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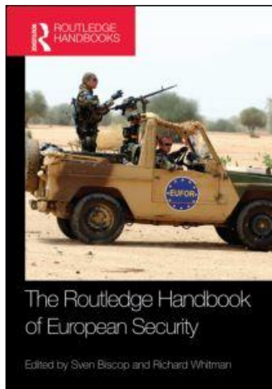

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CSDP and the OSCE

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CSDP AND THE OSCE
Time for partnership to reach its full potential?

Oleksandr Pavlyuk

The EU and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are key multilateral players, whose contribution to security and stability in wider Europe is difficult to overestimate. Their relationship, which traces back to the origins of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, has had a long history and has been a mixture of positive synergies and unfulfilled promises (Bailes, Haine and Lachowski, 2008).

OSCE–EU cooperation in conflict prevention and resolution and crisis management is a relatively new phenomenon that has largely evolved since 1999, when the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) was launched. Today, as conflict settlement and crisis management put an increased demand on international organizations, it is also coming on top of the OSCE–EU cooperation agenda. After the entry into force of the EU Lisbon Treaty and after the OSCE summit in Astana in December 2010, this is a proper political moment to look afresh at mutual experiences and cooperation to date and hopefully embark on a partnership that might bring new dynamics in dealing with conflict prevention and resolution and crisis management.

OSCE–EU cooperation: does it matter?

Since 1999, the OSCE and the EU have gone through notable transformations. Equally, the places occupied by the two organizations in European security have changed as well. Just several years ago, the role of the OSCE had been seriously contested. On the contrary, the EU was emerging as a powerful security actor, as its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and ESDP had gradually evolved (Lynch, 2009). Yet both CFSP and ESDP have remained constrained by internal political divisions on some key foreign policy issues, while the Union's newly gained confidence has been seriously shaken by the ongoing financial troubles. The OSCE, in turn, has some new and long due momentum, with the launch of the Corfu process, re-engagement of participating states in an open-ended political dialogue on the future of European security, and the conduct of the first OSCE summit in 11 years. The Astana summit reconfirmed the full adherence of participating states to all OSCE norms,

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principles and commitments, and reaffirmed a vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok and rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals. The summit, however, could not agree on a specific Framework for Action that was meant to translate the common vision into concrete practical steps in fulfillment of the objective of a security community.

For the OSCE, the EU is arguably a most important multilateral partner. The two organizations share many objectives, such as maintaining security and stability on the continent, promoting economic development and environmental safety and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, while the values of democracy and rule of law enshrined in the 1990 *Charter of Paris for a New Europe* and other OSCE commitments are central to the EU acquis.

The 27-strong EU counts for almost half the 56 OSCE participating states. Within the OSCE the EU speaks with one voice. Together with candidate countries, the Stabilization and Association process countries and potential candidate countries, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area, as well as with other countries that often align themselves with EU statements, the EU collective position reflects the opinion of up to 42 OSCE participating states. No other group of participating states within the OSCE can claim to be so representative.

Furthermore, EU members provide some three-quarters of the OSCE annual unified budget and over 55 per cent of all extra-budgetary contributions. Close to 70 per cent of OSCE seconded and half of contracted staff in the secretariat, institutions and field operations come from the EU member states. Until 2010, when the OSCE Chairmanship was taken over by Kazakhstan, the OSCE had been led by an EU member state for eight consecutive years. The OSCE Chairmanships in 2011 and 2012 are again EU members, Lithuania and Ireland respectively.

All this gives the EU significant political weight within the OSCE and makes the Union OSCE's indispensable partner. It also provides the EU with a big stake and leverage in contributing to shaping the OSCE's priorities and designing the organization's activities, although arguably the EU could be more active and efficient in pursuing its interests and agenda within the OSCE (Perrin de Brichambaut, 2009).

In sum, the EU has a special role to play within the OSCE as well as vis-à-vis the OSCE as a partner organization.

For the EU, the OSCE matters too and for several reasons. First, the OSCE is a unique platform for advancing CFSP and its goals. In fact, it is within the OSCE's predecessor – the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) – that the EU (in those days the European Communities) started to speak with one voice and gradually emerged as a security actor. The negotiations on the Helsinki Final Act and the post-Helsinki process provided the first major opportunity for EC members to coordinate their foreign policy efforts on security and security-related issues (Pijpers, 1990: 125–39). Later, the OSCE became one of the first venues where EU members practiced CFSP.

