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Comprehensive Security and New Challenges: Strengthening the OSCE

by Monika Wohlfeld and Fred Tanner

New-Med research network

ABSTRACT

The Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe's comprehensive security approach, developed in the 1970s, continues to guide its work on new transnational and multidimensional challenges. Relations with other international organisations and with neighbouring regions are essential to understand how the OSCE has faced these new challenges. Different case studies illustrate OSCE efforts, notably challenges emanating from the abuses of digital technology; the fight against hate crime on social media; the nexus between climate change, development and security; and the need to address migration and human trafficking as well as the global effects of the covid-19 pandemic. While the emergence of new security challenges in an increasingly unstable international environment presents new risks to the OSCE, finding a way forward may help overcome the persistent political divisions among the OSCE's participating States.

OSCE | Security | Cyber-security | Social media | Climate change | Migration | Coronavirus

keywords

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Comprehensive Security and New Challenges: Strengthening the OSCE

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Introduction

In today's globalised world, all states and societies face increasingly complex security challenges. Transnational and multidimensional in nature, these challenges cannot be addressed on a national basis or through the prism of 'hard security'. Multilateral cooperative frameworks able to assist states in developing cross-dimensional responses are therefore required.

The emergence of new security challenges in an increasingly unstable international environment presents new risks to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Yet, the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security continues to be relevant to address such challenges, both within the OSCE area and in neighbouring regions, including in the context of the OSCE's Asian and Mediterranean partners. The analysis draws on case studies that shed light on the OSCE's efforts to address new security challenges. These include a focus on cross-dimensional risks and threats from digital technology; the fight against hate crime on social media; the nexus between climate change, development and security; migration and human trafficking; and the covid-19 pandemic. Finally, it provides an assessment of the effectiveness of the OSCE's comprehensive security framework in addressing such challenges and discusses how the OSCE should be strengthened to better respond to the needs of its participating and partner States in the Mediterranean and Asia.

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1. New challenges and the OSCE

Global transnational and multidimensional challenges have been on national and international security agendas for decades. After the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States, the OSCE began to increase its focus on responses to terrorism and violent extremism. In 2003 the then 55 participating States of the Organization adopted the "OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century",[1] also called the Maastricht Strategy. The Strategy specifies that "threats to security and stability in the OSCE region are today more likely to arise as negative, destabilizing consequences of developments that cut across the politico-military, economic and environmental and human dimensions, than from any major armed conflict" and proceeds to list some of them (apart from inter-State and intra-State conflicts, terrorism, organised crime, discrimination and intolerance, certain economic factors, environmental degradation and threats of politico-military nature). But the list is not intended to be exhaustive, since threats are seen as evolving and not always foreseeable. As Russian Ambassador Alexander Alekseev argued in 2002, "it is impossible to draw up a comprehensive, all-inclusive list of new risks and challenges. The dynamic nature of the subject precludes a static listing".[2]

Over time, priorities shifted. For example, former OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger argued at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Bratislava in 2019 that "[t]oday we face daunting new challenges that affect our common security: Climate change. Migration. And a technological revolution driven by digitalization and artificial intelligence".[3] The need for the OSCE to continuously adapt to the changing security environment has been emphasised by the present OSCE Secretary General, Helga Maria Schmid. In January 2021 she pleaded for the OSCE to "be ready to meet new challenges – both those we already see on the horizon, and those we cannot yet imagine".[4]

Today we face daunting new challenges that affect our common security: Climate change. Migration. And a technological revolution driven by digitalization and artificial intelligence.

[1] OSCE Ministerial Council, *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century*, 2 December 2003, p. 1, https://www.osce.org/node/17504.

[2] Alexander Alekseev, "New Risks and Challenges within the Context of OSCE", in *Nação e Defesa*, Vol. 103, No. 2 (Autumn 2002), p. 35-42, at p. 39, http://hdl.handle.net/10400.26/1288.

[3] OSCE Ministerial Council, "Report by the Secretary General to the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Ministerial Council" (MC.GAL/6/19), in *Final Document of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, Bratislava, 5-6 December 2019, p. 43-46, https://www.osce.org/node/449422.

[4] OSCE Secretary General, *Inaugural Remarks at the Permanent Council, Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid* (SEC.GAL/13/21), Vienna, 21 January 2021, p. 2, https://www.osce.org/node/476329.

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2. The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security

The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security frames its response to new challenges. This approach dates back to the very beginnings of the Helsinki process. In the early 1970s, preparations for a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) began with active inputs from both the East and the West. In order to accommodate divergent expectations, it was proposed that the conference agenda be divided into three "baskets", one dedicated to political and security issues, another one to economic cooperation and a third one to human rights, cultural exchanges and freedom of the press.[5]

The Helsinki Final Act – a politically rather than legally binding document – was signed by the 35 CSCE Heads of State or Government[6] on 1 August 1975. While other organisations or negotiation frameworks pursued a narrow security and defence perspective, the CSCE participating States agreed on a broad understanding of security, according to which only the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms could lead to sustainable peace and security. As some observers have noted, that approach was revolutionary.[7]

With the end of the Cold War, as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia dissolved into a multitude of new states, the CSCE was soon faced with a very challenging set of problems: domestic conflicts, ethnic strife and struggling democratisation processes. The operationalisation and institutionalisation of the CSCE/OSCE, which started in the 1990s, aimed at equipping the Organization with the capabilities needed to cope with these new types of challenges.[8]

