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I address you today as a scholar who has observed the evolution of the OSCE from the outside rather than as a participant, especially its activities in conflict management, ever since the early days during which the Helsinki Final Act was negotiated in Geneva.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is unique among international security institutions in many respects: among those of singular importance is its role as an essentially normative institution that seeks to modify key structural features of international politics that have contributed to war both within and between states throughout recent history. In many ways its basic goal is to create in Europe “from Vancouver to Vladivostok” what the famous Czech-German-American international relations scholar, Karl Deutsch, called a “pluralistic security community,” a community of states in which the very idea of war disappears as a means to resolve conflicts of interests.

The foundations of this normative and comprehensive approach to security were laid out clearly in the “Decalogue” opening the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. These principles included such important norms as the non-use of force in international relations, recognition of the territorial integrity of states and non-interference in their internal affairs, affirmation of the right of self-determination of peoples (which was not necessarily to be equated with independent statehood), and respect for fundamental and universal human rights. Importantly, there was no hierarchy specified among these principles; although tensions might arise among them in actual practice, the Helsinki Final Act emphasized that all principles must be viewed in balance with no single norm dominant over the others. Although not always applied in practice by governments, between 1975 and 1989 these norms were echoed by citizens in many participating states who demanded that their governments abide by those principles to which they had subscribed. The Helsinki process thus contributed significantly to the dramatic changes in international relations that occurred as the Cold War was brought to an end and the opportunity opened up to replace the confrontations of earlier decades by a cooperative security regime.

The new normative structures of the post-cold war period were rapidly incorporated in the Charter of Paris and the Copenhagen Document on the Human Dimension in 1990, and the follow-up Moscow document of 1991. Basically these documents laid the normative foundations for a radically new and potentially very different order of cooperative security throughout the entire region. No longer would security be maintained solely by an absolute assertion of state sovereignty or by a balance of power among competing great power blocs, as had largely prevailed since the earlier Congress of Vienna of 1815. Instead a new security community would seek to establish a cooperative regime based on popular will of the citizens of all participating states and a new institutional structure that could potentially manage security in a new multilateral international system. Foremost among these principles was the norm

articulated in the 1991 Moscow Document in which all participating states agreed “categorically and irrevocably that commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating states and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the state concerned.”

In effect, this provision moved the region into a 21st century conception of international relations, albeit one based on 18th century enlightenment ideas, in which state sovereignty has its limits and where the legitimacy of governments derives from their citizens. When governments fail to live up to their obligations to their citizens, the community of states has a *droit de regard* over their internal affairs in order to encourage them to implement those principles that they have freely and voluntarily accepted when agreeing to the OSCE’s normative *aquis*, from Helsinki onward. In this conception, states may voluntarily surrender a little of their national sovereignty to multilateral institutions like the OSCE in order to gain something of even greater value in return: peace and security. Furthermore, in recent years the concept of security has been enlarged to apply not only to the prerogatives of states, but also to persons belonging to minorities and to individual citizens; human security has thus taken its place alongside state security as a fundamental norm of the OSCE community of states.

Not only did the post-Cold War period usher in a new normative foundation in the OSCE region, but it also saw the creation of a range of new institutions to manage the evolving security order in the region, to resolve conflicts non-violently, and to promote peace-building throughout the region. These included the creation of the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and, after the 1992 Helsinki Summit, the creation of “Missions of Long Duration” to be stationed on the ground in areas of potential or actual violent conflict to promote non-violent alternatives at all phases of the conflict cycle: prevention of conflicts from turning violent; management of escalation and crises; negotiating cease-fires and war termination agreements; support of peacekeeping in the aftermath of violent conflict; mediation efforts to resolve underlying causes of conflict (especially in cases of protracted conflicts); promotion of reconciliation among former enemies; and supporting long-term post-conflict stability and peace-building activities. These tasks have required the CPC to develop a full tool kit to be able to work flexibly but comprehensively at all stages of the conflict cycle to promote peaceful conflict resolution.

