

# **Building Bridges for Everyone: Switzerland's Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2014**

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## Abstract

In 2014, Switzerland is chairing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for the second time. The innovative concept of a two-year tandem presidency together with Serbia (2015) will give the OSCE more continuity. Switzerland will focus its activities on mediating in conflicts in the Western Balkans and Southern Caucasus, on modernizing conventional arms control in Europe, and tackling transnational threats such as kidnapping for ransom. For Switzerland, the 2014 Chairmanship of the OSCE offers the opportunity to break out of its self-imposed political isolation in Europe and to make its preventive peace policy and its established good offices more visible internationally.

## Keywords

Chairmanship-in-Office; Switzerland; neutrality; Western Balkans; Southern Caucasus; conventional arms control; kidnapping for ransom

## Introduction

“Today, the OSCE is not an organization of which foreign ministers think when they wake up in the morning.” It was with these somber words that the Irish Foreign Minister Eamon Gilmore characterized the state of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) at the end of Ireland’s presidency in 2012.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the OSCE is still alive, but compared to the second half of the Cold War and to the 1990s, the organization has lost its appeal and is struggling for a *raison d’être*. Its influence on European Security is modest – today’s really important security policy decisions are taken in Brussels, by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the European Union (EU), and not in Vienna, where the OSCE’s headquarters are based.<sup>2</sup> The expansion of both NATO and the EU into Eastern Europe in the mid-1990s and beyond led to continuously shrinking budgets at the OSCE.<sup>3</sup> NATO’s enlargement, in particular, alienated Russia from the West and thus impaired one of the unique selling points of the OSCE compared with other European security organizations, namely Russia’s inclusion as an equal member.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the OSCE remains the most inclusive Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian forum and the only pan-European security organization, reaching from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

For Switzerland, which assumed the annually rotating Chairmanship-in-Office of the OSCE on 1 January 2014, an active engagement within the organization offers the opportunity to break out of its self-imposed political isolation in Europe and to make its preventive peace policy and its established good offices more visible internationally. The OSCE remains the only security organization in which Switzerland is a fully-fledged, equal member, because it is neither a NATO nor an EU member. In the 40-year history of the OSCE, Switzerland has repeatedly proven its value as a go-between and honest broker between East and West and by advancing face-saving compromise solutions by innovative diplomacy. By chairing the OSCE in 2014, Switzerland’s traditional

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1 Quoted in D. Kelin, ‘Russia and the OSCE’, in *International Affairs*, 2013, no. 1, pp. 89-99, p. 89.

2 W. Richter, ‘Sicherheitsgemeinschaft OSZE’, in *SWP-Aktuell*, 2013, no. 17, p. 3.

3 OSCE Handbook, Vienna, 2007, p. 112. Retrieved 10 January 2014, [http://www.libertysecurity.org/IMG/pdf\\_OSCE\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.libertysecurity.org/IMG/pdf_OSCE_Handbook.pdf). For later budget figures, see the respective OSCE Annual Reports (2008-2012), available online at <http://www.osce.org/item/66000>.

4 Russia’s estrangement from the OSCE dates back to the alleged “betrayal of 1990” and the Russian resentment over NATO enlargement: Russian officials, including Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, claim that in February 1990 US and West German leaders had promised the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not be expanded eastwards. Yet, archival evidence proves that the topic was not discussed at the time. During the talks on German reunification, only the German Democratic Republic’s special military status was talked about. See M. Kramer, ‘The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia’, in *The Washington Quarterly*, 2009, no. 2, pp. 39-61. On the skilful diplomacy of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, see M.E. Sarotte, ‘Not One Inch Eastward? Bush, Baker, Kohl, Genscher, Gorbachev, and the Origin of Russian Resentment toward NATO Enlargement in February 1990’, in *Diplomatic History*, 2010, no. 1, pp. 119-140.

profile as a mediator and its policy of active neutrality will be raised. The priorities of the Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2014 include reconciliation in the Western Balkans, dialogue and confidence-building in the Southern Caucasus, the modernization of conventional arms control in Europe, tackling transnational threats such as terrorist financing, and institutional reform ahead of the 40th anniversary of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act – the OSCE’s “gospel” that laid the common normative ground among the now 57 participating states.

This essay outlines the challenges Switzerland is likely to face at the helm of the OSCE in 2014, but concludes that Berne’s stewardship will be to the benefit of both the OSCE and of Switzerland’s broader diplomatic efforts in the long run – and thus in line with Switzerland’s leitmotif to “Create a Security Community for the Benefit of Everyone”.

### Background of the Swiss Candidacy in 2011

Why did Switzerland volunteer, as the very first OSCE participating state to this day, to chair the organization for a second time (after 1996)? Switzerland did not actively seek the Chairmanship, it did not push for it. The rather delicate history of the Swiss candidacy is little known.<sup>5</sup> In 2011, it was initially Serbia that ran for the 2014 OSCE Chairmanship. Before the UN General Assembly, the Serbian President Boris Tadic argued for Serbia’s OSCE Chairmanship based on the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I. The symbolism of a Serbian OSCE Chairmanship 100 years after “1914” was to demonstrate how much Europe had changed since then – also thanks to the OSCE.<sup>6</sup> In Western capitals, however, Tadic’s argument made diplomats sit up. It was feared that Serbia could misuse its OSCE year for propaganda purposes. Many Western diplomats felt uncomfortable about a Serbian OSCE presidency and raised particular concerns regarding Belgrade’s policies toward Kosovo. It was also argued that after the controversial chairmanships of Kazakhstan (2010) and Ukraine (2013), it was time to have a Western member state leading the OSCE. Thus, the Swiss government was discreetly asked if it could take the OSCE Chair in 2014 instead of Serbia.<sup>7</sup>

