

Regional Interests in Maintaining and Diversifying OSCE Field Operations: Supporting a Trend

The European security landscape is divided once again. While the wave of state founding that followed the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet and Yugoslav federations – and which was accompanied by significant bloodshed – has come to a standstill, the results of this process are extremely diverse. One part of old, politically defined “Eastern Europe” has attached itself to the West: The enlargement of NATO in March 1999 and 2004 and, more importantly, the enlargement of the EU in 2004 provide the institutional foundation for the new division of Europe. On the one hand, the EU area has become the centre of political stability in Europe and the EU has become the continent’s most important non-military security organization. At the same time, a number of (relatively) weak states have emerged, above all in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, where the process of (formal) democratic reform that started in the early 1990s has conspicuously halted or looks likely to halt. These states are confronted with considerable domestic and external potential for conflict, which leads them to develop their own specific security interests, which vary considerably from region to region. Nevertheless, all of them are interested to some degree in cooperating with the EU states.

Independently of these European developments, the USA has become increasingly unilateral in its decision making, while Euro-Asiatic Russia may have a European focus, but is characterized by strategic uncertainty.

This raises the question of what conceptual implications the new regional differentiation of security interests may have for the OSCE and, in particular, for one of the Organization’s most important instruments for implementation – its field activities. The Informal Open-Ended Group of Friends of the Chair on Improving the Functioning and Effectiveness of OSCE Field Operations has been considering this question since 2003. The present text aims to contribute to the group’s discussion. It seeks to analyse potential connections between the security interests of the EU group of OSCE participating States and those of participating States from four important regions within the OSCE area: South-eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. It also seeks to examine the influence of Russia and Turkey on security policy in these subregions, which is at times of primary importance. This should make it possible to make suggestions for the future development of OSCE field operations.¹

1 A working group on “OSCE Field Activities” was set up at the Centre for OSCE Research (CORE) at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg. It consists of the authors of the current text, together with Claus Neukirch and Wolf-

Points of Departure for the Discussion of OSCE Field Operations

Clearly, Europe's new regional arrangements in Europe must be at the centre of the current discussions on OSCE reform. Remarkably, however, they are not being discussed directly but indirectly by means of talks on what is identified as the geographic and thematic imbalance of the OSCE agenda and OSCE field operations. In order to contribute to this discussion, it will be necessary, in the first place, to systematically survey, region by region, the most obvious interests of the 55 OSCE participating States in making use of the OSCE and its field operations. Of course, many of these interests are mutually incompatible. Nevertheless, reducing regional disparities has been a leitmotif of European international relations for a long time.

Inadequate Perception and Articulation of Interests

The OSCE encompasses the interests of a variety of participating States and their regional arrangements. This may be a trivial observation, but it highlights all the more effectively the fact that important organizations and states (EU, USA, Russia) fail to articulate their concrete interests in making use of the OSCE and its field operations adequately or precisely.

For example, although the EU has considerable political influence and economic attractiveness throughout Eastern Europe, this finds only limited expression in the OSCE context. Over the years, the EU has elaborated a number of policy instruments that are or can be made relevant for direct or indirect security engagements and co-operation with the OSCE. Embedded in basic concepts like the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Maastricht 1993, Amsterdam 1999) and the Wider Europe framework (2003), these policy instruments include Common Strategies, individual partnership and co-operation agreements, and association and co-operation schemes. Programmes such as TACIS support these policy options. Anticipated direct crisis management operations (Laeken 2001) may open a new dimension in EU security engagements. However, most of these policy instruments have been designed to fulfil specific purposes. There is virtually no overarching conceptual framework to apply these and other instruments in the context of OSCE security-building efforts.²

Alongside the EU's interests, the intentions of the CIS may also be of crucial importance for the current discussion on OSCE reform. However, the CIS appears to be too loosely structured to develop common positions on the OSCE that could be implemented at present. The high-profile statement made

gang Sporrer. Frank Evers also took part in an advisory capacity in several meetings of the "Group of Friends of the Chair" mentioned above, which were held in Vienna. These took place in 2003 under the chairmanship of the then head of the Canadian delegation to the OSCE, Ambassador Evelyn Puxley.

2 At the time of writing, the EU was expected to make initial policy statements on these matters at the end of 2004.

by nine CIS states on 3 July 2004³ was thus typical in containing only criticism of the OSCE, although a further statement made in September 2004⁴ expressed a willingness to enter into discussions for the first time. The GUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova – formerly the GUUAM group, with the participation of Uzbekistan) occasionally adopts a joint position on OSCE matters, but does not do so explicitly as a group of CIS states. Although Russia continues to see itself as a major force in European security, it still appears to be looking for the right way to deal with the OSCE. The agenda of the USA with respect to the Organization also seems to have been poorly defined and overlaid with other concerns for some time now. The Group of Like-Minded States, which consists of Canada, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway, makes occasional collective statements.

Finally, there are the states that host OSCE field operations. It is surprising to find that, at least in their public statements, they demonstrate little awareness of common institutional interests within the OSCE.