The office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) was also established at Helsinki in 1992 to facilitate quiet diplomacy and mediation between national minorities and governing majorities in the participating states, with the HCNM being empowered to act at his own initiative to initiate low-visibility involvement in situations potentially involving minorities at risk. Similarly the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was established to promote the development of democratic societies throughout the OSCE region in which citizens could freely elect their governments, and where governments and all parts of society would be equally subject to the rule of law. The underlying principle is that “good governance” could create a structure in which conflicts of interests could be resolved peacefully within a well-functioning institutional framework, so that no party would need to resort to violence to defend their interests and rights. Finally, the OSCE adopted a series of

increasingly intrusive military confidence- and security-building measures that reinforced the provisions of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, which, if updated to current regional realities, could also reduce security dilemmas within the region, both within and between states.

In summary, by the early 1990's the OSCE had established both the normative framework and the institutional structures to manage conflict throughout the entire region. Since that time those institutions have often played an essential role in managing conflict, ranging for example from prevention of violence in locations such as the Republic of Macedonia and Crimea in Ukraine, cease-fire negotiations between Russia and Chechnya, cease-fire monitoring in the southern Caucasus, mediation of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh by the Minsk Group, and post-conflict peace-building in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. The outcomes of these efforts have been mixed, although many of the OSCE's most important successes have gone largely unnoticed, often due to the quiet nature of the diplomatic engagement.

That said, the OSCE still needs to strengthen its institutional capacity and professionalism to work effectively at all phases of the conflict cycle. Many factors account for the failure to achieve a settlement of all issues in which OSCE institutions have been engaged: mandates often limit the range of OSCE engagement in conflict management; insufficient resources make it difficult for some missions to carry out the full range of conflict management activities; frequent turnover in mission staff may detract from an historical memory about what has worked and not worked in the past; and actions by some state parties where the OSCE works limit the ability of mission members to carry out their work on their territories. However, in my opinion the work of many of the missions could be strengthened substantially by integrating the rapidly growing academic literature on conflict management and resolution more fully into the daily work of missions and those supporting their work from outside.

Research on conflict management is still in its early stages, and there is certainly a lot of work for those of us in the academic community to do to improve our knowledge about what conflict management tools do and do not work in specific situations: we do not yet have all or even most of the answers! But the field has grown immensely over the past 40 years, and there are many lessons that could provide valuable support to OSCE mission members and to those coordinating their work at the CPC and other OSCE structures. Academic research on conflict management is premised on the assumption that there are many similar processes at work at each stage of the conflict cycle, even though every single conflict situation also comes with its own specific context and particularities. Research results cannot produce a singular template that can be applied to all conflict situations, but they can provide contingent and conditional information about critical relations between causes of conflict, tools for their management, and outcomes in conflict-affected regions.

Many practitioners of international diplomacy are inclined to reject research findings and argue that every conflict is unique. However, an analogy with medical research, also an imperfect science, might prove useful. No one with a serious illness would seek out a physician who was unaware of the medical research in their field over the past 40 years. For example,

there are many causers of cancer and multiple tools to treat it, yet an informed patient clearly wants to find a physician who is knowledgeable about the best alternatives to diagnose and treat his or her particular cancer. A well trained physician should be able to bring to every unique case of disease general principles based on empirical research about what is likely to work best for each specific patient, while avoiding treatments that may do more harm than good. By contrast, many people engaged in conflict management believe that they can enter into the field without any knowledge of the existing body of research about how to diagnose the underlying causes of conflict and how to choose among the many available tools in order to maximize the likelihood of managing or resolving those conflicts, even though the lives of thousands of people may well be at stake. One is no more born a diplomat than one is born a doctor: all modern professions need to rely on systematic research, development of analytic skills, and extensive training in order to maximize their ability to be successful in their efforts.

For that reason, my own research has focused on the activities of the OSCE missions in order to try to understand what has and has not worked in the OSCE's efforts to manage conflict in its area of application, based on the premise that we can learn from both past successes and failures how better to manage and resolve conflicts in this region in the future. There are many lessons that can be learned from almost 40 years of experience following the signature of the Helsinki Final Act. But we now need to take stock of what we know in order to learn how to do an even better job of managing those protracted conflicts that continue to plague the European continent, especially to prevent those conflicts from turning violent.

