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OSCE HIGH LEVEL MILITARY DOCTRINE SEMINAR 2011
Moderator's opening statement, Session 4, 1500 hours 25 May 2011
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It has been a special honour and pleasure for me to attend this High Level Seminar since I also had the chance to play a similar role at the last such event in 2006. Comparing the two occasions, my feeling is that the last five years have had quite a *sobering* effect on the debate: leading us towards more cautious, complex, broader and longer-term perspectives on the role of military forces. The military of many nations have struggled during this time with conflict situations that proved more complicated and frustrating than expected, while many are also facing serious cuts in capacity as a result of the 2008 economic crash – without yet being certain that the loss of quantity can be fully compensated with quality. All of us meanwhile face the uncertainties of a globalized and increasingly multipolar world, with its consequences of greater interdependence, more diverse and mobile risks, growing diffusion of technology and shifts in power balances between both state and non-state actors. Even if we have not talked much about non-OSCE players, we must be aware that the future understandings of powers like China and India – or even of a reconstructed Arab world – about the uses of conventional armed force might ultimately affect our common future more than anything we could agree together in this forum today.

But the importance of our own military dialogue was clear in the first session, when we heard important new thinking on doctrine from a variety of nations who actually agreed on most things. Intervening in different cultural settings today means facing 'wars amongst the people', where the physical environment is testing enough, but the conflict extends to a transnational level and even to virtual space given the importance of social media and cyber-weapons. Adversaries are typically irregular and multiple, and our relationship with them asymmetrical in both directions. The actions of regular forces can easily become fragmented in such conditions, and need maximum flexibility: yet our goals and values demand that they also stay coherent, not least in legal and moral terms. There is greater pressure than ever for integration between the three force branches, and for interoperability across the civil-military barrier and with a wide range of coalition partners. I found it interesting that influencing and cooperating with non-state actors was also taken for granted in these statements, because five years ago we were mainly talking about such actors in terms of new threats. We were, indeed, reminded yesterday that terrorism, crime and smuggling among others still challenge security in large parts of the OSCE area. Yet on the other side I think we understand better now that if we are actually to solve conflicts and overcome instability, we must work for transformations including economic, environmental and developmental progress where legitimate business and social actors are very much in the front line.

To balance the picture, it was rightly pointed out that many participating states still have to prepare their forces for possible self-defence and combat of a more traditional kind. Indeed, many of us still use forces for traditional peacekeeping and for non-warlike tasks like assistance in civil emergencies. To cope with all these challenges, it was argued that military doctrine should be what keeps the individual soldier on the right track in all circumstances, at the same time as it embodies the highest policy choices and values of the state or multi-state organization. The obvious tool for

achieving this is a new approach to training, which should be assisted by the general shift that is continuing towards use of all-professional forces. Yet the difficulty was also underlined of overcoming doctrinal inertia and giving concrete shape to what may almost become a kind of anti-doctrine, telling the warrior 'how to think' rather than 'what to think' and still less 'what to do'.

We had a chance to explore one doctrinal challenge in detail by focussing on the notion of a *comprehensive approach* in conflict operations, which seems to mean several things: not just readiness by the military to play different roles, but more coordination and complementarity between the military and other actors, and a more coherent multifaceted strategy for conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building. The same approach can make sense – as we heard in Finland's case - within a national strategy for protecting society against all hazards. Speakers seemed to accept that this must shift the military towards a less central and often less leading role, and indeed we heard a strong plea for politicians to understand better what the forces can and cannot be expected to do. The question is how far these ideas, which after all are not unique to the 21st century, have been or can be translated into practice. We heard about progress being made within nations and efforts within defence groupings: but I think Lt. General Magro was right to ask searching questions about how we implement this approach down to ground level and evaluate and learn from the results, while Maj. General Lafontaine argued that no single international organization has yet mastered or perhaps can master the comprehensive concept on its own. The question of interplay and compatibility between organizations was not one we could pursue fully at this seminar but it is, of course, a general preoccupation of OSCE and may hold the key to real progress in comprehensiveness as well. But we would be prudent to conclude, overall, that comprehensiveness in itself is not going to give us that elusive 'silver bullet'.

Neither, it seems, is technology. Already in the first session it was stressed that technical precision cannot serve our ends, including our need for legitimacy, unless discrimination is added; and that no mere technical fix can dispel the 'fog of war' or replace the importance of human understanding, influence, and the power to create convincing narratives. At the same time, we must acknowledge and deal with the impact of technological change for instance in shifting the emphasis in force superiority from quantity to quality, or from the number of platforms to the widening range of functions they can provide. Looking further ahead, our experts in the second session warned about the massive and partly unforeseeable impact of advances in nanotechnology, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cyber-techniques and robotics, but at the same time urged us to question whether our interest lies in blindly seeking the maximum technical superiority. It may be very human to do so, but accumulating hi-tech products before having a convincing operational purpose for them is more helpful for business earnings than for public security. Our assumption of superiority may be out of date anyway given the way that others can gain asymmetrical advantage from quite small niche technologies, or from destructive use of civilian know-how, or at the other extreme from 'dumb' and simple devices like IEDs. It was argued that in cybersecurity for instance the decisive balance of power and initiative already lies on the non-state side. Finally, technology works best when it enables the human warrior and decision maker, and conversely is never immune from the weaknesses of the human factor. Very much the same could be said about the handling of intelligence and of information in general.