It would benefit the current discussion on the future of the OSCE and its field operations if the most important (groups of) OSCE participating States would make a greater effort to formulate their interests in deliberately making use of the Organization. The OSCE's potential to act as a forum for political debate – one that could be made use of by the EU, but also by other regional organizations and countries – is often ignored. This is still true even though documents such as the Common Concept for the Development of Co-operation between Mutually-Reinforcing Institutions (Copenhagen 1997) and the OSCE's Charter for European Security, which includes the Platform for Co-operative Security, (Istanbul 1999) explicitly support this approach. The misunderstanding of the situation is illustrated best with reference to Albania, whose delegation – despite that country's democratic constitution and its participation in the EU Stabilization and Association Process – has openly attacked the OSCE Presence, and its democratization activities in particular.

Critical Comments on the OSCE and Its Field Activities

For some time now, the OSCE has been debating the form its field activities should take in the future. This has been occasioned above all by highly critical comments made by some host states of OSCE field activities – in part jus-

3 See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Information and Press Department, Statement by CIS Member Countries on the State of Affairs in the OSCE, Moscow, 3 July 2004, at: http://www.in.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/3be4758c05585a09c3256ecc00255a52?OpenDocument. The statement was signed by nine CIS states, but not by Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkmenistan, and was presented to the Permanent Council of the OSCE on 8 July 2004 by the Russian delegation.

4 See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Information and Press Department, Appeal of the CIS Member States to the OSCE Partners, Astana, 15 September 2004 (unofficial translation from the Russian), at: http://www.in.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/70f610ccd5b876ccc3256f100043db72?OpenDocument. The appeal, which was distributed electronically, was signed by eight CIS states, not including Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Turkmenistan.

tifiable, but also threatening to distract from the core of the discussion. They take up both general questions of the OSCE's approach and matters of operational management. The following are the most important points that have been raised:

- (a) the regional imbalance inherent in the policy transfer from West to East and the Organization's restrictive focus on certain states in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union;
- (b) the interference of field operations in the domestic affairs of host states. This criticism particularly focuses on activities in the areas of democratization, disregarding the principles of the Moscow Document (October 1991);
- (c) the imbalance between the OSCE's three baskets – the emphasis placed on the human dimension at the expense of the politico-military and economic-environmental dimensions;
- (d) double standards in the application of OSCE commitments;
- (e) the open question of limited-term field missions, which was raised above all by the closing of the missions in Estonia and Latvia (followed by the accession of these countries to the EU, despite ongoing problems with regard to minorities) and the closure of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya (despite the continuing conflict);
- (f) the lack of transparency and efficiency in the area of human resources, especially with regard to recruiting procedures and the use of secondment;
- (g) hotly contested budgetary questions, which begin with discussions of the Organization's scale of contributions (and are not restricted to field operations) and extend to extra-budgetary contributions to individual projects run by the missions that do not require consensus.

A number of these criticisms are summed up in the position paper presented by Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia on 4 September 2003,⁵ in the declaration made by nine CIS states of 3 July 2004 (as mentioned above), and in the appeal made by eight CIS states on 15 September 2004 (mentioned above). Questions of inadequate transparency are also discussed in a paper submitted by Norway on 28 September 2003.

Various Degrees of Criticism

Criticism of the OSCE's field operations varies strongly from region to region. The EU states, the USA and the Group of Like-Minded States tend to concentrate on pragmatic considerations that aim at further improving the successful field-operations concept. The one-sided geographic focus of the

5 Cf. *On the Issue of Reform of the OSCE Field Activities – A Food-For-Thought Paper*, PC.DEL/986/03, 2003.

current security transfer, the existence of which is not denied, is seen as the necessary consequence of the actual security situation in Europe. In non-military contexts, regional organizations, such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe together with the field activities they carry out in parallel with the efforts of the United Nations, are considered to have a role to play in the implementation of major undertakings, such as the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Criticism of OSCE field operations on the part of host countries start with a widespread rejection of the Organization's missions in several countries in South-eastern Europe (statements of this kind are most clearly heard from Albania, as already mentioned). In Eastern Europe, Belarus and Russia stand out, the former on account of its less than productive relationship with the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in that country, the latter especially during the closure of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya. Criticism of host countries' limited ability to influence OSCE activities played a role in the transformation of the OSCE Mission in Ukraine into the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, whose mandate is far narrower than that of its predecessor. In the South Caucasus, criticism tends to focus on the OSCE's failure to mediate in the "frozen conflicts" (Armenia/Azerbaijan, Georgia). In Eastern Europe, the same criticism applies to the Transdnistria conflict in Moldova. In Central Asia, the democratization activities of the OSCE Offices have come in for more (Turkmenistan) or less harsh (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) criticism.

The variable intensity of actors' engagement with the strategies and *modus operandi* of the OSCE and its field operations can partly be explained by differences in the need to co-operate with the Organization. That applies both to the individual participating States and to the international organizations represented indirectly in the Organization. It also demonstrates the differences in how the various actors perceive both the actual security situation in Europe's subregions and the OSCE's security offering (considered as a public good).

