

**WOLFGANG ZELLNER**

CORE/IFSH | CENTRE FOR OSCE RESEARCH OF THE  
INSTITUTE FOR PEACE RESEARCH AND SECURITY  
POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG (IFSH)

# **USING THE OSCE MORE EFFECTIVELY – IDEAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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*„Der Deutsche Bundestag fordert die Bundesregierung [...] auf: [...] 3. sich gegenüber den anderen Teilnehmerstaaten für ein OSZE-Gipfeltreffen 2025 zum 50. Jahrestag – als Perspektive für die Revitalisierung und Weiterentwicklung der europäischen Friedensordnung und Sicherheitsarchitektur – einzusetzen, um die in Helsinki und Paris angelegte Prinzipien- und Wertebasis zu stärken;“*

(Deutscher Bundestag, 19. Wahlperiode, Antrag der Fraktionen CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP und BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN, 45 Jahre Schlussakte von Helsinki, 30 Jahre Charta von Paris – die Organisation für Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa für künftige Aufgaben stärken, Drucksache 19/24390, 17.11.2020, angenommen am 20.11.2020)

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The intention of the present report is to show how the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) can be used more effectively to address the key tasks of European security: reducing emerging military risks through arms control; preventing and managing sub-regional conflicts; regulating overlapping spheres of economic integration; and dealing with the erosion of norms and a proliferation of authoritarian regimes.

The last three decades have been characterized by rapid and accelerating political change and a transition from a bipolar system, via a brief unilateral period, to a highly unstable multilateral constellation that is in permanent flux. The hope for global and regional cooperation that emerged after 1990 has given way to sharp competition and conflict.

The most important domestic sources of conflict are rising nationalism, populism, and authoritarian regimes of all kinds that pursue narrow self-interests and externalize their domestic conflicts. The key international drivers of conflict are geopolitical rivalries and the hegemonic shift between the US and China. In the OSCE area, it is important that Russia and Turkey follow their own agendas, including by military means.

Altogether, these developments lead to greater turbulence in the international system, to increased uncertainty, and to violent conflicts that might otherwise have been contained earlier.

The OSCE reflects these overall trends. The 1990 Charter of Paris was a “high-water mark of political consensus in and on Europe” (Hill 2020a). Three decades on, however, the situation in Europe is increasingly characterized by open conflict and war: Georgia in 2008; Eastern Ukraine since 2014; Nagorno-Karabakh in 2016, and again in 2020. The thresholds for using military force are decreasing. Against this background, it is high time to remobilize the OSCE and to connect it more closely with the core business of conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding. This will only be possible if the Organization receives substantially more political attention and resources from the relevant states. The example of Ukraine shows that this is possible. The following is therefore recommended:

- | the brokering of a new accord among OSCE states on pragmatic cooperation, to be adopted at a summit meeting in 2025 (Helsinki 2025);
- | the convening of a Group of Friends of the OSCE to drive this process; and
- | the securing of a higher level of political attention for the OSCE by engaging capitals and investing resources.

## Key Tasks and Priority Issues

### TOWARDS A NEW HELSINKI 2025 CONSENSUS

The OSCE must choose: either it can continue to muddle through, or it can try to reach a new accord on pragmatic cooperation among participating States with the following key elements:

- | ending the armed confrontation in Eastern Ukraine;
- | discussion of the nexus between the right of free choice of alliance and taking into account legitimate security concerns of other participating States;
- | dialogue between Russia, the European Union (EU) and interested states on the compatibility of EU association with membership of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU);
- | discussion among NATO states and Russia on conventional arms control, including confidence- and security-building measures (CSBM) for the prevention of military accidents in the Baltic and Black Sea regions; and
- | reaching at least a procedural accord on dealing with the human dimension (HD).

Optimally, such consensus should be reached at an OSCE summit in 2025. The recommendations in the following sections have been selected in line with this approach.

### INITIATING A DIALOGUE ON PRINCIPLES AND NORMS

The OSCE is a firmly norm-based institution, but a growing number of participating States have grossly violated such norms. As the OSCE cannot abandon or relativize its normative foundations without undermining its *raison d'être*, it must address the challenge of conducting a dialogue on principles and norms without compromising them in any way. It is recommended that the OSCE Chair (or if this is not possible, a coalition of willing states) conduct track 1.5 discussions among Russian, Western and other scholars and officials on the meaning and interpretation of basic OSCE principles and commitments.

### SECURITY DIALOGUE AND ARMS CONTROL

The short-term aim is to stop the erosion of arms control regimes.

As a matter of urgent action, it is recommended that creative legal constructions be sought to keep the US on board with the Open Skies Treaty, below the threshold of re-entering the Treaty.

From a short-term perspective, it is recommended that discussions in both NATO and the OSCE be focused on developing a NATO–Russia Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities Agreement.

From a mid-term perspective, it is recommended that new negotiations be initiated on conventional arms control, including CSBM, particularly with regard to the Baltic and Black Sea regions.

The long-term goal is to stabilize arms control regimes and to shift the focus to changing needs.

### CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

Cases of violent conflict in the OSCE area are increasing, and the thresholds for using violence are decreasing. The OSCE should therefore review the lessons learned from using its toolbox for conflict prevention and management.

To this end, a more systematic approach to structural conflict prevention ought to be elaborated, including all working areas in the OSCE's three dimensions, as well as its institutions and structures.

An assessment of the OSCE's capacity to conduct quasi-peacekeeping operations by hardening missions, using sophisticated technologies and deploying joint missions with other international organizations (IOs), particularly the United Nations (UN), ought to be carried out.

A comprehensive overall assessment of what has worked and what has not worked in the system of OSCE field operations ought to be conducted.

The option of lighter assistance missions and centres of excellence ought also to be considered.

### PREVENTING ECONOMIC CONFLICT, FOSTERING CONNECTIVITY AND INTEGRATION

The establishment of a trilateral format involving the OSCE, the EAEU and the EU for discussions on economic confidence-building measures ought to be considered.

Contact and discussion between the EU, the EAEU and interested states in the OSCE region on the mutual compatibility of these integration schemes ought to be fostered.

### DEFENDING AND DEVELOPING THE OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION (HD) ACQUIS

A purely defensive stance on the HD lacks perspective. Rather, the OSCE should pursue an approach that includes three elements:

- | rationalizing procedural debates on HD events, particularly by reforming the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) with an agreement on a fixed date and standard agenda, shortening the event to five to seven days, and agreeing on the modalities of non-governmental organizations (NGO) access;
- | addressing disputed issues, such as the freedom of the media; and
- | addressing new issues, such as the conduct of free elections under new social, political and technological conditions, and employing youth-related initiatives.

## Approaches, Competencies and Working Formats

The OSCE is a highly informal organization. Its political procedures are flexible rather than formally fixed. Therefore, the issue of political approaches and working formats is deserving of attention. The most salient issue is ensuring that greater political attention is given to the OSCE.

It is recommended that a “Group of Friends of the OSCE” be established. This Group would be committed to striving for a new Helsinki 2025 agenda, consulting in Vienna and among capitals, initiating discussions on key issues and strengthening the OSCE through voluntary contributions and seconded staff.

The “Group of Friends of the OSCE” ought to agree on a support package for the new Secretary General (SG), including appointing seconded staff to key posts, maintaining the Secretariat’s Strategic Policy Support Unit and supporting the SG’s “Security Days”.

