

Parliamentary Diplomacy and Cooperation on Counterterrorism: Lessons from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Marco Bonabello and Pauline Hennings*

Abstract

This paper examines the role of interparliamentary engagement in shaping international counterterrorism efforts, highlighting its key benefits. Focusing on the counterterrorism activities of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly from 2017 to 2024, the authors argue that interparliamentary involvement has heightened awareness among lawmakers, generated new policy guidance, and fostered greater interparliamentary coordination on counterterrorism issues. The findings suggest that parliamentary diplomacy and cooperation can enhance global security governance—including counterterrorism efforts—by infusing intergovernmental efforts with democratic legitimacy and enriching them with cohesive, human rights-compliant proposals.

Keywords

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, diplomacy, interparliamentary cooperation, counterterrorism, committee

To cite this publication: Marco Bonabello and Pauline Hennings, “Parliamentary Diplomacy and Cooperation on Counterterrorism: Lessons from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,” in *OSCE Insights*, eds. Cornelius Friesendorf and Argyro Kartsonaki (Nomos, 2026), <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748960751-01>

Introduction¹

The OSCE provides its fifty-seven participating States with an inclusive forum for dialogue on security issues and a flexible platform for joint action in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation. Established at the end of the Cold War,² the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA)

has, from its inception, sought to promote the greater involvement of national parliaments in OSCE affairs. Its mission aligns with the growing relevance of parliamentary diplomacy in international relations³—a development driven by the rising number of transnational challenges confronting national parliaments.⁴ As such, parliamentary diplomacy complements and builds on traditional state diplomacy through both bilateral and multilateral initiatives, particularly in contexts where traditional diplomatic efforts are overly rigid or lack legitimacy.⁵ Whereas traditional diplomacy is usually steered

* Marco Bonabello
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
marco.bonabello@oscepa.org
Pauline Hennings
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

by national governments in line with ruling parties' agendas, parliamentary diplomacy tends to be more inclusive, incorporating perspectives from both ruling and opposition parties. As a result, it reflects a broader spectrum of views at the international level.

With 323 parliamentarians from fifty-six national parliaments⁶ representing over one billion citizens, the PA reviews the OSCE's activities, discusses top security challenges, and promotes cooperation, with a particular focus on consolidating democratic institutions.⁷ It employs various mechanisms to fulfill its mandate, including resolutions and committees.

In this paper, parliamentary diplomacy is considered in close connection with interparliamentary cooperation.⁸ While parliamentary diplomacy involves managing relationships, resolving conflicts, and influencing policies through dialogue and negotiation, interparliamentary cooperation typically entails more practical, collaborative efforts among lawmakers from multiple countries to achieve tangible outcomes. Accordingly, parliamentary diplomacy is both a prerequisite for and a component of interparliamentary cooperation.

This contribution examines whether parliamentary diplomacy and cooperation (PDC) can contribute to global counterterrorism efforts. To this end, it examines the PA's activities in this domain from 2017 to 2024. The analysis draws on the authors' direct experiences as members of the International Secretariat

at of the PA at the time this research was carried out. Sources include first-hand observation, archival records from the International Secretariat, publicly available documents, feedback from PA members and partners, quantitative data on the Ad Hoc Committee's composition and activities, and relevant academic literature.

The paper considers the composition and role of the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, assessing its strengths and weaknesses, as well as its contributions to policymaking, legal implementation, and coordination. The conclusion offers a forward-looking perspective on potential future PA initiatives and presents recommendations for enhancing PDC in the counterterrorism domain.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism

Establishment, challenges, and value

In the years following the 9/11 attacks, OSCE lawmakers sought to address terrorism-related challenges in line with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.⁹ The OSCE progressively expanded its role in promoting the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288),¹⁰ and the PA began advocating for effective, human rights-compliant strategies for preventing and countering both terrorism and violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT). A key milestone in this effort was the PA's 2018 Resolution

on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and VERLT,¹¹ which underscored the need to embed traditional law enforcement efforts within a whole-of-society approach that addresses the underlying drivers of terrorism and violent extremism while adhering to international and human rights law. The resolution highlights the crucial role played by local communities, civil society, religious groups, and educational institutions in countering terrorism and stresses the unique contributions of parliamentarians through their legislative, oversight, and budgetary functions.¹² In addition, it recognizes the importance of interparliamentary forums for promoting policy coherence and international cooperation through the exchange of ideas and lessons learned.

In July 2017, the PA established the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT)¹³ as a new interparliamentary instrument to address terrorism and VERLT by monitoring trends, sharing lessons learned, and exploring new approaches, among other strategies.¹⁴ The PA aimed to enhance counterterrorism efforts through forward-looking policy development and coordinated initiatives. That said, how best to operationalize this ambition remained an open question. While it was crucial to ensure the balanced representation of different subregional dynamics, weighing the experience of certain countries, it quickly became clear that including all national delegations risked burdening the committee with excessive bureaucracy. Consequently, the PA President appointed ten members from across the

OSCE area, each with a strong commitment to counterterrorism, to serve under the leadership of a newly designated Chairperson.¹⁵

The establishment of the CCT also exposed some inherent limitations of PDC. The PA had limited resources and expertise on issues typically handled by specialists and practitioners. This necessitated two key measures: securing adequate administrative and advisory support within the PA's International Secretariat and allocating a dedicated budget to fund the CCT's initiatives. Expanding the International Secretariat's internal capacity was essential to ensuring continuity of purpose, given that the high turnover among committee members—due to electoral cycles—posed a challenge to long-term strategic engagement.