Interpenetration of Regional Political Goals

There can be no doubt that, simply by virtue of its economic power and social stability, the EU is the decisive regional organization for non-military security building within the OSCE area. Furthermore, the EU carries significant political weight within the OSCE itself. The EU, the Group of Like-Minded States, and the USA together account for 31 of the 55 OSCE participating States. This alone makes it necessary to examine the mutual penetration of the two organizations' political goals. In doing this, it will of course be borne in mind that neither of the organizations considers itself to be or can be seen as the implementation agency of the other.

Regional Differentiation of EU Interests in Co-operation with the OSCE

Although the OSCE can by no means be considered an agency for the implementation of EU policy, it is nevertheless in the interest of the EU group of OSCE participating States to represent the EU's various regionally specific interests in co-operation within a broader forum for security matters. For the EU group, the OSCE is perfect for this purpose, as it provides a permanent and institutionalized security dialogue with other European countries. The task of formulating appropriate policy positions is a matter for the EU group of states and not for the OSCE. Regional focuses for co-operation between the EU and the OSCE could be set in the following areas:

- (a) *for South-eastern Europe*: stabilization and promoting reforms to assist European integration;
- (b) *for Eastern Europe*: promoting reforms to assist European co-operation;
- (c) *for the South Caucasus*: conflict management and promoting reforms to assist European co-operation;
- (d) *for Central Asia*: promoting reforms to support links with European security structures and European co-operation.

Focuses of this kind also reflect more or less accurately the interests of individual states and sub-regions in co-operation with the EU – considered as the centre of European stability.

Key Areas for Co-operation in South-Eastern Europe

As well as post-conflict rehabilitation, the OSCE's engagement in South-eastern Europe is likely to continue to include support for regional and national stabilization and for convergence with European standards – in the OSCE's own terms, the dissemination of OSCE values. The countries in that region that host OSCE missions have already entered into co-operation and association agreements with the EU or have signed preliminary versions of such agreements. These agreements particularly stress the targets of cross-border co-operation. For OSCE field operations, specific opportunities for co-operation are available in fields including the following:

Post-conflict rehabilitation and conflict prevention. Following the end of the violent phase of the Yugoslav wars, the long-term interests in co-operation between the affected states of South-eastern Europe and the OSCE field missions lie in monitoring bilateral and inter-ethnic relations. The conflict in Macedonia in 2001 and the outbreak of violence in Kosovo in 2004 have underlined once more how inter-ethnic tensions continue to threaten the region. The interests of South-eastern European countries in preventing and regulating the situation overlap with those of the OSCE and the EU.

European integration and promotion of democratic standards. The prospect of joining the EU or at least of co-operating closely with the Union is a key motivating force in South-eastern Europe. The accession of Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia in the course of EU enlargement in May 2004 is likely to have strengthened the Union's role as the centre of political gravity in the region and its surroundings. The trend is further encouraged by the prospective accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and the recently announced candidacy of Croatia. Turkey, a major South-eastern European regional power, is also a candidate for accession negotiations. It is clear from this that EU-centred co-operation is eclipsing the previous political focus on the OSCE. However, the desire to join the EU and the related economic motivation can be made to work as a motor of reform precisely within the OSCE context. The Copenhagen Criteria for accession to the EU provide an opportunity for the OSCE and its most important participating States to become involved in countries that host OSCE missions, and are clearly compatible with those countries' interests. It is enough to note that the content of the Copenhagen Criteria (stable democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law, protection of minorities, a functioning market economy, adoption of the EU *acquis*) is virtually identical with that of the OSCE commitments. The goals defined by instruments such as the EU Stabilization and Association Agreements with Macedonia and Croatia and similar negotiations with Albania, can be adopted by the OSCE as they stand. In particular, the OSCE can contribute to democratic institution building and the promotion of good governance.

Involving Russia. The potential for Russian engagement in the security of South-eastern Europe is touched upon only briefly here. Russia has historical and ethnic links to the region – and especially to Serbia – even if at present it does not take a clear public stance on the region. Although Russia's participation in the KFOR operation in Kosovo was not without its problems, it did show that it is possible in principle to involve Russia in international conflict management operations in the region.

Involving Turkey. Traditionally a major power in the region, Turkey once again enjoys a strong presence in South-eastern Europe. It has strong ethnic, religious, and economic links with the region. The EU's dialogue with Turkey, which aims at democratization and security building, can certainly be extended to encompass South-eastern Europe. The same applies to involving Turkey in security building in the South Caucasus and in Central Asia, less so to Eastern Europe. Recently, the process of Cyprus's accession to the EU has proved a source of positive experience in Turkey-EU relations.

Key Areas for Co-operation in Eastern Europe

The closure of the OSCE Missions to Estonia and Latvia and the accession of the Baltic states to the EU means that OSCE field operations in their tradi-

tional form have become largely irrelevant for this sub-region. Nevertheless, the potential for the OSCE to carry out long-term mediation activities relating to the Baltic states' bilateral relations with Russia and to resolve questions concerning the Russian-speaking minorities should not be forgotten. The involvement of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and ODIHR will clearly be necessary for the foreseeable future. The Baltic region also contains the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, which is highly relevant to regional security. However, discussions of transit questions, for example, lie outside the OSCE's remit and are being discussed bilaterally and between the EU and Russia.