Consensus ought to be sought among foreign ministers on the necessity of adopting the Unified Budget on time.

Ways of entering into multi-year planning and a biannual budget on the basis of informal consultations among the Chair and the SG ought to be considered.

Innovative consultation formats ought to be introduced, and informal ties ought to be strengthened.

The visibility of the OSCE ought to be increased via, *inter alia*, the high-level involvement of representatives of participating States and attractive outreach events.

## Cooperation with Other International Organizations and OSCE Partner States

The OSCE cooperates with a broad range of other IOs. Some are comparable in terms of mandate and size; others are much larger and have their own legal personality. A recurring problem for the OSCE is a lack of liaison offices. Therefore, it is recommended:

- I that an alternative model be used for co-locating OSCE liaison officers at the representations of the Chairmanship in Brussels, Geneva and New York; and
- I that a forum be established to bring together governments, companies and other relevant organizations from the entire Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space, including China, to discuss opportunities for and obstacles to the development of better business relations between Europe, North America and Asia.

## UNITED NATIONS

On 10 December 2019, the OSCE and the UN signed a joint statement on cooperation and coordination. It is recommended that efforts be made to implement the practical steps contained in point 7 of the Joint Statement, which include having regular high-level engagements, strengthening existing inter-agency coordination and enhancing dialogue at the international, the national, and the regional level.



### EUROPEAN UNION

The exchange of letters on EU/OSCE cooperation between EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and OSCE SG Thomas Greminger on 22 June 2018 marked a new era in working relations between these two organizations. It is recommended:

- I that the improved access to EU funds be used to turn away from micro projects in favour of larger regional multi-year programmes; and
- I that the EU be engaged more systematically in places where both the OSCE and the Council of Europe are present in the field.

### COUNCIL OF EUROPE (COE)

With parallel mandates and a largely overlapping membership, the CoE and the OSCE are natural partners. Consequently, a dense network of cooperation exists between the two bodies, although cooperation is not without its difficulties. It is recommended:

- I that the work of the Co-ordination Group be strengthened by adding an informal element that makes it possible to deal with all issue areas;
- I that the “2+2” meetings be revived at the level of senior officials for specifying common working topics and practical ways to proceed; and
- I that cooperation between the CoE and the OSCE be strengthened in places where both organizations run field presences, linking this to coordination with the EU.

### ASIAN AND MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION

Both the Asian and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation are highly diverse, and it is difficult to find topics that find consensus among them. It is recommended:

- I that a cooperation centre be established with the Mediterranean Partners in Italy or Malta to deal with economic, ecological and migration issues and that seed funding be provided by a group of willing states;
- I that a green hydrogen dialogue be conducted among OSCE and Partner States; and
- I that a regular dialogue be held between regional security organizations in Europe and Asia such as the OSCE, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) on, *inter alia*, addressing global security challenges and security- and confidence-building measures, including soft security approaches such as economic connectivity.

## COOPERATION WITH CHINA

Although it is widely accepted that some form of cooperation between the OSCE and China may be desirable, granting OSCE partner status to China is almost impossible. Thus, one should look for cooperation options below the level of partner status. It is recommended:

- | that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) be used as a bridge to China;
- | that the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA) be made use of, particularly for discussing arms control/CSBM issues with China; and
- | that joint OSCE/UN events or Chairmanship events be used to invite China as a participant and/or guest.

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Like other states, Germany has traditionally used the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as a multilateral instrument for fostering European security. The intention of the present report is to present the Federal Foreign Office with suggestions for how the OSCE might be used more effectively in addressing the key tasks of European security:

- | reducing military risks through arms control, including confidence- and security-building measures (CSBM);
- | preventing and managing sub-regional conflicts;
- | regulating overlapping spheres of economic integration leading to conflict; and
- | dealing with the erosion of fundamental principles and norms and a proliferation of authoritarian regimes.

This brief report has three limitations:

First, it cannot address all of the various proposals that have been made, particularly on well-known subjects such as strengthening the role of the Secretary General (SG). Rather, it focuses on innovative and pragmatic recommendations that fit into the overall strategy outlined in Section 2.1. Nevertheless, the reader will find references to literature covering standard recommendations.

Second, the recommendations can only be sketched in brief. A complex project such as reforming the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) cannot be given the full treatment it deserves. Again, more detailed papers can be found in the references.

Third, the following recommendations are not evenly distributed among working areas and tasks, reflecting the uneven development of the thinking on the different issues. Some recommendations concern small procedural changes, while others have a strategic dimension. Nevertheless, the focus is always on concrete proposals to be implemented. There are no recommendations on current business, i.e. on Nagorno-Karabakh or Ukraine. The report contains recommendations that require Permanent Council (PC) decisions and others that can be implemented by the Chair, the SG or even individual Permanent Representatives. Some recommendations are easier than others when it comes to implementation.

Among the recommendations of this report, of key relevance are the recommendations to:

- | broker a new accord among OSCE states on pragmatic cooperation, to be adopted at a summit meeting in 2025 (Helsinki 2025);
- | convene a Group of Friends of the OSCE to drive this process; and
- | secure a higher degree of political attention for the OSCE by engaging capitals and investing resources.

Section 1 of the report analyses general political developments and their impact on the functioning of the OSCE. Section 2 deals with the key tasks of the Organization in its three dimensions, and Section 3 focuses on working formats and modalities. Finally, Section 4 addresses cooperation with other international organizations (IOs) and Partner States. This is followed by brief conclusions.

### 1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

The OSCE is a weakly institutionalized IO that is almost completely owned by its participating States. Thus, the Organization is largely a reflection of the quality of the relations among participating States.

The period from 1990 to 2020, although short in historical terms, has been characterized by quick and accelerating political change and a transition from a bipolar system, via a brief unilateral period, to a highly unstable multilateral constellation that is in permanent flux. The hopes for global and regional cooperation that emerged after 1990 have given way to sharp competition and conflict.

The most important domestic sources of conflict are rising nationalism, populism, and authoritarian regimes of all kinds that pursue narrow self-interests and externalize their domestic conflicts. A new phenomenon is the degradation of compliance with fundamental norms – such as in the field of the rule of law – within “Western” states. The key sources of international conflict are geopolitical confrontation and the hegemonic shift between the US and China. While this process is multi-level and asymmetrical, for our purposes it is enough to note that the US, under President Trump, gave up many important global and regional governance functions and that other players, including the European Union and China, have not (yet) been able to fill this gap. For the OSCE area, it is important that Russia and Turkey follow their own agendas, including by military means. Moreover, there are deepening tensions between OSCE states and states outside the OSCE area, particularly in the Middle East.

This growing focus on self-assertion and competition has resulted in:

- | sanctions and economic wars for high-tech superiority;
- | peripheral military wars to strengthen zones of influence; and
- | a lack of cooperation on common problems from climate change to COVID-19.

These developments have been accompanied by a general weakening of multilateral structures, from IOs (e.g. the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization) to different kinds of regimes, particularly in the field of arms control.

Altogether, these developments have led to greater turbulence in the international system, to increased uncertainty, and to violent conflicts that might otherwise have been contained earlier (Nagorno-Karabakh).

It is important to note that this problem–solution gap can only be filled if more states take on greater responsibility, pool their resources and invest substantially more in providing international governance – in political, financial, and staffing terms. This is particularly true of the OSCE, which is institutionally weak and depends on the input of its participating States.