Bern solved the thorny request from countries like the United States or Germany rather skilfully. It refused to campaign against Serbia, a fellow OSCE partner, but declared its readiness to launch a double candidacy together with Serbia for 2014-15. Switzerland would serve as the Chair in 2014 and Serbia would follow in 2015.<sup>8</sup> Switzerland campaigned for votes for this innovative concept of two consecutive Chairmanships by saying that the OSCE’s trust in Serbia would lead to further stabilization in the Western Balkans.<sup>9</sup> In addition, it was argued that such a two-year tandem Chairmanship would give the OSCE more continuity and more sustainable priorities. Switzerland thus introduced the new and innovative concept of a “double presidency”

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5 C. Nünlist, ‘Die Schweiz ist eine Mini-OSZE: Perspektiven auf das Schweizer Vorsitzjahr 2014’, in Bulletin zur schweizerischen Sicherheitspolitik, 2013, pp. 11-41, at 23f. See also D. Trachsler, ‘Der OSZE-Vorsitz der Schweiz 2014: Herausforderung und Chance’ in Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik an der Universität Hamburg (ed.), OSZEJahrbuch 2013, Baden-Baden, forthcoming in 2014.

6 B. Tadic, Address before the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, 23 September 2011. Retrieved 10 January 2014, [http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/66/RS\\_en\\_0.pdf](http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/66/RS_en_0.pdf).

7 R. Nägeli (a Swiss diplomat), Comment during Panel Discussion on the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship 2014, Annual Meeting of the Swiss Helsinki Assembly (SHV), University of Berne, 21 January 2013. See also S. Gemperli, ‘Ein heikles Tandem mit Serbien in der OSZE’, in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 13 May 2013, p. 7.

8 Ibid. At first, the United States was strictly against the Swiss proposal for a double presidency and wanted to avoid a Serbian OSCE Chairmanship also in 2015. Germany, too, was initially very skeptical and feared Serbia’s influence over the OSCE’s activities in the West Balkans. For a fascinating behind-the-scenes account of how Switzerland struggled to reach consensus on the tandem candidacy between October and December 2011, see L. Ferrari, ‘Wie die Schweiz den Vorsitz ergatterte’, in Tages-Anzeiger, 15 January 2014, pp. 6f.

9 M. Calmy-Rey, Statement at OSCE Ministerial Council, Vilnius, MC.DEL/11/11, 6 December 2011. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/mc/85936>.

into the OSCE. After hard efforts at persuasion, this arrangement was given the green light by the then 56 members of the OSCE in February 2012.<sup>10</sup>

### Switzerland and the OSCE – A Success Story

Despite the delicacy of the request, in 2011 Switzerland was in fact easily talked into returning to the helm of the OSCE. The strengthening of the OSCE is still a Swiss strategic foreign policy interest.<sup>11</sup> For Switzerland, the value of the OSCE lies in the fact that four out of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and seven out of the eight G8 countries are represented.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the OSCE is of particular importance for Switzerland. For this neutral small state, its active participation in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) during the Cold War was an invaluable foreign policy experience that reverberates positively until today.

The history of Switzerland and the OSCE has been a success story so far. Switzerland was one of the 35 founding members of the CSCE. Its active participation in the multilateral preparatory talks in Helsinki in 1972-73 and as the host of the first CSCE negotiations in Geneva from 1973 to 1975 marked a radical change from Switzerland's very strict isolationist neutrality policy and foreign-policy abstinence to an interventionist engagement in high-level political questions that were highly significant for European and even global affairs in the Cold War. Having previously been notably absent from multilateral political negotiations, the newcomer positively surprised the participating states, including the United States and the Soviet Union. Swiss CSCE diplomats were well prepared and actively mediated between East and West. Switzerland's unexpected active neutrality policy was widely praised in Washington, London, Berlin, and Moscow.<sup>13</sup> The Swiss delegation exploited the fact that it was not part of a political alliance and thus not bound by the corset of intra-bloc consultations in NATO, the European Community (EC), or the Warsaw Pact. Berne trusted its CSCE delegation and allowed them to operate quite independently. Diplomat Edouard Brunner – the Swiss “Mr. CSCE” – understood the CSCE process from the outset as a mainly political event and quickly became a key player in the multi-year negotiating marathon. Switzerland was among the ten countries that determined the course of the multilateral conference with 35 participating states.<sup>14</sup>

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10 Albania had at first considered launching a formal objection to the Swiss-Serbian double candidacy. At the very end of the so-called “silence period“ during which an OSCE candidacy can be appealed, a bizarre veto from Lithuania threatened the consecutive OSCE presidencies of Switzerland and Serbia. Lithuania pondered over a protest veto against Serbia, because Serbia had challenged the Lithuanian candidacy for the presidency of the UN General Assembly in 2012-13. Serbia thus launched the first rival candidacy within UN regional groups since 1967. However, in early 2012 the Irish OSCE Chairman-in-Office apparently refused to consider as effective an email from the Lithuanian delegation that tried to break the silence. Apparently, high-level talks between the US and the Lithuanian President Dalia Gybrauskaite also played an important role so that Lithuania finally dropped the idea of a formal veto. See M. Russell Lee, ‘Lithuania’s Block of Serbia for OSCE Withdrawn’, in Inner City Press, 9 February 2012. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.innercitypress.com/unpga2osceposts020912.html>; Ferrari, ‘Wie die Schweiz den Vorsitz ergatterte’, p. 7.