Aside from the Baltic states, the rest of Eastern Europe – the East Slavic states of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine together with Moldova – remains relevant for OSCE field activities. The following section considers a number of important areas for co-operation. Russia and Turkey will be considered separately in a later section.

Conflict management. There continues to be a considerable need for OSCE conflict management activities in Eastern Europe. This is true of the conflict region of Transnistria (Moldova), which affects Russia, Ukraine (at least with regard to the border regime), and – touching South-eastern Europe – Romania. Moldova is in favour of OSCE involvement.

The situation in Ukraine is less acute. Latent potential for inter-ethnic conflict exists in the Crimean Autonomous Republic and possibly also – though to a significantly lesser degree – on the mainland. The minorities affected by this include Crimean Tatars, ethnic Russians, and other non-Ukrainians. Ukraine is opposed to the OSCE becoming involved, but may be open to accepting mediation under certain circumstances. Recent differences of opinion between Russia and Ukraine over the Kerch Strait in the Crimea also indicate potential for international conflict.

In Russia, the Chechen conflict remains unresolved. Despite its peripheral geographical position, this conflict indicates clearly that a potential for inter-ethnic conflict exists in Russia, especially within those of Russia's 89 administrative subdivisions that are densely settled by non-Russians.

European co-operation. As in the case of Europe's other regions, the states of Eastern Europe have a strong interest in all kinds of co-operation relations within the OSCE area, and especially, in their case, with the states of the EU. As mentioned above, co-operation agreements and lines of co-operation with the EU have already been established. Further links to Western Europe also exist, above all with NATO and the Council of Europe. Turning to the individual states, Belarus is again seeking to move closer to Europe, despite its authoritarian regime and traditional closeness to Russia. The desire to leave behind the country's current isolation is not only being expressed as a goal within Belarus's internal political discourse: Sabre-rattling in the international arena has been replaced by disillusionment and a certain desire for European co-operation. Belarus has tried to indicate its desire in a variety of

contexts for a while now. To some extent, this change of direction was indicated by the replacement of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus, which had existed since 1997, by the OSCE Office in Minsk in January 2003.

Romania's talks over EU accession – which may occur as early as 2007 – forced the Moldovan public to take account of their own country's potential for development and co-operation.

Ukraine believes it is capable of converging with the EU in the medium term. Or, at least, the political leadership of that country tends to frame long-term political goals in such terms in its public statements. It is not uncommon for it to describe Ukraine as the geographical centre of Europe: midway between the Atlantic and the Urals. The political connotations of this are clear and are evoked quite deliberately. Nonetheless, the idea of Ukrainian association with the EU or even talk of accession have little to do with the domestic political situation and economic reality. They do however demonstrate the existence of a certain basic attitude – one that is also evident in Ukraine's co-operation with NATO (Partnership for Peace, KFOR/Kosovo, SFOR/Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sea Breeze).

Poland's entry to the EU and, most recently, its adoption of new visa regulations have brought home starkly to Belarus and Ukraine in particular (but also to Moldova) the fact that Europe is once again divided. It is no coincidence that the EU "Wider Europe – Neighbourhood" initiative explicitly favours co-operation that goes beyond the Union's new eastern external borders. The policy areas identified in the initiative provide opportunities for OSCE involvement in Eastern Europe, in areas such as convergence with European standards, especially with relation to democratization and human and minority rights.

State building and security-sector reform. A particularly relevant area for the OSCE's engagement in Eastern Europe is in promoting the establishment of state institutions. Support for security-sector reform is an aspect of this and is strengthened by a shared interest in combating extremism and terrorism.

Involving Russia. Historically, Russia sees itself more as a European than an Asian power and has traditionally had a strong interest in European integration. Russia or rather its forerunner, the Soviet Union, was one of the initiators of the CSCE process. Besides economic co-operation, Russia's orientation towards Europe is currently driven by dialogue with the EU carried out within the scope of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (1994) and the Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia (1999). Moreover, Russia is taking part in a separate security dialogue with the 19 NATO member states. Within the NATO-Russia Council (until 2002, the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council), Russia has its own working- and high-level agenda for co-operation. Russia is one of 46 members of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and participates in NATO's Partnership for

Peace. Russia is also a member of the Council of Europe. Looking beyond Europe, but with a strong European focus, Russia is in negotiations to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is highly defensive of its right to be included in the G8 framework. Russia's European focus is supplemented by activities in Asia. As well as reviving bilateral economic relations (e.g. with China and India), and co-operating with Asian regional organizations such as ASEAN, Russia has also instigated its own political initiatives, e.g. by founding the Shanghai Co-operation Organization with China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Activities of this kind do not indicate that Russia is turning away from Europe, rather they signify the options that Russia possesses for international relations outside the European sphere.

The following are the key areas for co-operation with Russia in the OSCE context:

- (a) Military security
- (b) European reintegration
- (c) Conflict management
- (d) Migration
- (e) Combating terrorism and other asymmetrical threats
- (f) Combating trafficking.