Second, while almost half of the OSCE participating states are now the EU member states, another half are not. The OSCE therefore remains the most inclusive security forum in its area. As such, it offers the EU a unique venue to engage multilaterally with the USA and Canada, Russia, non-EU European states, among them Norway, Turkey and Ukraine, as well as with states of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Naturally, the OSCE cannot and will not substitute bilateral channels of communication between the EU and non-EU countries. Nevertheless, the OSCE serves as an important multilateral forum for regular dialogue on a wide range of political and security issues.

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Furthermore, the OSCE Corfu process – a series of informal ambassadorial-level meetings in Vienna to discuss the future of European security that were run in the second half of 2009 and throughout 2010 – has reinvigorated the organization's role, which had declined in previous years, as a forum for substantive political dialogue. Through such a dialogue within the OSCE, the EU can strengthen its strategic partnership with Russia and enjoy a greater and more systematic engagement with its Eastern Partners, as well as with countries in Central Asia.

Third, the OSCE has developed, and is a repository for, a wide range of political commitments across three security dimensions – the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human – starting from basic principles guiding relations among states in its area to confidence-building and arms control measures, to human rights, democracy, rule of law and freedom of media. The European Commission regularly requests OSCE contributions when it comes to preparing annual progress reports on the candidate countries and potential candidate countries. Adherence to OSCE values and standards and implementation of OSCE commitments, which have been voluntarily subscribed to by all participating states, are seen as important benchmarks for the Union's bilateral relations with its non-EU neighbors. In some cases, the OSCE standards, e.g. in election observation, are widely recognized as a model. The implementation of OSCE commitments helps to enhance security in the region, which cannot but benefit the EU.

Fourth, the OSCE is also an operational player. It has limited resources, but it is flexible and, in some cases, the only acceptable multilateral actor on the ground. Since the early 1990s, the CSCE/OSCE has become a vehicle for supporting post-communist transition, thereby also facilitating the process of EU accession and enlargement. Through the work of its current 16 field operations, 3 institutions (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights/ODIHR, High Commissioner on National Minorities/HCNM, and Representative on the Freedom of Media) and Vienna-based secretariat, the OSCE assists participating states in implementing their commitments. Democratic institution-building and promotion of the rule of law and good governance have been at the heart of the OSCE's engagement with the post-communist countries, which is very much in line with the EU's policy goals and approaches towards these states. When the OSCE deployed its field operations throughout Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, in some places those were the first and for a while the only international presences on the ground. In Central Asia, the OSCE remains until today the main vehicle for multilateral international engagement.

Such mutual complementarity, if not dependence, makes it only natural that the OSCE and the EU should coordinate and work closely together to advance their common causes.

Evolution of a general framework for cooperation

Interaction between the then CSCE and the European Communities goes back to the Helsinki process, when the European Commission participated in the preparatory negotiations of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, with the latter also being signed by the Italian prime minister in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Communities. In 1990 and 1999 respectively, presidents of the European Commission signed two other basic OSCE documents: the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe* and the *Charter for European Security*.

More practical contacts between the CSCE/OSCE and other organizations and institutions, including the European Community, started to develop in the early 1990s. With the end

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of the Cold War, the CSCE functions expanded from being a forum for political and security dialogue to providing practical assistance to the post-communist states in their democratic transitions, as well as to preventing and resolving conflicts that erupted in Southeastern and Eastern Europe and in the South Caucasus. By the mid-1990s, the CSCE transformed from a conference into a regional security organization – OSCE – with its permanent structures and operational capabilities. Furthermore, this was the time when the wider Europe saw the emergence of a whole series of new regional and sub-regional groupings, each of them looking for its role and place in post-Cold War Europe, while the traditional European institutions – the EU, NATO and the Council of Europe – proved their value to members and were highly attractive to most non-members in the region.

How these various regional actors should interact was a dilemma of both conceptual and practical significance. Should there be one leading organization, a sort of European United Nations, to take the main responsibility for ensuring security and stability on the continent? And if so, could the CSCE/OSCE, being the most inclusive and comprehensive organization in the area and recognized in 1993 by the UN as a Chapter VIII regional arrangement, serve this function? Or should there be rather a horizontal interaction of equals, and in this case what would the principles and modalities of such an interaction be?