11 Eidgenössisches Department für auswärtige Angelegenheiten (EDA), Bericht über die ausserpolitischen Schwerpunkte der Legislatur 2012-2015, Berne, 21 February 2012, p. 10. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/attachments/26149.pdf>.

12 Bundesrat, Aussenpolitischer Bericht 2012, Berne, 9 January 2013, p. 1002. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/doc/publi/aussen.Par.0031.File.tmp/977.pdf>.

13 See P. Rosin, Die Schweiz im KSZE-Prozess 1972-1982: Einfluss durch Neutralität, Munich, 2013; T. Fischer, Neutral Power in the CSCE: The N+N States and the Making of the Helsinki Accords 1975, Baden-Baden, 2009; H.-J. Renk, Der Weg der Schweiz nach Helsinki: Der Beitrag der schweizerischen Diplomatie zum Zustandekommen der Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa (KSZE), 1972-1975, Berne, 1996.

14 P. Widmer, Schweizerische Aussenpolitik und Diplomatie, Zurich, 2003, pp. 383-393.

That Switzerland played a central role in the Helsinki process is undisputed. Former West German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher wrote in his memoirs in 1995: “The Swiss adopted a particularly active role in the CSCE process. Its long-lasting representative Edouard Brunner is closely linked with these efforts that became a new dimension of Swiss foreign policy.”<sup>15</sup> Brunner himself proudly recorded in his memoirs that the CSCE had demonstrated that Switzerland was not simply “the political dwarf and economic and financial giant”, as it usually pretended to be, but had distinguished itself in highly political negotiations.<sup>16</sup> The fundamental change in Switzerland’s foreign policy is also well documented in archival evidence. Already in 1973, West German diplomats praised the change in Swiss foreign policy from its “traditional defensive policy of independence to a solidary cooperative and diplomatically offensive neutrality policy”.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, in 1975 the Helsinki Final Act was widely regarded as a victory for the Soviet Union because the West de facto recognized the territorial status quo of 1945 and Soviet concessions in the realm of human rights were not binding. In Switzerland, too, skepticism prevailed. The Swiss Ambassador Ernesto Thalmann coined the phrase: “The whole agreement will sink into oblivion as soon as the ink is dry on the signatures of Helsinki.”<sup>18</sup> The explosive force of the Helsinki process became evident only later. US President Gerald Ford later characterized the Helsinki agreement as the “nail in the coffin of communism”. Indeed, it soon became clear that the alleged Soviet triumph in 1975 was a Pyrrhic victory.

In retrospect, Switzerland was responsible for the two most important visionary achievements of the CSCE process, even if that was not yet understood.<sup>19</sup> First, Switzerland supported, much earlier than other Western states, the Soviet desire for CSCE follow-up conferences after 1975. At the time, the West feared that Moscow would turn such follow-up meetings into a propaganda forum to celebrate the cementation of the post-war borders in Europe. Switzerland, however, already envisioned in early 1974 to use the follow-up conferences to remind the Soviet Union of its human rights commitments. As it happened, the CSCE meetings in Belgrade (1977-79), Madrid (1980-83), and Vienna (1986-89) became known as tribunals on the human rights situations in the Soviet bloc. Dissidents postulated the implementation of and compliance with the Helsinki principles – and the audacious Swiss idea bore fruit. In Belgrade and Madrid, Switzerland and other Neutrals kept the CSCE process alive even during difficult and very polarized moments and through renewed Cold War tensions and again performed important functions as intermediaries between East and West.<sup>20</sup>

Second, Switzerland together with other Neutral and Non-Aligned States – Sweden in particular – successfully lobbied for the inclusion of confidence-building measures in conventional arms control. Initially, the ex ante announcement of sizeable military manoeuvres was voluntary. Yet, it proved to be an innovative and constructive contribution to overcoming the East-West confrontation. A breakthrough was achieved in the CSCE framework in the Stockholm disarmament conference in 1986, when the Soviet leader Mikhail

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15 H.-D. Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, Berlin, 1995, p. 304, translated from German.

16 E. Brunner, *Lambris dorés et coulisses: Souvenirs d’un diplomate*, Geneva, 2001, p. 53, translated from French.

17 Quoted in Rosin, *Schweiz im KSZE-Prozess*, p. 130, translated from German.

18 Quoted in C. Nünlist, ‘Skepsis gegenüber Aktivismus der Schweiz: Neue Perspektiven zur KSZE-Politik von 1972 bis 1975’, in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26 July 2005, p. 13.

19 The following two paragraphs are based on C. Nünlist, ‘Expanding the East-West Dialog beyond the Bloc Division’, in A. Wenger, V. Mastny, and C. Nünlist (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-1975*, London, 2008, pp. 201-221, at pp. 216f.

20 See T. Fischer, *Keeping the Process Alive: The N+N and the CSCE Follow-up from Helsinki to Vienna (1975-1986)*, Zurich, 2012; Rosin, *Schweiz im KSZE-Prozess*, pp. 153-308.