## 1.1 The Development of the CSCE/OSCE since 1990

The OSCE is part of these developments and a reflection of their overall trends. The 1990 Charter of Paris was a “high-water mark of political consensus in and on Europe” (Hill 2020a). Thereafter, we can roughly distinguish three periods:

**Limited cooperation.** The period until 1999 was characterized by limited cooperation among the major OSCE participating States in and through the OSCE, together with other IOs. Differences were growing, but cooperation remained possible in both regional terms – in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and even on Russian territory (Chechnya) – and thematic terms, particularly on crisis management and arms control. The last largely successful major cooperation event was the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit meeting, which was overshadowed from the start by NATO’s enlargement and the dissent on Kosovo.

**Marginalization.** From 2000 to 2013, deepening contradictions and tensions led to the stagnation of the OSCE and its activities. A series of “reform” efforts (2005–2006) largely failed, and the Medvedev plan for a European Security Treaty, presented in Berlin in June 2008, was widely disregarded by Western states. An early warning, the brief war in Georgia in 2008 was not taken sufficiently seriously. At the last major cooperation attempt in this period – the 2010 Astana Summit meeting – states were unable to achieve sustainable success.

**Further marginalization and deadlock.** With the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in and around Ukraine, the period from 2014 onwards has seen open conflict and limited warfare. States rely more on military deterrence than on cooperative security, and relevant arms control regimes have collapsed or been sidelined. States are increasingly disengaging from multilateral efforts, the OSCE has been further marginalized, and no major decisions can be made in Vienna. Nevertheless, the OSCE has been the forum of choice for crisis management in Ukraine, as other IOs are too close to the conflict. In addition, the OSCE has shown that it can at least contain such a conflict provided major states task it with doing so.

As a supporter of proactive OSCE policies, Germany’s objective should be to stop and reverse these downward trends, to draw the OSCE closer to addressing the key tasks of European security policy, and to provide the Organization with the political attention and resources that are necessary for achieving this end.

## 1.2 Consequences for the Functioning of the OSCE

Changes to the political environment have entailed profound consequences for the functioning of the OSCE. Three areas are of prime importance: the marginalization of the Organization; the lack of consensus among the participating States and weakening compliance with fundamental norms of the organization; and the OSCE's weak institutional and operational structures.

### 1.2.1 LITTLE POLITICAL ATTENTION TO THE OSCE

The OSCE has suffered as a result of its marginalization in several respects. First, most foreign ministers and their staff do not concern themselves with the OSCE or make use of it. There are certain exceptions in terms of states (Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and others) and issues (currently, the war in Eastern Ukraine) but the overall trend is marginalization. Second, this has resulted in weak political leadership from most capitals, which has in turn resulted in the Vienna delegations' being largely concerned with themselves. Most Chairmanships (with states commonly appointing two or three officials to run OSCE business) are structurally overwhelmed and can only perform their tasks with significant support from the Secretariat. Even the professional quality of a number of Permanent Representatives to the OSCE has decreased over the long term.

The low level of political investment in the OSCE by most states has led to an agenda that is overburdened by a large number of peripheral items addressed by small conferences and micro projects and that by contrast only contains a limited number of relevant issues: currently Ukraine, the Structured Dialogue (SD) and election monitoring.

This has led to the neglect of key issues such as arms control, conflict prevention and management, competing spheres of economic integration, and the erosion of the OSCE's value base. Neglect of key issues contributes to the low visibility of the Organization. Even top activities such as the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM, the largest civilian mission in Europe) and the HDIM (Europe's largest human rights event) rarely make it into the international media.

Nevertheless: the Organization remains essential as an inclusive platform and an actor in settings where other IOs cannot act. Or, in the words of a former Russian Permanent Representative: "Even if the OSCE does break apart [...] [i]t will have to be replaced with another structure, which is likely very similar to it" (Kelin 2013: 90).

### 1.2.2 LACK OF CONSENSUS AND EROSION OF COMPLIANCE WITH NORMS

Contradictory and mutually exclusive positions among major participating States have resulted in lack of consensus, which has in turn led to a near breakdown of decision-making, with some exceptions. This reflects a serious undermining of shared values and obligations that is no longer limited to "Eastern" countries. Authoritarian regimes of all kinds, as well as tendencies in established democracies, engage in open and hidden norm contestation and norm violation, making the OSCE's work in all its dimensions much more difficult. Since the 2002 Porto Ministerial Council (MC) meeting, no political declarations have been approved. Routine decisions, i.e. on the

Unified Budget or the dates and agenda of OSCE routine events (such as the HDIM), have been taken hostage, often delayed by months. All in all, few substantial decisions have been made over the past few years. With that said, it has been comparatively easy to adopt decisions on the extension of the SMM mandate and budget. This shows that relevant decisions can be made if major participating States' positions converge.

Decision-making is additionally complicated by quarrels among smaller participating States or between these States and the Organization. Major participating States are now significantly less able to contain such conflicts than they have been in the past. In some cases, the personal interests of certain Permanent Representatives would seem to play a role (see Zannier 2018: 43), thanks to a lack of attention from capitals.

Nevertheless: the OSCE continues to exhibit a considerable convening power and agenda-setting capacity, political resources that are far from having been exhausted.

### 1.2.3 WEAK INSTITUTIONAL AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES

Since the early days of its initial institutionalization by the 1990 Charter of Paris, the OSCE has inherited a record of deliberately fabricated institutional weakness that is currently being worsened by declining support for multilateral institutions. The clearest example in this regard is the position of the OSCE SG, which is not comparable to the SGs of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the United Nations (UN). The SG's mandate is limited to being a representative of the Chairperson-in-Office and the Organization's chief administrative officer. The OSCE SG has historically been able to extend his/her narrow political room for manoeuvre by exploiting successive Chairs' weaknesses, using administrative procedures as political tools and playing a more significant role in dealing with the conflict cycle (OSCE 2011, MC.DEC/3/11).

The policy of zero nominal growth when it comes to the OSCE Unified Budget, now implemented for over a decade, has effectively narrowed the room for manoeuvre with regard to almost all OSCE activities, apart from Ukraine/the SMM. This has been exacerbated by the fact that even operational issues are largely managed by the Delegations and the Chair. Examples include the incoming Chair's role in chairing the Advisory Committee for Management and Finance (ACMF) and the Chair's appointment of Heads of Missions (HOM).

Nevertheless: the OSCE has shown a high degree of flexibility in developing and deploying innovative field operations (FOPS), as the example of the SMM shows.

## 2 KEY TASKS AND PRIORITY ISSUES

Before addressing the key tasks in further detail, the overall strategic orientation of the OSCE must be clarified. The main objective is to make better use of the OSCE in addressing key European security challenges. To this end, it is necessary to pursue an agreement among the OSCE states on pragmatic cooperation, to be adopted at a 2025 summit meeting (2.1), to initiate dialogue on principles and norms (2.2), to contain military risks through arms control, including CSBM (2.3), to prevent and manage sub-regional conflicts (2.4), to foster economic connectivity and integration (2.5), and to defend the commitments of the human dimension (2.6).

To achieve these aims, it is necessary to define the relevant topics, to mobilize political and societal actors, and to frame approaches to better utilizing the OSCE. This report offers an (incomplete) menu to this end.

