

CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL IN EUROPE: A NEW AGENDA – THE RUSSIAN APPROACH

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Maybe today is not the right moment to speak about the prospects of conventional arms control in Europe because of the ongoing crisis, but all crises sooner or later are settled down and I do hope that business as usual will be not in distant future. But on the other hand, maybe this crisis will give a kind of impulse to more active and effective work on either arms control or CSBMs Vienna document. Actually, because it's absolutely obsolete, the Vienna document does not work today. I wouldn't say that that is because of Russian position: two days ago the Open Skies flight was conducted over Russian territory. It was Ukrainian flight, so as the Open Skies Treaty is concerned, CSBMs are effective and working, but Vienna document is not. Here I will try to answer several questions concerning Russian position on conventional arms control in Europe which are often asked in different fora devoted to European security and arms control. Here I express my personal opinion; I do not represent MOD, although I spent more than ten years of my professional career dealing with conventional arms control being Deputy Head of Russian delegation for many years taking part in adaptation negotiations and afterwards in all consultations concerning CFE and Vienna Document.

Speaking about Russian interest in conventional arms control in Europe, I must say that it has been decreasing for the last six, seven or maybe eight years. The known result of this lack of interest was the suspension of the CFE treaty by Russian federation in 2007. The reasons for that lack of interest were many times spoken out by various Russian officials and I will try to explain once more why. First of all, the regional CFE treaty based on bloc-to-bloc principle, of course, couldn't work any longer because of a lot of contradictions between the Russian Federation, on one hand, NATO members, on the other, and new NATO members, on the third hand. So it was decided in 1998 to adapt the CFE treaty, and I must say that adaptation agreement is a good one, although today it's already obsolete and does not meet modern realities. But if it had been ratified and entered into force, of course, now it would have been much easier to speak about a new

treaty, to speak about modernization of some articles of the treaty which now we have in conventional arms control in its traditional form of a multinational legally binding treaty. Practically, we should start from the very beginning.

Let me give some more reasons why Russian Federation believes that the treaty adaptation agreement is not working and is practically dead. The three main purposes of the original CFE: establishment of secure and stable balance of conventional armed forces in Europe at lower levels, liquidation of disparities causing damage to stability and security, liquidation as a priority of the potential force of price effect and beginning of large-scale offensive actions in Europe – have been reached. Possibilities of a large-scale military conflict in Europe with the use of large numbers of tanks, ACVs, and heavy artillery are practically non-existent. Moreover, the experience of all regional military conflicts of the past twenty years shows that the military success was achieved through the use of not tanks, ACVs and artillery, but through the use of combat aviation ground-and-sea-based, cruise missiles and drones. So if there is a need for a new treaty, some new TLEs should be negotiated. Having said that I must add that my negotiating experience shows that it may take years, years and years to negotiate a new category. I remember when we tried to add some new types of ACVs to the list of ACVs limited by the treaty because there were obvious cases in some NATO countries: in Italy, in Norway. It took us five years to negotiate, and we failed, because the country that does not want some new equipment to be included may have hundreds of reasons, hundreds of legal reasons in definitions not to include. To include new categories, of course, it would be a very, very difficult task.

The second reason: the two cornerstones of any arms control treaty are limitations and verification. As I said, there is no need now to limit conventional arms in Europe, especially for Russia. Well, I don't even want to mention any additional limitations, regional limitations like the famous Flank ones. As for verification, the present practice of on-site inspections, which actually has turned out to be the instrument of collective control of Russian Armed Forces does not meet the Russian national security interest. I'll try to explain, because this question, this phrase is often used by Russia – “official collective control.” I'll explain the meaning because out of thirty participants of the CFE treaty, twenty five belong to NATO. They do not inspect each other. That's the

rule. So all of them are inspecting three countries: Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine – mainly Russia. Of course, it doesn't make happy the officials and the Russian Ministry of Defense.

Due to obvious reasons, conceptual, technical and political, working out a new treaty might be quite a difficult task. In this context, what is the way out, what are the chances to preserve conventional arms control in Europe? I see only one way out of the present deadlock. It is a serious adaptation of the Vienna Document. Vienna Document although, well, officially, now Vienna document 2011 is actually the fourth edition but, in practice, there is no much difference between Vienna Document '91 and Vienna document 2011. All attempts made by Russian Federation through all these years to convince our partners to do something about adaptation of Vienna Document to modern realities, unfortunately, failed. When we discuss with our American partners various arms control issues, like missile defense, weaponization of space, prompt global strike program, their position is very clear. Cold War is over, we are not enemies any more, we are partners, and there is no need for legally binding documents. The most important thing is transparency. So, in this case, VD is just the right instrument to provide transparency. But, of course, in its present form VD 2011 is not working document, it needs serious adaptation to modern realities. What do I mean?