Gorbachev for the first time agreed to Western on-site inspections in the Soviet Union.

In the 1990s, the CSCE initially survived the transition from the Cold War to a new era remarkably well. The renamed institutionalized OSCE (1995) adapted itself to the new security environment and covered important niches such as election monitoring, conflict prevention, and rehabilitation. It developed an impressive network of field presences. In 1996, Switzerland assumed the OSCE chairmanship and focused on the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Switzerland deployed 70 “yellow hats” and 160 electoral and human rights observers to the Western Balkans. Thanks to the Swiss good offices, the OSCE in 1996 for the first time played a very prominent and visible role in peacebuilding after a civil war.<sup>21</sup>

### Swiss Priorities in 2014

However, today’s OSCE cannot be compared with the OSCE of 1996. In 2014, it will be much more difficult for Switzerland to repeat its earlier foreign policy successes within the OSCE. “There are no short cuts and few lowhanging fruits,” Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter confessed at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Kyiv in December 2013, a few weeks before assuming the OSCE Chairmanship.<sup>22</sup>

The largest creative power and overall responsibility for the OSCE’s activities lies with the annually rotating Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) rather than with the OSCE Secretary-General. In 2014, CiO Didier Burkhalter will manage acute crises, coordinate all of its activities, and represent the organization as the “voice of the OSCE”.<sup>23</sup>

In July 2013, Federal Councillor Burkhalter presented Switzerland’s priorities for 2014 in Vienna. Ten topics are key for the Swiss OSCE presidency<sup>24</sup>: 1) Reconciliation and cooperation in the Western Balkans; 2) Dialogue and confidence-building in the Southern Caucasus; 3) Modernization of the Vienna Document and an exchange of ideas on conventional arms control; 4) Strengthening of security sector governance; 5) Implementation of commitments in the Human Dimension; 6) More reliable management of natural disasters; 7) Combating transnational threats (terrorism, cyber domain); 8) Further developing the OSCE (“Helsinki+40”); 9) Strengthening mediation capacities; 10) Enhanced involvement of civil society and young people.

At the Kyiv Ministerial Meeting on 6 December 2012, the Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter declared that Switzerland was ready for the chairmanship and promised that “we will be working hard to bring the OSCE closer to a security community for the benefit of everyone.”<sup>25</sup> Officially launching the Swiss Chairmanship at a meeting of OSCE ambassadors on 16 January 2014 in Vienna, Chairperson-in-Office Burkhalter again outlined Switzerland’s programme in more detail. Referring to the protracted conflicts in the South Caucasus, he emphasized that “we firmly believe that it is not an option to simply wait and see in these conflicts.”<sup>26</sup>

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21 L. Goetschel (ed.), *Vom Statisten zum Hauptdarsteller: Die Schweiz und ihre OSZE-Präsidentschaft*, Bern, 1997; A. Wenger et al., ‘Das schweizerische OSZE-Präsidentschaftsjahr 1996’, in *Bulletin zur schweizerischen Sicherheitspolitik*, 1997, pp. 4-46.

22 D. Burkhalter, Address at OSCE Ministerial Meeting, Kyiv, MC.DEL/1/13, 5 December 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/mc/109215>.

23 See W. Kemp, ‘The OSCE Chairmanship: Captain or Figurehead?’, in *Security and Human Rights*, 2009, no. 1, pp. 9–12.

24 Swiss Confederation, *Creating a Security Community for the Benefit of Everyone*, July 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/mc/109266>.

25 D. Burkhalter, Address at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting, Kyiv, MC.DEL/36/13, 6 December 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <https://www.osce.org/mc/109298>.

26 D. Burkhalter, Address at Special Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, CIO. GAL/9/14, 16 January 2014. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/pc/110326>.

## Reconciliation in the Western Balkans

It is no surprise that the Western Balkans is the top priority for Switzerland's OSCE year. The region was already at the centre of Switzerland's activities during its first OSCE Chairmanship in 1996. It is also a key region for Swiss foreign affairs in general. Since the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, up to 170,000 persons from Kosovo have been living in Switzerland.<sup>27</sup> Northern Kosovo is today's last unresolved territorial dispute in the Balkans. In 2014-15, the Swiss Ambassador Gérard Stoudmann will serve as the OSCE Special Representative for the West Balkans and will try to deepen the rapprochement between Belgrade and Pristina.<sup>28</sup> Switzerland will focus on the implementation of the Belgrade-Pristina agreement of April 2013.<sup>29</sup> The Swiss Chairmanship wishes to make reconciliation a topic of discussion.<sup>30</sup> Closely cooperating within the two-year double Chairmanship, Switzerland is improving bilateral relations with Serbia. In 2008, Switzerland's quick recognition of Kosovo's independence had angered the Serbs. Through the tandem presidency within the OSCE, Switzerland is also supporting Serbia's return from isolation back into the international community.

## Confidence-building in the Southern Caucasus

A second priority is confidence-building in the Southern Caucasus, in the conflict between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia in particular. Again, this region has already been an established key focus of Swiss foreign policy since 1991. After the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008, Switzerland successfully mediated between the two countries and established itself as an honest broker in the Geneva International Discussions. Since March 2009, Switzerland has represented the diplomatic interests of Georgia in Moscow and Russia's interests in Tbilisi. Within these protecting power mandates, Switzerland successfully settled differences related to Russia's application to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2011.<sup>31</sup> Similar status-neutral solutions are sought for various conflict-related problems.