Adding to this were the competing demands on CCT members' time. Many parliamentarians were already heavily engaged in their national legislative agendas, while some were also active in other parliamentary assemblies, such as the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and NATO's Parliamentary Assembly. This made it imperative to secure a strong buy-in from members by focusing on issues of high relevance to their constituents, thereby bridging national and international efforts while maximizing their limited availability.

With respect to the PA's statutory goal of promoting security through dialogue, increasing its operational activities required updating its toolbox. Traditional technical assistance projects—such

as legal drafting and capacity building—were quickly ruled out owing to the political nature of the PA. Even so, there was room to explore initiatives better suited to the role of parliamentarians, including thematic hearings, field visits, oversight initiatives, and policy dialogues.

In understanding where and how the PA could add value, it was crucial to capitalize on the unique strengths of PDC. Chief among these is its inclusivity; as it brings together parliamentarians from both ruling and opposition parties, its deliberations reflect a broader spectrum of perspectives. Second, its flexibility allows for swift mobilization, enabling the rapid arrangement of field visits, focused debates, and targeted media messaging. Third, its informality reduces bureaucratic constraints, fostering more open and frank exchanges. Its political and public outreach is also an asset, as national parliamentarians maintain direct access to national leaders and media outlets. Finally, PDC benefits from majority-based decision-making, which is a clear advantage in times of growing international polarization and geopolitical tensions. If effectively leveraged, these attributes could be drawn on to enhance the PA's visibility in the international counterterrorism arena.

Focus

A key challenge for the committee was determining whether to focus primarily on structural issues of widespread concern or on specific crises, such as terrorist at-

tacks. Addressing shared global challenges would enable the CCT to adopt a long-term approach rather than operating in a reactive, short-term mode. Ultimately, the former option aligned more closely with the mandate of the CCT, which was also conceived as a confidence-building mechanism within the PA.

Against this background, the CCT conducted scoping visits and meetings with international experts—starting with OSCE executive structures and the UN¹⁶—to map the institutional counterterrorism landscape, identify key challenges, and assess potential areas for parliamentary engagement.

Based on this assessment, the CCT established five overarching priorities: strengthening border security and information sharing, in accordance with UNSCR 2396 (2021); fostering prevention efforts to counter VERLT, especially online and among youth; promoting the prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and their families, including women and children; exploring the intersection of terrorism and other serious challenges, such as armed conflict, organized crime, and emerging information and communication technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI); and supporting victims of terrorism. Additionally, the committee recognized human rights protection and the mainstreaming of gender and child-related considerations as concerns that cut across all counterterrorism efforts. Accordingly, the committee forged a network of strategic partnerships with

organizations such as the OSCE and the UN, leveraging their expertise and resources to address these complex challenges.

Composition¹⁷

The CCT consists of ten to sixteen legislators from across the OSCE region, appointed by the PA President. The committee is led by a Chair (also appointed by the President) and supported by a small team in the International Secretariat.¹⁸

During the observation period (July 2017 to December 2024), the committee

comprised a total of thirty-eight parliamentarians, 34 percent of whom were female and 66 percent of whom were male. Female representation within the CCT appears slightly higher than in the PA as a whole, where women constitute around 30 percent of members, according to the 2024 Gender Report.¹⁹

The thirty-eight committee members belonged to twenty-seven different OSCE participating States, distributed as follows: two from North America, five from Asia, six from Eastern Europe, seven from South East Europe, and eighteen from Western Europe.

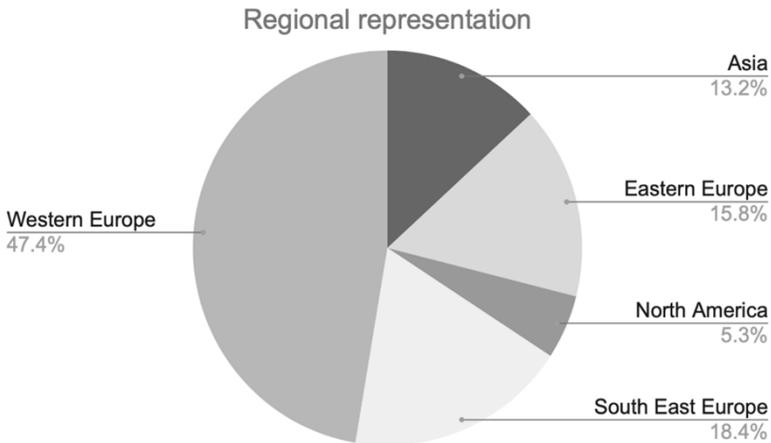


Figure 1. Composition of the OSCE PA CCT with regard to regional representation (July 2017 to December 2024).

While a European preponderance within the CCT is to be expected—given that approximately 80 percent of OSCE participating States are European—the inclusion of representatives from diverse OSCE

subregions enabled the CCT to remain alert to developments across the entire OSCE area. Several other parliamentarians, including observers from countries with Partner for Co-operation status in

the OSCE,²⁰ also contributed to different CCT initiatives, further extending the committee's geographical reach.