### 2.1 Towards a New Helsinki 2025 Consensus

The OSCE must choose: either it can continue to muddle through or it can attempt to conceive a more forward-looking strategy. Such an approach has been suggested by Heiner Hänggi of Switzerland:

“The idea of creating an inclusive and representative Group of Friends of the OSCE is not a new one, but one that could be further explored in this context. Such a group could review past experience and identify relevant lessons for the current situation, not [...] least in view [of the] 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2025.” (Hänggi 2020: 3)

Andrei Zagorski of Russia follows the same line of thinking, observing that the “most ambitious way of moving to a new consensus within the OSCE would be to anticipate holding a summit or at least a senior level meeting in 2025” (Zagorski 2020: 4). In an earlier publication, he proposed key points for a longer-term dialogue of this sort:

- I joint action for resolving the armed confrontation in Eastern Ukraine;
- I discussion of the nexus between the right to exercise free choice of alliance and taking into account the legitimate security concerns of other participating States;
- I dialogue between Russia, the European Union (EU) and interested states on the compatibility of EU association with membership of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU); and
- I discussion among NATO states and Russia on additional CSBM for the prevention of military accidents and incidents in the Baltic and Black Sea regions (see Zagorski 2017: 139).

Currently, Russia and most Western countries are not ready for dialogue of this kind, and it is far from certain whether such an agenda will ever succeed. However, the alternative is deepening conflicts, shrinking economic ties, an even stronger focus on deterrence and the rising probability of further (armed) conflict. Consequently, this report argues for a longer-term strategic discussion effort among Western states and Russia, with the objective of achieving an agreement on pragmatic cooperation, ideally to be adopted at a summit meeting in 2025. Such an approach requires a firm yet flexible position vis-à-vis Russia: firm in terms of norms, but flexible in political terms. Russia is currently violating OSCE principles and using military force to reach political goals.



Russia is part of Europe, however, and sustainable European security can only be achieved with its cooperation. As William Hill observes, the division between Russia and the West

“was neither inevitable nor intended. [...] Sometimes the results that led in the direction of today’s divisions were the product of conscious choices between important alternatives. At other times, the consequences of decisions were unforeseen and unintended.” (Hill 2018: 10)

A strategic effort towards an agreement on pragmatic cooperation requires several steps:

- | defining an agenda, including the key disagreements as well as areas of joint interest;
- | defining additional innovative formats, including informal and track 1.5 venues and the inclusion of relevant parts of societal and economic representatives to supplement the New Helsinki process; and
- | convening a group to drive this process at the state level – the Group of Friends of the OSCE, made up of those States that are closest to this idea.

The recommendations in the following sections follow this approach.

## 2.2 Initiating a Dialogue on Principles and Norms

On the one hand, the OSCE is a firmly norm-based institution; on the other, a growing number of participating States (no longer only in the East) have grossly violated these norms. As the OSCE cannot abandon or relativize its normative foundations without undermining its *raison d’être*, it must address the challenge of conducting a dialogue on principles and norms, as difficult as this may be.

Rather than contesting norms, States usually re-interpret them to legitimize their practices. Thus, as the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Meshkov has argued:

“The idea is to breathe new life into the Helsinki process. This will require the reaffirmation of all the Helsinki principles and ensuring their uniform understanding and practical implementation by all member states today. This will require efforts to address the most challenging problems that have not been addressed, but have been piling up over the past two decades, including the need to reach a consensus on the balance between the territorial integrity of states and the right of nations to self-determination and to reaffirm the unacceptability of an unconstitutional change of government and support for extremist forces.” (Meshkov 2015: 46)

For Meshkov, this position is apparently in full accordance with the annexation of Crimea, which a Western observer would view as a clear case of norm violation. As Hänggi argues, however, norm contestation is not limited to the defiance of norms:

“In this vein, even in the event of clear defiance of well-established norms, some powerful states have explicitly referred to existing norms but opted instead to provide alternative interpretations. [...] Nonetheless, and as more than just [...] a glimmer of hope, rhetorical reference to relevant norms by defiant states in justifying their non-compliant acts in fact

serves as confirmation of its existence and significance, further strengthening the norms in question.” (Hänggi 2020: 2)

Like certain traffic rules which are violated over and over again, violated OSCE norms continue to matter and can be re-strengthened by being properly discussed. Therefore, we propose that:

- I the OSCE Chair (or a coalition of willing states, if this is not possible) should conduct track 1.5 discussions among Russian, Western and other scholars and officials on the meaning, interpretation and mutual relationship of basic OSCE principles, norms and commitments, from the 1975 Helsinki Final Act to the 2010 Astana Commemorative Declaration.

The purpose of such a dialogue is not to open up a new forum for confrontation but to create space for genuine dialogue. Thus, the process should start with small formats.

### 2.3 Security Dialogue and Arms Control, Including CSBM

The key short- to mid-term (up to three years) objective in this area is the conclusion of a NATO–Russia Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities Agreement. Mid- to longer-term objectives include energizing public, professional and political debate on conventional arms control (CAC) in Europe and entering into negotiations on CAC agreements, particularly for the Baltic and Black Sea areas.

- I We recommend that the planned High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar, scheduled for 9–10 February 2021 (OSCE 2020, FSC.DD/5/20), be used to initiate:
  - I the organization of a public event in Vienna with the Chiefs of Staff/high military officers of Germany and other relevant participating States on a Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities Agreement;
  - I the organization of joint publications on this issue in international media by the Chiefs of Staff/high military officers of Germany and other relevant participating States; and
  - I the encouragement of NATO participation (to the greatest extent possible, both headquarters and national delegations) in the Doctrine Seminar.
- I We also recommend that Russian representatives in the sub-group on arms control of the German–Russian *Hohe Arbeitsgruppe Sicherheitspolitik* (High-Level Working Group on Security Policy) be asked which NATO/Western unilateral step(s) could trigger a Russian unilateral response, opening up space for further dialogue, and that
- I discussion in both NATO and the OSCE be focused on developing a NATO–Russia Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities Agreement (cf. Zellner/Oliker/Pifer 2020: 10) by
  - I concentrating the SD debate on this issue, particularly in military-to-military formats; and
  - I attempting to reopen military-to-military discussions in the NATO–Russia Council, if necessary limited to the issue of preventing dangerous military activities.
- I On 22 November 2022, the US left the Open Skies Treaty (OST). A US re-entry would require the consent of the US Senate, which can be excluded under the current circumstances. We

therefore recommend the establishment of a creative legal construction for keeping the US on board with the OST, below the threshold of re-entering the Treaty (US expert).

- I Finally, we recommend revitalizing the public debate on CAC by pooling available resources: the SD, the Group of Friends, the European Leadership Network (ELN) and the OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions. The CAC Discussion Project of the OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, which has planned workshops in Riga, Warsaw and Stockholm for late 2021, possibly in co-operation with the 2021 Swedish and 2022 Polish OSCE Chairs, can serve as a starting point.

## 2.4 Conflict Prevention and Management

Thanks to years-long preparations based on Decision No. 3/11 “Elements of the Conflict Cycle” (OSCE 2011, MC.DEC/3/11), adopted by the 2011 Vilnius MC meeting, the OSCE was able not only to deploy the SMM quickly in 2014 but to adapt, extend and modernize it. As the threshold for conflicts in the OSCE area is further decreasing, the OSCE can expect additional cases of armed conflicts. Thus, the OSCE would be well advised to discuss the lessons learned from using its toolbox for conflict prevention and management and to think about improvements.