In late 2012, Switzerland presented a new four-year, CHF 100 million cooperation strategy for the region.<sup>32</sup> Thus, this second OSCE priority for 2014 also fits perfectly with Swiss foreign policy. Switzerland appointed the Swiss diplomat Angelo Gnädinger as the OSCE Special Representative for the South Caucasus for 2014 and 2015.<sup>33</sup> The former director general of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will be participating at the frequent meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism where incidents along the armistice line are discussed.

Switzerland is also offering good offices in the protracted conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>34</sup> In the autumn of 2013, the International Crisis Group (ICG) cautioned against an acute

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27 Eidgenössisches Justizund Polizeidepartement (EJPD): Bundesamt für Migration, Die kosovarische Bevölkerung in der Schweiz, Berne, August 2010, p. 25-32. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <https://www.bfm.admin.ch/content/dam/data/migration/publikationen/diasporastudie-kosovo-d.pdf>.

28 EDA, Die Schweiz verstärkt ihre Präsenz in der OSZE, Berne, 20 September 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.news.admin.ch/message/index.html?lang=de&msg-id=50325>.

29 T. Fuster, 'Einigung im Kosovokonflikt', in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 19 April 2013, p. 5.

30 Burkhalter, Address at OSCE Ministerial Meeting, 6 December 2013.

31 See D. Trachsler, 'Representing Foreign Interests: Rebirth of a Swiss Tradition?', in CSS Analysis in Security Policy, 2012, no. 108.

32 Swiss Confederation, Swiss Cooperation Strategy South Caucasus 2013-2016, Berne, December 2012. Retrieved 10 January 2014, [http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/southerncaucasus/ressources/resource\\_en\\_222425.pdf](http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/southerncaucasus/ressources/resource_en_222425.pdf).

33 EDA, Bundesrat designiert Sonderbeauftragten für den Südkaukasus, Berne, 23 October 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/recent/media/single.html?id=50683>.

34 See A. Hess Sargsyan, 'Nagorno-Karabakh: Obstacles to a Negotiated Settlement', in CSS Analysis in Security Policy, 2013, no. 131.

military escalation. Yet, high-level contacts intensified after a meeting of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on 19 November 2013 in Vienna and recent signs have been encouraging. The US Secretary of State John Kerry is also shepherding a solution to the conflict and is well positioned as a mediator. The US is a close partner of Azerbaijan, but Kerry has the trust of the Armenians, having long represented the interests of vocal Armenian-Americans as the Senator of Massachusetts.<sup>35</sup> Through the CiO, Switzerland will be able to attend the exclusive confidential negotiations in the Minsk Group, where the US, Russia, and France lead the mediation effort. CiO Burkhalter appointed Markus Widmer, a Swiss colonel, as Head of the OSCE High-Level Planning Group (HLPG), a body located in Vienna, and mandated to advise him on the establishment and operation of a multinational OSCE peacekeeping force for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.<sup>36</sup>

In mid-December 2013, Ambassador Heidi Grau, who is heading the OSCE Chairmanship Task Force at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Berne, explained in a public seminar at the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich that the situation in the Southern Caucasus was very complicated and confessed that she was rather pessimistic as to whether substantial progress was possible in the search for a resolution to the protracted conflicts in that region in 2014.<sup>37</sup>

### Modernizing Conventional Arms Control

In December 2013, Ambassador Heidi Grau was also pessimistic with regard to the Swiss priority of modernizing the OSCE's conventional arms control regime. Since late 2012, the Swiss Foreign Ministry has always emphasized that the adaptation of the 1990 Vienna Document to modern warfare in the 21st century would be one of the top priorities of the Swiss Chairmanship. When the Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter, speaking at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Dublin in December 2012, first introduced possible topical key issues for 2014, the Swiss daily newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* ran the following headline: "Bringing Arms Control Up to Date".<sup>38</sup>

The Swiss focus on conventional arms control may be surprising at first glance. The fear of traditional armed conflicts with direct military consequences for Switzerland and Europe has almost completely disappeared today. In addition, disarmament agreements are primarily concluded between military alliances, of which Switzerland is not a member. However, Switzerland has traditionally advocated confidence and security-building measures in the OSCE framework. And while ceilings for major weapons systems as stipulated by arms control treaties are obsolete today, the fear of armed conflict over territorial claims is still real in the Southern Caucasus or the Baltic. Accordingly, there remains a requirement for verifiable transparency regarding armed forces and limits on deployment in sensitive border regions and contested territories. In addition, arms control should regularly be adapted to developments in security policy, military affairs, and technological progress. Issues such as maritime forces, airlift capacities, rapid deployment forces, modern weapons platforms and delivery systems, and electronic warfare need to be integrated into the OSCE conventional arms control regime.<sup>39</sup>

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35 A. Peterson, 'Kerry, Go Fix Karabakh!' in *The National Interest*, 24 July 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/kerry-go-fix-karabakh-8765>.

36 OSCE, Chairperson-in-Office Representatives, January 2014. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/cio/43566>.

37 H. Grau, Comment during "CSS Evening Talk" on Swiss OSCE Chairmanship in 2014, Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich, 11 December 2013.

38 'Rüstungskongrolle à jour bringen', in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 7 December 2012, p. 9, translated from German.