Russia is ostensibly concerned with its *reintegration* in Europe. However, it shows little sign of applying relevant initiatives in the context of the OSCE. This is the case, despite the fact that such initiatives have already been formulated for co-operation between the EU and Russia and could be applied to the OSCE without further ado. The Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia, as mentioned above, aims at the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, and public institutions, the integration of Russia in a common European social and economic space, stabilization, and security in Europe, and – beyond that – at meeting common challenges in areas such as the environment, organized crime, and illegal immigration. The Partnership and Co-operation Agreement with Russia, which entered into force in 1997, covered the same ground. The OSCE and Russia should be able to take up the same topics that have already been agreed by the EU and Russia.

Russia is less appreciative of the OSCE's activities in the field of conflict management. It needs to be familiarized with these anew. Russia was responsible for the closure of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya. It continues to move slowly towards implementing its Istanbul commitments (1999) with respect to Georgia and Moldova. Meanwhile, it is relatively straightforward to identify the entire Caucasus, i.e. the North as well as the South Caucasus, as a key locus of potential co-operation between Russia and the OSCE, simply because of the latent threat that potential developments in this region may spread throughout multiethnic and multiconfessional Russia. Russia is at least hesitant to discuss this cross-border regional security con-

text and the potential use that can be made of the OSCE and its field operations. And yet, OSCE conflict management is potentially interesting for Russia – certainly in the cases of the Caucasus and Central Asia, less so in the case of Moldova.

Migration is another important area where Russia could gain from co-operation. The regions where it could be most productive to involve Russia in relevant OSCE activities are the South Caucasus, and – above all – Central Asia. The scale of both legal and illegal immigration from these regions makes them extremely urgent for Russian security policy.

While the fight against terrorism serves Russia to some extent as a pretext to avoid resolving the question of Chechnya and broader matters of governmental reform, it cannot be denied that Russia faces genuine internal and external threats. These may be found in the form of ties between Turkic and Muslim population groups within Russia and neighbouring regions, but also have their roots in domestic social and economic conditions. Efforts to combat terrorism provide the OSCE with an opportunity to link co-operation with Russia to questions of democratization and supraregional activities. This includes activities undertaken to combat the illicit trade in weapons and drugs, trafficking in human beings, and (to a lesser extent) product piracy.

Involving Turkey. In terms of economics at least, Turkey is increasingly being recognized as a major regional power in Eastern Europe and is extraordinarily successful in this area. Turkey's unique ethnic and confessional composition means it could play a vital role in resolving minority issues in the region, in particular with regard to the concerns of Turkic peoples living in the Crimea (Ukraine), in the North Caucasus (Southern Russia), and in certain administrative subdivisions of Russia, such as Tatarstan. However, both the governments and the Eastern Slavic majorities of Ukraine and Russia tend to reject Turkish involvement in their countries' domestic affairs. Relations with Turkey are significantly affected by historical baggage. It should nevertheless be possible, not least for Turkey itself, to identify potential areas for co-operation.

Key Areas for Co-operation in the South Caucasus

The South Caucasus region is home to numerous latent security threats. Alongside the well known "frozen conflicts", there are many other examples of potential tension between states and ethnic groups. In addition, relations between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, on the one hand, and Russia, Turkey, and Iran, on the other, are characterized by varying degrees of difficulty. The region is home to efforts to co-operate with the USA and Europe, and, in different ways, with Russia and Turkey. Competition over security arrangements and economic co-operation determines the foreign policy climate in the region. In all three countries, efforts to co-operate with the USA dominate, and, especially since the 11 September 2001, the USA is clearly

understood to be a regional power. All in all, continuing instability in the South Caucasus suggests a number of potential items for the long-term agenda of the OSCE.

Resolving the frozen conflicts/conflict prevention. The three South Caucasus states have a long-term and many-sided interest in security co-operation with the OSCE. That applies not only to the resolution of the frozen conflicts in Georgia (South Ossetia, Abkhazia) and Armenia/Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), but also to avoid potential developments in inter-ethnic relations, especially in Georgia. Within Georgia, the situation in Ajaria is delicate, as is that in the district of Samtskhe-Javakheti, which has an Armenian majority, in Kvemo-Kartli, which is populated by Azeris, and in the ethnically Chechen-dominated Pankisi Gorge. A contentious issue is the much-discussed return of the Meskhetian Turks from Russia and Central Asia, also to Samtskhe-Javakheti. Throughout the South Caucasus, there is a long term role in mediation for the OSCE and its four field operations (the OSCE Mission to Georgia, the Offices in Baku and Yerevan, and the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the Minsk Conference). Classical OSCE topics such as minority protection and democratization will remain relevant in this context for some years to come.

Incorporating bilateral relations. As mentioned above, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are competing in reshaping their relations to Russia, Turkey, and the USA. Political intervention in regional processes by these three countries and their economic and military presence in the South Caucasus are seen as relevant for security purposes in various – and partly contradictory – ways. The dominant tendency is to aspire to partnership with the USA. The EU and its member states play a secondary role.

Of the individual countries, Azerbaijan and Georgia are striving to disentangle themselves from Russia and to establish co-operative relations with Turkey and the USA, while Armenia has a troubled relationship with Turkey and has adopted a highly pragmatic attitude with regard to Russia and the USA. Several parties have a problem with the presence of Russia and the CIS in Georgia and with Russia's control of the Armenian-Turkish border. Looking beyond Europe, Azerbaijan's relations with Iran are significant. Here, there is no acute threat, but there may be a long-term danger of developments that could exert a negative influence on the rest of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The most important factors here are Azerbaijan's relationship to the Azeri population in the north of Iran, the demarcation of the Caspian Sea, and the exploitation of the region's mineral wealth.

