



Basel Peace Forum 2019 – Rethinking Peace, Innovating the Future

Keynote address: “Peace & Security in the OSCE Region”

OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is great to be back to Basel – a city that has so successfully hosted the OSCE Ministerial Council at the end of the Swiss Chairmanship in 2014. I should tell you that I have the fondest memories of the event that took place in these very premises and turned out to be one of the most successful Ministerial Councils in recent times. Thanks to Basel’s hospitality.

The Basel Peace Forum with its forward-leaning appeal is the right place to think ahead and consider how emerging trends might impact us. So I am very pleased and very grateful to be here with you today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If I were to adapt the motto of the Basel Peace Forum to reflect the OSCE’s priorities, it would be: Rethinking security in Europe, innovating dialogue and co-operation.

Today I will look at European security and what the OSCE is doing to promote dialogue and co-operation in a tense environment. Given the focus on innovation, I will also talk about the potential of new tech tools for enhancing security as well as the risks they might entail.

First let’s look at the overall security picture. Frankly it is worrying.

We see increasing polarization between states but also within our societies. Predictability in international affairs is decreasing. There is little trust left between key players.

Military power has made a come-back as a means to advance political goals also in the Euro-Atlantic area – often disregarding established norms and

principles. Risks stemming from potential military incidents are higher than any time since the end of the Cold War.

Meanwhile, transnational threats are on the rise. They range from terrorism and violent extremism to trafficking in human beings, arms and drugs, as well as cybercrime. Global challenges like climate change and migration are creating additional uncertainties. And rapid technological change is adding further complexity.

In this volatile security environment, some are casting doubt on the viability of the current multilateral order.

Some of the world's most powerful countries are increasingly conducting foreign relations through purely transactional and often confrontational approaches. Unilateralism and a focus on narrow parochial interests are challenging broader multilateral forms of co-operation.

Support for multilateralism is diminishing just when dialogue and co-operation are needed most. So, from my perspective, shoring up support for multilateral co-operation is a pressing challenge. We need to prevent it from eroding further.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dialogue is at the core of multilateralism. And it is the heart and soul of the OSCE.

Dialogue is the key to rebuilding trust. We need real dialogue to revive a sense of common purpose and a culture of co-operation. But as trust in multilateralism declines and uncertainty grows, the space for East-West dialogue – the core of the OSCE's business – is contracting.

Deepening East-West tensions have reshaped security priorities throughout Europe and the wider Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. This in turn affects security dialogue and multilateral co-operation.

Constructive debate has been a rare commodity in recent years, including in the OSCE. Since most formal channels are being blocked or have turned sterile, we are trying to create more informal spaces for dialogue.

The OSCE's flagship initiative is called the Structured Dialogue. It focuses on political-military matters and aims to rebuild trust and confidence. State-owned and state-driven, this informal process has stimulated useful exchanges on threat

perceptions, force postures and military doctrines. It has also started to discuss practical steps to reduce military risks.

But more needs to be done. Breaking down barriers to better mutual understanding requires a broad-based approach. So, informal contacts and discussion between militaries, but also parliamentarians, academics, business leaders and civil society groups should be encouraged.

We must keep dialogue going and prepare for a time when states can again reach out to each other and mend their relations. In other words, we must prepare the ground for a revival of co-operative security, when the time is ripe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The success of multilateral diplomacy and co-operation depends on good-faith engagement – and willingness to compromise.

In the current climate of distrust, an incremental approach to co-operation is the most realistic way forward. This means seeking convergence where possible. It means seizing opportunities where States – East and West – have a common interest in joint action.

We cannot afford to be complacent. We cannot simply wait for the current turbulence in international politics to go away. We need to modernize our collective multilateral toolbox so that states regain confidence in their ability to effectively address today's challenges together.

Interests do converge on a whole host of issues: cyber security, preventing terrorism and violent extremism, dealing with large movements of refugees and migrants, combatting trafficking of people, drugs, and arms; or climate change and sustainable energy.

Our multilateral institutions were not designed to deal with today's complex challenges. So we need to update them to ensure that they are "fit for purpose." This includes applying modern technology and leveraging its benefits for the sake of peace, stability and development.

Of course, technology and innovation can be a double-edged sword.

The Internet can enhance political participation and access to information – but it also can be used for surveillance and to curtail fundamental freedoms. And it can easily be misused for criminal purposes. Violent extremists and terrorists

use digital means to mobilize resources, train, recruit, radicalize, and incite others to commit terrorist attacks. And cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure can pose a serious threat to peace and stability.

