



REVITALISING MILITARY CONFIDENCE-BUILDING, RISK REDUCTION AND ARMS CONTROL IN EUROPE

Vienna (Hofburg), 3 October 2016

Concept Note

Rationale

Military confidence-building and arms control have traditionally been main pillars of European security and stability since the end of the Cold War. However, this regime has been gradually eroding since the turn of the century. The conflict in Georgia in 2008 and more recently the conflict in and around Ukraine have highlighted deficiencies in the existing European arms control architecture, particularly in times of crisis.

The current security landscape in Europe is characterized by uncertainty, mutual mistrust and confrontational relations. Military-to-military dialogue is stagnating or has been suspended and military exercises are conducted with increasing frequency and often without prior notification (so-called "snap exercises"). Most importantly, there has been a growing number of military incidents and close military encounters both at sea and in the air. Over the last 18 months, the European Leadership Network has logged more than 60 such dangerous incidents in the Euro-Atlantic area: not just military-to-military but including also several close encounters with commercial airlines. In such an environment, there is a real risk of dangerous miscalculation and unforeseen incidents that could trigger a direct military confrontation.

In view of these dangerous developments, discussion on enhanced military transparency, particularly in border areas, and improved risk reduction measures have gained added urgency. There are efforts to draw from earlier military-to-military agreements such as the Incidents at Sea Agreement of 1972 or the Agreement on the Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities of 1989, which outline co-operative procedures to prevent and resolve peacetime incidents. There are also more recent agreements that can serve as a source of inspiration: for instance, the agreement between the United States and Russia over the avoidance of air incidents in Syria. In a wider context, a status-neutral approach to security, confidence-building and arms control measures is also attracting growing attention.

Risk reduction measures have been addressed at several recent high-level meetings and events. The NATO Summit in Warsaw called for the modernization of the OSCE Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, particularly in the domain of risk reduction and transparency measures. The issue of close military encounters has also been

repeatedly raised at the NATO-Russia Council. In the OSCE context, a number of concrete proposals are currently under discussion in the Forum for Security Co-operation and its working groups. These include suggestions such as status-neutral fact-finding and assessment missions as well as an institutionalized mechanism for military inspections under the OSCE Secretariat, an expert roster for Vienna Document inspectors or a Special Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship on risk reduction measures. Military confidence-building and risk reduction were also discussed at an OSCE Security Days conference on ["From Confrontation to Co-operation: Restoring Co-operative Security in Europe"](#) held in Berlin in late June 2016.

Re-launching politico-military dialogue on confidence-building, risk reduction and arms control is critical in the current political and security environment in Europe. It also represents a necessary prerequisite for rebuilding mutual trust and restoring co-operative security in the OSCE area in the long term. While such efforts are particularly challenging in times of crisis and confrontational relations, it is when they are most needed.

Objectives and expected outcomes

This OSCE Security Days expert roundtable will provide a platform for a strategic and forward-looking discussion on revitalizing military confidence-building, risk reduction and arms control in Europe. It will generate concrete proposals and inject fresh ideas on subjects such as preventing and managing military incidents, strengthening multilateral crisis response and risk reduction in the politico-military dimension and re-launching conventional arms control. As a Track 1.5 initiative, the roundtable aims to complement on-going discussions in the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation as well as other related bodies and structures, and provide further impetus to this crucially important process. It will also provide an opportunity to elaborate on the recent arms control initiative announced by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, H.E. Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

Format

Session 1: Preventing and Managing Close Military Encounters in Times of Crisis

- If a military incident occurs in Europe, what mechanisms for crisis management and de-escalation are available? Which existing agreements and initiatives could serve as a source of inspiration?
- What kinds of new mechanisms and initiatives could be launched to improve prevention of military incidents and enhance crisis management in case of their occurrence?
- How could the OSCE and its partnerships with other organizations help to achieve greater military stability and predictability in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space?
- Could the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) produce an agreement that would effectively reduce risks of unintended military confrontation in Europe?
- How could the relevant bilateral military-to-military agreements between Russia and other countries in Europe be multilateralized for the benefit of all states in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space?

Session 2: Strengthening Multilateral Crisis Response and Risk Reduction in the Politico-Military Dimension

- How can verification and inspection mechanisms be improved? How can international verification be ensured when it comes to irregular and non-state armed groups?
- Should the OSCE be provided with an impartial institutionalized mechanism to respond to crisis situations? What options could be considered?
- In what kind of concrete cases and scenarios could impartial military inspection missions under the OSCE (Secretariat) be deployed? How should such a mechanism balance its focus on conflict cycle functions and confidence-building measures (CBMs) vs. Vienna Document requirements?
- Under what conditions and in what kind of framework could the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) assume more responsibilities when it comes to risk reduction in a military crisis situation?
- Is it worthwhile exploring a link between status-neutral arms control with reference to the “Stabilizing Measures for Localized Crisis Situations” (1993) and third party verification?
- How can military transparency be increased in border areas, particularly with regard to so-called snap military exercises?

Session 3: Re-launching Conventional Arms Control in the OSCE Context

- What are the prerequisites for resuming discussions on conventional arms control?
- How can we move away from a bloc-to-bloc approach in conventional arms control?
- How can divergent security concerns and threat perceptions among the OSCE participating States be reconciled?
- How can a structured and systematic dialogue on renewing a conventional arms control process be ensured? What framework or mechanism would be most appropriate (e.g., group of friends, Special Representative on arms control, regular high-level meeting, etc.)?
- To what extent can the recent initiative by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, H.E. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, energize the multilateral conventional arms control process?

About the OSCE

With 57 participating States in Europe, Asia and North America, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest regional security organization. Its mission is rooted in the principles and commitments contained in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, a pioneering document that contributed to the end of the Cold War. The OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and human aspects and that is reflected throughout the work of the Organization.

About OSCE Security Days

OSCE Security Days have served as a unique platform for enhancing the security dialogue since the initiative was launched in 2012. Security Days events aim to deepen understanding of common security challenges and generate possible solutions by stimulating informal, interactive and forward-looking debate among prominent experts from international organizations, governments, think tanks, academia, civil society, youth, and the media.

Previous Security Days have focused on issues such as conventional arms control, water security, climate change, radicalization and violent extremism, the women, peace and security agenda, and migration.



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DRAFT Topical Agenda

09:45-10:30

Registration and welcome coffee

10:30-10:45

Opening

10:45-12:15

Session 1: Preventing and Managing Close Military Encounters in Times of Crisis

12:15-13:30

Buffet Lunch

13:30-15:00

Session 2: Strengthening Multilateral Crisis Response and Risk Reduction in the Politico-Military Dimension

15:00-15:30

Coffee Break

15:30-17:00

Session 3: Re-launching Conventional Arms Control in the OSCE Context

17:00-17:30

Conclusion