

‘Enemies of Détente’? Eastern European Strategies in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Belgrade and Madrid, 1977-1983

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***Abstract:** This article will focus on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) from an Eastern European perspective, while concentrating on the CSCE at times of crisis during the meetings in Belgrade and Madrid (1977-83) rather than during détente in the first half of the 1970s. By doing so, we will also shift the focus from human rights – a Western priority – to European security in the traditional sense – an Eastern European preoccupation, and we will gauge what, if anything, the Warsaw Pact countries contributed to the latter. Apart from restoring the Eastern European perspective to a historiography that has so far been dominated by a Western bias, this article also aims to shed a new light on the mechanism of the CSCE at large, by assessing to what extent the Warsaw Pact participants, too, endeavoured to keep this unique Pan-European process going even throughout the tensest periods of the Cold War. Covering the period from the beginning of the Belgrade conference in 1977 up to the end of the Madrid conference in 1983 in depth, this article therefore attempts to examine the Eastern European role in the CSCE process, at a period of crises, and specifically analyses why and how the Warsaw Pact participants stayed on board of the process. At the same time, this article pays ample attention to historical context, since the CSCE operated by no means in a bubble. It also assesses whether the Eastern European emphasis on security contributed to a Cold War thaw, albeit in a very different manner than the Western emphasis on human rights. The Eastern European participants perceived their Western counterparts as the ‘enemies of détente’ and themselves as its facilitators, and it is worthwhile to evaluate the process from the Eastern European perspective to see what led them to believe this. The article concludes that the Eastern European contribution to the CSCE indeed also paved the way to the end of the Cold War. The dual emphasis on human rights on the one hand and disarmament on the other, which was confirmed in the concluding document of the final document in Madrid, seemed to be a winning formula in terms of peacefully concluding the Cold War. Whereas the Western emphasis on the human dimension empowered the Eastern European citizens to undermine their regimes, the Eastern European focus on military détente and disarmament facilitated progress in arms control, which was all the more remarkable after both SALT II and the MBFR negotiations were frustrated in 1979 and 1980. Using the CSCE as a multilateral framework to*

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institutionalise European security through proposals on disarmament, the Eastern European participants accordingly also contributed to a safer Europe. Moreover, the multilateral institutionalisation of European security through the CSCE adumbrated the end of the Cold War, by transcending the adversarial bipolarity.

Keywords: détente, European Security, Cold War, Eastern Europe, multilateralism, Pan-European Process.