In terms of political affiliation, identifying and comparing ideological tendencies across members from different political and cultural contexts remains largely speculative, especially given the absence of formal political groupings within the PA.²¹ Even when identifiable, political

ideologies tend to evolve over time, further complicating the analysis.

Despite these complexities, a general assessment suggests that the majority of CCT members (60.5 percent) were broadly associated with conservative groups, while approximately 37 percent belonged to either social democratic, liberal, or independent groups.

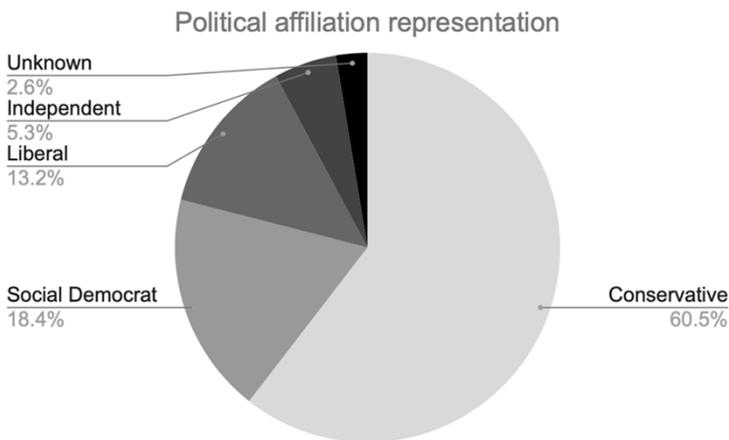


Figure 2. Composition of the OSCE PA CCT with regard to political affiliation (July 2017 to December 2024).

This distribution appears to reflect broader political trends across the OSCE region, which are also represented in the composition of the PA as a whole.²² In the context of the CCT, this trend may also signal a particular interest in counterterrorism issues among members from more conservative groups.

Finally, approximately 29 percent of CCT members belonged to opposition parties, while 44 percent belonged to ruling coalitions during their tenure. A further 18 percent represented both ruling and opposition blocs at different points, following political shifts in their national parliaments.

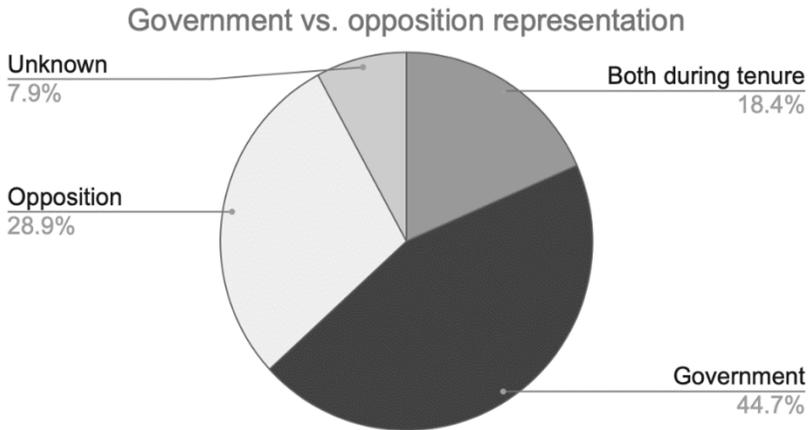


Figure 3. Composition of the OSCE PA CCT with regard to government and opposition party membership (July 2017 to December 2024).

Taken as a whole, the data would seem to confirm the inclusive nature of parliamentary diplomacy in general and the CCT’s work in particular. Members of both genders, from different subregions, and across ruling and opposition coalitions—as well as those representing both conservative and progressive ideological perspectives—were able to engage and enrich the new Committee’s agenda.

Activities and human rights

During this period, the CCT held nineteen official meetings in ten different countries,²³ providing members with the opportunity to engage with leading experts and discuss their strategic priorities. These meetings were further complemented by twenty-one public reports, which were debated before the PA. Ad-

ditionally, the CCT conducted eight official country visits to assess needs on the ground and engage with local stakeholders.²⁴ The CCT also contributed to dozens of international conferences, sharing lessons learned and promoting key OSCE commitments.

Throughout its work, the CCT consistently emphasized the importance of placing human rights at the core of counterterrorism and mainstreaming gender and child-related considerations. One key area of focus was the complex situation of women within the FTFs phenomenon.²⁵ While they may be liable for terrorism-related offenses—such as traveling abroad to join terrorist groups or aiding and abetting acts of terrorism—they are also often victims of grave abuses and/or mothers of traumatized children. The CCT also considered the needs of these children, advocating their repatriation,

rehabilitation, and reintegration wherever possible. At the same time, the committee stressed that child-sensitive procedures should be incorporated into border security and information-sharing measures.²⁶ Recognizing that young people are both targets of radicalization campaigns and potential promoters of counterterrorism narratives, it also highlighted the importance of youth engagement, which it pursued by fostering connections with youth networks and holding dedicated parliamentary debates.²⁷

Outcomes and limitations

Taking 2024 as an example, the PA engaged twenty-three members²⁸ in eleven major counterterrorism initiatives,²⁹ bringing them into dialogue with approximately eighty international and national experts and more than 120 parliamentarians from across the globe. In terms of impact, three main outcomes can be identified. First, committee members developed a deeper awareness of contemporary counterterrorism issues. Second, interparliamentary cooperation expanded, fostering greater collaboration and confidence building among legislators. Third, the PA advanced policy convergence on key issues related to preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT, while reinforcing the centrality of human rights in these efforts.

