

Between Diplomacy and War: The Limits of OSCE Mediation in Ukraine in the Run-up to 2022

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Abstract

This study examines crisis management initiatives undertaken by the OSCE and other actors in the run-up to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. These efforts—including the Geneva Statement, the OSCE Roadmap, the Normandy Format, the Trilateral Contact Group, the Minsk agreements, and the activities of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission—unfolded against a backdrop of escalating armed violence and Russian political maneuvers aimed at undermining Ukrainian sovereignty. Despite this sustained engagement, the OSCE's facilitation and mediation efforts proved insufficient. By analyzing the inherent shortcomings, missed opportunities, and limitations of these diplomatic initiatives, this paper seeks to draw key lessons for improving future international conflict resolution efforts.

Keywords

Ukraine crisis, Russia, OSCE, Minsk agreements, Normandy Format, diplomacy, deterrence, security guarantees, European security

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Introduction¹

The protracted conflict in Ukraine—which escalated from Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and hostilities in the Donbas to a full-scale invasion in 2022—has demonstrated the limits of international crisis diplomacy. While numerous international diplomatic initiatives have attempted to de-escalate tensions and create a framework for peace

over the course of nearly a decade, all have proven insufficient to prevent further aggression. The Geneva Statement, the OSCE Roadmap, the Normandy Format, the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), the Minsk agreements, and the activities of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) have been among the most important diplomatic efforts to stabilize the situation. Nevertheless, each initiative was ultimately hampered by structural weaknesses, deep-seated historical mistrust, strategic miscalculations, and a lack of credible enforcement mechanisms. Russia's political maneuvering and hy-

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brid warfare tactics during this period further complicated peace efforts, exploiting diplomatic ambiguity to advance its geopolitical objectives while undermining Ukraine's sovereignty.

By analyzing these failed diplomatic efforts, this paper draws key lessons

for future conflict mediation, highlighting the importance of enforcing agreements, strengthening multilateral security, and recognizing the limits of diplomacy with uncooperative parties in a dynamic geopolitical environment.

Event	Date
OSCE SMM deployed	March 17, 2014–February 24, 2022
OSCE National Dialogue Project	March 20, 2014–April 20, 2014
Geneva Statement on de-escalation	April 17, 2014
OSCE presents Roadmap for a peaceful resolution	May 12, 2014
Roundtables on National Unity	May 2014
Normandy Format first meeting;	June 6, 2014
TCG established	June 6, 2014
Poroshenko's 15-point peace plan	June 20, 2014
Minsk I agreement signed	September 5, 2014
Minsk II agreement signed	February 12, 2015
Normandy Format Declaration	February 12, 2015
UN Security Council Resolution 2202 (2015)	February 17, 2015
Normandy Format and TCG continue efforts	2015–early 2022
Normandy summit in Paris	December 19, 2019
Full-scale invasion of Ukraine	February 24, 2022

Table 1. Key diplomatic efforts in the Ukraine crisis (2014–2022).

Early diplomatic failures: From Geneva to the OSCE Roadmap

Although Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, its military intervention began much earlier, in March 2014. Following the Maidan

Revolution in late 2013 and early 2014, Russia illegally annexed Crimea and fomented violent separatism in the Donbas region, resulting in over 13,000 deaths and the displacement of millions.²

International efforts to manage the crisis were initially hampered by the intran-

sigence of the Yanukovych government, which maintained close ties with Russia. Despite holding the OSCE Chairpersonship in 2013, it opposed efforts to establish a crisis management infrastructure in the country and rejected the involvement of the UN, the OSCE, and the EU as potential mediators.³ The OSCE's central role in Ukraine began only after the ousting of President Yanukovych in early 2014. Under Swiss leadership, the OSCE took a more proactive stance, launching fact-finding missions, developing roadmaps, facilitating dialogue, and deploying a peace mission in Ukraine.⁴ The first formal attempt at international crisis diplomacy took place on April 17, 2014, at a high-level meeting in Geneva. This meeting brought together key international players—the United States, the European Union, Russia, and Ukraine—for the first time to address the escalating conflict. It concluded with the issuance of the Geneva Statement, a comprehensive framework designed to de-escalate the crisis. The Statement articulated a series of principles and tangible actions, including the disarmament of illicit armed groups, a pathway to amnesty, constitutional reforms to facilitate Donbas regional decentralization, dialogue, and an enhanced role for the OSCE.⁵

Building on the Geneva group's endorsement of the OSCE, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) drafted a Roadmap for a peaceful settlement on May 12, 2014 (OSCE Roadmap), which outlined a comprehensive, time-sensitive, and proactive approach to the crisis in

Ukraine, outlining detailed measures for de-escalation, reconciliation, and stability.⁶ The CiO emphasized the urgency of securing support for the OSCE Roadmap from both Ukraine and Russia, aiming to create a conducive environment for Ukraine's upcoming presidential elections in May 2014.

