Introduction to *OSCE Insights* 2022: War in Europe

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The OSCE has never been a fair-weather organization, but 2022 was one of its worst years yet. Vladimir Putin's decision to order a full-scale attack on Ukraine and Russia's brutal conduct of the war violated international law and fundamental OSCE principles. Russia's war raises the question of how a consensus-based organization can deal with a major state that no longer respects the basic rules.

The weakening of the OSCE has also shown itself in the participating States' failure to agree on matters vital to keeping the Organization operational, including the budget. Throughout 2022, the OSCE was operating on monthly provisional allotments, making strategic planning impossible. Moreover, due to high inflation and unfavorable exchange rates, it was running short of money, which hindered the continuation of some of its activities.

Russia's veto forced the OSCE to close its field operations in Ukraine, and many worried that other operations would follow suit. Agreement on extending the mandates of the field operations eventually came in late 2022, but no agreement was reached on who would chair the OSCE in 2024. The Ministerial Council in Łódź in December 2022 did not yield any results. Rather, the Polish Chair's decision not to grant a visa to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and Moscow's indignant response, revealed how difficult it has become to even sit in the same room.

Not all problems in the OSCE were directly about Russia, though. Unrest in Kazakhstan resulted in casualties and a military intervention. There was renewed fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and both states stymied agreement on the 2022 budget, as they had done in previous years. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan engaged in armed clashes, and bloodshed marked public protests during a constitutional crisis in the Uzbek autonomous region of Karakalpakstan.

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Nonetheless, the core issue was the antagonism between a revisionist Russia and NATO/EU members. The vitality of the OSCE has always mirrored Western-Russian relations, and thus it is no surprise that the very survival of the OSCE was at stake in 2022, at a time when NATO states and Russia risked being drawn into direct conflict.

At the same time, 2022 also demonstrated the OSCE's resilience. States with an interest in maintaining the OSCE, together with the Secretariat, flexibly dealt with decision blockades to keep the OSCE operational. Voluntary financial contributions became more important, and a group of participating States launched a new multi-year program for Ukraine (the Support Programme for Ukraine). The OSCE continued its work in many participating States. The extension of the field operations' mandates in December 2022 shows that consensus is even possible in the shadow of a major war in Europe. Thus, all in all, the OSCE's chances of withstanding the systemic shock of Russia's war looked much better in late 2022 than they had in the weeks immediately following February 24, 2022.

Against this backdrop, the authors of the 2022 edition of *OSCE Insights* discuss three questions: (1) Can the OSCE still offer value to participating States and societies? (2) How can governments deal with Russia within the OSCE? (3) How can the OSCE be preserved and its vitality increased? Answering these questions is challenging; Russia's attack on Ukraine is ongoing, and the outcome of the war will inevitably affect the role of the OSCE in any post-war European security order. In the following, we provide a summary of our contributors' main responses to these three questions.

Can the OSCE still offer value to participating States and societies?

The contributors to this volume agree that the OSCE is under severe pressure. While the main focus is the war against Ukraine, the policy briefs also illustrate a broader trend: participating States' preferences have increasingly diverged since the CSCE became the OSCE in the 1990s.

Nonetheless, despite the erosion of normative consensus within the OSCE area, the contributors to this volume argue that the OSCE can still offer value to governments and societies. William Hill and Jelena Cupać stress the forum function of the OSCE. The OSCE may become less relevant as an actor in its own right but will nevertheless remain important because it is a "logical venue" (Hill) for dialogue on pan-European security issues, including military confidence- and security-building measures. Forums also allow states to signal their interests; thus, Western states could signal to Russia that they are not ready to negotiate zones of influence and that they will not compromise on core OSCE principles (see Cupać's contribution).

Andrei Zagorski reminds us that the CSCE process would have ended if states had not been able to agree on follow-up meetings—and indeed, it nearly did end several times. Yet the OSCE is more institutionalized than the CSCE was. This re-

minder cautions against pursuing initiatives that would result in the OSCE's reverting to a CSCE-style conference cycle.