In 2003, the Maastricht Strategy laid out the crucial role that the OSCE's comprehensive security approach could play in dealing with new threats. The Strategy paid particular attention to the root causes of these new threats, including weak governance, intolerance and economic disparity.[9] Today, the OSCE's three "baskets" or "dimensions" continue to be viewed as being of equal importance and interconnected. This does not imply, however, that the commitments, funding and even structures of the three dimensions are equal or similar. The OSCE's institutions – the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

[5] To be precise, the first basket covered political and military issues, territorial integrity, the definition of borders, peaceful settlement of disputes and the implementation of confidence-building measures between opposing militaries. The second basket focused on economic issues like trade and scientific cooperation. The third basket dealt with human rights, including freedom of emigration and reunification of families divided by international borders, cultural exchanges and freedom of the press.

[6] The United States, the Soviet Union, Canada and every European country (except Albania).

[7] Pál Dunay, "The OSCE in Crisis", in *Chaillot Papers*, No. 88 (April 2006) p. 20, https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/130.

[8] The Paris Charter (1990) laid the foundation for the institutionalisation of the CSCE. See CSCE, *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, Paris, 21 November 1990, https://www.osce.org/node/39516.

[9] OSCE Ministerial Council, *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability...*, cit.

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(ODIHR), the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media – are active in the human dimension. The Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities who addresses economic, social and environmental issues of security, is part of the OSCE Secretariat, as is the Conflict Prevention Centre, responsible inter alia for political-military aspects of security. Missions or field activities are the Organization's key instrument in all phases of the conflict cycle and in all three dimensions of security. However, their mandates, sizes and activities vary although all are supporting host states in implementing OSCE commitments. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has a broad remit and champions comprehensive security, but has only an advisory function in the framework of the Organization. There are two decision-making bodies bringing together all OSCE participating States: the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation. The latter is responsible for the political-military dimension. The representatives of participating States who follow these two decision-making bodies are not necessarily the same.

In addition, not all OSCE participating States are equally prepared to address new challenges in a comprehensive manner, across all three dimensions. While Western European and North American states emphasise that they aim at a balanced approach towards all dimensions, this is often interpreted by others as focused on the human dimension and often viewed as intrusive and discriminatory in nature. Some states support deeper cooperation in addressing new challenges such as counterterrorism, while foregoing accountability and human rights issues.

These differences in how the three dimensions are operationalised as well as the different prioritisation of them by various participating States have an impact on their balance and interaction and thus affect the implementation of comprehensive approaches to new challenges.

While other international actors also broadened their approach to security, and the Human Security and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agendas became the rallying cry of the international community, the OSCE retained its primary focus on comprehensive security. Indeed, a cursory study of the Swedish Chairmanship priorities for 2021 and the new OSCE Secretary General's programmatic remarks indicate a clear commitment to comprehensive security. In January 2021, the incoming Swedish Chairperson-in-Office, Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde, pledged to uphold the concept, highlighting the interconnectedness between political and economic security, human rights, the rule of law and equality.[10] The new OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid reiterated similar statements.[11]

[10] OSCE Chairmanship, *Address by the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, H.E. Ms.Ann Linde* (CIO.GAL/1/21/Corr.2), Vienna, 14 January 2021, https://www.osce.org/node/475865.

[11] OSCE Secretary General, *Inaugural Remarks at the Permanent Council, Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid*, cit.

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3. Relations with other international organisations and neighbouring regions

While the CSCE/OSCE led the way in promoting a comprehensive understanding of security during the Cold War, other international organisations in the OSCE area have adopted an analogous comprehensive approach to security in the decades that followed. With memberships of different international organisations increasingly overlapping as a result of the enlargement of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), policy agendas have looked more and more similar. Both the EU and NATO have had considerably more funding as well as a wider toolkit of sticks and carrots, including enlargement, stabilisation and association or partnership and cooperation agreements. At the same time, both organisations have always emphasised the OSCE's role, its activities and missions, and cooperated with the OSCE on the ground.[12]

A cursory look at the thematic areas for cooperation between the OSCE, the EU and NATO reveals a focus on new challenges. The OSCE's list of thematic areas of cooperation with the EU includes, inter alia, border security management and the fight against human trafficking. The OSCE's list of priorities in cooperation with NATO focuses on countering transnational threats, including terrorism and cyber threats.[13]

An important partner for the OSCE, also in the realm of new challenges, is the United Nations (UN). After 9/11, cooperation came to include the OSCE's support for the UN and its specialised counterterrorism bodies. The shared UN–OSCE agenda also includes border management, environmental and economic aspects of security and anti-trafficking.[14] In 2014, in an address to the OSCE Permanent Council, then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon cited "civil conflicts, [...] terrorism, organized crime, illegal drug-trafficking, and health crises such as Ebola" as central areas of cooperation for the OSCE-UN partnership.[15]

The OSCE was mandated to cooperate with other organisations, based on the 1999 Platform for Co-operative Security, agreed in Istanbul by all OSCE participating States as part of the Charter for European Security. However, as Sandra Sacchetti, former OSCE Head of External Co-operation, argued, the Platform's

[12] Pál Dunay, "The OSCE in Crisis", cit., p. 7-8.

