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Germany's OSCE chairmanship 2016

The need for “contagement”

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The tensions between Russia and the West challenge the OSCE security order from within. Hence, critics support a containment strategy in the scope of NATO. However, the conflict management in Ukraine shows that the OSCE continues to practice a successful combination of expertise, inclusivity and rapid reaction. Moreover, the organization's comprehensive conception of security relations provides numerous opportunities for engagement. Thus, it should be regarded as an organization that can reinstate European peace and stability. During its OSCE chairmanship in 2016 Germany should strive to restore security by renewing dialogue and rebuilding trust in all of the organizations' fields of work. This would successfully complement NATO's containment strategy.

On 1 January 2016 Germany will take over the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) from Serbia. In doing so, Germany assumes a key institutional responsibility in midst of emerging transnational security challenges. Especially Russia's policy towards Ukraine and Syria manifest worrisome divisions within the OSCE arena and beyond. These developments put the future European security order and architecture to a test.

It is against this background that the German chairmanship seeks to revive the OSCE as an organization that acts jointly in order to meet these challenges effectively. Thus, German officials have established next year's term under the triad “renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust, restoring security“. On 4 November, a conference commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Charter of Paris brought together high-level experts and politicians from over 15 member states in Warsaw to discuss this ambition. It was analysed how this goal is situated within the OSCE-security order (1), which challenges frame this effort (2) what considerations and measures are to be taken into account (3), and how Germany can fulfil this agenda in 2016 (4)?

1. The OSCE security order

Having been established by its “Helsinki Final Act” in August 1975 and the “Charter of Paris” in November 1990 the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) institutionalized itself as a multilateral forum for dialogue in 1995 – the “Conference” became an “Organization”. Central to the OSCE's founding documents is a balance of power that acknowledges European borders and recognizes the territorial integrity of member states. This formed the basis on which the CSCE had achieved an East-West rapprochement in the fields of security, economy and culture. The organisation was able to establish a comprehensive security approach – characterized by the Politico-military, Economic and Ecological, and Human Dimensions – it's three fields of work. .Thereby, the OSCE achieved a sense of mutual security that simultaneously rests on realism

and on normative assurances. Moreover, the decision-making procedures of unanimity require broad consensus between East and West European states. Hence, renewed dialogue, based on the precondition of commitment to the member states' territorial integrity, is required in all three of the OSCE's "Dimensions". These remain key in order to restore those comprehensive security relations that were documented in the Charter of Paris as the guiding principles of an "era of democracy, peace and unity" in Europe.

2. Challenges to the European security architecture

Currently, the OSCE arena finds itself amidst a deep security crisis. With the annexation of Crimea Russia has challenged the fundamental agreement of the non-violability of borders and territorial integrity of states, which has been agreed to in the Helsinki Accords, the Charter of Paris, and public international law. Through undermining this very basis of the European security community new divisions, competitions and confrontations have emerged at the heart of the OSCE space. This reveals a sobering reality 25 years after the signing of the Charter.

A rapprochement between Russia and the West in the scope of the organization's framework is endangered due to the lack of trust and uncertainty arising from the unpredictability of Moscow's policy. On the one hand, by illegally annexing Crimea Russia undermined the fundamental principles of the OSCE security order. On the other hand, it declared its formal support to the OSCE by voting in favour of the implementation of the Special Monitoring Mission for Ukraine (SMM) and the Observer Mission Gukovo and Donetsk (OM). The task of these mandates is to stabilize other parts of Eastern Ukraine. Yet, in reality Russia provides the third largest number of observers to the SMM and OM, effectively giving it substantial control to steer the outcomes of these missions. Furthermore, the OM remains limited to the Russian-Ukrainian border passages at Donetsk and Gukovo, making continued exchange of information, personnel and weapons between separatists and Russia possible outside these checkpoints. Such fluctuating behaviour raises the concern that Moscow makes use of the unanimity requirement in decision-making in order to veto certain elements of the missions – for instance the use of technologically advanced monitoring methods or the extension of the missions beyond March 2016. Therefore, future cooperation with Russia is highly unpredictable, leading critics to describe Russia as "a shark acting in disguise in the planetary oceans".