Walter Kemp offers another historical reminder. Pointing out that the planning for the creation of the United Nations took place in the midst of World War II, he argues that the OSCE should devise a plan for stability in Europe even though the war against Ukraine is ongoing. Kemp suggests that while the outcome of the war will certainly impact any such plan, the OSCE ought to develop a strategy for if and when negotiations on a new European security order commence.

Creativity and compromises are not necessarily beneficial to all, however. In his analysis of OSCE activities in Turkmenistan, Luca Anceschi writes that "Turkmen-OSCE relations are marked by a minimum level of engagement and the avoidance of discussing thorny co-operation issues concerning human rights and good governance promotion." Focusing on the activities of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat and on ODIHR election observation efforts amid restrictions imposed by the Turkmen government, Anceschi reveals that what may be good for a participating State does not automatically benefit that state's society. His paper identifies a fundamental dilemma faced by the OSCE: How can a human rights–based organization meaningfully engage with authoritarian states that are part of that organization?

How can governments deal with Russia within the OSCE?

After February 24, 2022, many within the OSCE contemplated whether and how to suspend Russia's participation in the Organization. The contributors to this volume who discuss this question recommend keeping Russia in. For William Hill, an OSCE without Russia would not only lose its relevance but would turn Russia into a "perpetual disruptor." Keeping Russia (and smaller states that block consensus) in the OSCE may make it more difficult to reach agreement, "but diplomacy on hard, contested issues is never easy." Hill argues that the history of the CSCE suggests that at some point, Western states "will find it possible and desirable to engage seriously and substantively with Russia once again."

For Wolfgang Zellner, Russia's suspension would be formally justified on the basis of the suspension of Yugoslavia from 1992 to 2000. Practically, however, securing its suspension would be problematic insofar as Belarus and other members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) are unlikely to vote Russia out. It is equally doubtful that Russia would leave the OSCE on its own initiative, as other CSTO members would likely remain, thus exposing its isolation. Zellner recommends continuing dialogue on European security with Russia if possible. He argues that while states should call out Russia's violations of OSCE principles, symbolic actions such as walk-outs are counter-productive.

The question of how to balance isolating and engaging Russia is a difficult

one, however, and our authors' answers vary. Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni cautions that there may come a time when Russia feels compelled to leave the OSCE. A potential parallel is Germany's leaving the League of Nations in 1933. Andrei Zagorski reminds us that, in contrast to the USSR's engagement in the CSCE, Russia no longer regards the OSCE as a primary venue for discussing European security with Western states.

Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, Zagorski, and Cupać also recommend that states avoid confrontation over issues on which there is little room for compromise, in particular democratization. This does not mean that Western states should abandon liberal norms—in fact, Western states should reaffirm these norms. However, they should refrain from blaming and shaming (which, as Andrei Zagorski reminds us, almost ended the CSCE process). Instead, the OSCE could serve as a forum for de-escalating tension and identifying issues of common interest. Such efforts would have to be led by states rather than executive structures. Walter Kemp's paper notes that, in his attempt to find common ground among participating States, former Secretary General Thomas Greminger was accused of being too close to Moscow—a reaction that illustrates the limited autonomy granted by governments to the OSCE Secretariat.

How can the OSCE be preserved and its vitality increased?

As a central question cutting across all contributions, the authors explore whether and how the OSCE might not only overcome Russia's war against Ukraine but become a more important pillar of pan-European security. William Hill offers suggestions for how states can make best use of the OSCE's forum function. In this regard, he calls for less "political posturing and public relations" in order to make room for meaningful dialogue. He also sees a potential role for the OSCE in Ukraine, for example by contributing to a future ceasefire or peace agreement. In addition to the outcome of the war, however, the OSCE's ability to play a role will depend on NATO and EU member states' bringing important issues to the OSCE. Hill is also less optimistic about the future of structures and institutions such as ODIHR, whose budgets and size are likely to shrink due to a lack of consensus. As he argues, "we will face a prolonged period in which many important OSCE documents and commitments will be honored more in the breach than the (rigorous) observance."