The answers were given by the OSCE summit in Istanbul in 1999 when heads of state and government adopted the *Platform for Cooperative Security* as an operational document of the *Charter for European Security*.

The idea of the Platform was put forward by the EU in 1994, in response to a series of Russian proposals on 'enhancing the effectiveness of the CSCE'. Inter alia, the Russian proposals anticipated 'a genuine division of labour' between regional organizations and the 'overriding responsibility' of the CSCE for ensuring security and stability on the continent. In contrast, the EU advocated a concept of 'mutually reinforcing organizations' and a 'cooperative relationship' among them. Organizations 'concerned with the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area' were meant to complement each other in order to avoid duplication of efforts and wasting resources (Pavlyuk, 2009).

As far as the OSCE–EU relationship was concerned, the adoption of the Platform prompted the establishment and development of a broad cooperation framework aimed at the regular exchange of views and information, in line with the cooperation modalities outlined in the Platform. In 2002, a practice was established of holding two OSCE–EU Ministerial and two Ambassadorial meetings per year (under each EU Presidency), and in 2003 these were supplemented with the annual staff-level meeting. The OSCE Secretary General is invited twice a year to brief the EU Political and Security Committee, while various EU representatives address regularly the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. Within the OSCE, the EU member states hold a weekly coordination meeting to agree on joint statements.

Such close interaction between headquarters has been further reinforced by consultations and practical cooperation in the field, in particular in those countries that host OSCE field presences and where the EC/EU has established its delegations.

These modalities as well as guiding principles and specific areas of the EU–OSCE cooperation were codified in the Council *Conclusions on EU–OSCE Cooperation in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation*, adopted on 10 November 2003. Despite their title, the Conclusions addressed broader aspects of the EU–OSCE cooperation. Inter alia, the document recognized the role of the OSCE as 'a valuable instrument for the promotion of peace and comprehensive security in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok' and as 'an important partner for the EU', and affirmed the EU's determination to continue enhancing its relationship with the OSCE.[1]

In December 2003, the two organizations approved their respective security strategies: the *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century*, and the EU's *A Secure Europe in a Better World*. Both displayed similarities in understanding contemporary security threats and challenges and in placing emphasis on cooperation. The OSCE participating states further upheld and developed the provisions of the 1999 Platform and pledged the OSCE to expand its relations with all organizations and institutions that are concerned with the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area.[2] The EU members in the ESS underscored the role of effective multilateralism and recognized a 'particular significance' for the EU of the strength and effectiveness of the OSCE.

Overall, 2003 and 2004 were important years for the OSCE–EU relationship. On 1 May 2004, the EU completed the largest enlargement in its history, when ten new members, the majority being the post-communist states, joined the Union. In parallel, the EU adopted its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), covering inter alia the OSCE participating states in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. This EU embrace of more OSCE participating states, accompanied also by NATO enlargement, raised some fears as to the erosion of the OSCE's political role and functions (Ghebali, 2005: 18).

This was a particular concern as the OSCE itself entered a difficult period. Due to disagreements among participating states, the organization failed to secure a traditional political declaration at the end-of-year Ministerial Council meetings in Maastricht (2003) and Sophia (2004), which has ushered an unfortunate precedent for a number of years to come. As the EU was on the rise, the OSCE spiraled down into a limbo, when the very relevance of the organization was seriously questioned.

Moreover, democratic transitions came to a halt in some OSCE participating states, while peaceful democratic revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine provoked strong criticism of the OSCE's role in election observation. In both cases (parliamentary elections in Georgia in November 2003, and presidential elections in Ukraine in December 2004), the OSCE/ODIHR-led international election observation missions concluded that the elections held did not meet a considerable number of OSCE commitments. On 3 July 2004, the informal summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Moscow issued a *Declaration Regarding the State of Affairs in the OSCE*, and on 15 September 2004 eight CIS countries launched the *Astana Appeal to the OSCE*, both heavily criticizing the OSCE for 'misbalance' in its activities and 'double standards'.

