

**The Evolution of Cooperative Security:
Canada and the Human Dimension of the CSCE,
1973-1994**

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Contents

| | | |
|------|----------------------------------------------------|----|
| I. | Introduction..... | 1 |
| II. | Canada and the Origins of the Human Dimension..... | 3 |
| III. | From Helsinki I to Helsinki II..... | 8 |
| IV. | From the CSCE to the OSCE..... | 12 |
| V. | Canada's Role Within the OSCE..... | 14 |

Abstract

This working paper traces the evolution of the following concerns with the CSCE/OSCE process: (1) the influence of liberal ideas about the fundamental supports of security in foreign policy decisions, in particular the role of moral norms and a presumed correlation of internal repression with external aggression; (2) the influence of public opinion on human rights policy in an area of primary security concern; and (3) the expanding role of transnational values and agreements within the OSCE region. The study thus illuminates policy background concerning appropriate responses to security problems born of democratization in Eastern Europe and the main successor states to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. This is important as it is already clear that in several of these countries, along with new political and cultural openness and freedom, ethnic violence and economic 'scapegoating' of minorities is on the rise. The historic mix of ethnic influences on Western policy toward the region, rising levels of minority and other persecution throughout Eurasia, and the consequent refugee flows this presents for the OSCE area, suggest that the importance of "Human Dimension" issues as an underpinning to cooperative security will only increase in coming years.

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I. Introduction¹

Cooperative security is a relatively new concept, but one that has already captured the imagination of analysts and policy-makers alike. It appears to be emerging as the core doctrine for reconstituting international security regimes in the post-Cold War world. In essence, this idea maintains that long-term security and stability must rest on the presumption of the rule of law, both within and among nations. Reinforcing this presumption is an emphasis on building cooperative habits (of thinking as well as practice), leading to interstate mechanisms and mutually-run institutions that both build immediate security confidence and promote complementary values. Yet, while the term is newly-minted, the practice of “cooperative security” in fact has been evolving over several decades.

Among the best regional examples of this development is the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).² From its relatively humble beginnings the CSCE has grown into an impressive set of formal institutions. It is no longer simply a conference in permanent session; it now spans Eurasia and it seeks to provide security in the broadest possible sense, going beyond the military to include the economic and “human dimension” of international stability and intercommunal security. Yet, for most of its first two decades the CSCE was not so much an international institution or organization as it was a drawn-out process of political and normative negotiations. During much of this period it was also a locale of direct ideological confrontation between East and West. The incipient notion of cooperative security was well-cloaked, in what then appeared to be nearly meaningless rhetoric about common security ambitions and “confidence and security building measures” (CBMs/CSBMs),³ and even deeper hypocrisy over supposedly shared human rights standards. The most severe critics dismissed the CSCE as a diplomatic curiosity, or even as a throw-back to the days of closed diplomacy, without connection to real world issues or interests.

Canada has never numbered among the harsher critics of the CSCE/OSCE. To the contrary, even during its most stagnant years Canada lent whatever diplomatic support it could to sustain the basic process, in the hope that less conflict-ridden days might lead to eventual substantive progress as well. This persistence over process and commitment to the idea of the CSCE combined three core motivations: cognizance on the part of successive governments and Department of External Affairs (DEA) officials of the fact that fundamental Canadian security interests were inextricably tied to the maintenance of peace and security in the European region; a quiet conviction that normative interstate commitments had real value (that words had real political consequences in the affairs of nations); and at least in the early period, a desire to anchor Canadian trade and other interests more firmly in Europe, as against the tug of continental integration and the predominance of US influences in the debate over Canadian national identity.⁴ Beyond these concerns, Canada had two additional reasons for strongly supporting the CSCE process. First, it shared a general Western perception of the CSCE as a diplomatic vehicle for coming to terms with the reality of the Eastern Bloc and its submission to the Soviet Union and Soviet idea. Secondly, it shared the general Western view that the CSCE--and in particular its emphasis on the “human dimension” of regional security--offered a set of tools and incentives that promised to help prise open the Soviet Bloc and allow gradual reform to take root there.

¹ The research leading to this working paper was supported by a grant from the Cooperative Security Competition Program, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Canada. Administrative and other support was provided by the Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia. I am grateful for critical comments on this work by Joel Rosenthal, President of the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs; Stephen A. Garrett, Professor of International Policy Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies; and Carl C. Hodge, Director of the International Relations Program, Okanagan University College.

² The CSCE became the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) on January 1, 1995. Since this paper concerns developments and changes prior to that date, it uses the original acronym throughout.

³ Prior to 1983, and publication of the “Madrid Concluding Document,” these were known more simply as CBMs, or “Confidence-Building Measures.”

⁴ Some of these points are also made in Robert Spencer (ed.) *Canada and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe* (Toronto: Centre for International Studies, 1984), *passim*. This volume remains the authoritative source on Canada’s involvement with the CSCE during the first decade of its existence.

Canada's role in ensuring the survival and then qualified success of the CSCE was not a central one--given that the other players in the process included the US, the USSR, Britain, France and Germany, this was only to be expected. But nor was the Canadian role an uninspired or trivial one. Instead, Canada repeatedly proved its value as a member of the Western alliance, not infrequently performing mediatory and intermediary functions both within the Western camp and among East, West and Non-Aligned states. This reflected a basic concern for councils concerned with the security of a region into which Canadian troops had been drawn by war, twice in a single generation, and which since the end of World War II had continued to dominate Canada's national security perceptions and policies. Canada was also concerned not to be excluded from the potential for trade (the "Third Option" of the Trudeau years) that, in the early days, some thought the CSCE might offer. In addition, this dedication reflected the basic liberal character of the nation, including a conviction that real security interests would be served by discussions that aimed at setting standards for interstate behavior, which could then serve as both a catalyst and a currency of change in regional diplomacy and security affairs.

With the exception of the trade area, this commitment has paid handsome dividends. Reflecting the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, at the start of 1995 the renamed OSCE numbered some 51 nations spanning the Eurasian land mass, adding as well the two NATO-member, North American democracies. This has given rise to the currently fashionable (and rather heady) cliché that the OSCE stretches in its aspiration and mandate for peace and security from "Vancouver to Vladivostok." However exaggerated this rhetoric, there can be no doubt the organization underwent a significant expansion from the preparatory and founding conferences of 1972-75, when only 35 nations gathered, with all but two located in Europe.⁵ What was Canada's role in this evolution in institutional structure, issues and membership?

To answer this question it must be understood that the changing forms taken by the CSCE, and the quality of its contribution to security and cooperation, largely reflected the wider security context of East/West relations. That process is traced out in this paper, alongside the specifics of Canadian input and influence. From this perspective, the evolution of the concept of the "human dimension" of cooperative security, and Canada's role in this history, will serve as a central focus. At the insistence of most Western and some Neutral and Non-Aligned (NNA) states, from its very beginnings the CSCE kept up a unique emphasis on humanitarian and minority rights issues--the "human dimension" of security. At first, cynicism seemed justified as CSCE member states compartmentalized these concerns in the so-called "Third Basket" of the Final Act, which held them separate from the military (Basket I) and economic (Basket II) dimensions of security talks. But even before the great events of 1989-91, and the major institutional reforms of 1992-94, both Canada and the CSCE had shifted focus. Discussions moved from consideration of humanitarian issues on the basis of traditional, interstate relations to a consensus view of regional security as ultimately resting on mutual respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of peoples (including national minorities) as well as individuals. In 1990, Canada and other CSCE member states moved to formally codify the idea, in the Charter of Paris, that the pursuit of pan-European security must take place on the basis of declared common values and mutually enforced concern for democracy and human rights. This was a remarkable change from the early years of ideological confrontation and institutional stagnation. How did this change come about, and what role did Canada play in this shift toward the CSCE's concept of cooperative security's human dimension?

