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Armaments, Disarmament and International Security

Conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures in Europe

IAN ANTHONY AND LINA GRIP



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III. Conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures in Europe

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Europe-wide arms control

In 2012 the difficulties in agreeing on further progress on conventional arms control in Europe reported in 2011 continued. However, at the end of 2012 Ukraine, the incoming chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for 2013, initiated a process that might provide a future framework for developing a new approach to conventional arms control.

In November 2011, 24 parties to the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) ceased carrying out certain treaty obligations with regard to Russia as a legal countermeasure to Russia's suspension of implementation of the treaty in late 2007.¹ Russian representatives have stated that no formal talks on next steps in conventional arms control will be possible until the main purpose is agreed.²

In the United States the November decision was the catalyst for a 'ground-up' evaluation of conventional arms control, including the future of the CFE Treaty.³ The USA believes that the original problem the CFE Treaty was intended to address—the destabilizing effect of military capabilities able to seize and hold the territory of another state—has been solved. The review is to identify European security concerns that conventional arms control might help address, and then pinpoint the kinds of measure that could best address the issues identified. In public statements towards the end of 2012 senior US officials gave some indication of the line of thinking the review is expected to contain: arms control is expected to help 'provide confidence regarding the military activities and intentions of neighbors, especially in sensitive areas'.⁴

The USA sees two main objectives for conventional arms control: first, ensuring that there is sufficient predictability and transparency in the development of armed forces to avoid any risk of a 'strategic surprise', and

¹ For a summary and other details of the CFE Treaty see annex A in this volume.

² Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Alexander Grushko, quoted in 'Moscow does not expect CFE treaty talks to begin in the near term', RIA Novosti, 5 Apr. 2012, <<http://www.russialist.org/russia-cfe-treaty-delayed-787.php>>. However, the issue of conventional arms control is still an agenda item during regular but informal bilateral Russian-US consultations.

³ Gottemoeller, R., US Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, Remarks at the US Strategic Command 2012 Deterrence Symposium, Omaha, NE, 9 Aug. 2012, <<http://www.state.gov/t/us/196354.htm>>.

⁴ Gottemoeller, R., US Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, 'Revitalizing conventional arms control in Europe', Remarks at SIPRI, Stockholm, 4 Sep. 2012, <<http://www.state.gov/t/us/197648.htm>>.

second, helping to stabilize the security situation in some subregions of Europe. While no longer a State Department official, Steven Pifer perhaps captured US thinking in a presentation to the 2012 OSCE Security Days when he identified the main problems as: ‘lack of political confidence regarding neighbors’ intentions coupled with specific concerns that stem from subregions of insecurity or of fragile security plus the fear of localized military tensions or localized offensive operations’.⁵

Russia has focused on the need to establish rules for arms and other items of growing importance to armed forces that are not currently subject to conventional arms control treaties.⁶ In this context, Russian officials have referred to ship-borne weapons and armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

At the end of 2012 the Ukrainian Government outlined its plans for its chairmanship of the OSCE in 2013, which included revitalizing conventional arms control and making progress on resolving protracted conflicts.⁷ The approach proposed by Ukraine offered a possible framework for progress by emphasizing the need to ask fundamental questions about the future of conventional arms control, rather than focusing once again on the difficulties in the existing instruments. In a ‘food for thought’ paper circulated among OSCE members Ukraine posed a number of possible questions that could be taken up in 2013 on a Europe-wide basis. The questions posed in the paper included:

Can the OSCE play an important role in elaborating fundamental principles of a future conventional arms control regime and developing subsequently new arms control agreement?

If yes, what format can be used for appropriate works: [a] new committee, [an] open-ended ad hoc group, informal consultations, [the Forum for Security Co-operation]?

Does the OSCE require a special mandate for convening this work? . . .

What could be and what could not be expected from any future conventional arms control within the OSCE area? . . .

