

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper assesses the performance of OSCE's Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), its role in cooperative security in Europe, and its prospects in future. It begins with a brief account of the significance of the end of the Cold War for European security and changes in the conceptualization of security in this context. It then examines the role of the OSCE in addressing the challenges of the period, noting the organisation's strengths as a venue in which to pursue cooperative security, not least the inclusive quality of its membership. It then turns to an account of the origins, purposes, and activities of the FSC within this OSCE framework. The FSC was established with a three-sided mandate, focussing on arms control and disarmament, security dialogue and conflict prevention. Its activities in its first six years of operation fell into four general categories: harmonization of obligations (as between the Vienna Document and the CFE Treaty); the development of a Code of Conduct on Security; disarmament negotiation; and the development of new regional (and sub-regional) confidence building measures. In contrast, the mandate concerning "goal-oriented" dialogue on security remained largely unfulfilled.

With the passage of time and substantial progress on several key aspects of the agenda (e.g. "goal-oriented negotiation" focusing on inter-state confidence building measures and the development of a Code of Conduct), the FSC has been seeking to develop a niche in efforts to deal with newer related issues such as subregional arms control and confidence building and small arms proliferation.

The paper then examines the evolving security landscape, noting the declining salience of interstate military issues in European security, and the rise of numerous new (and not so new) challenges, including internal war, post-conflict peace-building, conflict prevention, the security aspects of politic-economic transition in the former communist states, migration, terror, proliferation and transnational crime. The FSC has played some role in the areas of non-proliferation and conflict prevention, although its status as a focal point on these questions is contested by numerous other entities both within and outside the OSCE. There is, in short, a striking gap between the traditional inter-state and military focus of the FSC's activities and the emerging security agenda in Europe. When combined with the completion of many of the tasks with which it has been preoccupied, this raises doubts about the continued utility of the Forum. Such doubts are worsened by the proliferation of other institutions dealing with soft and hard security issues in Europe and the consequent potential for overlap and duplication.

The paper goes on to note the relevance of the FSC's second major purpose (goal-oriented dialogue) to many of the issues that characterize the post-Cold War European security agenda, such as internal war and sovereignty. However, this function has been conspicuously underdeveloped over the history of the Forum. It is also questionable whether member states would wish to activate this dimension of the FSC to address issues that historically have been considered matters of domestic jurisdiction and which are often highly sensitive.

The analysis concludes by identifying three options for the FSC: the status quo option (i.e.