⁵ The only European state not to join in 1975 was Albania, then deep into its isolationist period under Enver Hoxha. At the time of writing, Serbia (Yugoslavia) is under suspension while Macedonia has only observer status, due to the intransigence of Greece in objecting to Macedonia's entry under that name. The fifteen successor states of the former Soviet Union have all joined. Some participated with great enthusiasm from the outset; others, most notably the new Central Asian republics, were drawn into the process very slowly between 1991-95.

II. Canada and the Origins of the Human Dimension

The CSCE process arose from several sources. As early as the mid-1950s, the Soviet Union called for a separate “European” security conference and treaty that would exclude the United States from regional security arrangements. Moscow repeated this call periodically throughout the 1960s and into the early years of détente at the start of the 1970s. What the Soviets clearly were after was some form of legal sanction for the post-WWII territorial gains they had made; wider acceptance of the legitimacy of their client state East Germany (German Democratic Republic, or GDR); and ultimately, a split of the United States from Western Europe, and especially from the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), in the areas of collective defense and other security arrangements.⁶ But also as early as the mid-1950s, most Western powers responded to the Soviet Union’s expressed interest in a pan-European security arrangement by proposing to link military aspects of security with economic ties and benefits, and with more fundamental humanitarian and human rights concerns.⁷ Moscow wanted to overcome trade and technology barriers while confirming and reinforcing political divisions between Europe’s two great camps. But the Western states--to varying degrees--saw the breakdown of political walls and the progressive extension of democratic values as the necessary precondition, and a long-term guarantee, of any regional security arrangements that went beyond the NATO alliance.

Thus, from the outset a basic tension existed between the Soviet Bloc’s emphasis on arms control issues, concern regarding military tensions, and interest in weakening ties between the US and Western Europe, and the democratic West’s insistence on linking security talks not only to trade but to the much more troublesome issue of respect for human rights within the Soviet Bloc. This tension helped prevent even preliminary negotiations for nearly fifteen years. It was not until the arrival of full-fledged US/Soviet détente, and even more notably the successful initiatives of West Germany’s Ostpolitik at the beginning of the 1970s, that the interests of both sides in the Cold War coalesced around acceptance of a general conference on regional security in Europe.

During this time of languid diplomatic sparring, Canada’s interest in an expanded détente and in a general security conference slowly became clear, growing in rough tandem with Western European interest and concern over the misdirection of US policy in Vietnam. But Ottawa could not overcome the inertia of intra-Bloc relations and the Soviet’s desire to exclude the US (and therefore, coincidentally, Canada) from a general conference on European security.⁸ Early Canadian efforts thus necessarily focused on obtaining a “seat at the table” over Soviet objections, which aimed not directly at Canada but at excluding the US. Canadian attempts also met some resistance from alliance partners.

Under Trudeau, Canada sought an independent role in Europe partly in order to “counterbalance” the weight of US influence on its foreign policy and national life. However, the Trudeau government’s announced defense review and cutbacks, including proposals to reduce the country’s forces based in Europe, raised doubts in European NATO capitals about the seriousness of Canada’s commitment to regional security and alliance strength. To curry favor with the European members of NATO, Canadian officials frequently portrayed their country as sharing Western Europe’s eagerness for a conference, rather than the indifference evident at the top levels of the Nixon administration. Leaving aside expression of the more particular reasons, this was summed up as the rather grandiose notion of a “Third Option” for Canadian foreign policy.⁹ The cutbacks to defense and to NATO meant that this claim to a role in Europe and a perception of the region’s problems that differed from the American was made even more

⁶ On Soviet motivations in the founding of the CSCE see Stephen J. Flanagan, “The Road to Helsinki,” in Vojtech Mastny (ed.), *Helsinki, Human Rights and European Security* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), pp.43-47. In the same volume, see the introduction by Vojtech Mastny and the essay by Robert Legvold, “The Soviet Union and Western Europe.”

⁷ Bennett Kovrig, “European Security in East/West Relations: History of a Diplomatic Encounter,” in Spencer (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.3-19.

⁸ See the excellent background discussion by Robert Spencer, “Canada and the Origins of the CSCE,” in his *Canada and the CSCE, op.cit.*, pp.12-101.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.30-44. On US policy toward the human dimension of the CSCE from Nixon through the Carter years, see the author’s *Principled Diplomacy: Security and Rights in US Foreign Policy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), pp.127-153.

emphatically than usual, as Canada scrambled to regain credibility with its European NATO partners. Canada eventually got its seat at the table not especially because of its own efforts. Instead, general Western refusal to exclude the US (which was then lukewarm about the idea of a pan-European conference) meant that the Soviets had to finally accept the participation of the two North American members of NATO in the proposed CSCE process.

Preparatory talks began in November 1972, leading to preliminary agreement to discuss all three areas of CSCE concern--military security (arms control and CSBMs), economic cooperation, and human rights and contacts--at the main conference, set for Helsinki. It was at this point that humanitarian concerns were lumped together and referred to as "Basket III" issues. This separation was partly due to consistent Soviet rejection of the West's argument that all three areas of negotiation were interrelated. But it also reflected a lingering division between the European Community (EC) states and the US. The former saw Basket III as the most important wedge into (and possibly one day dividing) the Soviet Bloc, because it promised not merely short-term easing of tensions but the eventual reform and basic transformation of the Soviet system. Meanwhile, under Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, the US held back from the multilateral conference approach to the Soviet Union in favor of direct bilateral contacts and summit negotiations.¹⁰

Hence, it was the European members of NATO, with significant assistance from Canada and the smaller democracies from the NNA group (e.g., Sweden), that pushed for strong linkage between Soviet interest in acquiring a sense of legitimacy for post-WWII borders on the one hand, and long-term progress in implementing Basket III principles on the other. Canadian officials were confident that the process would not be a sham, but would instead genuinely contribute to reducing intrabloc tensions. This satisfaction was muted by disappointment over the weakness of the CSCE's economic provisions. However, even at this preliminary stage Canada's interest in and promotion of the human contacts/human rights dimension of the CSCE process was paramount. As a senior External Affairs official told Parliament, in Canada's view the human contacts article was "the single most important item on the conference agenda."¹¹ As part of a coalition of smaller democracies both within and outside NATO, Canada had successfully pushed for a stronger connection between security and human rights within the CSCE than, at that point in time, either superpower desired. This connection was embedded in the proposals that came out of the Multilateral Preparatory Talks (MPT), the basis upon which the conference proceeded, at the Geneva round of talks in 1973-75, and most importantly, in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975.