[13] See for example OSCE partnerships' webpages: *The European Union*, https://www.osce.org/node/111481; and *NATO*, https://www.osce.org/node/111485.

[14] One example of the OSCE engagement to use its platforms and programmatic work was the regional support for implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004). This resolution focuses on the domain of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors. UN Security Council, *Resolution 1540*, 28 April 2004, https://undocs.org/s/res/1540(2004).

[15] UN Secretary-General, *Secretary-General's Address to the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, Vienna, 4 November 2014, https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/196764.

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> full potential as an instrument for multilateral coherence, as envisaged by the text of the Charter, remains unexploited [...]. This is due in part to the OSCE's peripheral position in the European security architecture and in part to the competition for political influence and resources between international organizations.[16]

Thus, relations between the OSCE and relevant organisations on new challenges can be described as characterised by "interaction, cooperation and confrontation".[17]

The principle of indivisibility of security cannot be implemented appropriately without taking into consideration neighbouring regions. To that end, the OSCE pursues relations with five Asian countries (Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand) and six southern Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia).

The section of the 1975 CSCE Helsinki Final Act entitled "Questions relating to Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean" states that security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean area as a whole.[18] The 2003 OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century calls upon both the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation "to voluntarily implement the principles and commitments of the OSCE".[19] Other decisions acknowledge the relevance of both Mediterranean and Asian partners to the security of the OSCE area and refer to the OSCE comprehensive security approach and cooperation in all three dimensions. During the Hamburg Ministerial Council in 2016, three decisions of the OSCE participating States referred to partner States and all three were related to new challenges: counterterrorism, migration and refugees, connectivity and good governance and ICT/cybersecurity.[20]

Specialised gatherings such as side events, special workshops or low-key projects involving one or more partner States on a number of selected themes and related to new challenges have been organised by the OSCE. All of them have been funded only by voluntary contributions through the OSCE Partnership Fund, provided mostly by one or more participating States or partner States, which accounts for a certain lack of continuity. The different views of participating States on the desirability and viability of such activities resulted in a proviso that they could be carried out in principle on the territory of participating States, but not on that of partner States, unless receiving a consensus decision by all participating States, a

[16] Sandra Sacchetti, "The OSCE's Platform for Co-operative Security", in *Security and Human Rights*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2014), p. 119-129.

[17] Peter van Ham, "EU, NATO, OSCE: Interaction, Cooperation, and Confrontation", in Franz Kernic and Gunther Hauser (eds), *European Security in Transition*, Aldershot/Burlington, Ashgate, 2006, p. 23-37.

[18] CSCE, *Helsinki Final Act*, 1 August 1975, p. 36, https://www.osce.org/node/39501.

[19] OSCE Ministerial Council, *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability...*, cit., p. 4.

[20] OSCE Ministerial Council, *Final Document of the Twenty-Third Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, Hamburg, 8-9 December 2016, https://www.osce.org/node/307311.

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process usually subject to difficult and prolonged negotiations.

There are some differences between the Asian and Mediterranean OSCE partnerships when it comes to new challenges. The Asian partners are generally more interested in sharing their experience of addressing new challenges with the OSCE community rather than hands-on assistance.[21] The Asian dialogue is focused on confidence-building measures, new challenges (often referred to as "transnational challenges" in this context) and economic cooperation[22] as well as the concept of comprehensive security. Discussions and activities with Asian partners address issues such as trafficking in human beings, cyber/IT security and cyber diplomacy.[23]

The Mediterranean dialogue of the OSCE includes exchanges of experience but also some operational support and capacity building on new challenges. However, although numerous agreed documents as well as seminars and meetings have addressed the Mediterranean dimension of security, the substance of that relationship has been emerging only through a painfully slow process.[24] New challenges – especially terrorism, but also cybersecurity, trafficking in human beings and migration – are some of the main themes of cooperation.[25]

4. Case studies of new challenges

This section takes a more in-depth look at the OSCE's responses to a set of new and global challenges, risks and threats facing states, societies and their citizens. The focus on cross-dimensional risks and threats – the abuse of digital technology; the nexus between climate change, development and security; migration and human trafficking; and the covid-19 pandemic are considered today by many states as threat multipliers and as matters of national security, whereas regional organisations such as the OSCE are not sufficiently empowered to tackle them. Efforts to add these risks and threats to the OSCE's comprehensive agenda are

[21] Afghanistan is an exception in this regard, but its needs are broader than responses to new challenges.

[22] Marietta S. König and Carolin Poeschke, "The Asian Partnership for Co-operation: Concept, Development, Trends", in IFSH, *OSCE Yearbook 2017*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2018, p. 265-277, at p. 265, https://ifsh.de/file/publication/OSCE_Yearbook_en/2017/KönigPoeschke-en.pdf.

[23] OSCE, *Annual Report 2019*, March 2020, p. 89, https://www.osce.org/node/449104; and *Annual Report 2018*, April 2019, p. 89, https://www.osce.org/node/416624.

[24] Monika Wohlfeld, "OSCE's Mediterranean Engagement on the Eve of the 40th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 14|15 (December 2014), https://www.iai.it/en/node/2823.