These developments paved the way for new PA resolutions, arguably the most tangible outcome of this interparliamen-

tary engagement. While such efforts may also have influenced national parliamentary dynamics, assessing their precise impact remains challenging in the absence of further data.³⁰

At the same time, these initiatives were occasionally constrained by political considerations and practical limitations. While open debate on controversial issues is generally welcomed in interparliamentary settings, achieving consensus on highly polarizing issues—particularly those perceived as sensitive by domestic audiences—is not always feasible. A case in point is the situation of children of FTFs stranded in detention camps in Syria and Iraq following the military defeat of the Islamic State. Despite several international calls for their immediate repatriation,³¹ the PA was unable to adopt a formal position due to divergent views among its members.

On a more practical level, the most significant constraint was members' limited availability, which occasionally curtailed the depth of discussion and the scope of meetings. In the fast-paced environment of parliamentary work, the outcomes of meetings, conferences, and visits were often quickly overshadowed. To prevent loss of knowledge and ensure continuity, the CCT sought to build on previous findings, ensuring that each new initiative expanded upon earlier efforts.

The following subsections explore in greater detail the interconnected and mutually reinforcing areas in which the CCT sought to add value, namely: (1) developing cohesive policy guidance,

(2) supporting the implementation of the international counterterrorism framework, and (3) steering the global parliamentary counterterrorism agenda.

Policymaking

A key strength of the CCT has been its ability to unravel emerging global challenges by raising parliamentary awareness and fostering unity of purpose in addressing them. Since its establishment in 2017, the CCT has developed five resolutions covering a range of counterterrorism priorities.³² Unanimously adopted by the PA plenary, these documents demonstrate the PA's capacity to rally its members—legislators from diverse political and cultural backgrounds—around a shared, forward-looking agenda.

Although not formally binding, these resolutions express the collective will of OSCE lawmakers to find common solutions to shared concerns. As soft law instruments, they codify key policy recommendations directed at the OSCE and its participating States, aiming to inform and influence relevant policymaking efforts. All PA resolutions are formally submitted—in the form of a consolidated Declaration—to the OSCE Ministerial Council.³³

These documents provide an opportunity to build consensus among participating States on emerging threats and to catalyze new OSCE initiatives and structures.³⁴ This is especially important in the counterterrorism context, as the last

OSCE counterterrorism document was formally adopted in 2016.³⁵ Since then, achieving consensus on countering and preventing terrorism and VERLT has remained elusive.

While PA resolutions and OSCE Ministerial Council decisions may differ in terms of political weight—the former constituting recommendations reached by simple majority and the latter binding commitments reached by consensus—the underlying security needs they address do not. As such, the PA's resolutions represent meaningful contributions to the counterterrorism policy framework of the OSCE.

Moreover, PA resolutions have occasionally broken new ground in international policymaking. For example, the 2024 Resolution on Artificial Intelligence and the Fight against Terrorism³⁶ is among the first international policy efforts to examine the dual impact of rapid technological progress in this field.³⁷ The resolution suggests several measures to ensure that OSCE participating States' responses remain attuned to AI-driven developments³⁸ and is expected to positively influence regulatory frameworks at both the national and the international level.

Another example of the PA's engagement with complex contemporary issues is the 2023 resolution condemning the terroristic activities of the private military company Wagner,³⁹ adopted amid Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The resolution reaffirms that acts or threats of violence against civilians by any belligerent party in an armed conflict,

when aimed at spreading terror, are prohibited by international humanitarian law (IHL). It further highlights the complementarity of the counterterrorism legal framework and IHL, which is crucial for ensuring that the objectives of neither legal regime are undermined, and to reinforce the principle of zero tolerance for terrorism in all its forms, including in conflict zones.⁴⁰ Having determined that the Wagner Group's actions around the globe are terroristic in both nature and intent, the resolution calls on all OSCE participating States to (1) consider designating the Wagner Group as a terrorist organization, (2) hold its members accountable for crimes committed, and (3) thwart its presence wherever it operates.

The resolution gained international visibility⁴¹ and served as a basis for the adoption of similar stances by other interparliamentary assemblies and national parliaments.⁴² In doing so, it contributed to shaping a more cohesive international posture against the abuses perpetuated by the Wagner Group, its successors, and similar entities. Furthermore, the resolution serves as a clear warning to private military companies, deterring them from perpetrating similar atrocities, and may be cited as a precedent in future policy and legal discussions.

Implementing the international counterterrorism legal framework

The PA has actively sought to strengthen the implementation of the existing in-

ternational counterterrorism legal framework, especially in areas where national implementation has lagged or faced significant challenges. To this end, the CCT has supported the development and distribution of several publications addressed specifically to lawmakers, aimed at enhancing their counterterrorism engagement at both the national and the international level. Notable examples include the 2024 Parliamentary Handbook on UN Security Council 1373 (2001) on Countering Terrorism⁴³ and the 2022 Model Legislative Provisions to Support the Needs and Protect the Rights of Victims of Terrorism,⁴⁴ both produced by the United Nations with OSCE PA support.

