

Book Reviews

OSCE Yearbook 2013 – Yearbook on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), by the Institute of Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/ IFSH, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2014, pp. 364, ISBN 978-3-8487-1141-3.

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When I was first asked to review the OSCE Yearbook 2013 for the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC), I felt privileged to obtain the opportunity to do so as a former OSCE member of staff. I must admit I often put the book aside while reading it, not because it was repetitive concerning what I already knew but, on the contrary, it helped me put my past OSCE experience in an insightful, well-articulated context. While doing so, I stepped back and saw my individual contributions on the overall map of the OSCE's work, and reached a better understanding of the Organization's challenges which I had often faced in the field. I therefore believe that practitioners like the OSCE field staff could definitely benefit from the valuable guidance that the OSCE Yearbook offers.

What intrigued me inside this edition? First and foremost, the 19th volume contains 20 diverse yet complementary contributions from experts and practitioners relating to all aspects of the OSCE and its work. Under three chapters (state of affairs – affairs of state; responsibilities, instruments, mechanisms, and procedures; organizational aspects), seven sub-sections present new developments in the OSCE's areas of work in a descriptive and, at times, analytical manner. As in previous editions, the Yearbook opens with a foreword by the Chairperson-in-Office for the year 2013, Ukraine's then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Leonid Kozhara, in which he provides a snapshot of what has been achieved in his term of office, and recommends the OSCE participating states to “unite around common goals and focus more on a co-operative agenda” in the future to overcome the deficit of trust and confidence, a key challenge faced by the Organization. Given the developments in Ukraine in the years thereafter, I personally found it cynical whether his ideas would still be applicable. The preface by the Editor, Ursel Schlichting, provides a sound overview of the Yearbook which allows those without sufficient time to read the publication from cover to cover to obtain a general idea about the Yearbook's content. It also prepares the readers for the special focus section of this edition, transnational threats and challenges in multidimensional areas of OSCE work, by elaborating on (a) a definition of transnational threats and challenges, (b) its types (with a focus on policing, anti-terrorism, and border management), and (c) the OSCE's responses thereto.

The main body of the publication begins with the first chapter devoted to two subjects: the current security situation in Europe as well as the assessments of developments and prospects within the OSCE, and considerations of the interests and commitments of selected OSCE participating States. In the first sub-section (“The OSCE and European security”), Marcel Peško presents the ‘Helsinki +40 Process’ as a new and positive effort to advance the OSCE's reform agenda, and echoes the recommendations put forward in the foreword: leading up to the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act in 2015 (tentatively scheduled for July 5–9),¹ there is much need for a change of approach to address the lacking trust and confidence among OSCE participating States. Building on lessons learned from the OSCE's initiatives since the 2008 Georgia crisis, Peško suggests that this can only be achieved by means of long-term, progressive, result-oriented, consensus-based, and participatory processes. We find this voice throughout the Yearbook: in the following chapters, contributors often compare and analyse the achievements and setbacks of the OSCE in its three traditional dimensions against the Helsinki +40.

In the same sub-section, Victor Mizin looks into Russian-US relations beyond the ‘reset policy’ introduced by the Obama administration (improving broken relations with Russia after Bush's term of office), arguing that arms control and issues of non-proliferation are still the only possible areas of co-operation between the two states. Mizin's efforts to reflect both sides' interests and fears are, no doubt, commendable. However,

¹ See <http://www.OSCEpa.org/publications/all-documents/annual-sessions/2015-helsinki/pro-gramme-1/2766-preliminary-draft-schedule-eng/file>.

in my opinion he does not seem to provide a recipe for the depoliticisation of these issues except mutual understanding which would be extremely hard to achieve since the Ukraine crisis. This chapter is followed by Adam Daniel Rotfeld who examines the evolution of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security communities towards a new “era of a polycentric security system, where new players and non-state actors will challenge the traditional security order”. His response to this challenge is the setting up of a Euro-Atlantic Security Forum within the OSCE entitled the “Platform for Co-operative Security” whose mandate should be agreed upon at the OSCE’s jubilee summit in Helsinki this summer. It will be exciting to see whether his suggestions will be taken on board by the participating States.