The European security developments since the end of the Cold War have been perceived through entirely different narratives in Russia than in the West. Through a Western lens, EU affairs and the NATO enlargement are understood as an achievement to which the OSCE has contributed substantially as a catalyst for democratic change. In contrast, from the current Russian perspective the developments since 1990 are an expansion of Western security institutions and ideologies. This clashes with the Russian domestic methodology of regime sustenance, in which legitimation is gained through foreign policy performance rather than through the electoral process. From this point of view the so-called colour revolutions in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine evidence a move towards the West and thereby imply a shrinking Russian sphere of influence. Subsequently, Moscow sees in them a loss of power that poses an imminent danger to Russia's national security and deems a continuation of aggressive behaviour necessary.

Both the crisis in Ukraine and the Russian military intervention in Syria are displays of a projection of power. Especially the annexation of Crimea resulted in a high level of domestic public support, thus, insinuating a rationale for revisionist behaviour as an incentive to continue an aggressive foreign policy. This creates a toxic environment, especially for local and national governments that have a historic, demographic or geographic proximity to Russia, who may experience psychological pressure or fear from becoming subject to proxy separatist movements. Ultimately, the differing narratives on European security developments illustrate a severe imbalance in the mutual security structure anticipated by the OSCE.

These circumstances have led to the criticism that the comprehensive security approach of the OSCE has been damaged beyond repair, leaving behind a loss of enthusiasm for seeing this organization as a primary framework to safeguard European security. Instead, especially Eastern European member states now favour the strategy of launching a counteroffensive from outside the OSCE structure through NATO. Reasoning that it has not failed in maintaining its member states' security since 1949, these states perceive the alliance as more capable to re-establish the credibility of Western European security principles. In particular, they envisage a conventional deterrence strategy in which NATO upholds the 5,000 troops strong "Very High Readiness Joint Action Force" and possibly deploys heavily armed forces permanently in affected regions – ready to defend territory according to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. However, such an approach would denote that a co-operative relation on the political and operational level in areas such as conflict prevention and crisis management is replaced with a policy of pure containment.

3. Restoring security through the OSCE framework

A Western security strategy outside the OSCE framework could imply a demise of the organization and its core premise that sustainable security can only be achieved through an inclusive approach. In order to prevent its disintegration the OSCE must continue to fulfil the mandate it has been given by its 57 member states and strive for an order that provides security for *all* of its participants – not *against* one of them – and across all its Dimensions.

3.1 *A new generation of CSBM: addressing normative legitimacy and politico-military substance*

Key to the reduction of uncertainty arising from Moscow's seemingly unpredictable behaviour could be comprehensive "Confidence and Security Building Measures" (CSBM). In the past, CSBM have been primarily formulated at the politico-military level that constitutes the first Dimension of the OSCE security community. Within this scope, it is essential that the member states strive for a basic level of stability and openness in which international borders are respected and the danger of conflict is reduced to an extent where predictability is reinstated.

The requirements to do so are twofold. Firstly, at a military level it is less important to build a new conventional arms control treaty to replace the stalled Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Since the design of such a treaty in itself does not anticipate the prevention of conflict and fails to match the challenges posed by modern hybrid warfare its structure is out-dated. Instead, the commitments to transparency about military capacities and mechanisms that allow their control, such as those in the 1990/2011 Vienna Document and the 1992 Open Skies Treaty, have proven the usefulness of CSBM as a method to promote openness. Secondly, at the political level deeper interaction must take place to de-escalate tensions. Hence, compliance with Minsk II provides a window of opportunity to send signs of good will. With such measures politico-military rapprochement becomes possible within the OSCE framework. Nevertheless, it is now more vital than ever before to highlight the value of the OSCE's integrative approach by dovetailing these efforts with a credible NATO pledge.

An effective complementarity between the OSCE and NATO's policies serves as an important dual function. It will contribute to reassure member states in Eastern Europe, thereby promoting trust and consolidating joint action within the own ranks. Simultaneously it signals to Russia that politico-military cooperation in the scope of the OSCE is a safeguard that will prevent a new arms race with NATO.

