

New Cold War – the impact of the deterioration of relations between Russia and the West on the security environment in Europe

On 10 March 2015 Russia announced the suspension of its participation in the Joint Consultative Group of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). As explained by the director of the Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Department in the Russian Foreign Ministry, Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia, suspending in 2007 the execution of the CFE, chose to remain in the consultative group, treating it as a forum for dialogue on a new arms control regime in Europe. However, according to Moscow, due to the lack of progress in this matter, Russia regarded its further participation in the consultative body as pointless.

The CFE treaty signed in 1990 established the quantitative ceiling on offensive conventional weapons (tanks, armoured fighting vehicles, artillery with a calibre greater than 100 mm, combat aircraft and assault helicopters) held by NATO and the countries of the then Warsaw Pact, both for entire blocks and geographical areas (states – the parties of the Treaty described within those limits their own quantitative limits for the various types of equipment). On the other hand, by imposing on the participating states an obligation to provide accurate information about the potentials of their armed forces and by introducing an inspection system, the chances of an unexpected military operation on a large scale were limited. In July 2007 Russian

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President Vladimir Putin signed a decree “On Suspending the Russian Federation’s Participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and Related International Agreements.” As a condition of returning to the fulfilment of the treaty

obligations Russia listed, among others, a swift ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty (the Agreement on the Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe – ACFE signed in 1999 introduced a new system of restrictions on conventional armaments in the same categories as the CFE Treaty and a more developed system of exchange of information and verification, however, the agreement was not ratified by NATO countries), and the abolition of the so-called flank restrictions (they concerned the Leningrad Military District and the North Caucasus Military District of the former USSR) applicable in the Russian Federation. Russia's withdrawal from the work of the consultative group, regarding the earlier suspension of implementation of the Treaty (NATO countries suspended the implementation of the Treaty with regard to Russia in November 2011) does not change Russia's obligations under international law to its other signatories and is primarily a political gesture.

Growing tensions in Russia's relations with the West

The decision of the Russian authorities with regard to the CFE should be considered in the context of deteriorating relations between the members of NATO and the European Union and the Russian Federation against the illegal annexation of Crimea and the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine (in response, the EU and the US, among other, imposed a series of sanctions and restrictions on Russian companies and people connected with the authorities in the Kremlin). Despite the so-called 'Minsk II' agreement, establishing, among others, a ceasefire between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian army, Moscow has continued its provocative policy towards the West, for example, by sending warplanes near the NATO airspace. As announced on 20 November 2014 by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, in 2014 NATO fighter planes intervened over 400 times in response to the actions of the Russian aviation, which is an increase by 50 per cent compared to the previous year. During the years 2014–2015 Russia carried out a great number of military manoeuvres throughout the entire country (the largest ones were: verification of readiness of the Western and Central Military District with the participation of 150,000 soldiers carried out between February and March 2014; in June 2014 – verification of the Central Military District with the participation of 65,000 soldiers; in September 2014 – verification of the East Military District with the participation of 160,000 soldiers and Vostok-14 manoeuvres

with the participation of 100,000 soldiers and carried out in March 2015 exercises with the participation of 80,000 soldiers from various units from around the country).

In response to Russian aggression in Ukraine and Moscow's provocative actions, the NATO states decided, among others, to strengthen the Baltic Air Policing mission (from 4 to 16 aircraft), aimed at protecting the airspace of the Baltic states which do not have their own combat aviation. The Readiness Action Plan was adopted at the NATO summit in Newport in September 2014, which assumed, among others, continuous, rotating presence of NATO forces on the territory of the eastern flank of the Alliance. According to NATO, the Alliance and the individual member states held approximately 200 different kinds of military exercises in Europe in 2014. The largest ones on the NATO's eastern flank included: Steadfast Javelin manoeuvres conducted in May in the territory of Estonia and with the participation of 6,000 soldiers; Saber Strike exercises carried out in the Baltic states in June, involving 4,800 soldiers; Steadfast Javelin II conducted in Poland and Germany in September with the participation of 2,000 soldiers; in October Anaconda manoeuvres in Poland with participation of 12,500 soldiers; Iron Sword exercises in Lithuania in November with the participation of 2,500 soldiers and the Black Eagle manoeuvres in Poland between October and December when 2,300 soldiers took part.

Is INF next?

The current crisis in Russia's relations with the West may have further implications for European security and disarmament treaties in force. The Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces, the INF Treaty, is particularly at risk, and Russia had been accused of breaking it already before the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine. At the end of January 2014 the U.S. Department of State announced ongoing since 2008 tests of a new Russian guided missile, which may constitute a breach of the INF treaty. The U.S. administration confirmed that the matter was raised in the talks with Russia, and U.S. allies within NATO were notified. In July 2014 Department of State's annual report on arms control pointed out that the U.S. ascertained that Russia has been violating its obligations under the INF.

The U.S. is probably concerned about Iskander-M system, equipped with R-500 cruise missile, the range of which exceed the limits permitted by the INF. The treaty signed at the end of the Cold War (1987) committed the U.S. and Russia (then the Soviet Union) not to produce, keep and possess a mid-range ballistic missiles (MRBM) and indirect (IRBM) range,

which may hit targets at a distance from 500 km to 5550 km. The Treaty also imposed the same restrictions on cruise missiles fired from launchers on land. Both sides, implementing the provisions of the INF, destroyed their stocks of MRBM and IRBM. After the end of the Cold War, apart from intercontinental missiles (ICBMs) with nuclear warheads, Russia was only left with outdated Frog and Scud systems with a range of respectively 70 km and 300 km (now withdrawn to the reserve) and OTR-21 Tochka with a range of approximately 120 km. The INF Treaty, however, did not forbid developing new missile systems with a range below 500 km. This is how in the 1990s Russia began work on a new short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) – Iskander. The system finally entered service in 2006 and is available in two versions – E (for export) with a range under 300 km and M, with a range of approximately 500 km. Another K version is in the test phase, the extent of which may reach up to approximately 3000 km. Currently, Russia's Armed Forces possess approximately 60 Iskander missile launchers, each with two ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear or conventional warheads. A ten-year Russian State Armaments Program for 2011-2020 (in Russia GPW 2020) envisages the introduction of a total of approximately 120 launchers by 2020. It is possible that simultaneously Russia has been trying to circumvent the INF Treaty by other means. RS-26 Rubiez missiles (formally classified as intercontinental missiles under the START agreement) may raise doubts here as some experts speculate that they may carry warheads over a distance of less than 5500 km.