The Final Act imposed no legally-binding commitments on its signatories. Instead, it enumerated supposedly common normative commitments, and set in motion a negotiating process to see if these might be advanced and implemented over time. As might be expected, it was not just the Soviet Bloc that wanted to avoid the legally-binding obligations of a treaty. The UK and US, most prominently among the Western powers, for different reasons also preferred rhetorical to formal legal pledges. Even so, ten basic principles were agreed upon. The first six concerned traditional security matters and used traditional language; they also spoke most directly to Soviet interests: (1) sovereign equality of member states; (2) an end to the threat or use of force against other signatories; (3) "inviolability of frontiers"; (4) territorial integrity; (5) peaceful settlement of disputes; (6) nonintervention in members' internal affairs (this sixth principle also spoke to Western and NNA interest in denying legitimacy to Soviet Bloc interventions taken under cover of the Brezhnev Doctrine). The next two Helsinki principles were unequivocally Western in inspiration and origin, and together constituted the effective linkage of human dimension issues with all other aspects of security as essential components of peace, as pursued under the CSCE process: (7) "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief"; and (8) "equal rights and self-determination of nations and peoples." The final two principles were pro forma incantations of members' collective intention to keep and apply the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.127-153.

¹¹ J.G.H. Halstead, Assistant Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, "Testimony before the *Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defense*," House of Commons, June 19, 1973.

agreement: (9) “cooperation among States”; and (10) “fulfillment in good faith of obligations under international law.”¹² More specific agreements were dividing into the various components of the “Three Baskets” on military, economic and human dimension issues.

The West obtained a great deal from the Final Act, although this was not necessarily appreciated at the time. Rather than decoupling the US from Western Europe, Moscow had to acknowledge that the US role in European security was legitimate. It even came to see this role as in some ways conducive to Soviet security (for instance, as a constraint on a resurgent West Germany and as a barrier to Anglo/French nuclear cooperation). The longstanding and highly dangerous tension over Berlin and the disputed status of the two Germanies was further eased, and agreement was achieved on a series of CBMs designed to support and extend détente.¹³ Also achieved was formal acceptance by all signatories of member states’ right to comment directly on each others’ human rights and other internal practices, as these pertained to common Basket III commitments.

What did the West give up? Despite a great deal of hyperbole on the political right over the “betrayal” of Eastern Europe, and concomitant mischaracterization of the Helsinki Accords as “another Yalta,” the Final Act did not grant Moscow the full de jure recognition of the postwar situation that it so wanted. Instead, the Final Act qualified the principle of “territorial inviolability” with the novel notion that frontiers could be altered, but only by peaceful means.¹⁴ The Accords did require West Germany to postpone reunification (which was not then seen as imminent in any case), and they tacitly accepted the continuing existence of a Soviet sphere of domination in Eastern Europe. But these concessions were at the time no more than an acceptance of the reality about German division and the apparent solidity of the Soviet Bloc (as was unofficially spelled out in the US in the so-called “Sonnenfeldt Doctrine,” which called for an “organic” relationship to be cultivated between the Soviet Union and its Eastern European client states¹⁵).

Canada was very pleased with the outcome of the Geneva talks and the capstone Helsinki Conference. The goal of a “seat at the table” in Europe had been achieved, foreign relations ties were more diversified than before, and through persistent toughness during negotiations with the Soviets, Canada regained a measure of credibility with its NATO allies, lost by the earlier defense cutbacks and perceptions of a desire for a softer line on the part of Prime Minister Trudeau.¹⁶ Despite an express desire to maintain a relatively low profile and to avoid merely polemical exchanges with Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) delegations, Canada actually was a prominent player in the founding of the CSCE, especially when it came to human rights and human contacts. As an immigrant nation, Canada had to contend with well-organized ethnic lobbies that expressed a much higher degree of interest in the CSCE process than did the general population.¹⁷ Thus, it quickly became apparent that, for Canada, Basket III issues were of central importance, and not merely rhetorically. Most notably, Canadian attention and negotiating effort was directed at the questions of family reunification (also of central importance to the Germans), and related issues of human contacts.¹⁸ It is important to appreciate this fact as, despite overall guidelines to avoid major controversy, the Canadian delegation over time emerged as among the most forceful in making presentations on the human dimension to the Soviet Bloc, casting off (at least briefly) the traditional stance of mediator and “helpful fixer.”

¹² See text of the Final Act in John J. Maresca, *To Helsinki: The CSCE 1973-1975* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1985), pp.226-283.

¹³ For example, prior notification of military maneuvers and the exchange of military observers during war games and NATO or WTO exercises.

¹⁴ On this point see the extensive discussion in Mike Bowker and Phil Williams, “Helsinki and West European Security,” *International Affairs*, Vol.61, No.4 (Autumn 1985), pp.607-618.

¹⁵ Helmut Sonnenfeldt, counsellor to the State Department, made his controversial remarks to a gathering of European Ambassadors. They were reported in the *New York Times*, April 6, 1976; reprinted as Doc. #21 in Mastny (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.94-98.

¹⁶ Peyton Lyon, “Canada at Geneva, 1973-75,” in Spencer (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.110-133.

¹⁷ Most notable among these groups were Jews, concerned with mistreatment and rights to emigration for persecuted co-religionists in the Soviet Union, and Ukrainians and Baltic peoples, concerned with issues of territorial integrity, independence and the rights of nationalist dissidents.

¹⁸ See External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp’s clarifying statement in *Statements and Speeches*, No.73/17.

Beyond recognition of geopolitical realities, the Final Act and the whole CSCE process represented a sophisticated new understanding of regional security. It was appreciated by the Canadian delegation, as it was by most Western Europeans (but less so by the Nixon administration), that while NATO was required to deny the Soviet Union potential opportunities for direct aggression it was just as important to limit the motives for belligerent action by Moscow.¹⁹ Thus, among the most lasting achievements of Canada at the CSCE founding conference at Helsinki, as matters have turned out, was its contribution to formal and collective recognition of the liberal-internationalist thesis that permanent security in Europe must be based on the free flow of persons and ideas--that is, on respect for basic human rights and the dignity of individuals, and progressive extension of the mores and institutions of representative government.

That notion was, of course, a fundamental threat to the status quo within the Soviet Bloc. As such, it constituted a more effective diplomatic thrust than all the earlier empty talk of "liberation" of the "captive peoples" of the East.²⁰ Through formal introduction of this idea into an accord the Soviets badly wanted for other reasons, the Western powers successfully turned the focus of the CSCE process onto internal preconditions for security, and thereby pointed to Soviet and Eastern Bloc repression as a source of legitimate and persistent general concern. The Soviets, preoccupied with territorial questions and to a lesser extent with access to trade and technology, apparently never grasped this point--had they, it is safe to say, the Final Act almost certainly would never have been approved. As one keen observer has put it, the old guard in Moscow fundamentally "misjudged the real thrust of Helsinki: the destabilizing potential of Basket III for domestic politics."²¹ It is all the more ironic, therefore, that the reaction to the Final Act in the US ranged from lukewarm to indifferent, to distantly hostile.²²