However, the CiO's decision to seek Russia's endorsement in Moscow prior to consulting with Kyiv drew sharp criticism from Ukraine's interim government and the United States. The move was perceived as a diplomatic misstep, potentially prioritizing Russian concerns over Ukrainian interests. Russia swiftly exploited the OSCE Roadmap to its advantage, leveraging it to undermine Ukraine's position. Moscow accused Kyiv of obstructing the implementation of the Geneva Statement, alleging its failure to disarm nationalist groups and cease military operations in the east. These accusations, often unsubstantiated, served to bolster separatist factions while casting Ukraine as the primary obstacle to peace and stability in the region.⁷ At the same time, the Geneva Statement posed a problem for Moscow, as it neither legitimized separatist groups nor mandated Ukrainian federalization, thereby limiting Russia's ability to dictate the country's political future.⁸

Although the Geneva Statement legitimized Ukraine's (Maidan) government, its failure to address Crimea implied acceptance of its annexation by Russia. Escalating violence soon rendered the Geneva commitments meaningless, leading to the cancellation of the Geneva II meeting

and paving the way for the Normandy Format. Russia, in turn, leveraged the Geneva Statement to frame the conflict as an internal Ukrainian crisis, downplaying its own responsibility and exploiting diplomatic ambiguity to further its strategic objectives.

A framework of frustration: The Normandy Format and the stalled peace process in Ukraine

Following the collapse of the Geneva Format, the United States' reluctance to engage multilaterally, and Russian opposition to European Union involvement, a new mediation framework emerged: the Normandy Format. Initiated during the D-Day commemorations in France in June 2014, this grouping brought together leaders from France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine. Within this framework, Russia positioned itself as a neutral mediator alongside Germany and France, effectively denying its direct involvement in the conflict.⁹ Notably, this self-portrayal was not formally challenged by either France or Germany, allowing Russia to maintain its narrative. Unlike the Geneva Format, however, the Normandy discussions excluded the United States, which opted to engage Russia through separate bilateral channels. This parallel approach weakened the West's ability to provide coherent support and exert pressure during pivotal moments in the negotiations.¹⁰

Despite its stated goal of achieving a peaceful resolution to the conflict in

Ukraine, the Normandy Format struggled to maintain momentum. Its effectiveness was undermined by infrequent meetings and extended periods of inactivity—the result of leadership transitions in France and Ukraine—coupled with a discernible lack of political will. Nevertheless, the Format achieved important milestones, including the creation of the TCG as the primary forum for resolving the conflict in Ukraine. Normandy's most significant breakthrough was the Minsk II agreement of February 2015, brokered at a high-level meeting following the collapse of its predecessor amid intense military clashes in contested areas.¹¹

Following a period of stalled progress, the Normandy Format summit in Paris on December 9, 2019, briefly revived hopes for diplomatic progress. This followed the election of President Zelensky, who campaigned on a platform advocating for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. While Zelensky and Putin reaffirmed their commitment to a cease-fire and troop withdrawals, fundamental disagreements continued to impede substantial progress. Zelensky rejected Putin's demand that Ukraine implement special status legislation and constitutional amendments for the Donbas region prior to holding elections, creating a diplomatic impasse. Chancellor Merkel subsequently rejected Zelensky's proposal to renegotiate the Minsk II agreement, which had made the restoration of Ukraine's control over its eastern border conditional on political reforms, effectively granting Russia significant lever-

age.¹² As a result, several critical issues remained unresolved, including the timing of elections, the extent of regional authority, and the status of armed separatists.