Turning to the second sub-section (“The OSCE participating States: domestic developments and multilateral commitment”), we find three contributions putting the spotlight on Switzerland, Armenia, and Kazakhstan. Daniel Tranchsler explains the reasons behind Switzerland’s decision to take up the 2014 OSCE Chairmanship, assuming a “bridge-building role between the various state groups and power blocks within the OSCE” to achieve three goals and ten priority issues. This is quite an ambitious target which I am not sure has been achieved considering the Ukraine crisis. Hans-Jochen Schmidt analyses the domestic and regional landscape of Armenia in the aftermath of the 2012 parliamentary and 2013 presidential elections, with a focus on the economy, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, relations with Turkey and Iran, and pointing to the failure of the European Union and the wider international community -including the OSCE to address the deeply rooted geopolitical problems. Last but not least, Sebastian Schiek reviews the compatibility of conservative modernisation and patrimonialism in the state-formation process of Kazakhstan under an unusual positive light, although he misses the opportunity to elaborate on whether or not, and if so, how, the country’s OSCE Chairmanship would have impacted on that process.

The second chapter forms the centre stage of the Yearbook. In the first subsection (“Conflict prevention and dispute settlement”), Claus Neukirch writes about early warning, early action, dialogue facilitation, and the meditation role, capacity, and tools of the OSCE in conflict resolution. He underlines the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC)’s concentration of work on four pillars – financial, human resources, equipment, and knowledge towards adequate preparedness to react quickly and effectively to newly emerging or re-emerging crises, political will and practice permitting. This contribution proves to be particularly interesting in light of the current role of the OSCE vis-à-vis the Ukraine crisis, which obviously constitutes an important test for the Organization.

In the second sub-section (“Comprehensive security: The three dimensions and cross-dimensional challenges”), the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, provides us with a brief summary of developments to date on internet freedom within the OSCE region, and advocates empowering the end-users to regulate internet access based on their preference instead of states taking the job in their hands. In her analysis, security, a free media, freedom of expression, and human rights are all interlinked, thus one cannot be considered without the other.

The largest portion of the Yearbook is formed by the third sub-section (“Focus on transnational threats and challenges: policing, anti-terrorism, and border management”) with seven articles elaborating on a wide range of issues in the politico-military basket of the OSCE, which results in an unbalanced distribution in the book of contributions among the OSCE’s three traditional dimensions. Wolfgang Zellner offers one of the most informative, challenging, and well-positioned pieces in this edition. He makes a convincing argument for transnational threats and challenges as a new dimension of conflict which appeared in the post-9/11

environment, and the shortcomings of the OSCE's responses to deal with this new type of threat within the framework of the 2003 Maastricht Strategy. He closely examines the OSCE's approaches to anti-terrorism, policing, and combating the trafficking in human beings from norm and custom-building perspectives, and concludes how the so-called "deep crisis of the OSCE" is not applicable in these particular fields of the OSCE's work due to five factors related to organizational strength, legitimacy, and approach (pp. 161–162).

The following contributions in this sub-section are, generally speaking, of an informative nature. Thorsten Stodiek describes the OSCE strategic framework for police-related activities in a lengthy, chronological manner. The inclusion of boxes with additional information in the text do not benefit its readability. Reinhard Uhrig and Ben Hiller take a more positive angle towards the OSCE's action against terrorism, attributing high importance to the Organization's Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism on the basis of consolidation, continuity, partnerships, and future focus.