The OSCE clearly has many comparative advantages as a regional institution engaged in the management of conflict. Its inclusive approach is a key quality in at least two respects. First, its geographical inclusiveness from Vancouver to Vladivostok makes it the only regional security organization in which the United States, the Russian Federation, and the European Union all participate. Since all three entities have a stake in most of the conflicts in the region, it is hard to imagine solutions in which all three are not engaged directly. NATO, the European Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the Council of Europe all suffer from the absence of one or more of these key parties. At the same time, the OSCE was in many ways a creation of the European "middle powers," most of which have invested more heavily in its governance and activity than some of the larger powers. This broad geographic inclusiveness is thus one of the real strengths of the OSCE. A second element of inclusivity is the fact that the OSCE works, more than most counterpart institutions, at all levels of society: it engages in direct mediation among governments, while also engaging local and regional actors, civil society, and non-governmental organizations. The work of the OSCE Missions and of the High Commissioner on National Minorities give it more direct contact at all of these levels than most similar institutions.

An additional strength of the OSCE is its continuity. The fact that Field Missions remain on the ground over long periods of time, several now longer than 20 years, gives the missions a deep understanding of the historical roots and changing dynamics of the situation in the countries where they work. This feature gives the OSCE missions a unique knowledge of the specific issues in each area of conflict where they work, knowledge that missions may either use directly

in their daily work, or that may provide critical advice to those OSCE institutional actors who enter from outside during periods of tension, such as the Chair-in-Office, the Secretary General, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Director of the Conflict Prevention Center. Because of the broad responsibility of each of these institutional actors, they cannot have the detailed knowledge of local circumstances possessed by mission personnel who have been on the ground for an extended period of time. It is especially important, therefore, that the OSCE resist vigorously calls from some politicians and governments to curtail the field missions, especially offices outside of national capitals, which are critical to maintain long-term contact with local issues in conflict-affected regions. At the same time, the Conflict Prevention Center can build on the academic research to provide training and guidance to field offices in the selection and implementation of the many tools of conflict management that might be useful in their specific circumstances. The development by the CPC of a manual for guidance in effective mediation techniques, based extensively on some of the best research about mediation, is one excellent example of how the headquarters offices in Vienna may support the field missions and work together to strengthen their capacity to manage conflict peacefully in the OSCE region.

The OSCE has the potential to develop a new model for institutional conflict management that is appropriate to the international relations of the 21st century. It is long past time when we should rely on models of international order based on the principles of absolute sovereignty proclaimed in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 or on the balance of power-based mechanisms institutionalized at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Helsinki +40 has the opportunity in 2015 to establish a new “Congress of Vienna” that will guide an international order of cooperative, comprehensive security in the 21st century. In order to do this it must reaffirm the commitment of all participating states to all of the normative principles that have been enshrined in the OSCE *acquis* since 1975. It must strengthen a system of cooperative security, supported by a well trained, professional set of institutions to implement that system based on dialogue and cooperation rather than competition and the use of coercion. It must build up its tool box of conflict management techniques that can be deployed flexibly, as needed in every possible circumstance it confronts, and have a well trained professional staff capable of using these tools rapidly and effectively. Finally, it must continue to strengthen its comprehensive approach to security by including in its efforts all citizens of the region regardless of political status, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status or other factors that have too often in the past excluded relevant individuals and groups from the conflict management process.

In recent years the OSCE has been challenged to maintain its international visibility and relevance in conflict management; it has been threatened with budget cuts and with reductions in the size, mandates, and resources of its missions; ODIHR has faced increasing obstacles to monitoring elections in some participating states; participating states have too frequently failed to heed the sound advice of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, with resulting increases in tensions between citizens and governments; and too frequently the participating states have failed to achieve consensus about basic issues at the OSCE’s annual summits and ministerial conferences, often at the expense of curtailing critical conflict management activities.

There would be no better time than 2015 – the 40th anniversary of Helsinki and the 200th anniversary of the Congress of Vienna – to reinvigorate the OSCE’s capacity in conflict management and its ability to achieve comprehensive security for all citizens of its 57 participating states. This requires a new, 21st century declaration that would move us into a security order that embraces contemporary understandings of international relations rather than continuing to rely on the principles of the 19th century that contributed to so much war and suffering throughout much of the 20th century.