[25] See OSCE Ministerial Council, "Report by the Chairperson of the Contact Group with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation to the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Ministerial Council" (MC.GAL/5/19), in *Final Document of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, Bratislava, 5-6 December 2019, p. 56-61, https://www.osce.org/node/449422; OSCE annual reports for 2018 and 2019, cit.; and programmes of annual OSCE Mediterranean Conferences of 2020 (https://www.osce.org/node/466827); 2019 (https://www.osce.org/node/426575); and 2017 (https://www.osce.org/node/329331).

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met with push-backs by some participating States arguing that it would lead to a loss of focus, neglect of traditional commitments and increased competition with other international organisations, such as the EU and NATO.[26] The following case studies explore in what areas the OSCE could find a comparative advantage in the OSCE area in advancing global agendas.

4.1 Cross-dimensional risks and threats of digital technology

The political space for the OSCE to engage in the cyber domain is constrained by the activities of NATO and the EU. Since the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, cyber defence has been recognised as a core task of the alliance. NATO has been reaching out to countries across the Eurasian region, as well as to "global partners", and has embarked on individual programmes of cyber cooperation in the Western Balkans[27] and Eastern Europe but also with countries such as Mongolia.

In this rapidly expanding programmatic turf of other organisations, the OSCE focuses on promoting a comprehensive approach to cyber security, particularly in Central Asia, where NATO and the EU have a limited presence. Activities include training on combating cybercrime, cyber security awareness and workshops with journalists on "cyber-bullying" and hate speech. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the OSCE has a lead role among the international community in building a Strategic Cybersecurity Framework, based on OSCE guidelines.[28]

OSCE activities on countering cybercrime are coordinated with the Council of Europe,[29] but also with other leading actors. The OSCE has developed a Joint Action Plan with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, defining joint commitments in fighting cybercrime.[30]

The comparative advantage of the OSCE in the cyber domain rests on its ability to create a comprehensive and inclusive cyber security approach that focuses on soft norm setting in the realm of confidence-building measures. The creation of three generations of such measures was guided by the recommendations of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security

[26] All EU and NATO members states are also participating States of the OSCE.

[27] The EU carried out cyber cooperation with standard setting in candidate countries in the Western Balkan with cyber requirements based on the EU Directive on Security of Network and Information Systems.

[28] OSCE Mission to BiH, *Guidelines for a Strategic Cybersecurity Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 1 October 2019, https://www.osce.org/node/438383.

[29] As to cybercrime, the Council of Europe is in the lead on implementation of the Convention on Cybercrime, which serves as a guideline for any country developing national legislation and cooperation in combating cybercrime.

[30] The Parties will aim to undertake joint technical assistance activities for ratification and legislative implementation of the UNTOC and the Protocols thereto with a special emphasis on cybercrime and cyber-enabled organised crime.

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in their reports of 2013 and 2015.[31] With the help of an open-ended informal working group, the OSCE launched a cyber confidence-building measures process for transparency building and risk reduction. OSCE participating States adopted 16 practical cyber/ICT confidence-building measures.[32] Inspiration and lessons learned could also be drawn from other regional organisations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum or the Shanghai Cooperation Council, which had developed their own codes of conduct in cyber security.

Cyber security emerged on the policy agendas of capitals more than a decade ago but since the controversy around Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 elections in the US, the nexus between election integrity and cyber security has become a major policy and research issue. Cyber security is a shared concern for all participating States and accordingly the OSCE Ministerial Council decisions have laid the normative groundwork for cyber security activities and empowered the OSCE to develop cooperative and inclusive responses to cyber threats.[33] The OSCE has been assisting states in their operationalisation through capacity-building workshops, tabletop exercises and the use of the OSCE communication network. Cyber-crime and cyber security are today one of the top key activities in almost all OSCE field missions.

Cyber issues and new technologies are also of interest to all partner States and have been discussed in a variety of formats, ranging from annual Asian and Mediterranean partners conferences and the respective Partners for Co-operation Group meetings, to regular interregional events inspired and funded by South Korea. Several recent extra-budgetary projects with Mediterranean partners focus on cyber-crime, the role of ICT, cyber operations and cyber confidence-building measures. Apart from seminars and conferences, these activities also take the form of training sessions. Nevertheless, the scope for capacity building for Mediterranean partners in this area is extensive.

4.2 Fight against hate crime on social media

In the recent past, election integrity and democratic governance in the OSCE area have come under pressure from populism and far-right movements. The abuse of

[31] UN General Assembly, *Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security* (A/RES/70/237), 23 December 2015, https://undocs.org/a/res/70/237.

[32] Agreed measures included voluntary information sharing on national cyber postures, using the OSCE as a platform for dialogue, meetings of national contacts and support for national capacity building to protect critical infrastructures.

[33] OSCE Permanent Council Decisions No. 1039 of 26 April 2012 (PC.DEC/1039), https://www.osce.org/node/90169; No. 1106 of 3 December 2013 (PC.DEC/1106), https://www.osce.org/node/109168; and No. 1202 of 10 March 2016 (PC.DEC/1202), https://www.osce.org/node/227281. OSCE Ministerial Council, *Decision No. 5/17 - Enhacing OSCE Efforts to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of Information and Communication Technologies* (MC.DEC/5/17), 8 December 2017, https://www.osce.org/node/361561.

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digital communication technology can facilitate trafficking in human beings and encourage terrorism, spread disinformation and hatred and incite violence against women. The complex relationship between the potential violent effects of digital communication technologies, human rights, election integrity and democracy will continue to represent a comprehensive security challenge in the mid- to long-term future.[34]

How can the OSCE address these challenges and what instruments are available to mitigate cyber risks and assist states to achieve "cyber resilience" when it comes to election campaigns, election security and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms?