The OSCE has so far dealt with some of these interests primarily through its efforts to manage the frozen conflicts by means of the Minsk process and the activities of the OSCE Mission to Georgia. Scope also exists to take up these various concerns in other ways, for example in terms of the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension via discussions of cross-border resource use or transnational environmental issues. The OSCE already

has considerable relevant experience. Of course, it must be noted that the OSCE's involvement is directly dependent on the desire for co-operation on the part of individual OSCE participating States.

Military security. In institutional terms, Armenia's, Azerbaijan's, and Georgia's efforts in the area of military co-operation tend to focus on NATO. In addition, Russia has a military presence in Armenia and Georgia, while Turkey and the USA are involved in military activities in Azerbaijan and Georgia. The OSCE has concerned itself in particular with resolving issues relating to Russia's military presence in Georgia, above all at the Istanbul Summit (1999), but also during the Maastricht Ministerial (2003). Azerbaijan is concerned at the military consequences of a possible crisis in Iran. The background to this situation is the dispute between Iran and the USA, Israel, and other Western powers over Iranian nuclear projects and the production of weapons-grade fissile materials. For a non-military organization such as the OSCE, there are several fields of activity that suggest themselves here: related non-military topics, such as security-sector reform, arms smuggling, or conflict-prevention in the Caspian Sea area.

Economic co-operation. The work of the OSCE also has a certain resonance for economic affairs in the South Caucasus. However, links between security and economic matters in that region tend to be explored bilaterally, and it is difficult for international organizations such as the OSCE to establish themselves. Bilateral co-operation efforts in sectors such as energy and raw materials have rarely been leveraged to support international security efforts. As a result, the region's largest economic project – the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which links Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey – has not been exploited for security purposes.

The most effective way for the OSCE to engage in the economic sphere is by addressing items from the agendas of the EU and, to a lesser extent, the WTO. The potential exists to make use of the cross-border exploitation of natural resources, which are distributed unequally throughout the region (principally oil and gas in Azerbaijan and water in Armenia), for security-political purposes, but it has so far barely been discussed by the OSCE. To do this it would be necessary to define the interests of relevant discussion partners (Russia, the USA, together with Germany, France, Britain, and Turkey, but also Greece and – not to forget – Iran). The demarcation and exploitation of the Caspian Sea's resources by the five states that border on it (Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Russia) have, in recent years, already led to Iran and Russia flexing their military muscles and could mean that the OSCE is one day called upon to fulfil a classical conflict mediation role.

Through its economic and environmental dimension, the OSCE is also active in the region in political facilitation efforts, such as the promotion of good governance, post-conflict rehabilitation, local cross-border trade, and cross-border water management.

Reform activities. Against a background of regional instability, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia see the establishment and maintenance of foreign relations as a key national priority. The urgent need for co-operation faced by all three states also entails, among other things, an increased openness to co-operation in domestic matters. In the long-term, this creates opportunities for the OSCE in all sorts of activities related to democratization. From the point of view of the EU, this provides fairly obvious opportunities for co-ordinating approaches with EU co-operation activities in the South Caucasus.

Involving Russia. Russia's economic and military presence in the South Caucasus is traditionally strong. Russia participates in the OSCE's activities and leads CIS operations in the region. It is directly or indirectly involved in developments in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Ajaria, Samtskhe-Javakheti, in the Pankisi Gorge, and in relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Developments among the ethnic groups of the South Caucasus and the small nations of the North Caucasus, which are always striving for autonomy to some degree, have tended to interact with each other and can have an effect that reaches deep inside multi-ethnic Russia. As mentioned, such developments are largely of domestic-political importance for Russia, as is most clearly demonstrated by the case of Chechnya. These considerations alone are enough to demonstrate the necessity of involving Russia in OSCE activities in the South Caucasus. Precisely the same topics are relevant here as were mentioned above. They have, to a large extent, already been covered by co-operation agreements between Russia and the EU.

Involving Turkey. Turkey, like Russia, is a regional power in the South Caucasus. Its presence in the region is traditionally based upon ethnic and confessional links to Azerbaijan and several ethnic groups in Georgia. Although Turkey shares a border with the Azeri exclave of Nakhichevan, it is nevertheless separated by Armenia and Iran from Azerbaijan itself and thus also has no direct land or sea links to the ethnically related states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This geographical detail has a significant influence on Turkey's regional and supraregional interests. Turkey has recently regained its economic strength in the region and is working towards developing military activities.

At the same time, Turkey's involvement in the South Caucasus is strongly influenced by the interplay between its domestic and foreign policies. For this reason, the interdependence of human and minority rights in Turkey and the placing of Turkey's relations with its neighbours on a peaceful basis (above all with Armenia) could be of prime importance for the OSCE. Developments in these two areas are mutually dependent. Special attention should be paid to opportunities for resolving the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and the conflicts in Georgia, as well as to the problem of Turkish-Armenian relations. In this connection, Turkey's strong interest in

co-operating with and joining the EU is, of course, significant for its co-operation with the OSCE.