Since 2005 Moscow has indicated the possibility of termination of the INF treaty, arguing that it is discriminatory for Russia (a treaty is binding only Washington and Moscow – Russia's neighbours, such as China, are free to develop MRBM and IRBM). Maintenance of the regime was also linked to the issue of deployment of U.S. missile defence system elements in Europe. During the presidency of George W. Bush, as part of this project, GBI (Ground Based Interceptor) missiles were to be deployed on Polish territory as well as a long-range radar in the Czech Republic, which Russia interpreted as a violation of the strategic balance of powers. In 2009 President Barack Obama decided to replace this program by the so-called European Phased Adaptive Approach, EPAA, which was to be an American contribution to the wider NATO system designed to protect Europe against a missile attack from the Middle East. This, however, did not dispel Moscow's fears, and it constantly threatens with retaliatory steps if the project is realised.

So far, the Kremlin has not decided on a formal denunciation of the INF Treaty, but recent deterioration of relations between Russia and the West could mean that Russia, in a more decisive way, will try to break its provisions, introducing systems incompatible with the treaty limitations. This will have serious implications for the security of European NATO countries. Poland and the Baltic states are entirely within range of the Russian missile allowed by the INF. Missiles of an extended range are created primarily for destroying targets in Western Europe (within the distance of Russian missiles with a range of 3,000 km, even without the use of the territory of Kaliningrad, are located almost all countries of Western Europe). A rocket attack on Western Europe would also be carried out using appropriately positioned RS-26 Rubiez missiles, and measures not included in the INF Treaty, such as Kh-55 cruise missiles carried by bomber aircraft. Russia is seeking to expand its range of measures to conduct a missile attack on all European NATO countries that could be used as a nuclear blackmail tool, designed to undermine the political will of European states when responding to Moscow's more aggressive policy (e.g. in the case of conflict with the Baltic states).

The collapse of security architecture in Europe

Russia's violation of the INF treaty, in the face of earlier suspending of implementation of the CFE agreement, constitutes the erosion of one of the last elements of the European cooperative security system and military transparency established after the Cold War (the Open Skies Treaty and the Vienna Document on Confidence and Security Building Measures still remain in force).

Although Moscow has been constantly declaring its willingness to start talks on establishing a new security system in Europe, which, in fact, would serve to guarantee Russia the possibility of direct influence on security policy in Eastern Europe, in the current political climate it is difficult to imagine any progress on disarmament and developing confidence building measures. One should rather expect further worsening of relations between NATO and Russia and the subsequent dismantling of the European security pillars.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Russia's suspension to participate in the work of a joint consultative group on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), and cessation of its execution in 2007, does not change Russia's obligations for the signatories of the agreement. It is a political gesture associated with deterioration in relations between Moscow and the West as a consequence of Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The Kremlin probably hopes to give a signal that in the case of consistent implementation of current policies by the EU and NATO, it may terminate other disarmament treaties, at the same time dismantling the security system in Europe.
2. As a result of the deterioration of Russia's relations with the West 'The Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces' (INF) is at particular risk. Moscow has been accused of violating it even before the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. While the Kremlin has not decided on a formal denunciation of the Treaty, there is a risk that Russia would eventually violate the provisions of the INF by introducing systems incompatible with its limitations. This will have serious implications for the security of NATO countries as Russia's purpose will then be building a broad catalogue of missile strike on all European NATO nations that could be used, e.g. for a nuclear blackmail.
3. Although Moscow declares its willingness to start talks on establishing a new security system in Europe, in the current situation, progress on disarmament and strengthening confidence building measures will be difficult. NATO should prepare for further deterioration in relations with the Russian Federation and further attempts at dismantling the subsequent security institutions in Europe.
4. NATO member states should decisively respond to Russia's violations of the INF Treaty. The U.S. in consultation with its allies should require precise explanations, and appeal to Moscow for respecting the treaty. In the absence of Russia's will to cooperate, consultations should begin regarding the adaptation of NATO missile defence system (NATO Ballistic Missile Defence Capability) so to be able to respond as well to Russian missile systems. The U.S. should also maintain and modernize tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Europe within NATO Nuclear Sharing, and in case of Russia's systematic failure to comply with the INF, the U.S. should consider redeploying cruise missiles on land-based platforms on the Old Continent. Poland should start bilateral consultations with the U.S. on potential adaptation of SM-3 systems, being deployed on Polish territory within the European Phased Adaptive Approach, also to counter the Russian missile systems.

5. Regardless of the actions within NATO, Poland should steadily increase its ability to respond to Russian missile potential. It should build a missile defence system with no delay under the current plan of technical modernization of the armed forces, and consider the purchase of more (than the eight planned) batteries of air defence system of medium range in the future. It is also necessary to build own potential of deterrence and acquisition of systems that could eliminate Russian rocket launchers for short range missiles in the event of their use against Poland ('Homar' system, JASSM missiles).

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