The following menu of options should be taken into account:

### CONFLICT PREVENTION

The most sustainable form of conflict prevention is long-term structural prevention in pre- and particularly post-conflict environments. It is recommended that a systematic approach to structural conflict prevention be elaborated, taking into account all working areas in the OSCE’s three dimensions as well as its institutions and structures.

### REVIEWING DEC. NO. 3/11 TEN YEARS AFTER ITS ADOPTION

The Swedish 2021 Chair has announced plans to deal with Dec. No. 3/11: “Next year, 10 years will have passed since the decision in Vilnius on ‘the elements of the conflict cycle’. This will provide an opportunity to revisit the existing tools to prevent and resolve conflicts” (Rydberg 2020). It is recommended:

- I that the Chair and the SG organize a workshop to reflect the lessons learned from implementing the instruments contained in Dec. No. 3/11 and to discuss options for their further improvement; and
- I that elements contained in the “Draft Decision on Further Strengthening OSCE Capabilities in Addressing the Conflict Cycle” of the 2016 Hamburg MC meeting be introduced, in particular:
  - I “further improving analytical capabilities for early warning-related purposes and strengthen[ing] a toolbox on early action mechanisms, in particular with regard to areas where the OSCE does not have a field presence”;

- | “further developing co-operation between the OSCE and the United Nations as well as other relevant international and regional organizations on aspects related to the conflict cycle”; and
- | “developing a proposal for a flexible mechanism to allow for the establishment of a temporary OSCE Secretariat in-house planning capacity, making best use of the expertise available within relevant OSCE executive structures” (OSCE 2016, MC.DD/8/16/Rev.2).

### ASSESSING THE OSCE’S CAPACITY TO CONDUCT PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (PKO)

A Russian PKO has been deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh. Nevertheless, the OSCE’s experience with the SMM and the uncertainty over whether comparable missions might be needed in the future make it advisable to reassess the OSCE’s capabilities in the field of PKO. Milestones in the history of OSCE PKO discussions include the following:

- | The 1992 Helsinki Document declared that “[p]eacekeeping constitutes an important operational element of the overall capability of the CSCE for conflict prevention and crisis management” (III, 17).
- | In the 1994 Budapest Document, the participating States agreed that “the conclusion of the agreement mentioned above [on Nagorno-Karabakh] would also make it possible to deploy multinational peacekeeping forces” (II, 4). This agreement has been never reached.
- | At the 2002 Porto MC meeting, the participating States tasked “the Permanent Council [with] conduct[ing] a review of peacekeeping, with a view towards assessing OSCE capacity to conduct peacekeeping operations and identifying options for potential OSCE involvement in peacekeeping in the OSCE region” (OSCE 2002, MC(10).DEC/4). The review did not lead to any decisions.

However, the 2003 review revealed three types of possible OSCE PKOs, two of which may still be relevant:

- | traditional blue helmet PKOs;
- | unarmed observer and/or monitoring operations; and
- | PKOs in co-operation with other IOs.

While traditional blue helmet PKOs based on military formations seem to be beyond the reach of the OSCE, the other two options are not. Civilian unarmed observer/monitoring missions have been conducted by the OSCE (i.e. the Kosovo Verification Mission, the SMM), and the same is true of PKOs together with the UN in South-Eastern Europe. We therefore recommend:

- | reviewing further options for “hardening” OSCE FOPS in PKO roles by providing suitable equipment, recruitment and training;
- | further developing options for using sophisticated technical equipment such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and satellite imagery (cf. Giardullo/Dorn/Stodilka 2020: 133); and

- | exploring options for joint PKOs with other IOs, particularly the UN, including possible OSCE police elements.

### REVIEWING FOPS IN GENERAL

William Hill, an experienced retired US diplomat and two-time Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, recommends “a comprehensive overall assessment of what has worked and what has not in the system of OSCE field missions. This assessment should be done with a view both to changing and improving existing field missions and to establishing and deploying possible future operations. This exercise could be accomplished either by a representative ‘wise man’ exercise or through the OSCE Network of Think Tanks” (Hill 2020b: 2).

### CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF FOPS

Former OSCE SG Lamberto Zannier proposed that “[o]ne option could be lighter assistance missions” and that “[t]he OSCE should also invest more in centres of excellence” (Zannier 2018: 46).

Kazakhstan has proposed the establishment of a Thematic Centre on Sustainable Connectivity (CSC) in its capital, Nur-Sultan. As Kazakhstan has repeatedly threatened to close the Programme Office in Nur-Sultan should the OSCE be unwilling to establish the CSC, the OSCE faces a dilemma. On the one hand, a locally owned CSC is desirable; on the other, the Programme Office covering all three dimensions should remain operational. The OSCE should seek a solution that combines the establishment of a CSC with the further existence of the Programme Office.

### REVIEWING SPECIFIC ISSUES REGARDING FIELD OPERATIONS

- | Appointing Heads of Mission (HOM): “Since field operations are likely to outlast the term of office of the Chairmanship, the Secretary General should, in consultation with the Chair, have the power to appoint and dismiss Head[s] of Field Operations” (Panel of Eminent Persons 2015a: 10).
- | Improving the gender balance among HOMs and other senior management staff of FOPS and OSCE institutions. Although the Secretariat has made substantial progress over the past three years in advancing women in international contracted posts and senior management positions, 13 out of 16 current HOMs are male.
- | Improving sub-regional cooperation among FOPS in terms of consultation and joint programmes and projects.
- | Consultations on establishing a repository fund for conflict management based on extra-budgetary contributions.

### I Cooperating with other IOs regarding field activities

“The following ideas could be further explored [...]

I Developing joint training programmes [...]

I Mutual secondment [...]

I Continuing and further developing co-ordination of policies at a country/region-specific level [...]

I Issuing joint political messages and statements [...]

I Strengthening co-operation between envoys and special representatives”

(Simonet 2020: 254–257).

## FURTHER LITERATURE:

On FOPS in general: Panel of Eminent Persons 2005, pt. 3.4; Zellner/Evers et al. 2014. Panel of Eminent Persons 2015a.

On OSCE PKOs: Meier 2015; Zellner 2016.

## 2.5 Preventing Economic Conflict, Fostering Connectivity and Integration

For a long time, the dominant opinion had been that economic interconnectedness would per se foster stability and peace. More recently, it has become clear that weak economic interdependence can achieve little when it comes to creating stability and security. Moreover, asymmetric interdependence can even be used to exert political pressure with economic sanctions (cf. Zellner et al. 2016: 16–17). As economic pressure and ‘trade wars’ can undermine political and even military stability, the long-neglected second dimension of the OSCE is now highly relevant to security. The two most salient issues in this context are the integration competition between the EU and the EAEU, which was one of the causes of the conflict in and around Ukraine, and the use of economic sanctions as political instruments. Connectivity, defined as the deliberate political shaping of economic relations between states to foster stability, is a key concept in countering these divisive developments. The following recommendations can be made:

I Economic confidence-building measures: The establishment of a “trilateral format involving the OSCE, EEU and EU for discussions on economic confidence-building measures” (SEC.DAYS/17/16, quoted in: Evers/Zellner 2017: 27) ought to be considered.