Beyond negotiation: The TCG's multifaceted role in conflict resolution

The TCG emerged in early June 2014 as a crucial platform for addressing the conflict in eastern Ukraine. First proposed by the CiO in a briefing to the UN Security Council on February 24, 2014, the TCG brought together senior representatives from the OSCE, Ukraine, and Russia to address a wide range of conflict-related issues. It operated on a continuous basis, convening frequently and often at short notice. Although the TCG evolved from informal discussions to a more organized structure, it never acquired a formal mandate or internal guidelines, creating operational uncertainty. In addition, the TCG's reliance on consensus effectively granted Russia veto power. Unlike the Normandy Format, where direct engagement with Ukraine was paramount, the TCG allowed for the direct participation of separatist representatives in both its meetings and its four working groups, granting them a voice and legitimizing their presence.¹³

Led by the OSCE, the TCG assisted in drafting and implementing specific elements of the Poroshenko peace plan, including facilitating direct engagement with separatist groups. It subsequently became closely associated with the Minsk

agreements and was both designated and internationally recognized as the official negotiating platform for conflict resolution efforts in Ukraine. In essence, the TCG's function extended beyond mere negotiation: it served as a facilitator of communication between all parties to the conflict, including the separatists, and played an indispensable role in resolving hostage crises and coordinating prisoner exchanges. Despite these contributions, the TCG's effectiveness was occasionally undermined by a lack of clearly defined communication channels with the Normandy Format. This coordination gap arose from the absence of formally established rules governing collaboration and information exchange between the two negotiation platforms.

The OSCE in Ukraine: Challenges to inclusive dialogue facilitation and monitoring

In response to the escalating crisis in Ukraine, the OSCE launched several dialogue support initiatives in 2014, including the National Dialogue Project (March–April 2014), the SMM (March 2014–February 2022), and the CiO-led high-level National Unity Roundtables (May 2014). The National Dialogue Project, initiated at the request of the Ukrainian government, aimed to mitigate deepening societal divisions exacerbated by the crisis. Implemented by the OSCE's Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, this four-week initiative engaged a wide range

of stakeholders—including government institutions and various civil society actors—across key locations throughout the country. It sought to create an enabling environment for high-level roundtables, inclusive town hall meetings, and parliamentary engagement in each region. However, the rapidly deteriorating security situation ultimately limited the mission's impact and duration.

During the first half of 2014, the SMM played a crucial role in monitoring and reporting on the evolving social and security situation. Prior to receiving its ceasefire monitoring mandate from the TCG in September 2014, the SMM used dialogue as a tool for de-escalation, facilitating the peaceful transfer of occupied buildings, and establishing direct communication channels with protesters and occupiers.¹⁴ It also conducted extensive mapping exercises to identify and engage potential partners, contributing to the preparation of subsequent high-level roundtables. Nevertheless, the SMM's operations were frequently disrupted by security incidents—including the kidnapping of military observers, the abduction of an SMM patrol, and the downing of flight MH17 by separatists—which diverted resources and hindered its effectiveness.

The CiO-led high-level National Unity Roundtables, co-chaired by former Ukrainian Presidents Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma, encountered significant challenges from the outset. Efforts to establish a planned Coordinating Council and to develop an OSCE-assisted code

of conduct for Roundtable participants were never realized. The initiative was further hampered by an unclear agenda, the controversial selection of participants, and the government's restrictive policy of engaging only with non-armed separatist groups.¹⁵ Ukraine faced the unenviable challenge of organizing an inclusive national dialogue involving individuals on its own wanted list while simultaneously conducting counterterrorism operations. Despite an amnesty offer aimed at persuading armed groups to disarm, the initiative collapsed after only three meetings.

The illusion of compromise: Why Poroshenko's peace initiative was doomed

President Poroshenko assumed office on June 7, 2014, with an uncompromising stance toward Moscow-backed separatists: "They don't represent anybody. We have to restore law and order and sweep the terrorists off the street."¹⁶ Following his election, Poroshenko faced a rapidly deteriorating security situation, especially in the Donbas. Separatist checkpoints and the occupation of government buildings proliferated, culminating in the proclamation of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR). In response to the crisis, he proposed a comprehensive peace plan designed to restore Ukrainian sovereignty over the entirety of its territory.

Unveiled in late June 2014, Poroshenko's 15-point peace plan aligned broadly with the principles of the Geneva Statement. Developed with the help of the TCG, it emphasized a unilateral and temporary ceasefire and the establishment of a 10-kilometer buffer zone along the Ukrainian-Russian border. Further key elements included constitutional changes to support decentralization and early elections in Donbas. Concerns and questions persisted, however, particularly concerning the role of international organizations such as the OSCE in the plan's implementation.