That was not the case in Ottawa, where there was considerable enthusiasm for the human rights dimension of the CSCE right from the start.²³ Driven by electoral considerations related to "ethnic" voters, the Liberal government pushed its officials to emphasize the human contacts plank in the CSCE platform. By focusing on human rights issues, the most controversial of the entire process, this directive also served the DEA's interests in another area: reestablishing in the eyes of Western Europeans Canada's anti-Soviet credentials and loyalty to Western principles and the Western alliance. In addition, Canada would 'have its cake and eat it too' on yet another set of issues. While regretting that in the founding period the US administration was not as active as it might have been (something reinforced by the relative unimportance of military issues in the early years), this very fact enabled Canada to display independence from US policy, which played well to those supportive of a "Third Option" approach to Canadian foreign policy as a whole. This is not to deny that the Canadian delegation was also motivated by genuine principle, for it clearly was. But it remains noteworthy that those states most insistent of issues such as family reunification were either immigrant societies such as Canada, or divided nations such as Germany. Another factor determining Canadian actions and positions was the structure of the negotiations, which were not conducive to Canada's traditional role of mediator. Because nearly every issue divided states along East/West lines, there was little room for countries such as Canada--clearly in the Western camp--to play bridge-builder, and little need either, given the presence in the CSCE process of several highly capable NNA nations. With the United States playing an unusually restrained role even within the NATO group of states, Canada soon found that the arena wherein it could exercise the most influence and have

¹⁹ Bowker and Williams, *op.cit.*, p.609.

²⁰ On this point see Nolan (1993), *op.cit.*, pp.103-125.

²¹ Vojtech Mastny, "Introduction," in Mastny (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.10. Also see A.H. Robertson, "The Helsinki Agreement and Human Rights," in Donald Kommers and Gilbert Loescher (eds.), *Human Rights and American Foreign Policy* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1979), pp.130-144.

²² For instance, presidential candidates Ronald Reagan and Henry 'Scoop' Jackson both opposed the Final Act, and there was widespread editorial criticism of President Gerald Ford's decision to travel to Helsinki to sign the document. See Gerald Ford, *A Time To Heal* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp.300-302; and Raymond Garthoff, *Detente And Confrontation* (New York: Brookings Institution, 1985), pp.478-479.

²³ See the author's *Principled Diplomacy*, *op.cit.*; and Alexis Heraclides, *Security and Cooperation in Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), p. 21. Also, interviews, various national delegations to the CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, Vienna; and CSCE human dimension officers at ODIHR, Warsaw, April 1994.

the greatest impact was--for once--within the NATO caucus group. Seldom in Canadian diplomacy have so many interests coalesced with such serendipity as in the run-up to Helsinki 1975.

During three decades of confrontation before 1975 both sides in the Cold War had more consolidated their respective spheres of influence than challenged that of the other side. But agreement on the Final Act led to a significantly different phase in the Cold War, at least in its manifestation as a battle of ideas.²⁴ After Helsinki there was a historic shift in the intellectual/political competition between the Soviet Bloc and the Western democracies, with the CSCE process at the center of the change. Henceforth, anti-Soviet rhetoric emanating from the foreign ministries of most NATO countries was to be tempered with talk of “confidence and security building measures” and other legacies of détente. But at the same time, greater efforts were now made by Canada and other Western democracies--only joined, but then surpassed later in the 1970s and 1980s, by the US--to use human rights issues to challenge the fundamental legitimacy and erode the political viability of the Soviet Bloc and the Soviet Union itself. True, this erosion of Soviet foundations was to be accomplished largely through dangling the carrot of reduced military tension through gradual political accommodation and arms control, and by offering mutually beneficial trade and technology transfers. But the assault on the bases of Soviet power also depended in good measure on a new, and offensive, emphasis on human dimension issues, which after all went to the very heart of Soviet legitimacy. In short, the West’s tenacious insistence on linking Basket I initiatives on military security and Basket II economic ties with Basket III humanitarian principles constituted a calculated ideological and political offensive, that successfully used the CSCE process to assault the very foundations of the Soviet system.²⁵

For the first time in the history of East/West relations, under the Final Act there was formal agreement to set up information exchanges on human rights disputes, and allowance for diplomatic representations and comments on member states’ compliance with CSCE commitments. Thus, a second major accomplishment of the Canadians in the CSCE was to successfully insist, along with the NNA as a whole and with several other small powers, that the process not stop with the Final Act, but lead instead to a series of follow-up meetings. This continuation of dialogue, rather than the Final Act per se, is what culminated years later in the creation of a formal “human dimension mechanism” and in a multiplication of post-Cold War processes for monitoring compliance with CSCE standards. It is important to note that this development almost certainly was not directly foreseen by the DEA, which instead tended to regard the CSCE as primarily an arena of ideological battle with the Eastern Bloc. Yet, skeptics who saw the years of confrontation in the 1970s and 1980s as a time of stagnation still would be proved wrong: it is now clear that it is more accurate to see that time as one of drip-by-drip erosion of the Soviet idea and system by exposure to the weathering effects of the idea of universal human, political and minority rights. In this sense, the long-term view taken by the Canadian government and delegation, and shared with many other Western countries, proved both prescient and shrewd.

As noted above, this shift was largely unexpected and unforeseen at the time by Soviet negotiators. It also went mostly unnoticed, at first, by higher-level American representatives and policy-makers, who in the early-to-mid-1970s were alternately preoccupied with bilateral approaches to Moscow or distracted by prolonged internal disputes attendant on the Watergate crisis and withdrawal from Vietnam. It was, on the other hand, the explicit intention of Canadian, Swedish, West German and other European diplomats to move the CSCE process in this direction. It thus bears repeating that the degree to which the West concentrated on the pursuit of respect for human rights as a prerequisite for peace was more a product of the emergence of an independent and newly assertive West German foreign policy, and specifically Ostpolitik, than of early US leadership or initiative.²⁶ But it also needs to be said that the

²⁴ A sophisticated treatment of this theme is Pierre Hassner, “Europe: Old Conflicts, New Rules,” *Orbis*, Vol.17, No.3 (Fall 1973), pp.895-911.

²⁵ Nolan (1993), *op.cit.*, pp.127-153.

²⁶ See Wolfram Hanreider, “Maturing of a Relationship,” in Carl C. Hodge and Cathal J. Nolan (eds.), *Shepherd Of Democracy?: America and Germany in the 20th Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), pp.105-121; Bowker and Williams, *op.cit.*, pp.608-13; Michael J. Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany And The West* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp.142-54; and the text of the Final Act in Maresca, *op.cit.*, pp.226-283.

smaller democracies succeeded in presenting to the Soviets a strong front, that must have impressed Moscow about the depth of real concern for liberal values in the West. In the later 1970s and early 1980s the US would embrace this idea wholeheartedly--after all, it had even deeper roots in US political history and diplomacy than it did even in Western Europe. In fact, in the 1980s, US (and somewhat surprisingly, also Canadian) delegates at the CSCE would make the fiercest human dimension criticisms of the Soviets, going beyond what the most assertive Western Europeans then thought advisable.²⁷ Nevertheless, the cumulative effect of Western efforts was a build-up of terrific diplomatic and political pressure on the Soviet system, reinforced by "Helsinki Watch" groups that sprang up in all Eastern Bloc countries.

