

Postscript

During the period in which this volume was written and finalized, the world, and the OSCE, changed considerably. In addition to the war of aggression against Ukraine continuing into its fifth year, the USA and Israel launched a fully-fledged military operation against Iran in February 2026, the implications of which are yet to be seen. Other violent conflicts continue, often without prospects for an early resolution. The rule of law and the international system are under pressure. Alliances and assumptions are changing.

These serious challenges underline the need for peace, security, and cooperation between states based on commonly agreed principles, even when there is little trust. As a result, we hope that this special edition will not only recall the historical significance of the Helsinki Final Act and its contribution to fostering security and cooperation in Europe over the past half-century, but also inspire readers to seek more cooperative alternatives to the destructive policies that have harmed so many and caused disorder in the past few years, both within and outside the OSCE area .

The curtain has not gone down on the OSCE. Agreement on a Unified Budget in March 2026 – for the first time in five years – shows that consensus is possible, even in difficult times. An organisation like the OSCE is badly needed to prevent, reduce and control conflicts in Europe, manage relations between states, and to provide a common framework to discuss the future of European security. The OSCE could also play a useful role in building peace after the war in Ukraine.

This publication contains a number of suggestions indicating possible ways forward. We encourage readers to put forward their own ideas, both through this journal and its website.

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