In 2019, the PA issued its own report, *Strengthening Border Security and Information Sharing in the OSCE Region: A Parliamentary Oversight Exercise*, which examined the implementation, through the oversight powers of national parliaments,⁴⁵ of key international obligations related to border security and information sharing stemming from UNSCR 2396 (2021).⁴⁶ This initiative involved coordinating fifty-six national parliaments to assess their respective governments' progress in fulfilling specific counterterrorism obligations. Through this exercise, the PA identified several legal and operational challenges in the context of border security, leading to a series of recommendations addressed to both executive and parliamentary structures within the OSCE. These included converting executive decrees—enacted under urgency procedures—into comprehensive

legislation that upholds human rights and the rule of law, harmonizing personal data protection standards, and strengthening cooperation with private carriers. These findings were subsequently codified in the PA's 2019 Luxembourg Resolution on the Challenges Related to Returning and Relocating Foreign Terrorist Fighters,⁴⁷ illustrating the extent to which the PA's various streams of engagement reinforce one another.

Welcomed by the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee in 2019,⁴⁸ this initiative demonstrated that interparliamentary assemblies can play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of international counterterrorism obligations by synchronizing the oversight powers of national parliaments, thus bridging the gap between international commitments and national enforcement.

Promoting international cooperation

The PA has created new opportunities for international cooperation on counterterrorism through strategic partnerships with OSCE structures, UN entities, and other parliamentary assemblies. These partnerships have strengthened the Assembly's knowledge and operational capacities while fostering greater engagement among parliamentarians on counterterrorism issues.

The CCT has worked closely with the OSCE Chairpersonship, executive structures, and institutions, including the Ac-

tion Against Terrorism Unit⁴⁹ and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.⁵⁰ This coordination has helped to define priority areas of engagement, ensure policy coherence and complementarity, and facilitate consultations on critical issues. OSCE experts have regularly contributed to official CCT activities, and the CCT has actively engaged with the OSCE Security Committee and OSCE Counter-Terrorism Conferences,⁵¹ supporting OSCE initiatives both at OSCE headquarters and in the field.⁵²

At the UN level, the PA has liaised with the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Office on Drugs and Crime, advocating for a stronger role for interparliamentary assemblies. This cooperation laid the groundwork for the 2020 Memorandum of Understanding between the PA and the then newly established United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which quickly became a key partner.

Alongside these endeavors, the PA has championed closer collaboration among parliamentarians across the globe, calling for a dedicated channel for interparliamentary cooperation on counterterrorism. These efforts culminated in the creation of a Coordination Mechanism of Parliamentary Assemblies on Counter-Terrorism in 2022, established under the auspices of the UN.⁵³

Also owing to its role in setting up the Mechanism, the PA was elected to preside over its work for the first two years, shaping its *modus operandi* and

thematic priorities. As of December 31, 2024, over seventeen regional interparliamentary assemblies from Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas had participated in the Mechanism, meeting twice a year to share their threat assessments, coordinate efforts, and plan joint initiatives.

This new instrument has boosted global interparliamentary collaboration and facilitated the exchange of critical knowledge on preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT. In addition, it has acted as a vehicle through which interested assemblies and parliaments can convey their requests for technical assistance, thus contributing to enhancing their capacities.⁵⁴

By steering the Mechanism's work for two years, the PA has spearheaded global interparliamentary cooperation, promoting a more cohesive parliamentary approach to counterterrorism well beyond the OSCE area. For instance, the CCT has facilitated high-level engagement between legislators and renowned experts on border security and information sharing, the role of youth in preventing terrorism, and the impact of AI in countering terrorism through a series of dedicated Parliamentary Policy Dialogues aligned with the PA's priorities.⁵⁵ Finally, its leadership of the Mechanism has enabled the PA to better assess security threats stemming from adjacent regions, such as the Sahel and the Middle East.

Recommendations

In an increasingly volatile geopolitical environment, where polarization and digitalization create new opportunities for those seeking to divide and harm, countering and preventing terrorism and VERLT are likely to remain high on the OSCE's agenda.

Moving forward, the PA should prioritize promoting the implementation of its policy framework at the national level. This could be achieved through subregional policy dialogues, local awareness-raising campaigns, and other targeted projects in partnership with the OSCE and the UN.

The PA should also consider following up on the Oversight Exercise on Strengthening Border Security and Information Sharing, building on the baseline established by the 2019 initiative.⁵⁶ This model of coordinated parliamentary oversight anchored in clear international obligations could be expanded to other policy areas where implementation remains challenging, thus complementing state-level efforts. Moreover, such oversight initiatives could be launched at the global level—potentially through the Coordination Mechanism of Parliamentary Assemblies on Counter-Terrorism—to support the implementation of the international counterterrorism framework beyond the OSCE area.

Ultimately, consolidating a cross-regional parliamentary network on counterterrorism should be a strategic priority, as it would help to link the security of

the OSCE to that of adjacent regions in an increasingly interconnected world. The formal recognition of the contributions of interparliamentary cooperation through a dedicated UN resolution could serve to invigorate this process.