In the end, linkage of military restraints and economic benefits to human, political and minority rights, combined with internal demands for reform that made explicit reference to the Helsinki Accords, contributed significantly to the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc, empire and idea.²⁸ Between 1989 and 1991 Moscow would have to openly concede, in fact as well as rhetoric, that regional security henceforth would have to be based not on well-defined spheres of influence and domination by the superpowers, but on wide acceptance of core Western principles of human, economic and social rights, representative governance and respect for international law. The seeds of this ideological surrender were planted in the CSCE at the outset, by the insistence of the Western states--among the leaders of which was Canada--respect for human rights was an essential element of peaceful interstate relations. It was this linkage that led to the breakthrough of considering the domestic conduct of member states as an entirely proper subject of international comment and concern.

III. From Helsinki I to Helsinki II

Within a few short years the Soviets recognized the grave mistake they had made by accepting the inclusion of human contacts and human and minority rights provisions in the Helsinki Accords. Previously fierce critics of the CSCE also pounced on the opening that Basket III now offered, and began to use the multilateral process available to attack the fundamental character of the Soviet system. This underlying development was obscured, however, by nearly a decade of apparent official neglect of, and disinterest in, the CSCE process among many member states. Over the course of several "follow-up" meetings--from Belgrade in 1978 to Vienna in 1987--the CSCE faded from the center of diplomatic attention it had too briefly occupied. Inability to make further progress beyond the initial set of Accords threatened to become failure to proceed at all, as the CSCE seemed to stagnate year after year. Rather than a means of transcending East/West conflict, the CSCE in these years looked to become just another arena for waging ideological and propaganda warfare between the NATO and WTO blocs, with the concerns of NNA states relegated to the margins.²⁹ Defenders of continuing the effort--a core group that included Canada--pointed out that this was simply part of a more general pattern in East/West relations, as after 1978 the Cold War clearly left détente behind and moved into a newly harsh phase of political and then indirect military confrontation (in Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and Central America). Thus, at Belgrade, Canada's delegation was one of the most active, once again stressing issues of human rights and family reunification, even while using much harsher rhetoric than previously.³⁰ Of particular importance, Canada took a lead in pushing for the right of individuals to criticize their own government on human rights issues--an initiative directly related to the deteriorating situation of political and religious

²⁷ Heraclides, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

²⁸ This interpretation of the impact of the West's human rights campaign on the Soviet bloc's internal transformation is widely held among both NATO and former Soviet bloc states' Permanent Missions to the CSCE. It was stated most emphatically and persuasively to the author by delegates from the Polish and Slovak Permanent Missions to the CSCE, interviews, CSCE Conference Center, Hoffburg Palace, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994.

²⁹ This point is made forcefully in Kal J. Holsti, "Who Got What and How: The CSCE Negotiations in Retrospect," in Spencer (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.134-166.

³⁰ H. Gordon Skilling, "The Belgrade Follow-Up," in Spencer (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.283-307.

dissidents within the Soviet Bloc, and the attendant rise of ethnic and religious (particularly Jewish) lobbying for ameliorative action through the CSCE as well as bilaterally.

If the West was disappointed by the first follow-up meetings, the Soviets were increasingly chary of a process that offered little beyond what they had achieved already in 1975, but which held their system publicly accountable for the repressive domestic policies it depended on for survival. Things grew worse as during the Carter years and the first Reagan term the United States began to use the CSCE “reviews of implementation,” or follow-up, conferences more as a diplomatic cudgel than the shaping tool they were intended to be.³¹ Even West Germany, long a principal supporter of the process, saw the CSCE more as a bridgehead for its own foreign policy into the Eastern Bloc than a bridge spanning the gulf between the blocs.

To a degree, this mix of indifference and narrow self-interest by the larger players left caretaking of the CSCE process to the smaller Western states such as Belgium, Canada and the Netherlands, which were supported by some NNA member countries in this task.³² These nations, seeing the long-term importance of the CSCE to regional security arrangements, therefore provided needed diplomatic ballast when either the hostility or indifference of larger powers threatened to sink the whole project. They kept up this activity despite the fact that during this time extant CSCE commitments were not lived up to even as delegates spoke of negotiating and undertaking new ones. By the mid-1980s the Final Act looked to be leading to neither finality nor any action worth mentioning. Perhaps the best that can be said is that the CSCE from 1978-87 was a process in search of a purpose. However, some states, like Canada, found their purpose in just keeping the process going. The CSCE did not fade away or dissolve as it might have for the additional reasons that (1) the process provided a kind of creative inertia all its own; (2) it remained a remarkably low-cost operation and did not draw critical fire on the expenses front;³³ (3) participation was highly symbolic for most states; and (4) in any event, its very ineffectiveness rendered it mostly harmless.

In follow-up meetings in the early-to-mid-1980s, Canadian delegates grew increasingly acerbic in their criticisms of the lack of compliance of Soviet Bloc states with the human dimension commitments of the CSCE. In this Canada followed US and UK leads to be sure, but was joined as well by other small, Western democracies, such as the Netherlands.³⁴ Yet despite the harsh new polemics, Canada’s main purpose remained to keep the process alive through the enervating years of the early 1980s, which saw the marshal law crisis in Poland and a drawn-out succession struggle in the Soviet Union.

Talks concerning the human dimension made even less progress than the rest of the CSCE in these years. The low point was reached during the tenth anniversary year, at the Ottawa Meeting of Experts on Human Rights in 1985 (a meeting that had been proposed by Canada and co-sponsored by the US and Spain, at the Madrid follow-up).³⁵ Debate was acrimonious, with each side more intent on swapping accusations about abuse than creating or improving mechanisms for oversight and implementation of existing commitments. The Soviets were increasingly defensive: even aggressive statements by Soviet delegates citing abuses in Western countries were, at base, an effort to deflect attention and thereby contain damage the human rights issue was doing to Soviet prestige. The session concluded without an agreed upon final document. As the host, Canada put the best face on the meeting’s failure that it could, stressing that the process itself had at least survived. Some analysts have since

³¹ See Docs. 93-118 in Mastny (ed.), *op.cit.*; Department of State, *Current Policy*, No.492 (June 15, 1983); Doc. 157 in Secretary of State, *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents* (1983); and Nolan (1993), *op.cit.*, pp.155-177, *passim*.

³² Concerning Canada, it is also true that during this period its delegation gained a reputation for being one of the most anti-Soviet and assertively critical. That reflected more general trends in Canadian foreign policy after 1977, in which domestic groups brought new pressures to bear on questions of immigration and family reunification. In the 1980s it also reflected the tenor of a twice-retained Conservative government. Interviews, delegates from NATO and former east bloc Permanent Missions to the CSCE, Hoffburg Palace, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994. Also see H. Gordon Skilling, “The Belgrade Follow-up,” and “The Madrid Follow-up,” in Spencer (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.283-348; and Heraclides, *op.cit.*, pp.47-106, *passim*.

³³ Even after it expanded its infrastructure significantly in 1993 and early 1994, the total budget of the CSCE remained under US\$45 million. Interview, Hans Christian Cars, Director of Administration and Budget, CSCE Secretariat, Vienna, April 28, 1994.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.46.