The Copenhagen Document (1990) provided the CSCE/OSCE with extensive responsibilities regarding the pursuance of election integrity in the OSCE region. As to hate speech, hate crime and hostile campaigns, the document requires that political parties and candidates be granted freedom from "neither [...] violence nor intimidation", and that vote casting be "free of fear of retribution".[35]

The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) serves as the collection point for information and statistics on hate crimes and other relevant information provided by participating States, as well as on hate incidents provided by intergovernmental agencies and civil society. Through its online reporting and hate crime website, ODIHR makes the data available to the broader public.[36] Partner States have not participated in this endeavour so far.

4.3 The nexus between climate change, development and security

The climate change agenda is driven by the United Nations, as convener for global meetings or as venue for dialogue, monitoring and review of implementation of the global commitments on this "planetary emergency".[37] Climate change as a threat multiplier generates a negative impact on all three dimensions of the OSCE. The OSCE, as a regional organisation, could make a valuable contribution under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The OSCE Secretary General Schmid noted in her inaugural remarks to the Permanent Council that she would promote closer cooperation with the United Nations, including on climate and development

[34] The ODIHR/OSCE PA international mission election report of the US elections, of 3 November 2020, argued that "baseless allegations of systematic deficiencies, notably by the incumbent president, including on election night, harm public trust in democratic institutions". ODIHR, *United States of America, General Elections, 3 November 2020: Final Report*, 9 February 2021, p. 1, https://www.osce.org/node/477823.

[35] CSCE, *Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE*, 29 June 1990, para 7.7, https://www.osce.org/node/14304.

[36] OSCE ODIHR Hate Crime Reporting website: http://hatecrime.osce.org.

[37] These commitments rely on the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, among others.

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issues.[38]

In the past, the OSCE approach to climate change was a second dimension issue, dealing with disaster risk reduction and prevention, water diplomacy, energy and sustainable cities. However, the effects of climate change are also linked to development, security and human rights. Security risks include, for instance, increased competition for food and water resources, which can have an impact on stability.

The climate change–security nexus is not yet an integral part of the OSCE's comprehensive security agenda, even though the Organization has a crisis response mechanism for prevention, early warning and early action that could also be tailored to climate change risks. The 2007 Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security recognised the role of the UN and defined the complementary role the OSCE plays "within its mandate in addressing this challenge in its specific region".[39] Attempts in 2017 and 2018 to include a mandate on climate change have failed as some participating States argued that dealing with this issue falls outside the Organization's mandate. Thus, the OSCE is not empowered to programmatically engage in climate actions.[40] However, there are examples of engagement on this issue, including through the regional consultation on climate change and security in South-Eastern Europe, conducted by the OSCE Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the German think-tank Adelphi.[41]

The issue of climate change and security is also a sensitive one for partner States. It has found its way onto the agendas of annual conferences dealing with "global security challenges" in the past but not into capacity-building and operational activities with partner States. However, a proposed new multi-year project on prevention of climate change and security threats in the Mediterranean, a joint initiative of the Union for the Mediterranean and the OSCE, has been put forward.[42] Vuk Žugić, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, explained that the project's main goal is to facilitate the exchange of experiences

[38] OSCE Secretary General, *Inaugural Remarks at the Permanent Council, Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid*, cit.

[39] OSCE Ministerial Council, *Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security* (MC.DOC/4/07), 3 December 2007, p. 1, https://www.osce.org/node/29550.

[40] See for example the EU statement on this issue: "In the context of global efforts to combat climate change, in particular after the adoption of the Paris Agreement, we deeply regret that we were not able to find consensus on a text dealing with this critical and urgent issue". OSCE Ministerial Council, "Statement by the Representative of the European Union", in *Final Document of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, Vienna, 7-8 December 2017, p. 75, https://www.osce.org/node/402209.

[41] OSCE, *OSCE and Adelphi Conclude First Regional Consultation on Climate Change and Security in South-Eastern Europe*, 23 February 2021, https://www.osce.org/node/479314.

[42] Union for the Mediterranean, *2019 OSCE Mediterranean Conference: Celebrating 25 Years of the Mediterranean Partnership Framework for Cooperation*, Tirana, 24-25 October 2019, https://ufmsecretariat.org/?p=85157.

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and best practices with the Mediterranean partners. The project has yet to raise funds and recruit staff, but is ground breaking in terms of focus.

4.4 Migration and human trafficking

In the wake of the so-called migration crisis in South-Eastern and Western Europe in 2015, some participating States both East and West of Vienna argued that the OSCE could only play a subsidiary and complementary role to other international actors, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organisation for Migration or the EU with its Frontex activities in numerous OSCE states. The OSCE can support UN-led processes by providing a regional contribution. The OSCE, for instance, co-chairs, together with UN Women, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. Addressing migration-related crime and trafficking in human beings is also part of the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department's programme activities, from a police-related perspective.

Migration has been part of the CSCE/OSCE discourse ever since the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, but until a few years ago migration was dealt with primarily in the second and third dimensions. This included the protection of the rights and personal and social welfare of regular migrants.[43] The significant increase in irregular migration flows generated a new urgency to address humanitarian, political and societal challenges that emerged across the OSCE. It raised correlations between border security management and the prospects of radicalisation of political movements with anti-immigration and xenophobic agendas.