Finally, the PA must remain responsive to emerging needs within the international community, exploring new developments and, wherever possible, codifying common standpoints. Given growing internal divergences within the OSCE,⁵⁷ such efforts are likely to become even more pertinent. The PA could play a bridging role in this regard, advancing policy proposals that address new developments.⁵⁸

The CCT should also explore ways to improve the flow of information on the impact of its efforts at the national level, which could in turn inform and refine its future initiatives. This could be facilitated through targeted questionnaires distributed to all parliamentary delegations, special committee sessions dedicated to the implementation of CCT recommendations, and regular interviews and feedback sessions with both current and former members.

More broadly, similar interparliamentary exercises could be replicated in other areas of the international security agenda, such as climate change and AI. The PA is well positioned to detect citizens' concerns and views across the OSCE area, in part owing to the expansion of digital tools that allow parliamentarians to interact more directly with their constituencies. Facilitating the greater involvement

of parliamentarians in multilateral security affairs is critical to ensuring that international agendas align with citizens' priorities.

Against this backdrop, OSCE participating States should better leverage the benefits of PDC by allocating additional resources to support sustained interparliamentary engagement and strengthening relevant interparliamentary structures. The establishment of dedicated windows for interparliamentary engagement would reduce overlap with other institutional affairs and facilitate lawmakers' regular participation in international forums.

To maximize the impact of their engagement, national parliaments should duly consider legislators' professional backgrounds and parliamentary experience when appointing representatives to different interparliamentary forums.⁵⁹ This approach would strengthen the coherence of their work at the national and the international level, facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.⁶⁰ In parallel, codifying lawmakers' international role at the domestic level—and ensuring that it is clearly communicated to the general public—would improve transparency while also encouraging greater public engagement in global security matters.

Finally, the role of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting peace and stability should be further systematized at the international level. The Council of Europe offers a valuable precedent in this regard, as its Assembly is formally recognized by statute (Article 10) as one of its two

main organs (alongside the Committee of Ministers), placing the executive and parliamentary dimensions of security governance on an equal footing.

Notes

- 1 The authors would like to thank Ms. Elena Stocco, who kindly reviewed the paper and gave invaluable advice on how to make it more rigorous.
- 2 For more details on the creation of the PA, see OSCE/CSCE, Charter of Paris for a New Europe (November 21, 1990), <https://www.osce.org/mc/39516>; OSCE/CSCE, Madrid Document (April 3, 1991), <https://www.osce.org/pa/40791>
- 3 The term “parliamentary diplomacy” commonly refers to the broad spectrum of international activities undertaken by members of parliament to foster mutual understanding between countries, enhance government oversight, better represent constituents, and strengthen the democratic legitimacy of intergovernmental institutions. See Gonnée de Boer and Frans Weisglas, “Parliamentary Diplomacy,” *Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 2, no. 1 (2007): 93–99, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187119007x180494>
- 4 De Boer and Weisglas, cited above (Note 3).
- 5 See, for example, Jerzy Jaskiernia, “Parliamentary Diplomacy: A New Dimension of Contemporary Parliamentarism,” *Studia Iuridica Lublinensia* 31, no. 5 (2022): 85–101, <https://doi.org/10.17951/sil.2022.31.5.85-101>
- 6 According to the OSCE PA Rule of Procedures (Appendix), the Holy See, an OSCE participating State, may send two representatives to the Assembly’s meetings as “guests of honor” due to the absence of an elected parliament.
- 7 OSCE PA, Rules of Procedure (November 2, 2024), <https://www.oscepa.org/ru/dokument/y/rules-of-procedure/1832-rules-of-procedure-english/file>
- 8 Kolja Raube, Meltem Müftüler-Baç, and Jan Wouters, eds., *Parliamentary Co-operation and Diplomacy in EU External Relations* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019).
- 9 Between 2001 and 2017, the PA adopted eleven resolutions related to different aspects of terrorism, mainly in reaction to new UN documents such as UNSCRs 1373 (2001), 1456 (2003), 1566 (2004), 2178 (2014), and 2396 (2017).
- 10 The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is widely considered the main instrument for preventing and combating terrorism at the international level. For further details, see UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, “United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy,” <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>
- 11 OSCE PA, Resolution on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (July 11, 2018), <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/all-documents/ad-hoc-committee-on-migration/3757-resolution-on-preventing-and-countering-terrorism-and-violent-extremism-and-radicalization-that-lead-to-terrorism-adopted-at-the-27th-annual-session-berlin-7-11-july-2018>
- 12 Within democratic frameworks, national parliaments act as *enablers*, shaping national counterterrorism policies; *guardians*, ensuring adherence to fundamental freedoms in all counterterrorism measures; and *mediators*, bridging diverging views within society.
- 13 The CCT currently comprises fourteen legislators from fourteen OSCE countries, led by a Chair who is supported by two Vice-Chairs. For further details, see OSCE PA, “Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism,” <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/factsheets/3614-osce-pa-ad-hoc-committee-on-countering-terrorism-factsheet/file>
- 14 For the full mandate of the CCT, see OSCE PA, “Countering Terrorism,” <https://www.oscepa.org/en/activities/ad-hoc-committees-and-working-groups/countering-terrorism>
- 15 The Chair of the CCT is expected to preside over its meetings, represent the committee