³⁵ The conference ran from April 7-June 17, 1985.

maintained that in simply holding the Meeting of Experts the human dimension process was inched ahead a bit more, by virtue of establishing “beyond doubt, that criticism regarding another state’s human rights record could hardly be construed as interference.”³⁶ But this was cold comfort to most interested observers who were deeply concerned about the apparent lack of progress--and in some respects, even retrograde movement--on human rights after ten years of CSCE effort, multiple follow-up conferences, and thousands of hours of multilateral talks.

That the CSCE was more a barometer than a key cause of détente was revealed again by the events of 1987-91. The first real breakthrough of the procedural logjam came at the Vienna Follow-up Meeting in 1987. But that came on the heels of a series of dramatic reversals of Soviet policy and practice that had no direct relation to the CSCE: the beginning of the end of persecution of Soviet dissidents, signaled by the release of Andrei Sakharov and Yelena Bonner from internal exile; a general easing of emigration restrictions on Soviet Jews; and a genuinely new openness in Soviet foreign policy under Mikhail Gorbachev and, even more so, Eduard Shevardnadze.³⁷ It was in this broader context of sweeping change within the Eastern Bloc that the Western members of the CSCE first resisted, and then seriously entertained, a rather remarkable proposal made by the Soviets--that Moscow should play host to a conference dedicated to the human dimension, the very area of CSCE obligation that had so bedeviled East/West relations over a dozen years. Canada was at first highly averse to the idea of a Moscow conference, but eventually bent to its NATO allies’ wishes.

This was the great turning point in the history of the human dimension, and indeed the whole CSCE. The West had long seen the process as one of building bridgeheads for its own interests into the East. But now that the internal bankruptcy of the Soviet system was almost being openly admitted, the Soviet Bloc countries--frequently led by the Soviet Union itself--sought to use the CSCE as a bridge out of their self-imposed isolation and backwardness. In exchange, the West and some NNA nations insisted that the human dimension start to move away from standard-setting activity (few standards remained to be set by that time, in any case), toward ongoing review and open commentary on implementation of the human rights and contacts provisions of the Final Act, and supplementary agreements.³⁸ It was agreed, in early 1989, to press ahead with the “Moscow Proposal” to hold one meeting on the human dimension in that city, in the course of instituting an elaborate new “CHD (Conference on the Human Dimension) mechanism.”³⁹ This agreement took nearly two years to arrange, and was achieved only after the West extracted significant concessions about markedly improving the “on-the-ground” human rights situation in the Soviet Union. Still, the initiative would eventually lead to the genuine breakthrough of the “Moscow mechanism,” that permits voluntary requests for CSCE dispatch of human dimension experts/rapporteurs to trouble spots, but also sets up the possibility of compulsory rapporteurs should the situation be judged of sufficient gravity.⁴⁰ Also, more emphatic normative commitments were obtained in the late 1980s, amplifying the core CSCE idea that peace ultimately depended on respect for individual human as well as minority rights.

At this point, distinguishing between CSCE cause and effect becomes much more difficult. Clearly, internal liberalization among and within Soviet Bloc countries partly drove their new openness

³⁶ Heraclides, *op.cit.*, p.74.

³⁷ On the understudied but extremely important role played by Shevardnadze in reforming and radically redirecting Soviet foreign policy see Paul Marantz, “Eduard Shevardnadze and the End of the Soviet System: Necessity and Choice,” in Cathal J. Nolan (ed.), *Ethics And Statecraft: Essays on the Moral Dimension of International Affairs* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, forthcoming 1995). On the specifically human rights changes in Soviet policy, and the US reaction to these, see Robert Cullen, “Soviet Jewry,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.65, No.2 (Winter 1986-87), pp.252-266; and Nolan (1993), *op.cit.*, pp.162-177.

³⁸ Heraclides, *op.cit.*, pp.88-90.

³⁹ The CHD mechanism agreed at Vienna committed CSCE states to the following: (1) “to exchange information and to respond to requests for information and to representations” on matters and principles pertaining to human dimension commitments; (2) to hold meetings with other states when these were requested for oversight purposes; (3) to accept the wider communication of human dimension concerns to member states as a whole; and (4) to respond with follow-up information to any bilateral or multilateral inquiries. An early, concise study is Hannes Turner, “Human Rights in the Concluding Document of the Vienna Follow-Up Meeting of the CSCE of January 15, 1989,” *Human Rights Law Journal*, Vol.10, Nos.1-2 (1989), pp.257-269.

⁴⁰ Interviews, various NATO country Delegations to the CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, Hoffburg Palace, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994. A concise explanation of the operation of the “Moscow mechanism” is Heraclides, *op.cit.*, pp.164-167.

and relative flexibility over adopting additional commitments and oversight provisions. But to what degree was the reverse true? Many activists of that day, often found now in government or diplomatic service, remain convinced that the human rights pressure brought to bear at a critical time by the CSCE process and member states was crucially important. They cite the CSCE's role in focusing international attention on continuing human and minority rights abuses and problems, and in protecting and encouraging the activism of Eastern Bloc Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).⁴¹ Most remarkable, Eastern Bloc governments now began to use the CHD mechanism and other CSCE opportunities, including to comment on each others domestic conduct. Within the Soviet CSCE delegation and the Soviet Foreign Ministry itself, such mechanisms provided both tools and validation to reformers in their struggles with hold-outs from the ancien régime. No less an authority than Eduard Shevardnadze has since written that in these years the CSCE became a centerpiece in the process of evolving Soviet foreign policy and East/West relations.⁴²

With the extraordinary events of the latter half of 1989 underway, attention within the CSCE shifted further away from ethereal standard-setting toward consolidation of real reform in the East, and genuine normalization of relations between the two formerly hostile military blocs. Procedural obstacles that stood for years now toppled like so many dominoes. Of course, once again this reflected wider events in the European theater that laid the groundwork for the remarkable consensus achieved at the Paris Summit of the CSCE in 1990, at which the Cold War and NATO/WTO hostility were formally declared at an end.

The "Charter of Paris" issued at this meeting was the seminal paper in the evolution of the "new CSCE," as almost all its officials habitually refer to the organization and its development since 1990.⁴³ Notably, the Eastern European countries ceased to function as a cohesive bloc within the CSCE-- including on human and minority rights issues. Lesser but growing differences were revealed among NATO countries, especially between the EC on the one hand and Canada and the US on the other. In turn, the effective dissolution of East/West Bloc negotiating within the CSCE loosened the internal ties of the NNA group, which became less activist and spoke less coherently than previously. The formerly distinct negotiations over CBMs, economics, and the human dimension now came together in a way long spoken of, but never achieved. Five conferences in quick succession (Paris 1989; Bonn 1990; Copenhagen 1990; Paris, again, in 1990; and Moscow in 1991) confirmed impressive new arms control agreements, set up a range of CBMs in the military field, and strongly reasserted the CSCE doctrine that peace was linked to political (and economic) liberalism and basic rights. Yet even these remarkable conferences and agreements barely kept pace with changes in the wider world. The CSCE was acting more as a stenographer than an executive of change.

By the middle of 1991, there was no longer an operating Eastern Bloc within the CSCE. Effectively there was no more center faction either, as the NNA took increasingly diverse positions. Only the Western (NATO) states maintained something like their former bloc cohesiveness, but even that caucus group was more divided than hitherto, with Canada more often in tune with the US and critical of the rigidity of the EC states in holding to their hard-won common positions.⁴⁴ The era of fundamental ideological division within the CSCE was at an end. It had not been compromised or negotiated out of existence. Instead, and there is no other fair way to put it, the surrender of one side had been accepted, more or less graciously, by the other. The core ideas about the interrelatedness of peace, security, human rights and economic liberty put forward for decades by the Western democracies were explicitly adopted by the CSCE as its own.