Under such circumstances, the EU position on the OSCE became of special significance. On 14 June 2004, the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on the *Role of the EU within the OSCE* that stated that 'the OSCE is a valuable instrument for the promotion of security and co-operation' and underlined the EU's interest in enhancing its partnership with the OSCE 'in a comprehensive way'.[3] On 10 December 2004, the Council of the European Union endorsed the *Assessment Report on the EU's Role vis-à-vis the OSCE*. This 27-page report remains the most comprehensive EU document on the OSCE to date. In it, the EU defined its long-term objective as preserving the integral implementation of OSCE values and standards in the Euro-Atlantic area and developed suggestions on strengthening the relationship between the EU and the OSCE, as well as on reinforcing the EU performance in the OSCE.[4]

In the first half of 2006, the EU Austrian Presidency initiated the adoption of a joint declaration on cooperation between the EU and the OSCE, aimed at codifying the existing framework of interaction between the two organizations and at providing impetus to enhanced cooperation. The proposal was welcomed by the OSCE Belgian Chairmanship, but failed to reach consensus among the OSCE participating states. The OSCE–EU relationship has thus remained non-formalized, but nevertheless intensive.

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Indeed, as the EU expanded geographically and functionally and engaged deeper with countries and regions where the OSCE had traditionally been in the lead, the increased overlap in membership and areas of responsibility called for closer cooperation and coordination between the two organizations. The adoption of EU policy documents such as the ENP, the Black Sea Synergy (2007), and the Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia (2007), as well as the appointment of EU Special Representatives (for Moldova, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia, but also in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Kosovo), have not only enlarged the EU's outreach, but also significantly expanded the boundaries and scope for the EU–OSCE cooperation. These EU strategies contained specific references to the OSCE and its values, standards and commitments, while the Strategy for Central Asia stated the EU's intention to seek strengthening cooperation with the OSCE in the region.

In 2009, the OSCE was formally invited for the first time to join on a permanent basis the EU strategic policy initiative – the Eastern Partnership, in particular its multilateral Platform 1 on Democracy, Good Governance and Stability, which was a sign testifying to enhanced EU–OSCE cooperation, as well as recognition by the EU of the OSCE contribution to strengthening democracy, good governance and stability in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.

Since 1999, the OSCE and the EU have, therefore, developed a solid political foundation and an extensive framework for regular consultations and exchange of information, although there has hardly been a strategic approach to ensure that efforts are indeed mutually reinforcing.

Cooperation in conflict settlement and crisis management

With armed conflicts breaking out across the area in the early 1990s, their resolution became one of the CSCE/OSCE's primary tasks. CSEC/OSCE was the first body to be called upon for help in crisis situations. This was particularly the case when dealing with conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union, where other European organizations were unwilling and unprepared to engage, or even unwelcomed by some parties concerned.

Still a Conference, virtually unprepared operationally and organizationally to deal with conflict settlement, the CSCE, to its credit, put in place rather quickly relevant capacities and structures and deployed a number of field operations with an explicit conflict prevention and/or settlement mandate, such as the CSCE/OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje in November 1992, the CSCE/OSCE Mission to Georgia in December 1992, and the CSCE/OSCE Mission to Moldova in February 1993.[5]

Throughout the 1990s, CSCE/OSCE developed a variety of specialized conflict prevention and resolution tools (including special and personal representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office, field operations, HCNM, and the Vienna-based Conflict Prevention Centre, etc.), mechanisms and procedures (Ackerman, 2009). Partly by design and to some extent by default, CSCE/OSCE had to take the lead in dealing with conflicts in the former Soviet Union, including providing political frameworks for negotiations on the peaceful settlement of the Transniestrian, Georgian–Ossetian, and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts.

It was not by accident that in the 1999 *Charter for European Security* participating states defined the OSCE 'as a primary organization for the peaceful settlement of disputes within its region and as a key instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation'.[6]

Interaction between the CSCE/OSCE and the EC/EU on conflict prevention and crisis management emerged already in the early 1990s. For example, the decision to establish a

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CSCE Monitoring Mission in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was taken in mid-1992 in the context of the efforts to extend the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM) to neighboring countries of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to help avoid the spread of tension to their territories. Since 1995, the OSCE and the EU coordinated closely in implementing the Ohrid General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Until the end of the 1990s, the EU was mainly absorbed with bringing stability to the Western Balkans, while the countries of the former Soviet Union remained beyond its sphere of immediate interest.