Although CSBM in the politico-military Dimension are undoubtedly essential, the very essence of the OSCE is its cross-dimensional conception of security relations. Indeed, recent history has shown that ideological and economic moves towards the West by countries in Russia's neighbourhood have led the Kremlin to exert political pressure and cause destabilization. Whilst this indicates that issue linkage in security relations

is significant, it also holds the potential to help restore confidence in European security relations in the scope of the other two OSCE Dimensions. The organization's toolbox offers further institutional forums that can work to achieve such comprehensive de-escalation. For instance, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has a 360-degree view of human rights activities in the member states and oversees the implementation of the human dimension. Russian cooperation with ODIHR could be a short-term achievement that expresses reliability and thereby prevents further deterioration of relations. In the long-term this could promote shared normative understandings, which in turn contributes to making advancements in the politico-military dimension irreversible.

Overall, the comprehensive security approach lends itself to pursuing the revival of trust and corporation across the OSCE Dimensions and through political rather than military means. As such, new cross-dimensional CSBMs are a cushion for the deterioration of relations through military deterrence strategies.

3.2 Engagement: empirical evidence of the OSCE's ability to reduce toxic environments

From its mission to Bosnia in 1996 to its mandate in Ukraine in 2015 – it has become evident that the OSCE can rapidly innovate, deploy and upscale missions. Without doubt the current security situation in Eastern Ukraine is toxic, yet, the organization has repeatedly proven its relevance as an organization that can achieve de-escalation through crisis management as well as promoting dialogue and cooperation by engaging all stakeholders. Despite the challenges that the current missions experience, important lessons for future OSCE engagement can be drawn.

The conceptualization of the Special Monitoring Mission for Ukraine (SMM) and Observer Mission (OM) is an example in which the OSCE rapidly developed an innovative mandate with its toolbox under the pressure of a looming crisis rather than through lengthy abstract crisis discussions. Based on the vision that OSCE field operations are service providers in situations of crisis and cannot be established against the will of the respective host state, dialogue between the top political leaders was employed to formulate the SMM and OM mandates.

Moreover, these missions encompass the cross-dimensional security approach and thereby reaffirm the continued validity of the OSCE's comprehensive understanding of crisis resolution. The Observer Mission fulfils the military verification of the Vienna Document, whilst the Special Monitoring Mission for Ukraine incorporates the Human Dimension through engaging ODIHR, the High Commissioner for National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

This recent empirical evidence suggests that, despite the toxic environment, the OSCE is still able to practice a successful combination of expertise, inclusivity and rapid reaction. It also indicates that neither Russia nor the West are willing to seize availing themselves of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to crisis resolution. Such continued commitment to engagement in the scope of the organization indicates that its mandate is still effective and holds the ability to revitalize itself.

4. Germany's 2016 agenda

A successful German chairmanship in 2016 ought to take a dual strategy into account. With its 57 member states, the organization is a comprehensive and inclusive forum for dialogue that provides a plethora of opportunities for cooperation. Through clarifying that the commitments made within the organization are non-negotiable and resorting to cross-dimensional CSBM a positive form of engagement for both sides of the conflict can be built.

Concurrently, this engagement should be complementary with NATO's policies in order to reaffirm the stance that perpetrators against Europe's stability and peace order are to be held accountable. However, this should not replace the OSCE's efforts made to prevent conflict and restore stability through its cross-dimensional approach. Deterrence is necessary as much as is dialogue. Thereby pressure can be exerted alongside the endeavour to revive serious cooperation in the scope of the OSCE.

The challenge in Germany's OSCE chairmanship will be to find a balance between rebuilding force to an extent where it contains further challenges to the European security order and *simultaneously* engaging with Russia and all stakeholders to promote trust and dialogue. The better such "contagement" – the mixing of containment and engagement – is realized, the more likely it is that security can be restored and the OSCE resumes its role as a comprehensive standard setter that restores comprehensive peace and security.

Leonie Munk worked as a project manager in the Federal Academy for Security Policy for the conference "25 Years of the Charter of Paris – how to renew commitment, fulfill expectations and revive the OSCE?" in Warsaw, 4 November 2015.

The article reflects her personal opinion.