I Fostering contact and discussion between the EU, the EAEU and interested states in the OSCE region on the mutual compatibility of these integration schemes: “Look at the question of economic connectivity between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union, giving special attention to the position of the states in-between, including Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine” (Panel of Eminent Persons 2015b: 17).

I Conducting a Green Hydrogen Dialogue among OSCE and Partner States (cf. 4.4).

## 2.6 Defending and Developing the OSCE Human Dimension Acquis

Because of the open and hidden norm contestation and norm violation by a number of states, no longer limited to the “East”, the OSCE’s HD is its most difficult working field. Making new substantial decisions has become almost impossible, and even decision-making with regard to routine events such as the HDIM (date and agenda) has become extremely difficult. Decisions are frequently made so late that there is little time to prepare the event in question.

It is not an option for the OSCE to relativize its HD work in any way. If it were to do so, the OSCE would undermine its *raison d’être* as a norm-based organization. The OSCE has no power to enforce the implementation of norms. However, its norm-related activity is an important point of reference for governments and societies. The OSCE should therefore pursue an approach that includes the following three elements:

### RATIONALIZING PROCEDURAL DEBATES AND REFORMING THE HDIM

The history of reform efforts in the Human Dimension (HD) spans almost two decades. In 2005, the “Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE” pledged that “[i]f a Human Dimension Committee is established (see para. 32), the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) could be reduced to a maximum of five days” (Panel of Eminent Persons 2005: 17, Rec. 25).

Several reform attempts, including in 2011–2012, failed. A detailed approach to reforming the HDIM (and the other HD events) was presented in 2012 by Wolfgang Zellner. Its main elements are:

- | agreement on a fixed date and standard agenda for the HDIM, to make annual PC decisions unnecessary;
- | agreement on a fixed date in the first or second quarter of the year to establish the HDIM as a starting point of the annual HD review cycle to be concluded by the MC meeting;
- | shortening the HDIM to between five and seven working days (Zellner 2013: 47 ff.); and
- | clarification of the disputed issue of non-governmental organizations’ (NGO) access to the HDIM, possibly on the basis of the proposal worked out by the respective Informal Working Group.

The point of shortening the HDIM has been disputed among Western states. Without shortening the HDIM, however, there is no incentive for Russia (and other participating States) to agree on reform. On the basis of this reform, the HDIM, which currently does not enjoy any media coverage, should take the form of an attractive event with well-known (external) speakers and accompanying cultural events in the future.

### ADDRESSING DISPUTED HD ISSUES

Disputed HD issues such as best practices to ensure international human rights standards or the observation of the freedom of the media should be addressed, including in MC draft decisions, so



as to engage norm-contesters in challenging discussions. Again, this should be used not as an instrument for confrontation but as a necessary demonstration of support for the OSCE's norms and obligations and as a tool for involving state representatives in a dialogue on values and norms.

### ADDRESSING NEW AREAS

- | Examining the social, political and security framework in the conduct of free elections  
“The OSCE should launch an examination of the social, political, and security implications and effects of the communications, internet and social media revolutions, in particular on the conduct of free election, including election campaigns” (Hill 2020b: 2). It is important to conduct this examination with a representative sample of participating States.
- | Youth-related initiatives  
The participating States “recognize the role youth can play in contributing to a culture of peace, dialogue, justice and peaceful coexistence, trust and reconciliation” (OSCE 2018, MC.DOC/3/18).  
Based on this Declaration, adopted by the 2018 Milan MC meeting, the OSCE should develop a more systematic cluster of youth-related initiatives. In particular, it should:
  - | organize an inter-regional youth exchange within the OSCE area (Wolters 2020: 2);
  - | institutionalize the essay competition run by the OSCE in 2020 together with the IFSH, the Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO), the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP) and expand the range of topics;
  - | introduce regular Youth Summits to be held prior to the MC meetings;
  - | extend the Central Asian Youth Network (CAYN); and
  - | organize model OSCE exercises on a sub-regional and OSCE-wide basis.



### 3 APPROACHES, COMPETENCIES AND WORKING FORMATS

As the OSCE is a highly informal organization, political procedures are less formally fixed and are largely flexible. Therefore, the issue of political approaches and the selection of working formats deserves almost the same attention as matters of substance. The most salient issue is securing more political attention for the OSCE: the political upgrading of the Organization. Today, the OSCE is caught in a vicious cycle of marginalization and self-absorption. Because capitals do not care (much), delegations are largely concerned with themselves. Without greater political attention and investment by capitals, the other recommendations will not be successful. In the following section, we recommend a number of more detailed approaches and initiatives.

#### 3.1 Political Upgrading of the OSCE

The establishment of a “Group of Friends of the OSCE” committed to:

- | acting along the lines sketched in para. 2.1; and
- | consulting in Vienna and at the capital level and engaging capitals in the Vienna business.

“High-level, high-profile meetings on thematic issues could be convened as necessary to focus attention on matters of relevance to all participating States” (Panel of Eminent Persons 2005: 14, Rec. 18a) (cf. 3.9). If necessary, this could be done by coalitions of willing states.

#### 3.2 Chairmanship and Institutions

As the Chairmanship, the Secretariat and the institutions are tightly connected, success depends on their close cooperation. This is all the more the case given that most Chairs lean heavily on the Secretariat. Lack of leadership has been bitterly felt in the current period, as the four top OSCE institutional positions remain unfilled. Recommendations for strengthening the OSCE’s leadership capacity include:

##### CHAIRMANSHIP

The OSCE should “encourage and incentivize OSCE countries that seek a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (or other key UN bodies) to apply for [an] OSCE Chairmanship prior to this” (Wohlfeld 2020: 2).

##### OSCE INSTITUTIONS

It should be ensured “that all OSCE institutions have designated deputies, rather than just officers in charge” (Wohlfeld 2020: 2).

It should also be ensured that “the Organization (including its field operations) [is] climate neutral” (Wohlfeld 2020: 4).

### 3.3 Options for Supporting the SG and Strengthening Her/His Position

The new SG will face a tough start. Therefore, the Group of Friends of the OSCE should provide her/him with a support package, including:

- | second staff to strengthen the Office of the SG and key positions in the CPC and to establish liaison persons in Brussels, Geneva and New York;
- | maintenance and consolidation of the Secretariat’s Strategic Policy Support Unit;
- | support for the SG’s “Security Days” by providing planning capacity and speakers; and
- | the establishment and extension of working procedures in fields that strengthen the position of the SG, i.e. staffing, coordination.

### 3.4 Finances and Budget

While the SMM budget is usually adopted on time, the adoption of the Unified Budget (UB) is usually delayed by months. Whereas a delay in the adoption of the SMM budget causes immediate phone calls among capitals, the same capitals do not care much about the Unified Budget. This must change. In addition, to put the OSCE budget on a sustainable basis, it is necessary to terminate the practice of ‘zero nominal growth’ (ZNG) and to introduce multi-year planning and biannual budgets. The Council of Europe’s recent switch from ZNG to ZRG, or ‘zero relative growth’ is a move in the right direction. So long as the OSCE does not follow suit, the following recommendations will work below the threshold of terminating the policy of ZNG and introducing biannual budgets:

- | The OSCE ought to work towards political consensus among the foreign ministers of the OSCE participating States on the need to keep the OSCE platform working, despite their many differences, meaning that the UB must be adopted on time.
- | “Multi-year strategic planning is required, and in the absence of an agreement among participating States on such a procedure, the Chairmanship/Troika and the SG could engage in informal negotiations and create three-year guidelines.” (Wohlfeld 2020: 1)
- | As an entry point into multi-year planning, the OSCE ought to introduce multi-year voluntary contributions for larger projects.
- | “An essential change I would recommend is to move responsibility for chairing the ACMF [Advisory Committee for Management and Finance] from the Chairmanship’s hands to the Secretariat.” (Zannier 2018: 43)
- | The members of the Group of Friends of the OSCE should commit to paying their contributions on time and to increasing extra-budgetary contributions and seconded staff.