As is the case with interaction among international organizations in general, 1999 opened a new page in the OSCE–EU cooperation in conflict prevention and crisis management. The ground was laid as the EU began to develop its civilian and crisis management capabilities with the establishment of the ESDP.

The OSCE 1999 *Platform for Cooperative Security* anticipated cooperation among international organizations and institutions in responding to specific crises. Relevant organizations and institutions were encouraged to 'keep each other informed of what actions they are undertaking or plan to undertake to deal with a particular situation'. The OSCE was offered, as appropriate, 'to serve as a flexible framework for cooperation of the various mutually reinforcing efforts' in responding to specific crises.

Consequently, and as an example, in 2001 the OSCE and the EU successfully coordinated their respective activities in preventive action during the political crisis in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, including constant information sharing, regular meetings and the establishment (together with NATO) of a joint operations room. International effort to contain inter-ethnic conflict resulted in a rare memorandum of understanding signed in 2002 between the OSCE and the European Commission, regarding cooperation between the two organizations on the implementation of the Framework agreement related to police development.

The November 2003 *Conclusions of the Council of the European Union on EU–OSCE Co-operation in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation* further suggested that the enhanced cooperation between the OSCE and the EU should include 'exchange of information and analysis, cooperation on fact finding missions, coordination of diplomatic activity and statements, including consultations between special representatives, training and in-field coordination', and went as far as offering 'possible contribution by the EU to the OSCE's operational efforts in crisis management' and the possibility of 'EU crisis management operations following a request from the OSCE'.[7]

With the adoption of its 2003 *European Security Strategy*, which set the task 'to promote a ring of well governed countries to the east of the European Union', and the strengthening of the latter's civilian and crisis management capabilities as the ESDP continued to develop, the EU has extended its geographic vision and has started to display interest and involvement in conflict settlement in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, where the OSCE had traditionally been the main player. This shift was probably partly caused by the OSCE's internal weakness and lack of progress in resolving any of the protracted conflicts, but largely came as a result of the EU's 'big bang' enlargement in May 2004 when the protracted conflicts moved closer to the EU borders.

Subsequently, the EU launched a number of policy initiatives in its 'immediate neighborhood' and beyond. In 2004, the EU member states agreed that the ENP 'should reinforce the EU's contribution to promoting the settlement of regional conflicts',[8] and the EU's 2007 Black Sea Synergy explicitly advocated 'a more active EU role through increased political involvement in ongoing efforts to address the conflicts (Transniestria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh)'.[9]

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In line with this policy approach, unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus and Moldova became the first testing ground for the EU's growing readiness to involve itself in conflict prevention and resolution in its Eastern neighborhood. In October 2005, the EU joined as an observer in the so-called '5+2' negotiation format for the settlement of the Transniestrian conflict where the OSCE is one of the three mediators (together with Russia and Ukraine), and a month later the EU established its Border Assistance Mission in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM). The mandates of several EU Special Representatives, in particular for the South Caucasus (2003) and Moldova (2007), included a contribution to the resolution of conflicts.

Gradually conflict settlement and crisis management has evolved into a key area for the OSCE–EU cooperation. Protracted conflicts and mutual efforts to address them now comprise a regular item on the agendas of OSCE–EU political and staff-level consultations.

Of 23 ESDP missions and operations deployed to date, 9 were established in the OSCE area, with 5 that continue to operate: the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina/ EUPM (since 2003), EUFOR Althea, also in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004), EUBAM, the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo/EULEX (2008), and the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia/EUMM (2008). All of them have developed a degree of cooperation and information-sharing with the OSCE on the ground.[10]

A further remarkable development took place in 2008. The EU effectively took the political lead in brokering the cease-fire agreement between Russia and Georgia, two OSCE participating states and non-EU members. Following the August 2008 war, the 300-strong EUMM was deployed on 1 October 2008 to monitor the implementation of the peace agreements of 12 August and 8 September and to contribute to the stabilization and normalization of the areas affected by the war. Until the end of 2008, the EUMM operated side by side with the OSCE military monitors. Yet the participating states failed to agree on the renewal of the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Georgia and the latter was discontinued in December 2008, once more revealing the difficulty of dealing with conflicts in the former Soviet Union, compared even to the Balkans, where in the same year the OSCE was able to maintain its status-neutral mission in Kosovo. The EUMM has thus remained the only international monitoring presence on the ground that operates along the administrative boundary lines. The EU also appointed its Special Representative for the Crisis in Georgia, who along with counterparts from the OSCE and the UN acts as a Co-Chair of the Geneva Discussions on security and stability in Georgia.