Key Areas for Co-operation in Central Asia

Opportunities are emerging for the OSCE to carry out co-operation activities in Central Asia by, firstly, linking conflict management activities and the need for reform with the strong interest on the part of several Central Asian states in establishing security ties to Europe. Moreover, the West has obvious economic interests in the region, above all because of the presence of large quantities of mineral resources in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The following specific opportunities present themselves for co-operation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan:

Conflict management and conflict prevention. No armed conflicts are currently taking place in Central Asia. However, with its multi-ethnic population, the region remains vulnerable to ethnic conflict and religious radicalization. The OSCE has already mediated successfully in Tajikistan. Post-conflict rehabilitation remains a vital aspect of the OSCE's work in that country and primarily takes the form of promoting dialogue between Islamists and representatives of secularism. The different economic situations in the five Central Asian states and the asymmetrical distribution of natural resources mean that some degree of social inequality is likely to continue in the region. The OSCE's economic and environmental dimension, in particular, is called upon here, although its ability to intervene is limited, as demonstrated by the Organization's attempts to mediate in the dispute over water management in the region.

Combating terrorism. The prevention of (largely) religiously motivated extremism and terrorism is a highly relevant topic in Central Asia. The urgency of the situation was brought home most recently by terrorist incidents that occurred in Uzbekistan in 2004. There is also a supraregional dimension, thanks to Central Asia's border with the OSCE's Partner for Co-operation, Afghanistan, and its nearness to Pakistan. There are obvious, if subtly varied, interests in co-operation here. A further factor that has placed the need to tackle extremism and terrorism on the agenda is the entanglement of radical movements – from Afghanistan via Tajikistan to Eastern Europe – with structures of the international drug trade.

Integration with European security structures. Central Asia's orientation towards Europe in matters of security policy is influenced by attitudes towards China (informed by history), a variety of experiences with Russia to the north, and the uncertain situations in Afghanistan and neighbouring regions, as mentioned above.

Europe frequently underestimates the extent to which the Central Asian states desire closer links with European security structures. Since the early 1990s, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have pinned key

security hopes on the OSCE – the only organization of its kind that provides them with an equal voice and a politically significant veto right. Although the extent to which the Central Asian states make their security hopes explicit varies, the ability the OSCE gives them to participate as equals and to have a permanent influence on the formation of security policy in European capitals mean that the Organization has come to be valued as a guarantor of security in the region. Turkmenistan appears to be the solitary country that does not share this view.

The Central Asian states' security relations with Europe are not limited to their participation in the OSCE but also encompass membership of NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Membership of the Commonwealth of Independent States also has an important European dimension via Russia – even if this is not generally recognized.

Reform activities. The OSCE needs to take advantage of the Central Asian states' interest in closer links to European security structures and to link it with topics such as security-sector reform, democratization, economic reform, and the promotion of good governance. Of these topics, security-sector reform creates particularly valuable opportunities for co-operation in Central Asia. Ranging from police activities to border management, this area is relevant to both domestic and foreign policy. The OSCE is capable of placing the provision of security-sector-related legal advice and technical support in a broad context of democratization. In general, the parties involved should be made aware of and encouraged to discuss the inevitable connection between domestic political reform, regional stabilization, and European security building.

Involving Russia. For Russia, Central Asia is a potential corridor for the import of insecurity, especially as a result of mass migration and the threat posed by religious extremism and terrorism. Trafficking is also relevant for Russian security policy. In addition, Russia is interested in the region's raw materials and has traditionally played a role in their exploitation.

Involving Turkey. Turkey has a special interest in Central Asia, thanks in particular to its ethnic links with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This is the most important basis for co-operation. Turkey is also a major economic player in the region. This is a further opportunity to involve Turkey more permanently in OSCE activities.

Recommendations on Developing OSCE Field Operations

1. *Understanding sub-regional features of the OSCE.* While the CSCE focused mainly on bipolar East-West communication, the range of interests involved in European security-building has broadened considerably since the 1980s. One new feature is the emergence of a clearly discernible sub-regional differentiation. As a result, the OSCE may be consid-

ered to be transforming into a platform for dialogue between European regions – specifically between the enlarged political European West (accompanied by the US and the Group of Like-Minded States), South-eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. This inter-regional dialogue is increasingly coming to make up the real substance of OSCE security-building. And it is thus clearly necessary to determine what the specific requirements and preconditions will be for making future use of the OSCE in each region. Achieving the necessary understanding is mainly a task for (a) the Organization’s main players, such as France, Germany, Russia, Turkey, the UK, and the USA, (b) participating States in the various peripheral European regions mentioned above, and (c) regional organizations within the OSCE area, such as the EU or the CIS.