- before external stakeholders, and steer its workplan.
- 16 See, for example, OSCE PA, “Reinforcing Counter-Terrorism Co-operation Discussed in Ad Hoc Committee’s Meetings at OSCE and UNODC,” November 14, 2017, <https://www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2017/reinforcing-counter-terrorism-co-operation-discussed-in-ad-hoc-committee-e-s-meetings-at-osce-and-unodc>
- 17 The data in this section is largely drawn from the internal archives of the OSCE PA International Secretariat and from open sources available online. The current composition of the CCT can be found at OSCE PA, cited above (Note 13).
- 18 The team at the International Secretariat consisted of a senior adviser (with previous experience in countering serious crime at the international level) and a research assistant.
- 19 See OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, *The 2024 Report on Gender Issues: Fostering Free and Inclusive Societies; The Role of Civil Society Organizations in a Time of Democratic Decline* (OSCE PA, 2024), <https://www.oscepa.org/en/document/s/special-representatives/gender-issues/report-17/4995-2024-gender-report-fostering-free-and-inclusive-societies-the-role-of-civil-society-organizations-in-a-time-of-democratic-decline-eng/file>
- 20 Namely Israel and Morocco.
- 21 In the OSCE PA, there are no official political groups, and members sit in national delegations during statutory meetings. This structure aligns with the OSCE PA’s distinctly diplomatic character.
- 22 Notably, the last three OSCE PA Presidents—George Tserateli (2018–2020), Margareta Cederfelt (2021–2023), and Pia Kautuma (2023–2025)—were associated with conservative groups. The PA President is elected by the entire Assembly.
- 23 Namely Austria, Andorra, Armenia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom, and Morocco (an OSCE Partner for Co-operation). A few meetings, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, were also held online.
- 24 Such visits were conducted in Türkiye (2024), Switzerland (2023), Norway (2020), France (2019), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018), Belgium (2018), the United States (2018), and Morocco (2017). For further details, see OSCE PA, cited above (Note 14).
- 25 See, for example, OSCE PA, *Resolution on the Challenges Related to Returning and Relocating Foreign Terrorist Fighters* (July 8, 2019), <https://www.oscepa.org/en/document/s/ad-hoc-committee-on-migration/3884-resolution-on-the-challenges-related-to-returning-and-relocating-foreign-terrorist-fighters-adopted-at-the-28th-annual-session-luxembourg-4-8-july-2018/file>
- 26 See, for example, OSCE PA, *Strengthening Border Security and Information Sharing in the OSCE Region: A Parliamentary Oversight Exercise* (OSCE PA, 2019), <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/ad-hoc-committees-and-working-groups/ad-hoc-committee-on-countering-terrorism/3905-strengthening-border-security-and-information-sharing-in-the-osce-region/file>
- 27 See, for example, OSCE PA, cited above (Note 11).
- 28 Several of whom engaged multiple times, for a total of fifty-nine “engagements” by OSCE PA members.
- 29 Namely, three official CCT meetings (Vienna, Bucharest, Dublin), one official CCT country visit (Türkiye), two meetings of the Coordination Mechanism of Parliamentary Assemblies on Counter-Terrorism (Istanbul, Rome), two Parliamentary Policy Dialogues (Istanbul, Rome), a panel discussion on the sidelines of the 2024 Internet Governance Forum (Riyadh), and two international parliamentary conferences (Doha).
- 30 This could be the subject of a separate study.
- 31 See, for example, OSCE, “Repatriation of ‘Foreign Terrorist Fighters’ and Their Families Urgently Needed to Safeguard Human Rights and Security, OSCE Human Rights Head Says,” February 11, 2020, www.osce.org/odihr/445909; Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, “Council of Europe Member States Should Urgently Repatriate Their Under-Age Nationals Stranded in