Proceeding to the next topic, border security and border management, we come across three contributions: the first – by Roman Makukha, Penny Satches Brohs, and Jonathan Trumble – deals with key cross-border threats and challenges in the five Central Asian participating States (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), considering the OSCE's comprehensive approach to cross-border issues as a whole, as well as its specific activities and projects in this region in particular. The authors bring the OSCE's partnership with other organisations and implementing institutions, the establishment of co-operation and co-ordination for further capacity and dialogue building, and the provision – through the OSCE's field presence – of economic assistance to inhabitants of the border regions, as policy proposals to the table. On a related subject, Sabrina Ellebrecht tackles the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR), quite a technical subject to my liking, but one which is no doubt interesting for those working in the field of integrated border management in order to learn what EUROSUR could contribute to the system already in place. Kurt P. Tudyka's article takes a critical stance towards the OSCE's role and activities in its management of territorial and internal border related issues. In stark contradiction to earlier – more positive – contributions, he presents a disappointing picture of the OSCE's treatment of border issues: the OSCE reduced this work merely to the training of border officials while staying clear of potentially politically explosive border problems. In the last article of this sub-section, Thomas Feltes comes forth with a well-explained item on community policing, bringing best practices from Germany. However, he poses obstacles ahead of the implementation of its philosophy in practice. The Yearbook concludes with its third chapter, which includes two subsections, on the organizational aspects of the OSCE – a refreshing change from dedication to the politico-military dimension, which I personally found at times somewhat tedious. In the first sub-section ("OSCE Institutions and Structures"), Frank Cogan offers an insight into and an honest account of the 2012 Irish OSCE Chairmanship, underscoring the need at the time for the revitalisation of the OSCE from 'Corfu' (the launch of a new dialogue on the future of European security in the aftermath of the Georgian crisis) to the ongoing Helsinki +40 Process particularly to overcome the political deadlock within the human dimension. Wolfgang Zellner provides an update on the development of the OSCE Academic Network, a topic which he had already written about in the previous (2012) Yearbook. He calls upon both the OSCE and think tanks/ academic institutions to engage with, invest in, give access to, and provide support for this network. Cathie Burton wraps up this sub-section with a brief, rather promotional-style contribution on the OSCE's efforts towards better communication with the outside world, as exemplified in the relaunch of the OSCE magazine "Security Community", the overhaul of the existing website, and the increased use of social media (Twiplomacy).


The second and final sub-section ("External relations and influence") explores the OSCE's engagement with

Afghanistan, and the role of the Arab League in mediation and conflict resolution in the Arab world. The first contribution by Arantzazu Pagoaga Ruiz de la Illa deserves a special mention here as it touches upon the OSCE's involvement in Afghanistan, namely the Organization's "piecemeal" approach, projects that have been implemented so far and planned for the future, as well as challenges faced throughout the process (e.g. the lack of the allocation of a long-term budget, proper monitoring and evaluation, and political will). In view of the departure of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) at the end of 2014, the article offers a valuable overview of the OSCE's comparative advantages for better engagement with Afghanistan. The author promotes "developing a strategic framework for the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan". The Yearbook ends on a somewhat low note when Hesham Youssef in his article hardly goes beyond describing the Arab League's mediation history based on its legal framework and more interestingly factors which have affected the Arab League's role to date. The article includes proposals to advance the Arab League's co-operation with international and regional organisations such as the OSCE, "by establishing networks of mediators and mediation team members, and compiling lessons learned in mediation and conflict resolution".

Finally, the Yearbook also includes compendious appendixes with data and facts on the 57 OSCE States as well as a full bibliography of recent publications.

About the Author

Gülcan Yeröz has a BSc in International Relations (Ankara University, Turkey) and an MA in Human Rights (University of Essex, UK). From 2007 to 2013 she worked for the OSCE Presence in Albania and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo both in the field and at HQ level. Since 2013 she has worked as a human rights consultant with the Council of Europe Office in Kosovo and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, The Hague. At the time of writing this review, Gülcan was helping local NGOs in Nigeria in their advocacy and strategic programme development, and promoting women and girls' participation in social, political, and economic life. She has recently moved to Geneva, Switzerland, where she continues to provide expertise to international and local organisations as a consultant.



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Security and Human Rights (formerly Helsinki Monitor) is a journal devoted to issues inspired by the work and principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It looks at the challenge of building security through cooperation across the northern hemisphere, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, as well as how this experience can be applied to other parts of the world. It aims to stimulate thinking on the question of protecting and promoting human rights in a world faced with serious threats to security.

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