2. *Diversifying cross-regional efforts.* Over three decades, the OSCE has developed values, principles, and norms for regulating security affairs across Europe. They amounted to what is called the OSCE *acquis* – the outcome of permanently evolving security talks between the Organization’s participating States. The *acquis* essentially reflects a blend of 55 national interests in anchoring cross-regional security guarantees for the continent. These interests have been manifested primarily in the negotiations and discussions carried out under the aegis of the Organization, in its central institutions, and in its field operations. It is imperative that current discussions on reforming the OSCE bear in mind the inseparability of these three elements. The OSCE’s activities will be unable to develop their stabilizing effect without solid cross-regional bonds in both dialogue and implementation. Implied in this assertion is a clear statement of support for maintaining and diversifying the Organization’s implementation vehicles – the field operations.
3. *Setting regional focuses.* Reflecting the variety of security requirements in the different regions of the OSCE area, the general provisions of the OSCE *acquis* have to be applied in a differentiated manner to the needs of the various participating States and European sub-regions. Conceptually, this requires the outlining of regional focuses for the OSCE’s cross-regional efforts. In practical terms, it means resolving to gradually reform the forms and tasks of OSCE field operations.
4. *Shaping field operations.* The new regionalization of the OSCE area suggests diversified cross-regional co-operation and regional differentiation in the shaping of OSCE field operations. Regional diversification of certain areas of the OSCE’s work would partially answer the question “*Quo vadis, OSCE?*” It would likewise refocus discussions from the OSCE’s alleged imbalances (in terms of geography and the issues it focuses on) to more productively exploring interests in and capacities for cross-regional co-operation within the OSCE area.

The following suggestions try to interlink the aforementioned regional interests to cross-regional OSCE security building. They also take into account the fact that OSCE on-site engagements already encompass a range of activities that go beyond the classical scheme of country-based field missions. These include cross-border networking between OSCE field operations, for instance in the South Caucasus; field activities carried out directly by centralized OSCE institutions (HCNM, ODIHR, FOM); and OSCE-supported activities that are not managed directly by the OSCE, but which enhance OSCE networking and the dissemination of OSCE values in a given region, such as the recently established OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

Thematic Missions or Common Concern Groups (CCGs). Thematic missions or Common Concern Groups would be networks of field activities focused on a specific topic and operating in a number of host countries simultaneously. A CCG would have a Head Office in one country and would interact with Correspondence Offices in other host countries. Possible examples are a “CCG on Migration”, a “CCG on Trafficking in Human Beings” or a broad-based “CCG on Trafficking”. They would co-ordinate activities between interested countries of origin, transit and destination along the whole migration or trafficking process. Existing OSCE expertise in the field (mission departments or desks, mission officers, focal points, etc.) could easily integrate with CCGs. Furthermore, one could integrate the specific interests of other relevant international organizations (CIS, CoE, EU). Depending on the particular concerns involved, the geographic scope of CCGs might be inter-regional or regional (South-eastern Europe, South Caucasus, Central Asia, etc.).

Thematic Regional Co-operation Agencies. This proposal is for the OSCE to promote regional co-operation on specific issues. This could be achieved by utilizing existing OSCE networks in each region. Co-operation on particular topics would be formalized by setting up co-ordination agencies. This would also facilitate the involvement of relevant international organizations (CoE, CIS, EU) that were interested in co-operation on specific issues. Examples of this kind of activity would be an “OSCE Environmental Protection Agency in Central Asia” or an “OSCE Stabilization Facilitator in South Eastern Europe”.

Thematic Country Missions. This proposal enlarges upon the concept of traditional OSCE missions. Its essence is to focus the aims of a mission on one specific subject. This scheme could involve establishing new operations as well as restructuring existing OSCE field operations. An example of this kind of activity would be an “OSCE Office for Security Sector Reform in Country XYZ”.

Mobile Missions or Roving Ambassadors. This long-discussed proposal enlarges upon the idea of the established schemes of Special Rep-

representatives or Special Envoys. Mobile Missions or Roving Ambassadors would be temporarily established operations to investigate a specific subject and assist in its concerted solution. The subject matter, the criteria for assuming and concluding activities in the relevant countries or regions, the reporting procedures, and other details would be delineated in advance in the mission or ambassadorial mandates. Head Desks would be based in Vienna. An example for this kind of operations might be a “Special Envoy on Visa Regimes”.

Outsourced Operations. This concept would involve OSCE field engagements with no direct OSCE ownership or OSCE supervision. It would provide non-institutional forms of OSCE involvement like participation in regulatory, monitoring or advisory bodies as well as making financial contributions to institutions that directly or indirectly act in the interests of the OSCE. Those participating in these activities would be acting in the interests of the OSCE and may receive special orders from the OSCE. An example for this kind of activity has been the participation in the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

The suggestions made here do not intend to call the established forms of OSCE field operations into question, but – at the most – to complement them or to stimulate discussion over the further development of the OSCE’s field activities. One way in which new forms of OSCE field operations can develop is through the adaptation of existing operations to changing needs and circumstances. That is nothing new. The existing range of field activities already reflects – not only in the variety of designations used, but also in substantive ways – a significant development in a comparatively short space of time. However vital flexibility is in the debate on the forms of OSCE field operations, it should be matched by an equal level of constancy with regard to their content: The OSCE’s field activities are a powerful expression of the Organization’s will to co-operative security. They help participating States act in their own interests by complying with their OSCE commitments, which, since the 1991 Moscow Document, have ceased to be considered merely domestic concerns.