39 'Rüstungskongrolle à jour bringen', in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 7 December 2012, p. 9, translated from German.



It now seems that Swiss diplomats realize that, realistically, no substantial progress can be expected in this realm in 2014. Swiss efforts will therefore focus on providing discussion platforms and on coming up with creative ideas to break the current impasse within the OSCE. The main OSCE body for debating arms control is the Forum for Security and Cooperation (FSC) with an independent chairman. Close cooperation between the Swiss Chairmanship and the FSC chairs – Malta, Moldova, and Monaco – will be important. Of particular interest are the updating of subregional regimes for the Balkans and for the Caucasus.

## Helsinki plus Forty

There is greater optimism with regard to the multi-year OSCE reform process called “Helsinki plus 40” that was launched in late 2012. The “Helsinki+40” process aims at adapting the OSCE to meet modern challenges. At the Kyiv OSCE Ministerial meeting, Switzerland, together with Ukraine and Serbia, presented a roadmap for “Helsinki+40”.<sup>40</sup> Ahead of the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, reforms are planned in eight areas that will strengthen the organization. In Kyiv Didier Burkhalter asked the other 56 OSCE members for high-level political engagement in three areas<sup>41</sup>: First, the OSCE should intensify its work on non-traditional threats, such as terrorism and environmental challenges. Second, the consecutive Chairmanship model should be institutionalized, and ministers should be involved in more regular strategic dialogue in addition to regular thematic summits. Third, an eventual OSCE summit in Serbia should not take place automatically, but be made contingent on enough progress being made in the Helsinki+40 reform process. Independently, Burkhalter also urged the OSCE to think about mid-term planning beyond the 40th anniversary.

The main format of the reform discussions is an informal Helsinki+40 Working Group (IHWG) at the level of OSCE ambassadors in Vienna. The OSCE Chairmanships of the Ukraine, Switzerland, and Serbia have appointed seven Special Coordinators to move discussions in the thematic areas forward. Switzerland is very experienced in overcoming difficult negotiation situations and narrowing gaps between colliding bargaining positions. Swiss diplomacy will try to build consensus and to offer face-saving compromise solutions with the help of summaries, position papers, questionnaires, and non-papers. In 2012, several international think-tanks produced various ideas for the OSCE reform process.<sup>42</sup>

## Kidnapping for Ransom as Terrorism Financing

Switzerland also plans to focus on the fight against terrorism and against the phenomenon of kidnapping for ransom (KFR) as a source of terrorism financing.<sup>43</sup> For the US government, KFR is the “most significant terrorist financing threat today”.<sup>44</sup> Kidnappings of foreigners have become a lucrative business. Islamic terrorist groups

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40 Helsinki+40 Process: A Roadmap towards 2015, MC.DEL/8/13, 5 December 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/mc/109302>. The eight areas for discussion are: 1) modernization of conventional arms control; 2) addressing transnational threats; 3) strengthening capabilities across the conflict cycle; 4) achieving progress towards the settlement of protracted conflicts; 5) enhancing the strategic orientation of the economic and environmental dimension; 6) strengthening the human dimension; 7) enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the OSCE; 8) enhancing cooperation with Mediterranean and Asian partners.

41 Burkhalter, Address at the OSCE Ministerial Council, Kyiv, 5 December 2013.

42 See M. Bieri, ‘Helsinki+40’, ISN Blog, 10 October 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?id=170391>; S. Liechtenstein, ‘The Helsinki+40 Process: Determining the Future of the OSCE’, Security and Human Rights Blog, 23 September 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, [http://www.shrblog.org/blog/The\\_Helsinki\\_40\\_Process\\_Determining\\_the\\_Future\\_of\\_the\\_OSCE.html?id=401](http://www.shrblog.org/blog/The_Helsinki_40_Process_Determining_the_Future_of_the_OSCE.html?id=401).

43 The following is based on C. Nünlist, ‘Kidnapping for Ransom as a Source of Terrorism Funding’, in *CSS Analysis in Security Policy*, 2013, no. 141.

44 D. Cohen (US Undersecretary of Treasury), Remarks at Chatham House, 5 October 2012. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1726.aspx>.

use extorted ransom funds to finance a significant share of their expenses. Reliable statistics are not available, but experts estimate that al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) alone has collected a total of USD 89 million in KFR revenues between 2003 and 2012.<sup>45</sup> Among the 60 foreigners ransomed for cash by AQIM since 2003, there were also seven Swiss hostages. On average, the terrorists receive USD 5.4 million in ransom per hostage.

The Swiss government has repeatedly stated that it does not make ransom payments. Often, however, private KFR specialists are engaged who negotiate, with or without the knowledge of Western governments, with the kidnapers and arrange ransom payments. Insurance companies offer complete KFR packages, and this aspect has become a lucrative business of its own. Switzerland will host an OSCE conference on this topic in April 2014 in Interlaken.<sup>46</sup>