These developments raised the question of how the OSCE could help to address new challenges linked to migration in Europe. In January 2016, the incoming German OSCE Chair-in-Office, then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, declared:

> Especially [on migration], we should make use of this organisation's potential. Its geographical span and comprehensive approach make it a suitable vehicle. [...] And it's the right place to look at the social impact of migration and immigration – with a special focus on tolerance and non-discrimination.[44]

[43] See also OSCE Ministerial Council, *Ljubljana Ministerial Decision No. 2 on Migration* (MC.DEC/2/05), 6 December 2005, https://www.osce.org/node/17339; and *Decision No. 5/09, Migration Management* (MC.DEC/5/09), Athens, 2 December 2009, https://www.osce.org/node/40711.

[44] German Federal Foreign Office, *Inaugural Speech by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the OSCE Permanent Council to Mark the Start of Germany's OSCE Chairmanship*, 14 January 2016, https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/160114-osze/277702; OSCE Ministerial Council, *Report by the OSCE Chairmanship on Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees* (MC.GAL/8/18), 9 December 2016, p. 1, https://www.osce.org/node/287871.

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The German Chairmanship established an Informal Working Group (IWG) on Migration and Refugee Flows to explore how a more coherent and strategic approach could be adopted by the OSCE to address this challenge. This IWG, chaired by Swiss Ambassador Claude Wild, produced a comprehensive report arguing that migration and refugee flows constitute a security challenge to the OSCE and recommended to add migration governance to the OSCE agenda, including through "dialogue and cooperation with Partners for Co-operation, with other international organisations and civil society".[45]

The report prescribed a truly comprehensive approach for the protection of rights of people on the move.[46] The IWG thus facilitated consensus-building among participating States that led to the Ministerial Council Decision on migration in 2016.[47]

According to this Decision, OSCE participating States were encouraged to use the OSCE platform, "including appropriate OSCE working bodies, to continue addressing migration-related issues where the OSCE has developed its expertise, and improve dialogue on migration-related matters with regard to developing possible effective measures and common approaches to address them".[48]

However, due to increasing political tensions, lack of resources and expertise, in recent years the OSCE has not been able to strengthen the normative and operational basis on migration, with the exception of activities in the domains of human and child trafficking.

For the partner States as well, migration can be a sensitive issue. While migration has been addressed in the context of the comprehensive approach to security during relevant conferences and seminars, trafficking has been one of the issues that have been of greater interest for partner States, especially from the Mediterranean region. Apart from events devoted to this issue, such as for example the Seminar on Co-operation to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings in the Mediterranean Region held in 2013, a number of projects involved Mediterranean partners, including on prevention of trafficking in human beings. Some large multi-year projects on trafficking focus entirely on the Mediterranean region but not all of these are fully funded.

[45] OSCE Chairmanship, *Towards Comprehensive Governance of Migration and Refugee Flows in the OSCE Area* (CIO.GAL/117/16), 15 July 2016.

[46] This included the need to assist participating States to implement their human dimension commitments, the protection of labour and social rights of migrant workers, combating all forms of human trafficking along migration routes, mainstreaming gender issues in all policies and projects, and empowering field missions to assist host countries in the implementation of migration governance commitments and activities. See Ibid.

[47] OSCE Ministerial Council, *Decision No.3/16, OSCE's Role in the Governance of Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees* (MC.DEC/3/16), 9 December 2016, https://www.osce.org/node/289491.

[48] Ibid., p. 2.

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4.5 The new challenge of the covid-19 pandemic

Covid-19 represents a new global challenge to the OSCE. Apart from the immediate impact on the health sector, covid-19 has led to nationalistic impulses, including "vaccine nationalism", and has accelerated the retreat of multilateralism; it has had tremendous socio-economic costs and exacerbated the effects of regional and international fragility and fragmentation. Covid-19 is not just a risk and threat to national security and societal well-being, it has also amplified conflict dynamics in the OSCE area.

With the covid-19-related lockdowns and closure of borders between OSCE states, the implementation of commitments related to the 2011 Vienna Document, and with it the Confidence-and Security-Building Measures obligation in the OSCE, came basically to a halt as inspections, evaluation visits and observations have been cancelled.[49] Furthermore, the security dialogue on the Vienna Document modernisation was cut short due to the pandemic.[50]

Special relevance in the covid-19 crisis falls upon the "OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security" that has provisos on deployment of armed forces in support of internal affairs of a state. In many countries, such a deployment in support of covid-19 measures has been made under state of public emergency conditions or some other form of emergency regime or restrictive measures. This may affect states' obligations related to human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of assembly. According to the Copenhagen and Moscow documents, OSCE states have in such cases a notification obligation and the Helsinki Summit document (1992) assigns ODIHR with a clearinghouse function.[51] ODIHR asked the participating States at the outset of the crisis to report on declarations or extensions of a national state of emergency in their whole territory or a part of it, in connection with the pandemic. While a number of states responded to this call, not all have provided the requested information.[52]

With regard to field missions, the OSCE had to give priority to duty of care of deployed personnel[53] over mandate implementation. The field missions attempted

[49] The Turkish Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-operation issued a letter appealing to all participating States to refrain from or postpone verification activities under the auspices of the Vienna Document 2011 whenever possible, until it was determined that the prevailing conditions allowed such activities to take place safely again. OSCE Ministerial Council, *Letter from the Chairperson of the FSC to the Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, Chairperson of the 27th MC* (MC.GAL/2/20), 1 December 2020, https://www.osce.org/node/472404.

