

REVIVING THE OSCE: EUROPEAN SECURITY AND THE UKRAINE CRISIS

STEFAN LEHNE

After years at the margins of international diplomacy, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has suddenly regained political relevance because of the Ukraine crisis that began in 2014. The organization turned out to be the most appropriate framework to manage the crisis and prevent further escalation. To continue to play a useful role in resolving this issue and in easing tensions between Russia and the West, the OSCE needs to adjust its way of working and strengthen its toolbox.

New Relevance but Old Constraints

- As the relationship between Russia and the West deteriorated at the end of the 1990s, the OSCE's role declined. The organization's arms control regime eroded, its debates on human rights relapsed into ideological confrontation, and its work on promoting economic cooperation never got off the ground.
- The Ukraine crisis has revived the organization. While political crisis management has been left mainly to a few capitals working with the parties to the conflict, the OSCE's monitoring mission in Ukraine has become an essential factor of stability. Violence has not stopped, however, and the mission's work remains hampered by insufficient cooperation from the parties.
- The OSCE has also assumed an important role in facilitating negotiations on implementing the Minsk agreement, which contains a road map for a political settlement. However, little progress has been made so far.

The Way Ahead for the OSCE in Ukraine

Reduce the gap between high-level political crisis management on Ukraine and the OSCE's implementation of the Minsk accord. This will ensure that the OSCE receives tasks that are relevant to the situation on the ground and that the body is equipped to accomplish.

Enhance the OSCE monitoring mission's capabilities for stabilizing the situation. Develop more stringent and verifiable rules for the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the conflict zone. Enhance the mission's role in defusing local hot spots. Strengthen the OSCE's planning, recruitment, logistical support, and financing arrangements.

Broaden the context for the search for a political solution. Implementing the Minsk agreement remains a key priority. But a genuine political solution must go beyond the Minsk package. It will have to deal with Ukraine's future economic and security relations with the West and Russia and provide a modus vivendi for Crimea.

Strengthen the OSCE's contribution to reforms and good governance in Ukraine. There is a clear need for a more focused approach and for more coordination of the various projects run by parts of the organization on the ground. Equally important are more joint efforts with other parts of the international community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stefan Lehne is a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe in Brussels, where he researches the post-Lisbon Treaty development of the European Union's foreign policy with a specific focus on relations between the EU and member states.

CONTACT

Christine Lynch
Communications Director
+32 2 209 29 93
clynch@ceip.org

CarnegieEurope.eu



@Carnegie_Europe



facebook.com/
CarnegieEurope

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace is a unique global network of policy research centers in Russia, China, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. Our mission, dating back more than a century, is to advance the cause of peace through analysis and development of fresh policy ideas and direct engagement and collaboration with decisionmakers in government, business, and civil society. Working together, our centers bring the inestimable benefit of multiple national viewpoints to bilateral, regional, and global issues.

© 2015 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. All rights reserved.

The Carnegie Endowment does not take institutional positions on public policy issues; the views represented here are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Carnegie, its staff, or its trustees.