### Other Swiss Priorities

In the first dimension (security), Switzerland also wants to strengthen the governance of the security sector, for example by developing a practical guide on the democratic control of armed forces. In the second, traditionally neglected dimension (economy and the environment), Switzerland in 2014 is prioritizing the more reliable management of natural disasters in the OSCE space and the strengthening of disaster resilience. Other promising topics in the field of dealing with transnational threats, besides the Swiss focus on Kidnapping for Ransom, are the concrete realization of confidence-building measures in cyberspace just decided at Kyiv<sup>47</sup> and the return of (jihadist) foreign fighters.<sup>48</sup> Even though at Kyiv, for the first time in three years, OSCE decisions in the third dimension (human security) were adopted, Swiss diplomats realize that progress in better implementing OSCE human rights principles will be difficult. Swiss efforts will focus on the issues of preventing torture, countering trafficking in human beings, respect for minority rights and human rights in economic crises, promoting democratic elections, and strengthening the rule of law in combating terrorism.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the efforts within the Helsinki+40 reform process, Switzerland would also like to strengthen the OSCE's capacity to act by increasing its mediation capacity, for example by inviting OSCE staff to conflict mediation courses in Switzerland. In addition, civil society is to be integrated more in the OSCE work. A heart's desire of Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter is the youth. The project "Youth for Security and Cooperation in Europe" brings together 57 young people from all participating states. They will simulate a whole OSCE negotiation cycle discussing current issues and making recommendations in their Youth Action Plan.<sup>50</sup>

### Challenges for the Swiss Chairmanship

So much for the Swiss planning for 2014. However, CiO Didier Burkhalter will simply not be able to act according to the well planned programme. He will also be tested as crisis manager if an unexpected conflict

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45 Strategic Forecast (Stratfor), Mali: Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's Ransom Revenue, 15 October 2012. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/mali-al-qaeda-islamic-maghrebs-ransom-revenue>.

46 S. Gemperli, 'Befrachtetes OSZE-Jahr', in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 27 November 2013, p. 13.

47 OSCE, Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the OSCE's Efforts to Address Transnational Threats, MC.DOC/2/13, Kyiv, 6 December 2013. Retrieved on 10 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/mc/109346>.

48 Burkhalter, Address at Special Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, 16 January 2014.

49 Grau, Panel Discussion at "Evening Talk", 11 December 2013.

50 'Die Erwartungen an die Schweiz sind hoch: Interview mit Bundesrat Didier Burkhalter zum OSZE-Vorsitz 2014', in C. Nünlist and O. Thränert (eds.), Bulletin zur schweizerischen Sicherheitspolitik, 2013, pp. 121-126, at p. 121. See also Burkhalter, Address at Special Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, 16 January 2014.

breaks out. Violent escalations in Northern Kosovo or the Southern Caucasus would be major setbacks, since Switzerland defined these two regions as top priorities. Alternatively, the fact that Switzerland did not mention Afghanistan or North Africa as OSCE priorities in 2014 could come back to haunt its OSCE Chairmanship. After the Western withdrawal from Afghanistan, the OSCE could play an important role in reducing the expected security vacuum, for example by improving border control or by fighting the drug trade in the region.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the OSCE's tool box could be helpful in helping the countries affected by the pan-Arab rebellions during their transition to democracy – and thus stabilizing Europe's Southern neighbourhood. In June 2013, Libya officially applied to become a cooperating partner of the OSCE.<sup>52</sup> At least Switzerland is actively engaged in the OSCE's efforts in North Africa. In 2013, Switzerland chaired the Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG) and organized seven meetings on topics including stolen assets recovery or kidnapping for ransom.<sup>53</sup>

In 2014, the terms of both the OSCE Secretary-General and the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) will end. While Secretary-General Lamberto Zannier will be easily re-elected for a second term, the appointment of a new ODIHR director will be politically sensitive, as the OSCE's activities as an election observer are highly controversial within the organization.<sup>54</sup> The Swiss Chairmanship will thus be confronted with the difficult task of shaping consensus among OSCE ambassadors to agree on a recommendation as to who should replace the current human rights chief Janez Lenarčič, whose second and last three-year term will end in June 2014.

In addition, Burkhalter's "double presidency" in 2014 will be very constraining – he also serves as President of the Swiss Confederation in 2014, a very time-consuming job that annually rotates among the seven members of the Swiss Federal Council.<sup>55</sup> While it certainly will be an advantage to be a president himself when meeting OSCE leaders such as President Vladimir Putin or US President Barack Obama, many domestically important appointments in his capacity as the Swiss President will prevent him from spending time as the OSCE chairperson-in-office. In 2011, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister apparently travelled 85,000 km in his job as the OSCE Chairman and visited 18 participating countries during 23 trips. He also delivered 90 public speeches.<sup>56</sup> For Burkhalter, domestic issues and Switzerland's relationship with the EU will probably be more important than the OSCE presidency.

Moreover, the 2014 OSCE presidency bears certain reputation risks for Switzerland. The increased international visibility could aggravate controversy over the free movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU or over the idea of a national burka ban in Switzerland. During 2014, the world will pay close attention to the alleged model OSCE member Switzerland.<sup>57</sup>

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51 S. Liechtenstein, Looking Ahead to 2014: The OSCE's Role in Central Asia and with Regard to Afghanistan, Security and Human Rights Blog, 18 March 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, [http://www.shrblog.org/blog/Looking\\_Ahead\\_to\\_2014\\_\\_The\\_OSCE\\_s\\_Role\\_in\\_Central\\_Asia\\_and\\_with\\_regard\\_to\\_Afghanistan.html?id=350](http://www.shrblog.org/blog/Looking_Ahead_to_2014__The_OSCE_s_Role_in_Central_Asia_and_with_regard_to_Afghanistan.html?id=350).