⁴¹ For instance, this view was stated emphatically by delegates from the Polish and Slovak Permanent Missions to the CSCE, among others, and by members of the Canadian Mission to the CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, Vienna, and at DEA in Ottawa. Interviews, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994; and Ottawa, February 24, 1994.

⁴² Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991), p.128-129, and *passim*.

⁴³ Interview, Hans Christian Cars, CSCE Secretariat, Vienna, April 28, 1994.

⁴⁴ Interviews with various national Delegations to the CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994; and DEA officials, Ottawa, February 24-25, 1994.

It is not an exaggeration to say that in this way the human dimension of security now moved to the very center of regional negotiations. The tenor of debate changed accordingly. Where once harangues, charges and counter-charges dominated human dimension and other CSCE meetings, Western delegates now sometimes praised Eastern reformers and reforms, while heads of state or government from Poland and the Czech Republic stood at CSCE summits to condemn communism and praise democracy and the marketplace. Western and NNA delegates also made more careful distinctions among those formerly Eastern Bloc countries that were genuinely liberalizing (e.g., Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic) and those (such as Rumania and Bulgaria) where repressive elites had done little more than make a change of public name, party uniform and flag. Finally, former Eastern Bloc states began to invoke the CHD mechanism in a positive way (not just in counterattack, as previously), though for the most part they remained preoccupied with cementing internal reforms. That lone hold-out from the CSCE, Albania, now requested and was given permission to join, though only as an observer at first; and the Baltic States were admitted ahead of the break-up of the Soviet Union, with surprising ease and without objection from Moscow. Yet, for all that was accomplished in the years 1989-91, it remained true that the CSCE was for the most part behind the curve of reform. If it was going to become more than marginally relevant to the great changes taking place within individual member states and between East and West, everyone agreed, a major reform of the process itself was necessary. It was time to turn to real implementation: mainly unilaterally through internal reform, but aided by multilateral fact-finding, conciliation and good offices. And it was time, most said, to turn the process into an organization.

IV. From the CSCE to the OSCE

The CSCE underwent major reforms in 1992-94, culminating in what has become known within the organization as “Helsinki II.” Essentially, another series of reform conferences (Helsinki in 1992; Rome in 1993) accelerated and made official what was already underway as a form of creeping institutionalization: the CSCE ceased to be a conference in permanent session and became a formal institution. For the first time, truly permanent structures were put into place—a Secretariat in Vienna; an economic office in Prague; a High Commissioner for National Minorities based in the Hague; and a specifically human dimension and democratization branch, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw. With these structures set up by the end of 1993, the CSCE then took the final step and became the “Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe,” or OSCE, on January 1, 1995.⁴⁵

The EC/EU member countries were especially forceful in pushing for this broadened institutionalization. Not all CSCE members welcomed the development, however. Canada and the United States, in particular, during 1991-93 bent to institutionalization and budget increases only under the weight of their European allies’ persistence; they both would have preferred to see the CSCE retain the flexibility they believed went with looser structures.⁴⁶ But beyond the EC/EU’s penchant for bureaucratization of almost every issue it addresses collectively, these institutional adjustments were also a realistic response to the rise in importance of the human dimension within the overall structure of the OSCE in the post-Cold War period. During 1989-92, East/West military issues faded rapidly from prominence and have since been relegated to other, non-CSCE forums (most notably, NATO’s “Partnerships for Peace” program). Top Canadian officials, senior OSCE officials and Ambassadors and

⁴⁵ Interviews, Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, CSCE, Warsaw, April 18-21, 1994; interviews, delegates from various Delegations and Permanent Missions to the CSCE, Hoffburg Palace, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994.

⁴⁶ Interviews, Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, CSCE, Warsaw, April 18-21, 1994; interviews, delegates from various Permanent Missions to the CSCE, Hoffburg Palace, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994; interview, Keith M. Morrill, First Secretary, Canadian Delegation to the CSCE Forum for Security and Cooperation, Vienna, April 25, 1994. American objections to a change in the legal status of the CSCE partly reflected the peculiar constitutional reality that if full legal stature as an international organization was agreed, this would raise the question of Senate approval; interview, John Barrett, Head, Policy Planning Section, Political Affairs Division, NATO, Vancouver, March 28, 1994.

other delegates from a variety of member states therefore expect the human dimension to become the primary focus of the organization as the 1990s proceed.⁴⁷

Early evidence for the growing importance of the human dimension is mixed. The worst failure, of course, has been the calamity of the war in the former Yugoslavia, where the CSCE early on ran into a stone wall of resistance to its claim to an oversight role and to efforts at mediation and human rights monitoring. By mid-1993 the situation had deteriorated so badly that Serbia (Yugoslavia) was suspended from membership. In 1993-94, the question of universality arose. Greece invoked the “consensus rule,” by which the CSCE traditionally operated, to block full membership for Macedonia (to whose flag and name Athens has made petulant objection); Macedonia was thus given only observer status.

However, other evidence concerning the OSCE’s new role and effectiveness is highly encouraging. The record of the High Commissioner for National Minorities is a stellar one. His expertise in preventive diplomacy and good office missions has been called upon by numerous states involved in cross-border ethnic disputes, or which have been criticized for discriminatory practices (e.g., several countries concerning the Roma). There also have been hopeful developments concerning the Baltic States, including at least one request by Russia for ODIHR’s good offices and other assistance in resolving citizenship disputes pertaining to ethnic Russians left in the ‘near abroad’ after 1991.⁴⁸ OSCE observer and rapporteur missions are going to an increasing number of trouble spots--from Trans-Dniestra in Moldova to Latvia, and from Nagorno-Karabakh to Georgia.⁴⁹ Cooperative efforts are also underway with the United Nations and with NATO, in an effort to avoid costly duplication of effort and to share expertise. For example, the OSCE shares information with NATO’s North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), and has been invited to NACC seminars on regional security; it also cooperates with NATO and the EU through “sanctions assistance missions,” concerning enforcement of sanctions against Serbia. UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has publicly welcomed the OSCE’s willingness to take on human rights observer and other missions within its region; and the OSCE has observer status at the UN.⁵⁰ Even Japan, which presently has observer status, has expressed an interest in assisting OSCE efforts at conflict resolution and preventive diplomacy in the Balkans, and perhaps elsewhere.⁵¹

Of course, larger states always played a preeminent role in the CSCE--and this continues to be the case within the OSCE. The main players have always been the Soviet Union (Russia after December 25, 1991), the United States, and the European Community (European Union after January 1, 1994). But smaller states have played, and continue to play, a significant role as well. Within the Western camp mid-sized democracies have been among the more active delegations, and have at times been influential beyond their relative weight in other fora. Canada was among the most highly active from the start, engaging in the process well ahead of the US whose active interest in the CSCE developed toward the end of the 1970s. Canadian delegations were especially engaged-- and somewhat uncharacteristically, also confrontational--in the 1980s. They found allies among the Belgians and Dutch, prominent players within the Western camp in the 1970s and 1980s, and with the Swedes, who were active within the NNA group before joining the EU caucus in January 1995.