First, it is absolutely obvious that the thresholds for observed un-notified military activities, in regard to number of personnel and pieces of equipment, should be lowered (Chapters 5 and 6). Just the latest Russian exercises which could have been observed are not because these are not exercises per se; these are the so-called surprise check of combat readiness. But still, the number of personnel taking part in these so-called exercises and the number of pieces of equipment are much lower than the present thresholds in the Vienna document for observation of military activities.

Second, maybe it's time to decrease the number of units used for calculation of national quota of evaluation visits because in the circumstances when CFE Treaty is not working, two or three evaluation visits or even one for many OSCE countries is not enough for provision, real transparency and confidence building. The same approach may be applied to the duration of evaluation visits. As for inspections and the chapter

6, their number and duration as well the number of inspectors, may also be decreased. So my opinion is that while the chances of concluding a new legal binding CFE Treaty are very low, the radical modernization of Vienna Document and turning it into a document which is half way between CFE and present Vienna Document is the right thing. Moreover, if the Vienna Document would be modernized and adapted to modern realities, it should include naval CSBMs, since as I said before, the role of the navy in all regional conflicts is great.

There were three attempts made by Russian Federation to introduce naval CSBMs into Vienna Document either as a part of Vienna Document or as a separate document. All our attempts failed because of very strong opposition of the United States and some other countries, because of the, well, the, practically, the only argument that naval CSBMs interfere with the principle of freedom of navigation, which is a cornerstone of the Law of the Sea and by no means could be violated. I must say that it is violated and there are some documents now effective and working which violate the freedom of navigation and the most known example of that is the so-called PSI (Proliferation Security Initiative), which says about interference of ships in the open sea if there is a suspicion that weapons of mass destruction are on board or something illegal connected to weapons of mass destruction are on board. Russia is a part of that initiative, although we limited our participation by our territorial waters and our territory. But when I asked my American partners when we negotiated that initiative, negotiated Russian participation in that initiative, I said, "What about freedom of navigation?" They said, "You see the freedom of navigation is important, but non proliferation is more important, so the violation or non-violation of the principle of freedom of navigation depends on the importance of the task." So in this connection I must say if OSCE state parties believe that confidence building measures are important enough, they should include naval CSBMs in the Vienna Document. That's preferable, or to have it as a separate document. And when I say naval CSBMs, of course, I do not limit myself to the exchange of information which was actually the original, not the original but was later modified by some western countries, Germany, in particular, that lets limit ourselves as for naval activities by the exchange of information. No, it should include all the system of notifications and verifications. Some people say it's impossible. I say

where there is a will, there is a way; everything is possible. We are living in a world with a lot of technical abilities and possibilities to track and to verify.

Having said that I understood that I'm thinking in the realities of the past, namely, the need to reinforce the control mechanism of VD. In this connection I recall the negotiations on the latest US-Russian START Treaty which is recognized as meeting modern realities. During those talks, the sides from the very beginning agreed on the decrease of the number of inspections, which after all was decreased by three times. So there is one more way to ensure transparency and predictability, as regards conventional forces. And that is expansion of military cooperation on bilateral and multilateral basis. As far as I understood, the last two years the Ministry of Defence of Russian Federation went just this way to ensure transparency and predictability, enlarging and reinforcing military cooperation between all major countries. And the most clear example of that was the invitation, it was last year, when Russian Federation conducted large exercises in the Caucasus and our Minister of Defense invited representatives of the countries with which we have the most intrusive military cooperation plans to be present at all stages of the military exercise, in all briefings. He invited them on board of his plane, and those representatives were present not only at one or at two briefings which are in the Vienna Document provisions but in all briefings which were made during the exercise. But in the present circumstances, when some countries decided to stop military cooperation to speak about expansion of that opportunity is not appropriate.

To conclude, I'd like to clarify the widely discussed issue of interconnection between conventional arms control in Europe and other areas of arms control. I must say that if anybody thinks that missile defense and other arms control issues are obstacles for conventional arms control, that's not true. Unsettled problem of missile defense is an obstacle for further reductions of strategic offensive weapons but not conventional ones. The only argument concerning conventional forces, which some Russian representatives mentioned, is the need to complete the re-equipment of Russian land forces to be on equal footing with our western partners before any further reductions or limitations can be discussed.