Similarly, Wolfgang Zellner argues that the future of the OSCE depends on how participating States use the Organization. He proposes an interim strategy that maximizes the OSCE's options. The strategy relies on informal arrangements in case of Russian vetoes, including the use of extrabudgetary contributions to fund OSCE institutions. In addition, he suggests that the OSCE should engage states in areas where Russian influence is waning and where there is a high risk of conflict, in particular the South Caucasus and Central Asia. According to Zellner, however, a more informal, flexible OSCE depends on significant political will and

intense consultations, and thus on giving a strong role to the Chairperson-in-Office and the Troika.

Two of our authors draw on lessons from the past. Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni reveals coping strategies used by the League of Nations, arguing that the OSCE can learn from both its failures and its successes. As she observes, the League should not be regarded as a failure given that many of its activities live on in the United Nations. She stresses that the crisis faced by the OSCE is political and that institutional reform (such as improving the budget process) is therefore of limited utility. Instead, she recommends exploiting a flexible mandate: the OSCE should avoid getting bogged down in debates on contentious issues such as human rights and arms control and should instead focus on areas where there is potential for consensus, such as economic connectivity and the security implications of climate change. Another lesson from the League is the importance of broadening political support. Arguing that a large, heterogeneous membership helps international organizations to survive, she recommends that the OSCE engage states that have not been very active thus far, such as Central Asian states (mirroring Wolfgang Zellner's recommendation). She suggests further that the OSCE should work towards receiving more support from external actors such as NGOs, which have significant technical expertise.

Andrei Zagorski shows how we can learn from the CSCE. The Soviet Union and the United States at times considered withdrawing from the CSCE and used meetings for blaming and shaming. The Soviet Union's reservations about the West's focus on human rights is similar to Russia's criticism of its current emphasis on the human dimension. But the CSCE survived thanks to what Zagorski calls "asymmetric bargaining," which reflected the divergent interests of participating States and created a setting in which "balanced progress" could be made across the different baskets. The history of the CSCE also suggests that states could use the OSCE as a forum for clarifying ambiguous principles such as non-intervention in internal affairs. Zagorski argues that the applicability of these lessons depends on the outcome of the current crisis. If the situation allows, an agreement on common rules could underpin a modus vivendi.

Drawing on his experience as head of the OSCE Strategic Policy Support Unit, Walter Kemp calls on the OSCE to develop a strategy for returning to co-operative security. As Kemp argues, the development of a strategy would not require consensus; it could be informal and include external experts. It would, however, require leadership by the Troika. Key elements of a co-operative security agenda include arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. In this sense, Kemp departs from Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, who recommends avoiding divisive issues as far as possible. Like Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, though, Kemp proposes that the OSCE should also consider issues that have thus far been excluded from the OSCE's core agenda, such as the security implications of climate change. He lists various innovations made during

his tenure but also reveals how participating States restrict the autonomy of the Secretariat.

For Luca Anceschi, the OSCE's engagement with Turkmenistan has been inadequate. He argues that minimal and selective engagement reduces the OSCE's relevance insofar as it limits change to those areas in which the OSCE operates. This also undermines security in the OSCE area since authoritarian politics, he argues, is a source of insecurity. As an alternative, he proposes that the OSCE's engagement with Turkmenistan should treat authoritarian politics as a problem. Consequently, the OSCE should refrain from activities such as election observation under restrictive conditions and, more systematically, should promote human rights.

In sum, the contributions to *OSCE Insights* 2022 present perspectives and recommendations that could help the OSCE not only to survive but to become a more vital contributor to co-operative and comprehensive security.

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