However, since the end of the Cold War these states, too, have realigned within the OSCE. Canada has been forced to accept a lower profile, as its foreign policy resources are cut back and the small Western states with which it once tacitly allied (e.g., Sweden) move into and coordinate policy as

⁴⁷ Interview, Vladimir P. Dronov, Diplomatic Adviser, Office of the Secretary General, CSCE Secretariat, Vienna, April 28, 1994; interview, Peter F. Walker, Ambassador of Canada to the CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, Vienna, April 27, 1994; interviews, delegates from various Permanent Missions to the CSCE, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994; interviews, DEA, Ottawa, February 24-25, 1994.

⁴⁸ Interviews, Jaques Eric Roussellier, Human Dimension Officer, Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, CSCE, Warsaw, April 18-21, 1994.

⁴⁹ CSCE, *Newsletter*, April 15, 1994 and October 7, 1994; and CSCE, *Summary of Meetings, Decisions, Missions and Documents Since the Charter of Paris 1990* (1994), p.21.

⁵⁰ Interview, Vladimir P. Dronov, Vienna, April 28, 1994.

⁵¹ CSCE, *Newsletter*, October 7, 1994.

part of the EU Bloc.⁵² Since the Maastricht Treaty ostensibly commands a common EU foreign and defense policy, delegations from smaller Western European democracies have increasingly submerged public differences within an EU front dominated by the larger EU countries. Furthermore, the US also now acts increasingly separately, as a great power with distinct bilateral relationships and interests beyond the OSCE.⁵³ On the other hand, it is promising that the newly independent nations of Eastern Europe (especially Poland), and some of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) nations have turned to the OSCE as a principal support for their wider political and foreign policy interests vis-à-vis Russia. Russia itself has given multiple indications that it wants to develop the OSCE as the main European political and diplomatic body. This raises a host of opportunities in the years ahead--as well as some rather obvious pitfalls.

In spite of the hubris of its claim to seek security “from Vancouver to Vladivostok,” the OSCE appears to know its limits. Thus, it has not tried to bludgeon miscreant states with imposed legal remedies that would most likely be rejected and lead to sustained confrontation. Instead, it has generally moved only when a political consensus has been reached on a given issue. To critics, this appears paralytic. But it probably should be seen as far-sighted and prudent, however glacial it is at times. Moreover, the OSCE has wisely resisted efforts by some non-participating Mediterranean states to draw it into extra-regional issues; and it has rejected a secretive approach by “Northeast Asian countries,” as one official put it to the author, for assistance on resolving a longstanding peninsular disagreement. It has also managed to stay out of the unfolding Middle East peace process, despite the interest of some involved countries to draw it in.⁵⁴

In short, the OSCE is moving toward a definition of its role in regional security that looks first to the human dimension as a form of preventive diplomacy at its most fundamental level, rather than to a direct role in conflict management. It already has in place a variety of formal and informal “mechanisms” that can work well, if they are both seen and used by member states in non-adversarial roles. Human dimension issues now permeate virtually all that the OSCE does or considers. This is a significant accomplishment for all countries involved, and one for which Canada may fairly lay claim to a share of the credit.

V. Canada's Role Within the OSCE

On a different scale, other changes have come about that will affect Canada's role within the OSCE as it evolves into the 21st century. First, the issue of national minorities is likely to become even more prominent than hitherto, as the full lessons of the failure in the former Yugoslavia become evident. It is in this area that OSCE preventive diplomacy may bring the most important results. But it is this very same area of human dimension conflict that is fraught with grave possibilities for disaster and widespread disillusionment. Canada will have to remain on guard against pessimistic tendencies--its own and those of other member states--so that the occasional failure like that in Bosnia does not turn into a larger disaster of retreat from cooperative security as a guide to policy toward the region.

Second, maintaining attention on the OSCE will be difficult for another reason, one nearly unique to Canada and the US. These two nations no longer have the same domestic political incentives to pay attention to questions of individual dissidents and political and civil rights. In both countries the old CSCE constituencies have faded in importance. Ukrainians, Poles, Baltic populations and other immigrant groups which formed important client and pressure groups have, to put it bluntly, already won

⁵² Some US officials are critical of Canada for this shift, which they also see reflected in a new Canadian attitude of overly easy conciliation when resistance is met on issues such as implementation review. Interviews, Washington D.C., February 1994; and Vienna, April 1994.

⁵³ Interviews, delegates from the Canadian and US Missions, and the Dutch and Polish Permanent Missions to the CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994; interviews, officials of the CSCE Secretariat, Vienna, April 22-May 1, 1994.

⁵⁴ Interview with Vladimir P. Dronov, Vienna, April 28, 1994.

most of what they sought from the CSCE process.⁵⁵ In some cases they have even moved to the other side, in the sense of now trying to shield newly independent national governments from criticism on human rights grounds (such as denial of political rights to ethnic Russians in parts of the 'near abroad' or the rise of anti-Semitism in Poland and Ukraine).

Third, as the OSCE increasingly undertakes election-monitoring missions as part of its promotion of democratic institutions, Canada needs to reevaluate its practice of sending partly or sometimes badly trained Elections Canada personnel abroad on such missions. Canada has not always met specific ODIHR or other OSCE requests for election assistance;⁵⁶ instead it has responded with personnel and other contributions that appear to have more to do with bureaucratic perks and pecking orders than with the country's real foreign policy interests.

With these considerations in mind, it is a fair conclusion that Canada ought to lend what force it can to steering the OSCE towards concentrating on encouraging and sustaining the building of new democracies and more tolerant and law-respecting societies throughout the Eurasian region. The OSCE may have an additional role to play in the economic transformation of former command economies--it is somewhat drawn by the legacy of Basket II issues in this direction. But it can also be argued that the OSCE should instead emphasize political and minority rights as a means of preventive diplomacy, leaving economic arrangements where they will be decided anyway by national governments in their dealings with the marketplace and international lending agencies. Thus, it probably would be best for both parties were Canada to resist the temptation to view the OSCE as offering an entre to the developed markets of Western Europe and the emerging markets of the East and the CIS. The OSCE is at its best, and Canada is at its best within the OSCE, when both are doing normative work, that is, when Canada joins coalitions of like-minded member states and seeks to build wider and deeper acceptance of shared norms--most notably respect for the rule of law and representative institutions, and for human and minority rights. Like the OSCE itself, Canada is most effective when it looks to build a consensus around preventing new conflicts from breaking out, than when it inserts itself into ongoing conflicts.

The OSCE has so far survived the end of the Cold War, the break-up of the Soviet Union and empire, and a massive expansion of its membership and demands on its attention and resources. Canada has played a not insignificant role in all of that. If it continues to move prudently and slowly, in face of the rush of events, Canada can help turn the OSCE into a principal vehicle for constructing European security on the basis of shared respect for human rights, representative government, and respect for international legal and normative commitments.

⁵⁵ Interview with Keith Morrill, First Secretary, Canadian Delegation CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, Vienna, April 25, 1994.

⁵⁶ Interviews, Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, CSCE, Warsaw, April 18-21, 1994.