More profound changes lie ahead of us.

We are just beginning to understand how artificial intelligence can affect us. “Deep learning” techniques combined with large amounts of data will influence our behaviour in all sorts of areas: from the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, to transport, to our ability to address climate change.

Whether these changes will have a positive or negative impact on international security and stability will largely depend on the willingness of states to cooperate with each other to identify opportunities and limit risks and threats.

But without a doubt, international security will be profoundly affected by the A.I. revolution. States leading the development of these technologies will have a comparative advantage in economic but also in military terms. And the prospect of an A.I. race further feeding distrust between major powers cannot be ruled out. In the absence of international regulatory frameworks the sudden advent of A.I. technologies could lead to further fragmentation in the international security order.

A.I. could also open the door for irresponsible, uncontrolled and unethical uses by non-state actors, such as terrorist groups and criminal networks, with serious security consequences. For instance, A.I. algorithms might lead to the automation of hacking. The use of commercial drones carrying explosive materials equipped with A.I.-enabled face-recognition software can soon be a tool in the hands of terrorist networks. Fake news supported by fabricated, yet extremely realistic, A.I.-generated video and audio material will make it increasingly difficult to distinguish facts from noise in the online world.

But if we can create the right sort of framework to encourage responsible uses of A.I., the benefits for stability, peace and development will outweigh the risks. I hope that eventually the OSCE might become a platform for meaningful dialogue on technology and security – to exchange best practices and develop confidence and security-building measures.

The 57 OSCE participating States have already agreed to 16 confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of misperception and miscalculation stemming from the use of Information and Communication Technologies. These

pioneering “cyber-CBMs” encourage states to co-operate to prevent tit-for-tat reactions. Or an escalation that could potentially trigger conventional military responses. The challenge now is to get states to implement these cyber confidence-building measures.

Technological progress has also fundamentally altered the equation for conventional arms control. The effectiveness of existing mechanisms, including those developed within the OSCE framework, is increasingly being questioned. Classical approaches to calculating the balance of power by counting comparable weapon systems no longer capture the real capabilities of contemporary military infrastructure.

Advances in technology are upgrading existing hardware and introducing whole new weapons systems. There already are vast improvements in fire power, accuracy and deployability, miniaturization and camouflage: just consider unmanned aerial vehicles, self-learning machines, robotics, nanotech and stealth technology. And the discussion surrounding so-called lethal autonomous weapon systems has only just begun. The new complexity will need to be studied and mapped before states can develop relevant criteria and a shared understanding of respective capabilities.

The OSCE is not inactive in facing these trends but clearly we should do more and more quickly.

The OSCE is developing an innovative information management and reporting tool to support political-military dialogue between OSCE participating States. This tool will better visualize arms control information. It will help create a solid basis for further discussion of confidence-building measures and future adaptations to arms control agreements.

Technology also increasingly plays a role in our conflict management operations and capacity-building activities.

You may know about the OSCE’s role in efforts to manage the crisis in and around Ukraine. In 2014, we launched the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine – the SMM – to monitor developments on the ground and to help defuse tensions. We also support – to the extent possible – the political process seeking a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

Technology plays an important role in the SMM’s work. For example, it uses UAVs to supplement its monitoring activities. We have built up a large fleet of

short-, mid-, and long-range drones. This extends the Mission's reach, especially to areas where access is difficult – whether for security reasons or due to restrictions imposed by one of the sides. The SMM also uses sophisticated cameras and satellite imagery. It is currently exploring the deployment of a new geographic information management system to improve situational awareness, imagery analysis and team communications. Technology helps us to fulfil our monitoring and reporting tasks more effectively. Its use increases the safety and security of our monitors. At the same time we need to acknowledge that technology cannot replace lack of political will to implement the Minsk Agreements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our work is closely connected to technological advances in other ways, too.

For example, we support states in South East Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia in implementing UN Security Council resolutions to counter terrorism.

This includes assistance in establishing databases such as Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record systems and collecting biometric data.

And we also support capacity-building activities for fighting cyber-crime and protecting critical infrastructure from cyber-attacks.

So technology clearly is playing its role – in our operational and capacity-building activities and in the security dialogue that we seek to promote.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude.

New technologies force us to open ourselves up to change. So, harnessing the power of innovation and making responsible use of technology is critical to all of us – whether as individuals, companies or multilateral organizations. The OSCE, like many other organizations, is adapting in many ways, but our ultimate mission remains the same: To offer an effective, comprehensive and inclusive platform for strengthening security and co-operation in Europe.

Thank you for your attention.