

Book Review

OSCE Yearbook 2010, Yearbook on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), by Institute of Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, pp. 427; ISBN 978-3-8329-6399-6.

Branislav Milinkovi

Branislav Milinkovi was a Serbian political activist and diplomat.

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1. It is quite appropriate that in the year when the OSCE held its first summit after more than a decade, Institute of Peace Research and Security Policy from Hamburg published very substantial volume of its traditional OSCE Yearbook — 28 articles (more than in any of the recent volumes) managed to cover many burning issues of the European security.

2. The editorial choice to have a special focus on the particular topic (initiated in 2008 by Georgian — South Ossetian conflict and followed by ‘Corfu Process’ in 2009) was very well made this time by highlighting Central Asia. There are at least two convincing reasons to do so in 2010 — OSCE Chairmanship of Kazakhstan (the first Central Asian state, the first ex-Soviet republic and the first majority Muslim country to perform this task) and serious disturbances in Kyrgyzstan. But one should also have in mind broader strategic importance of this ex-Soviet space which is home to more than 100 different nationalities and which is shaped by Islam stronger than any other OSCE region.

In his analysis of the role of Islam in the security policies of the Central Asian states T. Epkenhans argues that Islam appears predominantly as a ‘security problem’ or ‘danger’, but adds that Central Asian elites hesitantly acknowledge that Islam could also be a component of a legitimate social order. This recognition of the special role played by Islam in the socio-political processes and possible directions of this gradual rapprochement have been presented by A. Seifert and E. Usualiev with the special emphasis on the Kyrgyzstan. L. Golovko, on the other hand, underlines critical importance of the deeply rooted understanding of the unchangeability of Central Asian ruling elites which actually poses a ‘natural’ limit for the ongoing legal and social reforms.

a. Uteganova established very interesting link between Kazakhstan’s long term development programme ‘Strategy 2030’ and country’s priorities during the OSCE Chairmanship — Kazakhstan as ‘bridge builder’ between West and East and North and South, development of the Eurasia’s transit potentials, promotion of the tolerance and the dialogue between the Islamic and Christian world. The chairmanship is also presented in the broader historical and institutional context by M. Laumulin.

b. Eschment describes extremely complex mosaic of various ethnic groups in Kazakhstan and development of the nationalities policy over the last two decades, which is traditionally better than in any other country in the region. The most striking negative example was bloody clash between ethnic Kyrgyz and members of the Uzbek minority in the south of Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 analyzed by T. Kunze and L. Gronau — while authors welcome the constitutional referendum and elections following these clashes, they also signal new dangers for the Kyrgyz emerging democracy.

3. Chapter of the Yearbook traditionally devoted to the OSCE and European Security was inspired by the Astana Summit, so it could easily be named after the subtitle of the Astana Commemorative Declaration ‘Towards a Security Community’. W. Zellner explains why high expectations before the Summit ended up in the disappointments, but he prudently concludes that it might be too early to form valid conclusion since time distance is needed. He reminds that historical importance of Helsinki Final Act 1975 became clear much later and that Istanbul 1999 was immediately assessed as a great success, while it actually marked the starting point of the decade of disagreements. After his analysis of the Corfu process and preparatory works for Astana Summit A. Zagorski concludes that ‘deep dividing line runs through the OSCE’ (between the CSTO states and others) which highlights the lack of the OSCE’s common purpose.

V. Voronkov presents Russian proposal for a new European Security Treaty (EST) in the light of the wider European,

Euroasian and global developments. While P. Herd and P. Dunay don't see EST as the adequate response to the current security challenges they argue that discussions stimulated by the EST uncovered the lack of trust as the key problem which might be addressed by, inter alia, rebalancing various dimensions of the OSCE and granting greater Euro-Atlantic recognition to the CSTO. Later in the volume there is an informative overview of the structure, objectives and activities of the CSTO by N. Bordyuzha. P. Grudzinski proposes gradual process of adaptation of existing institutions in the Euro-Atlantic and Euroasian region in order to regain mutual trust. M. Peško and H. Salber with A. Ackermann explored the potentials of the Corfu process to reach similar goal. The Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative as a possible response by academic and NGO community is presented by R. Salzman.

Astana Summit was a 'complex mix of success and failure' (Zellner). OSCE is left in the 'state of limbo' (Zagorski). Whether it will be upgraded towards indivisible security community (which seems to be commonly shared objective) or downgraded towards invisible security community (which some skeptical observers might fear) does not depend on the OSCE only. 'Having the OSCE work in isolation would be pointless' (Grudzinski).

4. The part of the volume dealing with the three traditional dimensions of the OSCE has four articles on human dimension (elections, democratization, media freedom and national minorities), one article on energy security (P. Dreiski, without very strong focus on the OSCE) and none on politico-military dimension. Since 2008 and 2009 volumes had similar balance of dimensions it might be advisable to try to do some additional 'rebalancing' in the volumes to come.

Based on the excellent case study of the election assessment mission to the 2009 Parliamentary Elections in Germany, J. Eschenbacher and B. Knoll substantiated strong claim in favor of the suitable sort of election monitoring in the 'long-standing democracies'. Not so much to prove that involvement of ODIHR experts might always and everywhere bring some positive momentum on electoral reform efforts, but much more to help that electoral assistance evolves into coherent and effective practice widely accepted by all OSCE participating states. In order to strike a right balance between countering terrorism and protecting media freedoms R. Bless calls for media self-regulation. S. Riese, N. Roehner and C. Zeurcher concluded that strategies applied by external actors for fostering democracy after civil wars in the Balkans were not very effective. Mindful of the fact that in the early stages of democratization nationalistic mobilization can lead to the internal and ethnic tensions, N. Sabanadze argues that Bolzano/Bozen recommendations on national minorities in inter-state relations, although basically drafted for the consolidated democracies, could serve useful purpose also in the fragile regions like South Caucasus.


5. After the 2011 Arab spring, M. Wohlfeld's assessment of the efforts to reinvigorate dialogue between the OSCE and Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation should become even more interesting — her list of ideas how to improve this dialogue deserves particular attention. Some ideas how to develop an OSCE mediation capacities are presented by A. Ackermann, J. Crosby, J. de Haan and E. Falkehed.

Finally, four more OSCE participating states came under spotlight in this volume. O. Protsyk offered preliminary analysis of the early days in office of the new Ukrainian president V. Yanukovich, while F. Evers reviewed missed opportunities opened by the Orange Revolution and the OSCE work in the complex Ukrainian domestic political situation. S. Stober presented very detailed account of the OSCE Mission to Georgia in order to describe reasons for its failure after 17 years, while not ignoring important international aspects which contributed to that result — recognition of the independence of Kosovo and decisions of NATO summit in Bucharest in the same year like

the Five Day War in August 2008. K. Tudyka presented the Greek OSCE Chairmanship 2009 in the chronological way, while S. Raščan wrote on the Slovenia and the OSCE.

6. The annual volumes of the OSCE Yearbook remain the far most important source to study achievements and failures of this unique pan-European organization. They also serve as useful illustration of the OSCE's strengths and potentials that are so often and so easily disregarded by many, without even trying to understand its distinctive origins, developed tools and substantial impact on the ground. Simple but powerful reminder of the usefulness of the OSCE as a forum for discussion is provided by U. Schlichting in her preface to this volume: 'Where else can contradictory positions be discussed among equals? How else can they be overcome except in dialogue?' OSCE Yearbooks play important role in contributing to this valuable dialogue.





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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.

Netherlands Helsinki Committee
Het Nutshuis
Riviermarkt 4
2513 AM The Hague
The Netherlands

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