### 3.5 Running Projects

Fewer mini projects and more multi-year regional programmes ought to be implemented. A good example is the project “Capacity-Building for Criminal Justice Practitioners: Combating Cybercrime and Cyber-enabled Crime in South-Eastern Europe”, which is being jointly implemented by the

OSCE Secretariat, OSCE FOPS and relevant national authorities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (Nosal 2019: 307–308).

### 3.6 Consultations, Negotiation Formats and Distribution of Competencies

The following proposals differ in terms of their implementation. Some require decisions, while others can be implemented by the Troika or even informally:

- I The Troika ought to be developed “as a system for continuity and mutual support” (Panel of Eminent Persons 2015a: 10). This should be implemented at all levels of the working structure, i.e. the PC and its three Committees.
- I “Turning to subsidiary bodies, the Chairmanship of the three committees [...] could rotate in a similar way as the Chairmanship of the FSC” (Zannier 2018: 39).
- I Where appropriate, the triangle negotiation format ought to be used: “For the first time, the so-called ‘triangle’ negotiation format of the Russian Federation, the EU, and the US was used extensively before and during the Astana Summit.” The EU negotiator was Helga Schmid (De Brichambaut 2012: 45–46).
- I Negotiations ought to be supported by Groups of Friends:  
“With the invaluable support and assistance of a ‘Group of Friends’, the Chairmanship conducted an inclusive and intensive consultation process with participating States, both in Vienna and in the capitals. The group, composed of five Heads of Delegation from small, medium and large participating States acting in their personal capacity, not only advised the Chairmanship at different stages of the consultations, but also actively supported the negotiation team by taking on various negotiation tasks” (Raunig/Peer 2019: 74).

### 3.7 Consultations within and between Governments

As Wilhelm Höynck observed, “[c]oordination starts at home” (Wilhelm Höynck, first C/OSCE SG). Coordination within and between different governments is a crucial condition for success. We therefore recommend:

- I that regular coordination talks be conducted among the OSCE, NATO, conventional arms control and relevant country divisions within foreign ministries, coordinated with defence ministries;
- I the introduction of OSCE items in high-level bilateral consultations such as the German Russian HASP (*Hohe Arbeitsgruppe Sicherheitspolitik*/High-Level Working Group on Security Policy); and
- I the introduction of OSCE items in consultations with other IOs, such as the EU and NATO.

### 3.8 Strengthening of Informal Ties

The OSCE has always been a framework that paves the way for important decisions via informal talks. This is all the more important in times such as the present, when official bodies mainly serve for the exchange of accusations and do not allow for real dialogue. The following is therefore recommended:

- I A system of informal working groups mirroring the working structures of the OSCE ought to be developed to enhance the inclusiveness of consultations and to give states more opportunities to get involved (cf. Zellner et al. 2005: 38).
- I “Based on this experience, I believe an informal segment should be introduced into the work of the PC” (Zannier 2018: 38).

### 3.9 Visibility

- I “High-level, high-profile meetings on thematic issues could be convened as necessary to focus attention on matters of relevance to all participating States” (Panel of Eminent Persons 2005: 14, Rec. 18a); (cf. 3.1).
- I “I believe the OSCE lacks a major outreach event along the lines of the World Economic Forum, which would bring it vital visibility” (De Brichambaut 2012: 47).

### 3.10 Inclusion of Societal Groups

- I “In future, parliamentarians, young people and representatives from civil society, science and business should be included more in [... new forms of dialogue] to bolster the OSCE’s potential as a mediator and connector” (SEC.DEL/575/16, quoted in: Evers/Zellner 2017: 7) (for youth, see 2.6.c).
- I The OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions ought to be institutionalized on a consolidated financial basis.

These small- and (at best) medium-scale measures cannot be expected to bear immediate fruit, but they will contribute to establishing the OSCE as a more effective platform that can perform larger-scale tasks if and when the political conditions allow.

## 4 COOPERATION WITH OTHER IOS AND OSCE PARTNER STATES

The OSCE cooperates with a broad range of IOs at the headquarter and the expert level, as well as in the field. Some partner IOs, such as the Council of Europe, follow comparable mandates and are of similar size. Others, particularly the UN and the EU, are much larger and have a legal personality that the OSCE lacks. A specific problem for the OSCE is that it does not have OSCE liaison offices, and there is little chance that the participating States will reach consensus on including the necessary resources for this in the Unified Budget. It is therefore recommended that:

- I an alternative model of co-locating OSCE liaison officers at the representations of the Chairmanship (Wohlfeld 2020: 3) in Brussels (EU, NATO), Geneva and New York (UN) be used. Alternatively, this could be provided by a state or a group of states.

One of the OSCE's most underused resources is its remarkable convening power and agenda-setting capacity. Though it may appear too ambitious for the OSCE, the following proposal by the 2015 Group of Eminent Persons would be a welcome development:

- I “Make proposals for a forum to bring together governments, companies and other relevant organizations from the entire Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space, including China, to discuss opportunities for and obstacles to the development of better business relations between Europe, North America and Asia” (Panel of Eminent Persons 2015b: 17).

The focus on business relations could be broadened on issues of common concern such as climate change, the necessary transition to green energy, and the fight against global diseases – in short, the key questions of responsible global governance.

### 4.1 The United Nations (UN)

On 10 December 2019, the OSCE and the UN issued a “Joint Statement to Supplement the Framework for Cooperation and Coordination between the United Nations Secretariat and the OSCE”. On a practical level, the OSCE has access to the UN contract system; the SMM is supported by the UN Global Services Center in Brindisi. It is recommended that:

- I focus be placed on the implementation of the practical steps contained in point 7 of the “Joint Statement”, which include having regular high-level engagements, strengthening existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms and enhancing synergy and dialogue at the international, the national and the regional level.

### 4.2 The European Union (EU)

On 22 June 2018, EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and OSCE SG Thomas Greminger exchanged letters on strengthening EU–OSCE cooperation. This marked the starting point of a new era in working relations. Annual high-level meetings have been taking place, the first in Brussels on 13 December 2018, the second online due to pandemic provisions in the spring of

2020. Issues of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, particularly in the Western Balkans and Central Asia, are discussed at the expert level. The OSCE is increasingly gaining access to EU funding for larger projects and multi-year programmes. Recommendations can only strengthen this positive trend:

- I The OSCE should use its improved access to EU funds to turn away from micro projects in favour of larger regional multi-year programmes.
- I The EU should engage more systematically in places where both the OSCE and the Council of Europe are engaged in the field.

### 4.3 The Council of Europe (CoE)

With parallel mandates and a largely overlapping membership (all OSCE participating States apart from the US, Belarus, Canada, the Holy See, the five Central Asian states and Mongolia are members of the CoE), the CoE and the OSCE are natural partners. There is therefore a dense network of cooperation between these two bodies, although cooperation is not without its difficulties (cf. Evers/Härtel/König 2020).