The ceasefire lasted only ten days before Poroshenko terminated it, citing "more than a hundred" violations.¹⁷ The high number of casualties and Ukraine's continued loss of control over critical sections of the border with Russia highlighted the fragility of the peace plan and the obstacles to achieving lasting stability in the Donbas region. Regaining control over the eastern border quickly became a central point of contention in subsequent negotiations, as it was essential to Ukraine's ability to stem the flow of arms and mercenaries from Russia. Yet despite its failure, the plan's emphasis on dialogue, decentralization, and constitutional reforms laid the groundwork for future peace efforts, ultimately leading to the two Minsk agreements. It demonstrated that peaceful solutions were not only being pursued but also viewed as achievable, even in the face of a seemingly intractable conflict. In hindsight, however, it may also have been a strategic miscalcu-

lation in its failure to recognize the full extent of Putin's imperial ambitions.¹⁸

The Minsk agreements: A framework for peace or a tool for Russian influence?

In September 2014, the TCG facilitated the negotiation of the Minsk Protocol (also known as Minsk I), an initial attempt to address the conflict in eastern Ukraine through an agreement that included Ukraine, Russia, and the separatists.¹⁹ While the Protocol's twelve points incorporated most of Poroshenko's peace plan,²⁰ the Battle of Debaltseve in January 2015, which resulted in heavy Ukrainian losses, led to its collapse. In response, the Normandy leaders negotiated a follow-up agreement—Minsk II—on February 12, 2015.²¹ This second accord was more comprehensive and detailed than its predecessor, building on the provisions of Minsk I. Its key provisions included granting "special status" to the self-proclaimed DPR and LPR, thereby consolidating Russian political influence in Ukraine. An amnesty for certain armed groups, coupled with a failure to force insurgents to relinquish territorial gains, further tilted the agreement in favor of the separatists.

Nevertheless, the Minsk II agreement was endorsed by a joint declaration of the Normandy leaders, including the presidents of Russia and Ukraine.²² Notably, and later ignored by Moscow, the declaration reaffirmed full respect for Ukraine's

sovereignty and territorial integrity. At Russia's urging, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2202 (2015), which formally endorsed the Minsk II agreement. Though Western members offered reluctant support, the resolution called on all parties to fully implement the agreed-upon measures, including a comprehensive ceasefire. Russia subsequently weaponized Resolution 2202 to legitimize its position, arguing that the Minsk agreements now constituted binding obligations under international law.²³

The Minsk agreements were flawed due to asymmetrical commitments and disagreements over sequencing: Ukraine prioritized security, while Russia insisted on prior political concessions. The so-called Steinmeier Formula attempted to break the deadlock over the timing of the Donbas elections by granting the Donetsk and Luhansk regions temporary special status on election day, with permanent status contingent on verification by the OSCE. In addition, under Minsk II, Ukraine was required to implement decentralization measures before regaining control of its borders, giving Russia further leverage.

Though initially intended as a path to peace, the Steinmeier Formula gradually came to be viewed as a concession to Russia, igniting fierce nationalist opposition in Ukraine. The prospect of amnesty and autonomy for Russian-backed regions triggered widespread protests. As former Chancellor Merkel later recalled, ten thousand demonstrators in Kyiv chanted "No to capitulation! No to amnesty!"—directly targeting President Zelensky's

efforts to implement the Minsk agreements.²⁴ This determined opposition was also evident when Ukraine rescinded an invitation to German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier following Russia's 2022 invasion, underscoring the deep and emotional resistance to the Minsk agreements and the formula that bears his name.

A fragile watch: The SMM's limited impact on ceasefire implementation

The Minsk agreements entrusted SMM with a crucial role: monitoring and reporting on ceasefire compliance. Equipped with drones, SMM patrols observed and documented breaches, disseminating information to the OSCE Secretariat, the TCG, the OSCE Permanent Council, and the public through daily online reports. The SMM also monitored and verified weapons withdrawals and force disengagements.²⁵