52 OSCE, Libya Applies to Become OSCE Partner, 17 June 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/sg/102800>.

53 OSCE, Report by the Chairperson of the Contact Group with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-Operation to the 20th Meeting of the Ministerial Council, MC.GAL/4/13, 28 November 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/mc/109035>.

54 See C. Strohal, 'Konsolidierung und neue Herausforderung: das ODIHR im 30. Jahr der OSZE', in OSZE-Jahrbuch, 2005, pp. 335-354.

55 M. Häfliger, 'Didier Burkhalter: Der doppelte Präsident', in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2 December 2013, p. 7.

56 The figures are quoted from D. Ó Beacháin, 'Ireland's Chairmanship of the OSCE: A Mid-Term Review', in Irish Studies in International Affairs, 2012, vol. 23, p. 89-109.

57 Nünlist, Schweiz ist eine Mini-OSZE, p. 37.

Finally, even though Switzerland recently began to emphasize that during 2014-15, each chair bears the sole responsibility for its OSCE year, that will not be the view of Western countries, including the United States or Albania. They agreed to the Swiss-Serbian “double presidency” in 2011 assuming that Switzerland would be “mentoring” Serbia during 2015. Politically, Switzerland will thus also be held to account for Serbian OSCE activities in 2015.<sup>58</sup>

### A Window of Opportunity

Despite these challenges, many factors point to a successful Swiss OSCE Chairmanship in 2014 – a presidency from which both the OSCE as well as Swiss foreign policy will profit. The innovative new concept of closely coordinated consecutive presidencies and the deadline of the Helsinki+40 reform process in 2015 have allowed Switzerland a more sustainable establishment of priorities. This medium-term planning boosts the planned activities’ chances of success. Other OSCE states such as Germany and Poland could follow the example of jointly campaigning for consecutive chairmanships.

In addition, Russia plays a special role in the OSCE. The OSCE is the only European security organization in which Russia is an equal member. Russian consent is important for progress in European Security projects. Switzerland and Serbia are perfectly suited for better integrating Russia into the OSCE family. Berne maintains friendly relations with Moscow. Switzerland even launched a strategic partnership with Russia in 2007.<sup>59</sup> And Serbia enjoys a privileged dialogue with Moscow. In 2014, the OSCE “troika” of past, present, and future chairs consists of Ukraine, Switzerland, and Serbia. All three countries are either neutral or non-aligned states. They are not members of NATO, the EU, or of Russian-sponsored alliances in the East. These three bridge-builders and neutral go-betweens are well positioned to help to shape compromise solutions and to overcome the present political deadlock between Russia and the West – just like during the CSCE process in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>60</sup>

The experience in high-level multilateral diplomacy during 2014 will prepare Swiss diplomats for the planned candidacy for a seat in the UN Security Council in 2023-24. At the same time, a new generation of Switzerland’s “best and brightest” diplomats and government officials will be trained in the Swiss OSCE Task Force in Bern and the Swiss OSCE delegation in Vienna.<sup>61</sup>

### Conclusion

What can Switzerland achieve in 2014 in the OSCE? Masterstrokes cannot be expected. The culture of compromise has suffered during the last decade.

Between Russia and the West, a new East-West gulf has opened. It is commendable that Switzerland will become involved in modernizing conventional arms control in Europe and mediating in the Western Balkans and Southern Caucasus.<sup>62</sup> The OSCE Chairmanship gives Switzerland an opportunity to distinguish itself

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58 Ibid., p. 24.

59 See J. Grätz, ‘Partnerschaft mit Russland: Bestandsaufnahme einer aussenpolitischen Akzentsetzung’, in C. Nünlist and O. Thränert (eds.), Bulletin 2013 zur schweizerischen Sicherheitspolitik, Zurich, 2013, pp. 43-70.

60 C. Nünlist, Window of Opportunity: Switzerland’s Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2014, ISN Blog, 7 October 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?lng=en&id=170387>.

61 D. Trachsler, ‘Ein geschickter Schachzug’, in Tages-Anzeiger, 8 July 2013, p. 7. See also S. Gemperli, ‘Kandidatur für UNO-Sicherheitsrat in Prüfung’, in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 13 August 2010, p. 9.

62 See also W. Zellner, ‘Die Schweiz beweist Mut zur Verantwortung in Europa’, in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 18 December 2013, p. 21.

as an active and credible bridge builder. Its mediation efforts profit from the fact that Switzerland does not carry a historically strained rucksack and does not have ulterior strategic motives. At the helm of the OSCE, Switzerland will thus make a solid contribution to stability in Europe and the European neighbourhood. In addition, it will also make its established peace supporting activities more internationally visible.


The Ukrainian OSCE Chairmanship of 2013 was lacking in ambition, enthusiasm, and creativity, even though the Kyiv Ministerial Council was able to produce substantive statements in all three OSCE dimensions.<sup>63</sup> In addition, recent developments between Russia and the West do not augur well for the OSCE and the Swiss Chairmanship in 2014. The US-Russian relationship reached a new low in 2013, despite recent cooperation between Washington and Moscow on Syria and Iran. Indeed, for the next few months, Didier Burkhalter will have to think quite a lot about the OSCE when he gets up early in the morning.



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63 M. Rojansky, Summing Up Ukraine's 2013 OSCE Chairmanship, ISN Blog, 20 December 2013. Retrieved 10 January 2014, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?id=174714&lng=en>.





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