

The role of the OSCE

RUSSIA NATO Dialogue

**Remarks by
Thomas Greminger, Director, GCSP**

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Dear Sergey, dear Alexey,

Thanks for inviting me to speak and thanks to the authors for the inspiring papers. I have been asked to talk about the potential role of the OSCE and I will do so in a moment. Allow me to make a few general comments at the outset.

This war is a disaster for Europe, and a tragedy for all the citizens who are caught up in it. Nothing can justify this breach of international law. It is also a severe disappointment – if not a shock - to all those of us who have been warning of the dangers of war, and trying to promote de-escalation to prevent it.

I am afraid that whatever we do, we are entering a new Cold War, a Cold War 2.0. Having said this, there is still an opportunity for a quick ceasefire, for a fair, balanced ceasefire not a victor's ceasefire. As Adam Thompson points out in his paper, this window for agreeing will be very brief. It will determine, and here I am with Adam as well, the kind of cold war that we will get. Clearly, the longer the war drags on, the more entrenched the position of all sides will become, the deeper and protracted Cold War 2.0 will be. Andrey Kortunov gives us in his brilliant paper, "7 glimpses of the 'New Normal'", an idea how such a world could look like. Clearly, this is not the kind of world that we want.

This will obviously also strongly affect the potential roles the OSCE could play in the short term and long term and this takes me to the main focus of my remarks:

What role for the OSCE, the theoretically most inclusive platform for dialogue and conflict management and resolution in the Euroatlantic & Eurasian space? I will refer to three potential areas.

- 1) Conflict management + resolution
 - 2) The OSCE as a platform for discussing and negotiating military risk reduction measures, confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) and arms control arrangements.
 - 3) As platform for launching a negotiation process with the aim of coming to a new and common understanding of the principles of European security and its implications for the European security architecture.
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1. Two points on conflict management and resolution: The chairmanship, supported by the Secretary General and the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), could, at least in theory play an active role as mediator/facilitator in any attempts of working towards a ceasefire or peace agreement. This is often done by appointing a Special Representative, not necessarily a Polish national. This worked relatively well in 2014, since there was a clear resolve by all major stakeholders to task the OSCE with facilitating de-escalation measures. However, given the current polarization, it does not appear very likely that Russia would want to convey such a role to the OSCE at this point in time. The second point is on monitoring: If there is a ceasefire, the OSCE would be ideally placed to assume the monitoring tasks. The operations of the SMM have been temporarily suspended, but operations could be resumed quickly, with or without formally amending the current mandate.
 2. The OSCE is a platform for negotiating CSBMs, military risk reduction measures and arms control arrangements. Many of us have acknowledged that a lot of substance for discussion had been brought to the negotiation table, triggered by the Russian guarantee request, the two draft agreements submitted to the US and NATO, and in particular, the

American response to these proposals at the end of January 2022. My assumption would be that all of this is for the time being off the table. Under the premise that at some point in time there is again appetite to talk, and all of this is brought back to the negotiation table, there would be a rich menu to be discussed on existing OSCE platform. CSBMs, military risk reduction, but also subregional arms control arrangements could be discussed in the Forum for Security Cooperation, the Structured Dialogue, or in ad hoc platforms supported by the OSCE. True, these platforms have not been particularly effective in recent years, but this is largely due to the lack of interest of major powers to properly using them. So, if there is a clear commitment by key actors, they can also deliver.

3. The OSCE could also be used to launch a process aimed at recreating a common understanding of fundamental principles of European security and discussing its implication for the European security architecture. Again, only once there is appetite to resume dialogue and get back to diplomacy. Here again there are platforms ready, for instance, the one that has been made available very recently to discuss issues of European security by the Polish chairmanship. There have also been elsewhere ideas and first reflections on how to conduct a process that would take us to “Helsinki + 50”. This could only work, if such a process is kicked off by a strong political signal, be it through a summit as Michael Mc Faul had suggested in an article a month ago or at least through a ad hoc Ministerial Council meeting. And it would need to be sustained by constant political backing. Diplomats will not be enough to pull such a process off and through. Regular meetings on the political level would be needed to keep the process going. And particularly at the outset a lot of track 2 expertise on both process design and substance would have to be brought into such a process.

So, in conclusion, I am convinced that, if the moment comes when states want to move back to diplomacy, there are useful roles that the OSCE could assume.

Thank you for your attention.