At the highest level is the Co-ordination Group (Chairs, SGs, heads of institutions), which meets twice a year. One shortcoming of this format is that it has a fixed agenda of four items – anti-terrorism, trafficking, tolerance and non-discrimination, and national minorities – that cannot be expanded because of lack of consensus among the OSCE participating States, thus limiting the range of issues it can deal with.

Cooperation at the expert level and between institutions is generally considered excellent, whereas cooperation in the field reveals different levels of development. Election observation is a flagship joint activity. Both the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) work regularly with the CoE's Venice Commission and its opinions, and ODIHR and the CoE SG Marija Pejcinovic Buric exchanged letters on cooperation in November 2019. The following recommendations can be made:

- I The work of the Co-ordination Group ought to be strengthened by adding an informal element that makes it possible to deal with all issue areas.
- I The “2+2” meetings at the level of senior officials ought to be revived for the purposes of specifying common working topics and practical ways to proceed.
- I Cooperation between the CoE and the OSCE ought to be strengthened in places where both organizations run field presences and ought to be linked with coordination with the EU.

### 4.4 The Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation

Both the Asian and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation are highly diverse groups. It is therefore difficult to define topics that can find consensus among them, and Partner activities in their respective countries rarely find consensus among the OSCE participating States.

Regarding the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, Italy and Malta proposed the establishment of cooperation centres in their respective countries for dealing, *inter alia*, with trafficking and border management. Both proposals failed due to lack of funding. Nevertheless, as it would be useful to have a permanent platform for exchange with the Mediterranean Partners, it is recommended:

- I that a cooperation centre with the Mediterranean Partners be established in Italy or Malta to deal with economic, ecological and migration issues and climate change and that seed funding be provided by a group of willing states; and
- I that a green hydrogen dialogue be conducted among OSCE and Partner States.

One of the greatest challenges that all OSCE states will face over the coming decades is the transition to a hydrogen-based economy. Therefore, the OSCE should initiate a hydrogen dialogue among all OSCE and Partner States, particularly the Mediterranean Partner States, to examine how cooperation in the production and distribution of hydrogen can foster economic connectivity and contribute to stability and security.

“The National Hydrogen Strategy” of the Federal Government states that “[e]xisting forms of collaboration, notably with the energy partnerships of the Federal Government, but also with the partner countries in German development cooperation or the International Climate Initiative, offer prospects for joint projects and for testing import routes and technologies. Besides these, further initiatives for international cooperation may emerge” (Federal Government 2020).

Regarding the Asian Partners for Co-operation, it is recommended:

- I that a regular dialogue be established between regional security organizations such as the OSCE, the ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) on, *inter alia*, addressing global security challenges and security- and confidence-building measures, including soft security approaches such as economic connectivity (cf. OSCE 2017, SEC/GAL/109/17).

## 4.5 Cooperation with China

It is widely accepted that some form of contact and cooperation between the OSCE and China may be desirable. In addition, the implications of China’s Belt and Road Initiative for the OSCE states ought to be discussed. Some participating States oppose such a move, however. In addition, granting OSCE partner status to China is practically impossible insofar as China would be unwilling to accept the OSCE acquis and to consult with the 57 participating States on the question of whether it should be granted partner status. Moreover, Japan already acts as a *primus inter pares* among Partner States. Thus, cooperation options below the level of partner status should be explored. Experience shows that Chinese partners participate in events if invited. It is therefore recommended:

- I that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) be used as a bridge to China (five OSCE participating States are members of the SCO – four Central Asian states and Russia – and ties between the two IOs already exist, including at the level of the SG);

- I that the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA) be made use of (eight OSCE participating States are CICA members, three are observers, and the OSCE itself holds the status of an Observer IO. As the CICA also deals with the “Military and Political Dimension”, it would be possible to discuss arms control/CSBM issues with China in this framework); and
- I that joint OSCE/UN events or Chairmanship events be used to invite China as a participant and/or guest.



### 5 CONCLUSIONS

The OSCE is one of the most underused resources for Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian stability and security. Ideally, with its commitment to comprehensive, cooperative, equal and indivisible security, it is well suited to addressing security questions of all kinds. In reality, however, the Organization has been politically sidelined and neglected to such a degree that the greater part of its agenda concerns peripheral issues, with delegations devoting most of their energy to minor battles among themselves.

The situation in Europe is increasingly characterized by tensions within and between societies, conflict and open war: Georgia in 2008; Eastern Ukraine since 2014; Nagorno-Karabakh in 2016 and 2020. We cannot predict how many violent conflicts will arise in the future, but we do know that conducting wars is increasingly viewed as a normal political instrument by a number of states. Consequently, the threshold for violent conflict is decreasing.

Against this background, it is high time to remobilize the OSCE and to draw it closer to the core business of conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding. This will only be successful if the OSCE receives substantially more attention and resources. The example of Ukraine and the SMM shows that this is possible.

Therefore, we propose a mid-term strategy aimed at new consensus on pragmatic cooperation in Europe among the OSCE States, to be adopted at a summit meeting in 2025, 50 years after the approval of the Helsinki Final Act. To realize this objective, a years-long process and continuous political investment are necessary. This investment is burdened with profound uncertainty; we do not know whether a new Helsinki 2025 consensus will be achieved. What we do know, however, is that greater effort is needed to prevent war from becoming the new normal in Europe.

## ANNEX 1

### LIST OF EXPERTS CONSULTED

Chernykh, Irina	Professor at the Kazakh-German University in Almaty
Dunay, Pal	Professor at George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies; former Director of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek
Hänggi, Heiner	Deputy Director and Head of Policy and Research Department of Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)
Hill, William	Global Fellow at the Wilson Center; former Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova (1999–2001, 2003–2006)
Knoll-Tudor, Bernhard	Director of Executive Education at the Hertie School; former Special Advisor to the OSCE ODIHR, former Policy Advisor to the OSCE Mission in Kosovo
Krumm, Reinhard	Head of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe; former Head of the FES Regional Central Asian Office and the FES Russian Office
Kulesa, Lukasz	Senior Associate Fellow at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM); Senior Associate at the European Leadership Network
Liechtenstein, Stephanie	Diplomatic correspondent, freelance journalist based in Vienna
Lundin, Lars-Erik	Distinguished Associate Fellow at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI); former EU ambassador to the International Organizations in Vienna, Swedish Representative to the Minsk Group, and Head of Division for CSCE in the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Narten, Jens	Advisor on Peace and Security at the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); former member of OSCE Mission in Kosovo
Remler, Philip	Non-resident Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; former Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova (2007–2012)
Richter, Wolfgang	Senior Associate at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP); former head of the military section of the German Permanent Representation to the OSCE (2005–2009)

Saari, Sinikukka	Senior Associate Analyst at the European Union Institute for Security Studies; former policy planner at Finish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Smolnik, Franziska	Deputy Head of Research Division Eastern Europe, Eurasia at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP); guest visit at the German Permanent Representation to OSCE (2018)
Wohlfeld, Monika	German Chair in Peace and Conflict Prevention, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta; former Deputy Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre of the OSCE
Wolters, Alexander	Director of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek
Zagorski, Andrei	Head of Department for Disarmament and Conflict Resolution, Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO); Professor at MGIMO-University

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