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The OSCE Summit and New Security Threats

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The security threats and challenges faced by the OSCE Participating States have been clearly identified in the statements of many Heads of State or Government, and in the Astana Declaration:

- First, the “traditional” ones: conflicts and the threat or use of force; lack of implementation of OSCE commitments, especially in the field of human rights; economic and environmental challenges; threats to energy security;
- Then the so-called “emerging transnational threats”: terrorism, organized crime, illegal migration, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), cyber threats and the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, drugs and human beings.

Not surprisingly, the same threats and challenges have been identified other groupings within the OSCE Area: the European Union (EU),¹ the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)² and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).³

Thus the question is not so much the determination of security threats, on which there seems to be a broad consensus, but the responses to them. Within the OSCE, two differing approaches have prevailed, particularly in attempts to prevent conflict and deal with external threats:

- On the one hand, a “Westphalian”, traditional approach, putting emphasis on state security and national sovereignty but gradually expanding the areas of inter-governmental cooperation;
- And a more “integrated” approach, with transfer of sovereign powers to supranational organizations or mechanisms, focusing on human security, common values, and norm-setting as an exportable model.

¹ See the Executive Summary of the EU Council Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy, 11 December 2008: “State failure affects our security through crime, illegal immigration and, most recently, piracy. Terrorism and organised crime have evolved with new menace, including within our own societies. The Iranian nuclear programme has significantly advanced, representing a danger for stability in the region and for the whole non-proliferation system....The arteries of our society - such as information systems and energy supplies - are more vulnerable. Global warming and environmental degradation is altering the face of our planet. . . . Recent financial turmoil has shaken developed and developing economies alike.”

² See Article 8 of the CSTO Charter: “The member States shall coordinate and harmonize their efforts in combating international terrorism and extremism, the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and arms, organized transnational crime, illegal migration and other threats to the security of the member States.

³ See the New NATO Strategic Concept, especially its Paragraphs 8 and 9 (proliferation of ballistic missiles, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction); 10 (terrorism); 11 (instability or conflict fostering extremism, terrorism, and trans-national illegal activities such as trafficking in arms, narcotics and people); 12 (cyber attacks); 13(attacks against vital communication, transport and transit routes for international trade and energy security); 15 (environmental and resource constraints, including health risks, climate change, water scarcity and increasing energy needs).

One of the advantages of a forum such as the OSCE is precisely to allow the sharing of experiences by both approaches, whether successful or not, and the crafting of responses adapted to individual needs while promoting win-win solutions instead of zero-sum games.

Recommendations for Possible OSCE Responses

1. Like other regional organizations having competences in security such as NATO and the EU, the OSCE should improve its autonomous capacity to assess security risks, threats and challenges and to conduct strategic analysis as well as conflict prevention through early warning. To some extent, these functions are already fulfilled by the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), the Chairman-in-Office's Personal Representatives, and the OSCE Academy. But there could be an advantage for the OSCE to rely more on a permanent research structure similar to the EU Institute of Security Studies (EUISS) or a Policy Planning Staff, directly attached to the Secretary-General. Clearly, expert contributions from Participating States would form the core of the research, but such an Institute could also benefit from the expertise of independent scholars throughout the OSCE area. The main task of the Institute would be to conduct studies on its own initiative or at the request of the Secretariat or Participating States, particularly on actual or potential security threats affecting all or part of the OSCE area, and make relevant policy recommendations to the Participating States.

The OSCE region is very much connected, in security terms, with the neighbouring regions (the Mediterranean, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, etc.). Moreover, most of those threats and challenges have a transnational character as seen above. Therefore the OSCE's responses to security threats and challenges occurring in those regions or shared with them should take into account a global perspective and multilateral action. In Vienna, the OSCE can already cooperate with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on issues such as narcotic or radioactive material smuggling and trafficking as well as transnational organized crime including human trafficking. But there is also a wealth of expertise and experience in Geneva in addressing the various cross-cutting transnational issues, especially those related to "soft security", conflict prevention and management or post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. Several organizations, and not only from the UN system, are already active on the territory of many Participating States : the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Labour Office (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), etc. Also worth mentioning are the many experts on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation kept busy, both on WMD and conventional disarmament, despite the stalemate of the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating forum. Finally, an important part of this network is made of the many NGOs, research centres, advocacy or civil society organizations active in those fields, such as the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, or the Small Arms Survey. If the OSCE decided to open a Liaison Office in Geneva, it would certainly help it to coordinate better those activities in the OSCE area and make the policies already applied within the multilateral framework more visible in the OSCE context.

3. In this regard, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP),⁴ because of its experience in training the future leaders of most Participating States, thanks to its Geneva-based and

⁴ See: www.gcsp.ch

worldwide network of experts, and due to its existing cooperation with the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, can bring to the OSCE a useful contribution in the field of security policy. We will host on 16 December 2010 a public conference on the results of the Astana Summit. We could, if there was interest, follow this up with other events tailor-made to the needs of the Organization and its Participating States. One opportunity would be for Participating States or the Organization to fund scholarships for the training of future leaders of OSCE States in security policy. Another framework that could be of use, especially to the Participating States in regions of frozen conflicts, is the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP)⁵: established in the wake of the creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in New York in 2006, this network of some 70 intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions involved in one or several aspects of post-conflict stabilization and recovery is managed by the GCSP with three other partners. It has developed good practices, helped coordinate stakeholders in headquarters and in the field, and catalysed collaborative learning on peacebuilding.

⁵ See: www.gppplatform.ch