In the spring and summer of 2010, the OSCE coordinated closely with the EU (as well as with the UN) in the effort to reduce tension and stabilize the situation during the violent events in Kyrgyzstan. The contacts that had been built between the two organizations in previous years benefitted their coordinated action, by allowing a quick, smooth opening of the necessary channels of communication at all levels. In practical terms, the OSCE and EU special envoys on the situation in Kyrgyzstan, together with their UN counterpart, were issuing joint statements and delivering coordinated messages to the Kyrgyz authorities. In Bishkek, the weekly coordination meetings were held at the OSCE premises. The resulting regular information exchange proved very helpful for planning relevant activities of the concerned organizations and avoiding overlap and contradiction. Within the OSCE, the EU actively supported the decision on the launch of the OSCE Community Security Initiative in Kyrgyzstan. All in all, the OSCE–EU interaction in responding to the crisis in Kyrgyzstan was a rather promising experience of close coordination and synergy.

The crises in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan have highlighted three points. The first is that violent conflicts in the OSCE area – both inter-state and intra-state – that many hoped

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had been consigned to the past, are actually a fact of our present. Second, both crises have demonstrated the weakness, if not helplessness, of the international community, including the OSCE and the EU, in preventing the emerging crisis situations. Third, they have marked the emergence of a new reality – a more proactive stance of the EU on conflict settlement and crisis management in the regions where until recently the OSCE had borne the main responsibility.

Conclusion

As unresolved conflicts continue to pose a serious threat to security and stability and as new crisis situations occasionally flare up in the OSCE area, conflict prevention and crisis management are certain to remain among the key tasks of the OSCE and the EU. This will increasingly require the strengthening of their individual capacities and effectiveness, as well as enhanced OSCE–EU cooperation and coordination in resolving the protracted conflicts and in responding to possible new crisis situations.

So far, the two-decade-long efforts by the OSCE to resolve protracted conflicts in its area have not produced a single final settlement, but neither for that matter have those of any other international organization. Yet the OSCE remains a key multilateral instrument for early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area of responsibility. It is no longer the only, but remains an important and in some cases the main player. The OSCE continues to provide a political framework for the settlement of the Transniestrian and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts, it co-chairs the Geneva discussions, and it maintains a unique presence and lead in the countries of Central Asia, where potential for instability is high and might further increase after the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan. Moreover, under the 2010 Kazakh Chairmanship the OSCE's focus naturally shifted to the region of Central Asia. In essence, despite all the existing problems, the OSCE remains a main multilateral instrument for conflict settlement and crisis management in the former Soviet Union.

Prompted by the recent experiences, conflict prevention and resolution and crisis management are back on the top of the OSCE political agenda. Within the framework of the Corfu process, participating states identified issues related to early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation as core priorities for the organization. The need was widely acknowledged for the OSCE to make full use of the instruments, mechanisms and procedures at the organization's disposal, but also to improve its analytical and operational capabilities, and to strengthen its effectiveness in dealing with all phases of the conflict cycle.

The issue of moving from early warning to early action to ensure a prompt and effective response was the focus of particular attention. Yet while agreeing on the need to strengthen the organization's effectiveness, participating states have expressed different, sometimes conflicting views on how to achieve that. The problem is how to combine the operational needs and the organization's consensus-based working methods. While some states favored strengthening the role of the Chairmanship to empower it to act more quickly in crisis situations, others strongly insisted on the need to preserve the consensus-based decision-making process and the importance of the consent of the parties concerned, and suggested instead developing uniform principles for conflict prevention and crisis management. These discussions have continued under the 2011 Lithuanian Chairmanship within the framework of the so called 'V to V' dialogue and their outcome remains unclear at the time of this writing.

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Within this debate, the EU countries in particular called upon the OSCE to be a first responder in crisis situations and an initiator of international cooperation in the field of conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. This is a role that was broadly envisaged for the OSCE in the 1999 *Platform for Co-operative Security* – a role that the organization has not been pro-active and persistent enough in carrying out.