As a non-expert I may be over-simplifying this very rich session, but what I mainly took away from it were four thoughts. First, the general statement that technological hubris is a risk in itself. Secondly, the advice that our force planning and doctrine should aim for a pragmatic mix of hi-tech and more traditional capacities, of hardware and software and of basic human resourcefulness. Thirdly, that that if the sharing of technological power between state and non-state or non-traditional players has already gone so far, we should think about whether we could exploit it by new partnerships with well-meaning actors - a technological version of the comprehensive approach? Finally, we had a lively debate over the gap in regulation of new destabilizing technologies and of private security and defence companies, where it was argued that more effort is needed even if OSCE itself may not be the primary venue. I feel myself that the 'reflex to regulate' destabilizing and breakout factors, which was second nature to us all in Cold War times, has been too much weakened in the last decade especially, and this is a good time to think about reviving it in the interests of all our governments' legitimacy as well as our peoples' security.

In the third session we probed further into what new doctrines, including the comprehensive approach, mean in practice for basic concepts like the chain of command. It was argued that doctrine under the comprehensive approach - and under a multi-dimensional concept of security - must be a doctrine for the whole of government and arguably for all society, not least since more and more of the conditions for success depend on non-state providers. This raises new questions that were explored but not necessarily resolved in the session, about how the terms and rules for such a broad approach will be set, where the actual leadership of any modern defence activity lies, and what this means for the professional and legal responsibility of the military in particular. The importance of force training in this context was underlined yet again, with emphasis on the possibility and value of of applying new information sharing techniques, real-time updates, and multilateral sharing with partners; and we heard how various nations and organizations are working for this

The other important theme of this session was the impact of new doctrine, technology and action on arms control, disarmament and confidence building. The general argument was made that if we cannot maintain and reinforce our achievements in these fields, we may undermine our new broader security goals by weakening the stability that we rely on at home when taking more risks abroad. We also risk shifting the balance of resource investments back from new challenges to older fears, at a time when resources are scarcer than ever. To avoid this, it was suggested that we should not give up on the CFE Treaty, should consider widening the scope and the level of detail of activities covered by the Vienna Document, and should put the necessary resources into the Open Skies Treaty: in all cases doing our best to accommodate new doctrinal and technological developments without weakening the control of more traditional military processes. Exactly how to achieve all that is no easy matter, as shown by the interesting debate towards the end of the session. It seems obvious that a quantitative approach to arms restraint is not going to be able to capture factors of quality including key force multipliers: but it was pointed out that the general aim of restraint and confidence could also be served by processes of dialogue, analysis and explanation of new activity patterns, and of course also by opening ourselves to direct partnership and multileralization of the new security efforts.

What lessons could we draw from this whole seminar for OSCE? As a starting point for this final session, I would propose that military dialogue and transparency remain crucial for all the common security purposes of this organization, and if anything need to be further intensified at this point in history. They serve *positive* ends through the sharing of experience and best practice, thus promoting doctrinal as well as practical interoperability between all interested partners – including non-military players. But so long as we have still not banished all conflict, tensions, and factors of inner instability from our own OSCE area, there are still also challenges of *confidence and stability* to be faced. We still cannot help wondering about the implications for ourselves of all those improvements made by others to deal with distant conflicts and with non-traditional enemies, even if the countries responsible assure us that their success serves the general security interests of the OSCE family. During this seminar we have indeed heard some specific examples of developments that cause such anxieties.

If we want to alleviate and avoid such worries - which is after all one of the fundamental purposes of OSCE – we have many traditional tools of arms control, confidence and security building, cooperative monitoring and verification to hand. Without downplaying the importance of other approaches such as non-proliferation methods, the control of inhuman weapons and further updates to the general laws of war, I do feel that a case has been made for exploring how OSCE's existing documents, instruments, mechanisms and processes can be adjusted both in horizontal coverage and vertical depth to capture and control the new elements of change and potential instability. After listening to the last two days' debates I also wonder if OSCE might find other ways to continue discussion aimed at transparency, understanding and sharing of best practice on generic issues like cyberspace and private business actors in defence, or indeed on the role of women which we were rightly reminded of at the end of the last session. How exactly to pursue this is outside my own remit, but this last session gives an initial chance to offer some ideas about priorities, suggested guidelines or more specific proposals. I encourage all concerned to do so, starting with our two distinguished commentators.