[50] OSCE, *Journal of the 944th Plenary Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation*, 29 April 2020, https://www.osce.org/node/452611.

[51] OSCE, *Impact of Emergency Measures on Human Rights and Democracy Key Focus of New OSCE/ODIHR Report*, 17 July 2020, https://www.osce.org/node/457603.

[52] As of 15 June 2020, 28 participating States had informed ODIHR of emergency measures adopted. Fourteen States communicated having declared a nationwide state of emergency or equivalent status, while only some provided information on derogations.

[53] Duty of care measures of the OSCE dealt with health and safety of personnel, relocation and

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to support the host countries and the most vulnerable communities during the pandemic crisis, mandate permitting. The missions also worked on gender-related impacts of the crisis, in particular gender-based violence during lockdowns.

At the Ministerial Council meeting in Tirana in December 2020, as a decision could not be agreed upon, the OSCE Chairmanship made a statement on behalf of participating States except one (Armenia). The statement calls for solidarity and multilateral cooperation addressing covid-19, refers to compliance issues related to states of emergency, warns of rising instances of racist, xenophobic and discriminatory public discourse and underlines the need to take steps to counter the spread of disinformation. The statement covers in a comprehensive way all three dimensions. However, no mention is made of climate change, migration or human trafficking affected by covid-19.[54]

The pandemic has an impact on the OSCE's cooperation with partner States, as events are held online and financial support available through extra-budgetary funds for activities and projects with partner States is less available. Partner States have a clear interest in addressing the pandemic situation also in the OSCE context, although some aspects of the debate on this issue, related to the third dimension and to the use of emergency measures, may be sensitive to some of them. The next annual Asian partners conference, hosted by Thailand, is expected to focus on global health in a comprehensive security format and on lessons learned, including from ASEAN.[55]

5. The way forward on new challenges and comprehensive security

Despite the ground-breaking comprehensive security legacy of the OSCE, the Organization has not emerged as a leading international or regional entity when it comes to addressing comprehensive security in the post-Cold War era.[56] Its potential could be used to greater effect.[57]

evacuation of staff. In some cases, a MEDEVAC mechanism had to be established as local health systems were unable to cope with the covid challenges. In certain missions, the OSCE staff has been reduced up to 40-50 per cent in their respective areas of responsibility.

[54] OSCE Ministerial Council, "Statement by the Chairperson...", in *Final Document of the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, Tirana, 3-4 December 2020, p. 47-50, https://www.osce.org/node/481447.

[55] Monika Wohlfeld, "Security Sector Reform in the MENA Region: The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic", in Stephen Calleya (ed.), *Towards a Post Pandemic Euro-Mediterranean Strategy*, June 2020, https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/448655/Towardsapostpandemiceuro-med.pdf.

[56] Pál Dunay, "The OSCE in Crisis", cit.

[57] Walter Kemp, "The OSCE: Entering Its Third Phase in Its Third Decade", in *Helsinki Monitor*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2004), p. 254-262; Roberto Dominguez, *The OSCE: Soft Security for a Hard World*, Brussels, Peter Lang, 2014.

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Addressing new challenges across all dimensions is very much part of the DNA of the OSCE. Nevertheless, as the three dimensions rest on different institutional provisions, there are difficulties in "delivering as one" when it comes to policy and project implementation. Coordinating platforms, focal point networks or special representatives must support the efforts.

However, implementation of comprehensive policies does not just hinge upon technical coordination. The political agendas of some participating States aim at minimising the human dimension of the OSCE's engagements and favour the first and second dimensions. This has programmatic implications. As a stopgap to this, some Western states turn towards financing extra-budgetary projects in the human dimension area that require no consensus by the participating States. To give an example, some like-minded states including the US and Western European states are funding extrabudgetary projects related to border security management and countering human trafficking in Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan.

There is no doubt that all international institutions and organisations are compelled to address global new challenges today. As other organisations have also developed broadened and deepened approaches to security and have taken over parts of the comprehensive security agenda, turf battles emerge in the OSCE area. But the pressing issues presented by new challenges require coordinated input from all actors. As a consequence, the OSCE has been seeking niche activities and collaborative frameworks with relevant organisations.

The key OSCE document in that respect is the 1999 Platform for Co-operative Security which gives the OSCE a wide role in fostering coordinated approaches.[58] While much has been done to collaborate with other organisations, more can be done to arrive at coordinated approaches. As Sandra Sacchetti suggests, a "more pragmatic approach towards the Platform could help surmount some of the complex political dynamics hampering its full implementation".[59]

The comparative advantage of the OSCE lies in its agenda-setting capacity.[60] For example, the OSCE managed to rapidly develop buy-in to the global counterterrorism agenda by addressing violent extremism and terrorism regionally. In particular, the OSCE could review its experience of the early implementation of the Platform which included a series of events bringing together sub-regional organisations in the OSCE area on issues such as counterterrorism efforts. For the purpose of improving programmatic and operational coordination, the OSCE has concluded several arrangements with other organisations. The Memorandum of

[58] OSCE Ministerial Council, "Operational Document – the Platform for Co-operative Security", in *Istanbul Document*, 19 November 1999, p. 43-45, https://www.osce.org/node/39569.

