

OSCE PA debate Helsinki +50

Vienna, Hofburg

22 February 2023

Madame President, Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Exactly one year ago I was in the Hague to launch my book: *Security through Cooperation*.

As you can imagine, there were a few remarks about whether that was the best time or the worst time to be promoting a book about cooperative security.

One year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine I believe the message of such a book is more relevant than ever.

The sub-title of my book is "To the Same End". It is a play on words. The definition of cooperation is to work together to the same end. But if we fail to cooperate we will meet the same end.

In that respect, I would like to re-enforce the case for cooperative security.

Let me start by stressing that cooperation is not appeasement, and it is not pacifism.

Nor should cooperation be viewed as the absence of conflict; rather it is a reaction to conflict, or an effort to prevent it. If we all lived in harmony there would be no need for cooperative security organizations.

Therefore, cooperative security is usually an aspiration rather than a fact. In cooperative security arrangements countries seek to work together in order to manage their relations peacefully, to increase predictability or to de-escalate tensions – as opposed to collective security arrangements where the partners are more or less like-minded, and usually united in a defensive alliance. Think of the difference between the OSCE and NATO.

There is a place for both collective and cooperative security. Think back to the late 1960s when the NATO doctrine was based on deterrence and détente.

However, today there is no talk of détente. Many leaders admit that the war in Ukraine can only end with mediation. But at the moment there is little sign that mediation will end the war.

Both sides seem to think that time is on their side, the enemy is a threat to their existence, and that the war will end in victory.

President Putin seems to have the same mindset as Vladimir Lenin who said "You probe with bayonets: if you find mush, you push. If you find steel, you withdraw". Over the past year, I think Moscow has been surprised at the steely resolve of Ukraine, and its allies in the West. But can Putin afford to withdraw?

Ladies and Gentlemen, at some point, Russia and Ukraine will have to make peace. They cannot change their geography. They will have to find a way to live beside each other. The stronger Ukraine is, the greater the incentive for Russia to cooperate: not only with Kyiv, but with the West. But the more Moscow feels threatened, the greater its desire to defend itself – which could cause instability in its neighborhood.

The warning signs of this “security dilemma” were evident for years, at least as far back as Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007.

That unresolved dilemma has resulted in two simultaneous conflicts: one between Russia and the West, and one between Kyiv and Moscow. It will be hard to solve one without the other.

The OSCE’s role in ending the conflict between Russia and Ukraine will probably be limited. At the same time, its work is almost paralyzed as a result of that conflict.

That said, it is vital for the OSCE to survive since it will be the logical place to rebuild the European security architecture after the war.

I would therefore raise the following questions for your consideration:

- For those who say that Russia should be kicked out of the OSCE, what would be the added value of the OSCE without Russia?
- And for those – including Russia – who think that it is important to maintain channels of dialogue; my question is, dialogue to what end?
- For those who say there can be “no business as usual” I would ask – “does that mean no business at all”? Or should we be doing things differently?

What I am driving at is that those who still believe in cooperative security and an inclusive pan-European security arrangement should be thinking about what post-war Europe will look like, and what lessons can be learned from this horrible war, and the period leading up to it.

Concretely, I think that lessons can be learned from conversations held during the darkest days of World War Two when a group of countries came together at Dumbarton Oaks to create a new international organization out of the ashes of the League of Nations. Or the early 1970s when consultations were held in Finland and Switzerland to discuss problems relating to security and cooperation in Europe.

It may be difficult to have those conversations among the 57 – at least at the moment. But creative formulas could be found for informal dialogue. And it will be important to engage civil society and parliamentarians. Let us not forget the important role played by Helsinki Committees in the 1970s and 80s.

I would like to believe that there is a critical mass of people across the OSCE area who do not want nuclear war, a return to dictatorships, and a divided Europe. Their voices need to be heard.

In that spirit, we need to mobilize all those who want to stop Russia’s aggression, to halt the escalation of this conflict, and to urgently seek ways of rebuilding peace, stability and good-neighborly relations in line with the OSCE’s founding principles.

At a minimum, this requires:

- Keeping open channels of dialogue and using them constructively and creatively;
- Keeping the OSCE alive;
- And holding informal consultations on the future of European security.

As it says in the Parliamentary Assembly Call for Action “we need decisive leadership to steer the OSCE community towards the vision and the ambitious goals set out by our former leaders, a vision we share and feel bound to promote, and to help our Organization navigate the troubled waters ahead.”

The war has shown what happens when cooperation fails. The alternative is doing what our predecessors understood in 1945, in 1975, and in 1990: namely fostering security through cooperation.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to the debate.