

Paving the Way to Peace in Europe. Pan-European Diplomacy in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1972-1990

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Abstract: *CSCE was an unprecedented platform for Pan-European diplomacy, which has received relatively little scholarly attention to date, and which will be central to this article. Although monographs, articles and chapters on the CSCE abound, the vast majority of them focus on the way in which the emphasis on human rights in the Helsinki Final Act proved instrumental in the achievements of Eastern European dissidents. This article aims to show that the CSCE paid an important contribution to 'perforating the Iron Curtain' and paving the way to peace in Europe in more ways than has generally been understood. The mere practice of multilateral diplomacy in itself seemed to contribute to modifying the course of the Cold War. The Soviet participants, too, considered the CSCE a 'unique school of multilateral diplomacy', likening its impact to the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15 or the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The fact that all European countries (except Albania), Canada and the US convened was, indeed, unprecedented. That by itself constituted a qualitative change in the Cold War, which was hugely important to the Soviet participants. Although it is hardly mentioned in the historiography, the Soviets main priority was not so much the recognition of its influence sphere in Eastern Europe as its sense of belonging to Europe as a whole. The 'Pan-European Process' became the Soviet synonym for the CSCE from its very start, and the Kremlin was prepared to huge concessions in order to continue participating in it.*

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