[59] Sandra Sacchetti, "The OSCE's Platform for Co-operative Security", cit.

[60] See also Wolfgang Zellner, "Old and New Challenges for the OSCE", in IFSH, *OSCE Yearbook 2016*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2017, p. 33-44, https://ifsh.de/file/publication/OSCE_Yearbook_en/2016/Zellner-en.pdf.

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Understanding between the OSCE and the UN Development Program, for instance, covers a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from arms control to anti-corruption and human rights.[61]

Although the OSCE is not a development or humanitarian organisation, it should seek to link its work to the global narrative and *acquis* on human security and sustainable development. As all participating states of the OSCE are members of the United Nations, they all have national agendas contributing to sustainable development. The OSCE can provide the regional collaborative framework for such efforts.

Risks and threats that are of importance to both the OSCE participating States and its partners are transnational and global in nature. Such common security concerns should be addressed in a comprehensive and joint fashion. However, the OSCE Asian and Mediterranean partnerships, while useful overall, are not developing into operational fora that would allow OSCE participating States to tackle such joint challenges. This is partly a result of the fact that key actors for either dialogue (China, Libya, but also Palestine, Lebanon and Syria) are not included in these partnerships. Thus, a review of the outreach principles should be undertaken.

One idea that has been floated and does deserve attention is to negotiate individual action plans with partner States, reflecting their different needs and expectations and structuring a multi-year framework. Such action plans could focus on joint approaches to common new challenges. Individual action plans would have to be developed in parallel to regional efforts, and would have to be a transparent process, conducive to the goals of the OSCE's partnerships. Overcoming limitations on implementation projects in partner States would go a long way towards making them more sustainable and relevant for those States.

Another interesting but little publicised idea has been put forward by Malta, which has suggested the creation of an OSCE Centre of Excellence for Mediterranean partners in Malta.[62] The idea was to allow for bundling efforts and resources and harnessing the participating States' and partner States' shared interest in pursuing specific specialised events and projects, in the realm of rule of law, justice and the fight against terrorism. The discussion on the proposal for an OSCE Centre of Excellence was aborted at an early stage, but such a Centre could allow for focusing and strategising as well as enhancing efforts in these important realms or the broader context of new challenges and could also involve Asian partners.

A number of OSCE documents refer to the need to broaden dialogue on specific issues with regional organisations beyond the OSCE area.[63] This includes the

[61] MOU between UNDP and OSCE from 27 September 2018.

[62] OSCE Secretary General, *Welcoming Remarks by Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, OSCE Secretary General*, Rome, 18 September 2014, https://www.osce.org/node/124557.

[63] See for example OSCE Ministerial Council, "The Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating

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Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States and the African Union, but also ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Better links with these regional organisations would allow for dialogue on a region-to-region basis; give a role to partner States; and allow for communication with States that are not part of the two dialogues.

Conclusion

Faith in multilateralism is at stake, if security institutions do not find a way to deal with new challenges. The rapid transformation of the security environment and complex threat scenarios reflecting the rapid development of new security challenges require extraordinary leadership by the OSCE Chairs, supported constructively by participating States and the Executive Structures to navigate in the murky waters of today's international affairs.

The OSCE could be a very useful tool to address the entire spectrum of new challenges for its participating States. Its comparative advantage is its comprehensive approach, taking into account its politico-military, economic and environmental, and human rights aspects. These include its unique *acquis* in transparency and confidence building measure agreements. The recent agreements on three clusters of cyber CBMs are an example, as is the role of the OSCE in election observation across the OSCE area. The notion of election integrity in face of new technologies requires a whole new approach to comprehensive security, that includes countering hate speech and cyber threats and other abuse of digital technology that threatens democratic governance. ODIHR is well positioned to take the lead in moving this agenda ahead. Another example is the strong performance of the OSCE in countering human trafficking that is linked to abuse of digital technology and to irregular migration. The OSCE should leverage more its Chapter VIII status under the UN Charter when it comes to agenda-setting on countering global new challenges.

A modicum of shared understanding is needed to facilitate cooperation among "non like-minded states" in the OSCE to successfully address the obstacles hampering the effective implementation of a comprehensive approach to new challenges.[64] This includes a commitment to providing the OSCE with more adequate resources.

Terrorism", in *Final Document of the Ninth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council*, Bucharest, 3-4 December 2001, p. 8-13, https://www.osce.org/node/40515; *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability...*, cit.; *Declaration on Co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners* (MC.DOC/9/14), 5 December 2014, https://www.osce.org/node/130561; and *Document Nr. 4, Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean* (MC.DOC/4/18), 7 December 2018, https://www.osce.org/node/406532.

[64] An expert group of the Wilson Center recently addressed ways to overcome the "uncommon cause with disparate interests and often-conflicting claims" among OSCE participating States. Wilson Center, "Uncommon Cause: The Future of the OSCE", in *TransAtlantic Series*, No. 2 (February 2021), p. 2, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/node/105098.

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The task at hand is to prepare the OSCE to "take the digital curve" and adapt to the new realities of a world confronted with the challenges such as climate change, the covid-19 pandemic and migration. At the same time, finding a way forward on these issues may also help to better address the growing political divisions among the OSCE participating States.

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