Whither the OSCE and the Euro-Atlantic & Eurasian Security Community?

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The latest OSCE Ministerial Council in Dublin, on December 6–7, 2012, has shed light on the challenges and opportunities that the organization will continue to face, as well as on the security community debate. This policy brief will outline recent developments and will discuss the potential comparative advantages that security community-building institutions (including OSCE, NATO, EU and the Council of Europe) might have in developing the envisioned Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community. It will argue that in order to be effective, such efforts need to be both prioritized and inclusive.

For the second year in a row, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Council in Dublin, December 6–7, 2012, concluded without decisions in the human dimension, and several interventions (including U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's) expressed concerns about the future of the organization. At the same time, however, a decision was reached – though with great difficulty – on a multi-annual strategy towards the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2015, throughout the three upcoming Chairmanships of Ukraine, Switzerland and Serbia. The adoption of this decision was the result of skillful diplomatic work by the Irish Chair, supported by the incoming Chairs. Encouraging is that Poland and possibly even Germany and later France, are preparing candidatures for chairing the organization after 2015.

The EU's High Representative Catherine Ashton expressed strong support for the OSCE, not least based on her recent trip to four Central Asian states. Hopefully, this support can be operationalized further: EU member states provide 70 percent of the OSCE budget, after all. The review of the External Action Service in 2013 may be an occasion to further beef up the way the EU can cooperate with other organizations to achieve more multilateral effectiveness. Although this is not primarily a formal issue, Russian Minister Sergey Lavrov did refer to a readiness to review the rules of procedure of the OSCE, in order to give the EU a higher status within the OSCE – while at the same time giving similar privileges to the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and the Eurasian Economic Community. This can be read as an indirect comment to the report on the OSCE and other organizations (Lundin, 2012) that proposed to prioritize a few priority substantial rather than procedural objectives: the human dimension, conflicts, transnational threats and arms control; an approach in principle supported in letters by the UN Secretary-General and the EU High Representative to the Irish Chair commenting on the report. In its concluding statement in Dublin, the U.S. representative also referred to the need to develop more effective substantial cooperation with other international organizations.

However, the real issue is of course not how these organizations work together, but rather the political will of the participating states to respect and implement the commitments reaffirmed at the 2010 Astana Summit. To a large extent, the future of the OSCE also depends on the continued interest of the transatlantic partners within the organization.

Security Community-Building Institutions

Over the past years, the vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community – ranging from Vancouver to Vladivostok – has regained traction in the security community debate, notably at the Astana Summit and in several Track II initiatives (IDEAS, EASI, etc.). However, the debate is complicated by a multitude of implicit problems, as discussed in ISDP Policy Brief 107, *Deciphering the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community Debate*. First of all, there is no common understanding between different international actors of what a security community exactly entails, as conceptualizations range from Karl Deutsch's 'negative peace' understanding of a transnational region of sovereign states where violence and war between states is unthinkable, to a more encompassing understanding of a trust-based community founded on shared norms, values and identities. International actors subsequently adopt different security community conceptualizations to suit their own interest, which further complicates the process.

This policy brief argues that a security community cannot be created with a single act, but its development should rather be seen as the result of a long-term process that shapes mutual identities. Such a process does not only take place on a state-level, as the engagement of local actors and states' constituents is essential to the development of a security community. Such a process can be facilitated by security community-building institutions that serve as catalysts for the diffusion and internalization of norms and knowledge on different levels of society.

One possible security community-building institution is of course the European Union, as it is clear that the European idea inspires a lot of the overall security community discussion. However, the EU is not likely to have the same traction across the entire post-Soviet space as it has had in the Western Balkans. NATO is also a major security community-building institution, being an established trans-Atlantic security organization covering a large section of the proposed security community area. But there are limits to the scope of the organization and its inclusiveness, in particular with regard to Russia and the rest of the post-So-

viet area. Another possible institution that can facilitate the process is the Council of Europe, of which Russia and the states are members. This is important because the Council of Europe addresses key issues of relevance, notably in the human dimension. However, while the Council could indeed play a facilitating role, it does not include the U.S. or Canada, nor Central Asia. Finally, the OSCE can be argued to be able to play a leading role as a security community-building institution: from the outset, OSCE has incorporated all states within the envisioned security community that have expressed a political will to live up to the standards and norms of such a community. However, Russia maintains a skeptical attitude towards the OSCE and its comprehensive concept of security, in particular to vital parts of the human dimension, while the U.S. and some other Western countries, in contrast, put the overall emphasis on the human dimension.

Prioritization & Inclusiveness

So how can this be resolved? Will Russia succeed in its ambition to prioritize the Council of Europe as the main human rights organization in the post-Soviet space, while at the same time reducing the scope of the OSCE to a few common ground areas? Will the U.S. increase its engagement? Will EU member states sustain their comprehensive concept of security and the focus on implementation of agreed commitments in all dimensions? The eventual fate of the OSCE, as well as of the security community, will likely be the result of a very drawn-out process.

This policy brief does not agree with earlier conclusions presented in the IDEAS Report (Zellner et al., 2012), that recommends the OSCE to address and set in motion as many issues and processes as possible, while focusing on a so-called Europeanness of the organization. Instead, we argue that the future role of the OSCE will to a large extent depend on its ability to provide added value in a few prioritized areas: the human dimension, conflicts, transnational threats and arms control. Hopefully, the multi-annual perspective agreed at the Ministerial Council will give the incoming Chairs the strength to avoid fragmentation and

marginalization in terms of initiatives. The OSCE needs to focus on the most important and, at the same time, the most difficult issues that are central to the objectives of the organization. Furthermore, besides prioritizing its efforts, OSCE efforts should be inclusive: taking into account that it is not a European organization, as it includes Central Asia and the trans-Atlantic partners as well.

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