To facilitate ceasefire implementation, the SMM provided liaison officers to the Joint Center for Control and Coordination (JCCC), established by Ukrainian and Russian General Staffs. In principle, the JCCC aimed to directly address ceasefire violations by enabling communication between senior officers and field commanders. In practice, however, its effectiveness was undermined due to the lack of direct interaction between Ukrainian and Russian officers, who communicated independently through the OSCE. This was further compounded by bureaucratic challenges, including the

use of tourist visas by Russian officers and the JCCC's lack of enforcement authority. While the JCCC occasionally succeeded in negotiating localized ceasefires for infrastructure repairs, it ultimately collapsed in 2017 when Russia withdrew, citing impediments to its personnel's work. The SMM was left to fill the resulting vacuum,²⁶ even though its relationship with the JCCC had never been clearly defined—a gap that ultimately weakened monitoring and de-escalation efforts.²⁷

The ceasefires established under the Minsk agreements were repeatedly violated, as fighting for territorial control continued unabated. As former Deputy Head of the SMM Alexander Hug observes, “the OSCE SMM did not report a single day during which no fire had been recorded.”²⁸ The consistent failure of the Minsk agreements to prevent ongoing conflict highlights a critical flaw: the insufficiency of relying on unenforced ceasefires. As a result, any future peace agreements must prioritize and implement security guarantees rather than repeating the ineffective formula of the Minsk process.

A significant limitation of the SMM stemmed from its adherence to strict impartiality, which precluded it from directly attributing ceasefire violations to specific parties. While SMM reports often employed coded language that strongly implied that pro-Russian separatists were primarily responsible for violations, this indirect approach hindered the establishment of clear accountability. While it lacked the authority and capacity for en-

forcement, the SMM's regular reporting provided essential transparency for the Ukrainian government and public, fostering a better understanding of the conflict dynamics.

Diplomatic illusions: The Minsk agreements and the road to war

In the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion, international crisis management efforts from 2014 to 2022 have come under scrutiny. Former Normandy Format members Angela Merkel and François Hollande have since acknowledged that the Minsk agreements bought Ukraine valuable time to strengthen its military capabilities and reinforce its defensive infrastructure.²⁹ Several political analysts have argued that Russia strategically leveraged the Minsk agreements to exert pressure on Ukraine, systematically undermining its sovereignty. This view has fueled criticism of perceived “Western complicity,” with many contending that by legitimizing Russia's role in the Minsk negotiations, Western powers unwittingly created an environment that enabled the 2022 escalation.³⁰

In a telling omission, the Geneva Statement, the OSCE Roadmap, and the Minsk agreements remained silent on Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. From the outset, there were widespread doubts about Russia's sincerity in implementing the Minsk framework. Moscow portrayed itself as a neutral mediator while simultaneously supporting separatist movements

in eastern Ukraine—a contradiction that deepened suspicions.³¹ These doubts were further reinforced by Russia’s controversial “passportization” policy in the Donbas. By issuing Russian passports to residents of the region, Moscow was able to claim it was defending its “citizens” in Donbas, establishing a pretext for future military interventions. Simultaneously, it insisted that Ukraine negotiate directly with separatists, many of which were Russian veterans, while framing the conflict as a Ukrainian civil war in which Russia was serving merely as a third-party arbitrator.

In contrast to the Istanbul Communiqué of March 2022 and anticipated future peace deals, which involve “land for peace” concessions, the Minsk agreements were based on a “political influence for peace” model.³² Unlike the 2022 negotiations, this framework focused on immediate ceasefire arrangements and Russian *droit de regard* over a federalized Donbas, emphasizing regional subsidiarity over comprehensive geopolitical changes. While Ukraine viewed the Minsk process as a path toward restoring its territorial integrity—even if that meant granting amnesty to separatists and regional autonomy to Donbas—Russia used it as a tool for transforming Ukraine into a “Russian satellite.”³³ As Ukrainian scholar Serhii Plokhy notes, the “special status” provision for Donetsk and Luhansk was less about decentralization and more about creating a Russian-controlled enclave within Ukraine in the Donbas regions.³⁴ This was essentially a strategic

blueprint for maintaining Moscow’s grip on Ukraine’s internal affairs, effectively stalling its progress toward full sovereignty and Western integration, including NATO membership. Until 2021, Russia maintained that the Minsk agreements were the only viable solution to the conflict, asserting that there was “no alternative.”³⁵ At that time, in the eyes of Normandy members, “Minsk was dead in the water.”³⁶ This failure ultimately served as an excuse for the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022.³⁷

Though widely and ardently criticized by many Ukrainians, the Minsk agreements were viewed by some analysts as a potential means of averting a full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. While speculative, this perspective underscores the difficult trade-offs faced by Ukraine. The full implementation of the agreements would have required significant concessions, such as granting special status to separatist-controlled regions and curbing Ukraine’s NATO ambitions. Nevertheless, some argue that these compromises, however painful, may have been the necessary cost of avoiding a far more catastrophic conflict.³⁸ The notion that Russia, driven by its geopolitical ambitions, may have always intended to invade Ukraine regardless of the diplomatic outcome serves as a cautionary guardrail for this study.