The latter call by the EU within the OSCE is an encouraging sign, as the effectiveness of future international efforts in conflict prevention and crisis management in the OSCE area is likely to depend a lot on EU willingness to support the OSCE and the latter's role in this field, as well as on EU interest and ability to further enhance its own engagement and contribution. The OSCE will be able to provide better values for the EU only if the EU keeps its political commitment to strengthen the OSCE and effectively work with it.

The EU has traditionally played a key role in conflict prevention and crisis management in the Balkans and in recent years has gradually emerged as an important contributor to conflict settlement and crisis management in the South Caucasus and in Moldova. The EU's increased involvement has been largely welcomed by the parties in conflict and by the OSCE.

The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and strengthening of the EU's common institutional framework in the area of CFSP (including the introduction of the post of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, assisted by the European External Action Service) are expected to increase the Union's effectiveness in the field of conflict prevention and crisis management, as well as to enhance the EU's capability to interact with its partners, including the OSCE. These are promising developments.

At the same time as EU enlargement has taken a break and does not seem to be on the cards for the Union's 'Eastern partners', it is an open question how successful the EU might be in dealing with conflict prevention and crisis management in its Eastern 'neighborhood' without its most powerful leverage, the prospect of accession. Neither the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative nor bilateral agreements in the making on political association and on a deep and comprehensive free trade area are likely to replace the magnetism of the membership option. Furthermore, the current financial and economic crisis is likely to put tough constraints on the EU budgets, including possibly in the conduct of crisis management operations.

Part of a solution lies in ever closer OSCE–EU cooperation and coordination in conflict prevention and crisis management. This should be not only the emerging trend, but a priority for both organizations for the future. The recent experiences in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan have proved that neither the EU nor the OSCE (nor any other organization) can succeed by acting alone, and that results can be achieved better and faster when the OSCE and the EU work together. Furthermore, the OSCE and EU approaches to conflict settlement and crisis management are based on largely overlapping strategies and a comprehensive approach aimed at fostering confidence-building, promoting economic development and encouraging rule of law, good governance and democratic institution-building.

In this regard, it is time for the EU-sponsored concept of 'mutually reinforcing' organizations, enshrined in the OSCE 1999 *Platform for Co-operative Security*, to get a new breath of life and be translated from a principle into an operational tool. In case of the OSCE–EU relationship, with inter-institutional mechanisms of consultations and cooperation well in place and functioning, including regular political dialogue and working-level contacts, and with cooperation experience accumulated in recent years, it is expedient to give some further thought to how the existing framework for cooperation could serve better the purpose of enhanced practical coordination in conflict prevention and resolution, including in the final settlement of the protracted conflicts, and in actual crisis situations. It is often on the eve of and during

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crises that organizations tend to be less successful in coordinating their efforts. The reality is often too complex and rapidly evolving to leave much time for consultations, especially since it often takes time to shape collective responses within organizations themselves, given the diversity of views and interests of member states.

At the operational level, further practical arrangements could be considered for improving inter-operability on the ground, especially in response to specific crisis situations. At the political level, both the OSCE and the EU should display stronger commitment to making better use of the existing regular cooperation mechanisms for policy coordination, and a stronger will to coordinate approaches and actions in response to crisis situations and in search of the final settlement of the protracted conflicts, by drawing on the respective strengths of the OSCE and the EU. Better synergy between the OSCE and the EU, based on the former's inclusiveness and resulting legitimacy and on the latter's political clout, economic and trade opportunities on offer and financial resources at its disposal, could produce a powerful and attractive instrument in conflict prevention and resolution and crisis management in the OSCE area.

Such an approach will, no doubt, require a degree of trust and commonality of interests and values among OSCE participating states. This is an ambitious goal behind the Astana summit vision of a security community in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. Whether this vision becomes a reality remains to be seen.

Notes

1. Council of the EU (2003).
2. OSCE (2003: 9–10, paras 52–7).
3. Council of the EU (2004a: 28).
4. Council of the EU (2004c).
5. See OSCE (2009).
6. OSCE (1999: 3, para. 7).
7. See Council of the EU (2003).
8. See European Neighbourhood Policy (2004: 6).
9. European Commission (2007b: 4).
10. For more on the relationship between EULEX and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, see Czaplinski (2009).