



# DECIPHERING THE SECURITY COMMUNITY DEBATE

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*Several attempts have been made in recent years to revive a process towards developing more trust and reconciliation in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space. But much of this debate has not been very accessible; concepts are abstract and the formats for discussion have also been less visible and interesting for media and policymakers. This policy brief seeks to give an overview of the state of play in the security community debate.*

Over the last years, several official attempts have been made to improve mutual trust – however with varying success – between states within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) region, covering the entire area between Vancouver to Vladivostok. From the Russian side the idea of a new overarching foundation document was launched through the 2007 Medvedev proposal for a European security treaty. While the idea is not dead, the notion of trying to regulate future ambitions of NATO and EU both in terms of enlargement and policies – including missile defense – is still there, the proposal for a new foundation document has lost much of its prominence in the debate.

In the OSCE an important first step to promote trust was achieved at the Astana summit in 2010, namely a total reaffirmation of all CSCE/OSCE commitments made throughout the years. Notably, the participating States reaffirmed categorically and irrevocably that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of each State. However, due to irreconcilable differences on issues, for instance related to Georgia, the framework action plan for realizing the vision of a security community in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space was not agreed upon, although it has remained on the table during the Lithuanian (2011) and Irish (2012) Chairmanship periods of the OSCE.

Only a few weeks after the Summit, noncompliance with the commitments in the human dimension following the Belarus elections aggravated the situation, and an agreement on these human dimension issues was blocked at the Ministerial meeting in Vilnius in late 2011. At the Dublin

Ministerial meeting 6-7 December 2012, a new effort will be made to create a process called Helsinki +40 aiming at progress in view of 2015 throughout the Ukrainian, Swiss and Serbian Chairmanships. Progress will however require a stronger prioritization of efforts in the OSCE, which is currently pursuing a very large number of programs and projects in parallel.

In addition to the above mentioned efforts, several Track II initiatives have been launched to underpin the security community debate. First of all, the Euro Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI) focused on the Euro-Atlantic scope and was led by Igor Ivanov, Wolfgang Ischinger and Sam Nunn in an effort supported by Carnegie Endowment. The results of this initiative were presented at the Munich Security conference in February 2012. Specific efforts were made to focus on the most difficult issues and to create processes to deal with them, including missile defense and the most controversial issues in Polish-Russian relations. Eminent experts on both sides were recruited to try to find a way ahead on both issues. While the Polish-Russian track still seems alive, the lack of attention for the proposals on missile defense was disappointing.

The fate of a second initiative, IDEAS, undertaken by the foreign ministers of Germany, France, Poland and Russia is now under consideration ahead of the OSCE Dublin Ministerial meeting. This initiative, which was put forward at Vilnius in 2011, resulted in a study published by four think tanks in October 2012. The report contains a number of recommendations, both with regard to what should be done in the OSCE region as a whole as well as to what should be done specifically by the OSCE itself. The scope of this study was wider than EASI, covering the Eurasian dimension as well.



## Underlying Problems

The underlying problem in this debate clearly is a deep-rooted mutual distrust within the region as a whole and the continued risk for not only intrastate but also interstate conflict in several sub-regions. Issues such as energy, water and the financial crisis have broadened the scope for potential conflict and thereby also the scope of the comprehensive concept of security developed within the OSCE context. This means that the original notion of a security community, meaning absence of war, does not resonate with the whole range of issues at hand. In the 1950s, in the midst of the Cold War, Karl Deutsch introduced the concept of security community as the notion of an international order that transcends the communities of nation states. It was defined as a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose constituents maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change. In other words, within a security community, violence and war between states becomes unthinkable.

In the OSCE discourse, however, the security community concept has been linked to the issue of implementation of a broad range of value-based commitments and, in addition, the notion of trust has become increasingly fundamental in the debate. The post Cold War broadening of the security policy agenda with the revival of historical conflicts within and between states, fuelled by difficulties relating to globalization, has further complicated the conceptual debate. And of course, as can be expected, the issue of spheres of influences is still closely related to how different state actors promote different versions of the concept of security community.

From an EU perspective, the unacceptability of a new division of the OSCE space into different spheres in terms of values and commitments is clear, while from the Russian side the current effort is more often described as a way to increase trust and predictability between two interlinked but still separate processes of integration in East and West.

What other Eastern countries in Central Asia and in the Caucasus, etc., think about all this is not altogether clear. Some, such as Uzbekistan, shy away from a multilateralization of issues which would seem to be likely candidates for common ground conflict prevention processes, such as water management. The American position on its role in the security community is probably still under review in Washington, not least due to the uncertainties following the expected 2014 withdrawal from Afghanistan and the continued resistance from the Russian side against an over-active American and NATO presence beyond Afghanistan-related logistics in the post-Soviet space.

These issues will continue to be discussed among OSCE participating States, however not only in the OSCE framework, as the security community debate will most likely continue to play a role in trilateral interchanges between Russia, the EU and the United States.

## Recommended and Consulted Sources

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