- Northern Syria,” May 28, 2019, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/council-of-europe-member-states-should-urgently-repatriate-their-under-age-nationals-stranded-in-northern-syria>
- 32 Namely, the 2024 Bucharest Resolution on AI and the Fight against Terrorism, the 2023 Vancouver Resolution on the Wagner Group’s Terroristic Nature and Actions, the 2022 Birmingham Resolution on Victims of Terrorism, the 2019 Luxembourg Resolution on Addressing the Threats Stemming from the Return and Relocation of Foreign Terrorist Fighters, and the 2018 Berlin Resolution on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, which outlines the PA’s comprehensive counterterrorism strategy. For further details, see OSCE PA, cited above (Note 14).
- 33 Moreover, they are usually shared with all presidents of national parliaments. As such, they are clearly intended to inform both intergovernmental and national policymaking. The extent to which this actually occurs could be the subject of a separate inquiry.
- 34 Looking back, the OSCE PA has often served as a precursor on key issues that were later integrated into OSCE programs and structures. For instance, the PA was among the first to advocate for greater media freedom, increased attention to gender issues, and raising the profile of human trafficking. Similarly, the security implications of AI, which were a primary focus of the Assembly in 2023–2024, is now gaining increasing traction within the OSCE. For more information, see R. Spencer Oliver, *The Parliamentary Assembly and Its Political Influence in the OSCE* (OSCE PA, 2005), <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/documents-1/955-2005-the-parliamentary-assembly-and-its-political-influence-in-the-osce/file>
- 35 OSCE Ministerial Council, Declaration on Strengthening OSCE Efforts to Prevent and Counter Terrorism, MC.DOC/1/16 (December 9, 2016), <https://www.osce.org/cio/288176>
- 36 OSCE PA, Resolution on Artificial Intelligence and the Fight Against Terrorism (July 3, 2024), <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/ad-hoc-committees-and-working-groups/ad-hoc-committee-on-countering-terrorism/resolutions-and-publications/5040-resolution-on-artificial-intelligence-and-the-fight-against-terrorism-adopted-at-the-31st-annual-session-bucharest-29-june-to-3-july-2024/file>
- 37 On the one hand, AI advancements provide opportunities to enhance data analysis, improve threat detection, and refine predictive modeling, enabling more proactive and effective counterterrorism strategies. On the other, these same technologies can be weaponized by terrorist groups for recruitment, fundraising, and the dissemination of propaganda and disinformation.
- 38 Among other measures, the resolution calls on participating States to 1) enhance their legislative frameworks and build their AI capabilities to more effectively prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism while ensuring respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, privacy rights, and data protection standards; 2) establish robust oversight mechanisms; 3) promote media/digital literacy and enhance societal resilience against online polarization and radicalization, which can lead to terrorism; and 4) develop effective public-private partnerships to prevent and counter the misuse of AI for terrorist purposes.
- 39 OSCE PA, Resolution on the Wagner Group’s Terroristic Nature and Actions (July 4, 2023), <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/ad-hoc-committees-and-working-groups/ad-hoc-committee-on-countering-terrorism/4755-osce-pa-resolution-on-the-wagner-group-terroristic-nature-and-actions-30th-annual-session-2023/file>
- 40 The counterterrorism legal framework serves as a crucial tool in cases where IHL does not apply, such as when a terrorist attack occurs in a conflict zone but is unrelated to the conflict itself or is not committed by one of the belligerent parties.
- 41 See, for example, Thomas Latschen, “Is the Wagner Group a Terrorist Organization?,” *Deutsche Welle*, September 18, 2023, <https://>

- /www.dw.com/en/is-the-wagner-group-a-terrorist-organization/a-66740597
- 42 See, for example, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Legal and Human Rights Aspects of the Russian Federation's Aggression Against Ukraine, Resolution 2556 (June 26, 2024), <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/33682/html>
- 43 United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, Parliamentary Handbook on Promoting the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) on Countering Terrorism (UN, 2024), https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism/files/unoct_parliamentary_r1373_handbook_en.pdf
- 44 United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, Model Legislative Provisions to Support the Needs and Protect the Rights of Victims of Terrorism (UN, 2022), https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism/files/220204_model_legislative_provisions.pdf
- 45 OSCE PA, cited above (Note 26).
- 46 Namely, advance passenger information, passenger name records, and biometric data management systems (biometrics).
- 47 OSCE PA, cited above (Note 25).
- 48 OSCE PA, "OSCE PA's Voridis and Chambers Address UN Security Council on Parliamentary Counter-Terrorism Efforts," July 2, 2019, <https://www.osce.org/parliamentary-assembly/424631>
- 49 For further details, see OSCE, "Action Against Terrorism," <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/terrorism>
- 50 For further details, see OSCE, "OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights," <https://www.osce.org/odihr>
- 51 The latter took place in 2018, 2019, and 2020.
- 52 For example, OSCE PA, "Legislators, Experts Work on Human Rights-Compliant Policies for Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of FTFs in South East Europe," September 15, 2021, <https://www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2021/legislators-and-experts-work-together>
- 53 The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism's Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement fulfils the functions of the Secretariat of the Coordination Mechanism.
- 54 In June 2022, for example, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism conducted a National Advocacy Event with Albanian parliamentarians. For further details, see United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, "Advocacy Event: Republic of Albania; Promoting Universalization and Effective Implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism," <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/events/Albania-Promoting-Universalization-and-Effective-Implementation-of-ICSANT>
- 55 Under its presidency (2022–2024), the PA organized four Policy Dialogues, which focused on border security and cross-border cooperation (Doha, January 2023), the impact of terrorism and violent extremism on youth (Vienna, October 2023), the protection of religious sites, symbols, and objects (Istanbul, May 2024), and countering the use of AI for terrorist purposes (Rome, December 2024).
- 56 For instance, in the context of fighting transnational organized crime and curbing irregular migration.
- 57 The OSCE has been working without an agreed Unified Budget since 2021, which has resulted in uncertainty and a series of containment measures aimed at limiting costs, hampering the organization's ability to operate at full capacity.
- 58 The last OSCE Ministerial Council Decision related to countering terrorism was adopted in 2016. See OSCE Ministerial Council, cited above (Note 35).
- 59 Ideally, members of the PA should also be involved in national parliamentary committees dealing with foreign affairs, security and defense, sustainable development, human rights, and the rule of law, among other key areas.
- 60 International parliamentary efforts should enrich national parliamentary dynamics. Creating links between relevant national and international committees could be beneficial on both levels.