

## The EU, the OSCE and the Future of European Security

**Meeting Report**  
Rome, 8 March 2016

### Overview

On 8 March 2016, the OSCE together with the Institute of International Affairs (IAI) organized a panel discussion in Rome on “The EU, the OSCE and the future of European Security”. The event brought together over 70 participants from the diplomatic community, civil society, academia and media.

The event focused on two strategic processes addressing future European security that have been taking place in recent months within the OSCE and the EU. At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Belgrade in December last year, the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security published its final report, “[Back to Diplomacy](#),” with recommendations on how to return to an inclusive security dialogue, rebuild trust and restore security in the OSCE area. The EU launched its own reflection process in preparation for the new EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, which should be published in June 2016. The joint OSCE-IAI event provided an open debate on how these two initiatives could shape the policy discourse on the future of European security and what roles the EU and the OSCE should play in this regard.

The event was opened by the President of IAI, **Ferdinando Nelli Feroci**. The OSCE Secretary General **Lamberto Zannier** delivered a keynote speech, which was followed by a panel discussion featuring **Nathalie Tocci**, Deputy Director of the IAI and Special Adviser to High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini; **Thierry Béchet**, Permanent Representative of the EU to the OSCE; **Teija Tiilikainen**, Director of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs and a member of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security; **Robert Cooper**, former British diplomat and head of the drafting team for the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security; and **Rasa Ostrauskaite**, Deputy Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre. The event was moderated by **Fred Tanner**, Senior Adviser to the OSCE Secretary General.

### Summary of discussions

The current security situation in Europe was seen as more unpredictable and uncertain than in the final years of the Cold War, so it was necessary to reduce existing risks while ensuring that security and co-operation could be maintained on a more stable basis. Both the EU and the OSCE should play a crucial role in these efforts. The conflict in and around Ukraine

amply demonstrated that the OSCE continued to play a key role in the European security architecture as a forum for inclusive dialogue and a platform for joint action. Its comprehensive toolbox, long-term presence on the ground, established record as an impartial observer and a credible and neutral facilitator have proved to be key comparative advantages when responding to the unfolding crisis in Ukraine.

The debate underlined that the EU was a strong and indispensable actor within the OSCE, so it was essential that EU member states have a joint vision of long-term objectives that they would like to achieve through the OSCE. It was also important that they clearly and consistently articulate the OSCE's role and added value from the EU's perspective. Despite very good practical co-operation between the organizations, the OSCE-EU partnership should be strengthened and become more strategic. The EU's strong support for the OSCE's operations in Ukraine was one example of how well this can work, but there were also other regions and areas where the EU could use the OSCE's capacities and expertise more actively to enhance its own impact. This was particularly relevant for the OSCE Field Operations in Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Central Asia. Mutual partnership and co-operation should be guided by principles of "smart multilateralism" based on synergies, complementarities and utilizing the comparative advantages of each player.

The forthcoming EU Global Strategy offered an opportunity for the EU to clearly define its long-term objectives and vision, including its role within the OSCE as a regional security organization. Compared to the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), the new EU Global Strategy would be more operational and would focus also on practical measures aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening the resilience of European states and societies. Its underlying principle would be building the EU primarily as a value-based security community. Given a deteriorating security situation in Europe, it was suggested that the EU strategy should express strong and fundamental support for the model of co-operative security embodied in the OSCE since it was built on the same norms and values as the EU. Furthermore, the OSCE remained the only multilateral framework for addressing Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security issues where Russia had subscribed to common norms and principles, and actively participated on an equal basis with other countries, including member states of the EU and NATO. The EU Global Strategy should thus provide a counterargument to efforts by some actors to challenge fundamental principles of the co-operative security framework and the legitimacy of the OSCE.

There was general agreement that there was no incentive for the EU to rapidly reset its relationship with Russia before the settlement of the conflict in and around Ukraine. At the same time, the EU needed to move beyond its current strategy, which was mostly reactive, and find a new *modus vivendi* for dealing with Russia. There should be more dialogue on relevant European issues that might be of common interest and where both sides could co-operate in a more pragmatic way, such as infrastructure projects or fostering co-operation in the energy sector. It was underlined that pragmatism should not be interpreted as compromising on principles, but as assessing realistically the state of affairs and perspectives for mutual cooperation under current circumstances. When looking for common ground with Russia, it was also necessary to consider the imperatives of its domestic politics.

From a long-term perspective, most speakers agreed that it was in Europe's interest to find a sustainable political settlement with Russia that would resolve the current crisis. The Final

Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security argued that this could be achieved only through a robust diplomatic process. The core issues that would have to be addressed included the security status of the “states in-between”, i.e., countries that became independent with the dissolution of the Soviet Union but have neither joined Western institutions nor Russian-led regional organizations. Some of these states, such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, aspired to become members of the EU and/or NATO, which Moscow perceived as a threat to its national security. Europe’s long-term goal should be finding a geopolitical and economic understanding with Russia concerning these states. Such a settlement would have to be based on international norms and principles, including the Helsinki principles. Given the current political context, this seemed unlikely to be achieved in the short term, but it should remain Europe’s primary long-term goal. Speakers agreed that full implementation of the Minsk Agreements and cessation of hostilities in Ukraine would be a starting point for such a process. The OSCE as a forum for inclusive and equal security dialogue should play a key role in these efforts.

Given current circumstances, some speakers argued that any attempts to put security in Europe on a more stable basis would have to be inspired mainly by pragmatism and efforts to rebuild mutual trust from the bottom up. The OSCE’s role as a platform for addressing common challenges was particularly relevant in this regard. At the same time, it was also emphasized that a pragmatic approach alone had its limits and could not solve the crisis of European security without a wider diplomatic framework at the governmental level. Findings and recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security could serve as an important source of inspiration for efforts to return to co-operative security in Europe.

## **Conclusions and key findings**

- The crisis in and around Ukraine illustrated that the OSCE continues to play a crucial role in the European security architecture. Its comprehensive toolbox, large and well-established field presence, and its role as a forum for inclusive security dialogue as well as a platform for joint action remain key comparative advantages of the Organization.
- The EU-OSCE partnership should be more strategic. The EU member states need to have a joint vision of long-term objectives they would like to achieve by acting in and with the OSCE. They should empower the OSCE and clearly and consistently articulate what role and added value the OSCE has from the EU’s perspective.
- The forthcoming EU Global Strategy should express strong support for the OSCE, including its normative foundations and its model of co-operative security.
- Strengthening the EU’s engagement within the OSCE would be beneficial for both organizations. The EU should use the OSCE’s capacities and expertise more actively (“smart multilateralism”), in particular the OSCE’s Field Operations in Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Central Asia.
- The EU needs to find a new *modus vivendi* for dealing with Russia that should be based on pragmatic co-operation in areas of common interest, including both global and European issues (e.g., infrastructure, energy sector, research, Arctic).

- From a long-term perspective, Europe's primary goal should be reaching a sustainable political settlement with Russia through a robust diplomatic process as recommended by the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security.
- Some findings and recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security could serve as an important source of inspiration for efforts to return to a climate of co-operative security within Europe.

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