Conclusions and recommendations

The crisis in Ukraine prior to February 2022 exposed fundamental weaknesses in

international crisis management. Despite extensive diplomatic efforts, the failure to prevent Russia's full-scale invasion revealed a lack of genuine political will and the absence of effective institutional enforcement mechanisms. The Yanukovich government's rejection of OSCE involvement in late 2013—a pivotal moment and missed opportunity—laid bare the pressing need for strengthened early warning frameworks and a more dynamic, forward-leaning approach to conflict mediation, ultimately foreshadowing the disastrous consequences of inaction. A further challenge was the lack of coordination between key institutions and platforms, including the OSCE, the Normandy Format, and the TCG. The relationship between the JCCC and the SMM also remained unresolved, based on ad hoc arrangements. The failure to establish clear information-sharing protocols and defined implementation responsibilities weakened crisis management efforts.

The collapse of the JCCC in Ukraine highlights both the importance of structured military-to-military communication for ceasefire management and the risks associated with limited interaction and reliance on external actors, pointing to the need for a more robust, transparent mechanism for future conflict resolution efforts.³⁹

The failure of the Minsk agreements ultimately resulted from their built-in ambiguities, which led to persistent disputes over implementation and a lack of political commitments. While the Steinmeier Formula was intended to provide clari-

ty, it faced resistance, demonstrating that sustainable peace processes require both national ownership and enforceable commitments. Germany and France's cautious approach to confronting Russia in the Normandy Format, a strategically limited US role, and an ineffective OSCE presence proved fatally inadequate; the absence of a robust peacekeeping mission capable of enforcement, coupled with a critical lack of credible multilateral security guarantees and military deterrence, left Ukraine vulnerable, ultimately fueled Russian coercive behavior, and prolonged the conflict.

Russia's self-portrayal as a neutral mediator was inherently deceptive, eroding trust from the beginning. Ukraine's reluctance to negotiate directly with armed separatists, though politically justified, narrowed potential diplomatic avenues, while Russia's strategic manipulation of separatism demonstrated how hybrid warfare can be used as a tool to maintain instability.

The Poroshenko peace plan and the Minsk agreements demonstrate that passive diplomatic frameworks are inadequate and that active enforcement is essential. The TCG, whose efforts extended beyond mediation, stands out in this regard. Its four working groups addressed the full spectrum of conflict management, highlighting its critical role in crisis resolution.

Russia's exploitation of the Minsk process to justify its full-scale invasion marked a fundamental failure of deterrence, reflecting not just a breakdown in

negotiations but a broader inability to counter Russia's strategic ambitions. As former Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba warned: "Any hypothetical 'Minsk-3' can have only one result: an even bloodier war."⁴⁰

The Ukrainian crisis compels us to acknowledge the urgent need to strengthen conflict resolution institutions such as the OSCE and other relevant international bodies. Such institutions must be empowered to promote compliance with agreements, credibly monitor ceasefires, and address the root causes of conflict. In contrast to the SMM's limitations, future monitoring mechanisms must clearly attribute ceasefire violations while maintaining impartiality.

A sustainable peace in Ukraine and elsewhere requires a multi-dimensional approach that goes beyond ceasefires. Key elements must include sustained diplomatic engagement and legally binding security guarantees. One option could be a legally binding version of the Budapest Memorandum, possibly endorsed by a UN Security Council resolution. Additional pillars include military risk reduction through verifiable arms control, economic reconstruction to ensure long-term resilience, and the establishment of a comprehensive, structured European security dialogue, underpinned by a reaffirmation of the Helsinki Principles and OSCE commitments. Such a dialogue must address not only the immediate conflict but also systemic regional instability by laying the foundations for a security architecture based on sovereignty, ter-

ritorial integrity, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Notes

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