Should the limitations on categories of armaments be considered as an important element of maintaining security and stability within the OSCE area? ⁸

⁵ Pifer, S., ‘Developing a new approach to conventional arms control?’, Contribution to OSCE Security Days, Vienna, 25 June 2012, <<http://www.brookings.edu/research/speeches/2012/06/25-security-pifer>>.

⁶ Zellner, W., ‘Conventional arms control in Europe: is there a last chance?’, *Arms Control Today*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Mar. 2012).

⁷ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), ‘Protracted conflicts, arms control, trafficking in human beings top agenda as Ukraine takes over OSCE chair’, Press release, 1 Jan. 2013, <<http://www.osce.org/cio/98443>>.

⁸ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), ‘Initiating a dialogue within the OSCE aimed at discussing the role conventional arms control can play in today’s and future European security architecture’, Ukrainian Food-for-Thought Paper, [n.d.].

These questions are broad enough to be the basis for a thorough assessment of the role of arms control at the European level.

At the OSCE Ministerial Council in December 2012, foreign ministers agreed to launch a process labelled 'Helsinki+40', with the objective of developing practical measures to (among other things) implement the commitment made in the 2010 Astana Commemorative Declaration to overcome the impasse in conventional arms control in Europe and open the way for negotiations on a new agreement.⁹ The measures should be elaborated by 2015—four decades after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. The foreign ministers called on the OSCE'S Forum for Security Co-operation to contribute within its mandate.¹⁰

South Eastern Europe

The 1996 Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control (Florence Agreement) currently limits the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.¹¹ The agreement is one of the political-military components of the Dayton Peace Accords as part of a set of integrated regional stabilization measures. While the weapon holdings of all states parties are now below the treaty-imposed ceilings, the states parties continue to carry out a schedule of inspections, including voluntary inspections beyond their treaty obligations.

Since 2010 the transfer of the Florence Agreement to full local ownership has been under way. Whereas the implementation of the Florence Agreement has involved inspectors from 29 OSCE participating states and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, the four parties will take full responsibility for implementation in 2014.¹² The inspection process provides the responsible authorities in the region, including the military, with a detailed understanding of the current policies and plans of neighbours and reduces any risk that suspicion might arise over military plans and developments.

From 1996 to the end of October 2012 nearly 10 000 heavy weapons of different kinds were eliminated under the agreement, including roughly 1400 battle tanks, nearly 700 armoured combat vehicles, over 7500 artillery

⁹ OSCE, Summit Meeting, Astana 2010, 'Astana Commemorative Declaration: towards a security community', SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1*, 3 Dec. 2010, <<http://www.osce.org/cio/74985>>.

¹⁰ OSCE, 'Decision on the OSCE Helsinki+40 process', MC19EW18, 7 Dec. 2012.

¹¹ For a summary and other details of the Florence Agreement see annex A in this volume.

¹² Interview with Major General Michele Torres, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Article IV of Annex 1B of the Dayton Peace Accords, *RACVIAC Newsletter*, no. 30 (July–Dec. 2011), pp. 6–7. In the longer term, the activities are expected to come to an end entirely when all countries in the region become members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

pieces, 167 combat aircraft and 14 helicopters.¹³ By the middle of 2012, 670 inspections had been conducted.¹⁴ While the Florence Agreement reduced the volume of major weapons in the region, South Eastern Europe also experienced a tremendous influx of illicit conventional arms of different kinds during the 1990s as well as a significant proliferation of weapons made in the region. In addition, large quantities of arms were lost from state ownership and control in this period as safe and secure stockpiling of existing arsenals was fragile or inadequate.¹⁵ With external support, states in the region set up a number of measures to reduce the excessive accumulations of conventional arms and ammunition. Cooperative and practical approaches were preferred over coercive, strategic measures, including enhancing confidence and integration through setting up regional institutional structures to guide, support and monitor national implementation.

In 2012 the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), launched in May 2002 in Belgrade, passed its 10th anniversary. SEESAC is a regional organization tasked with supporting regional arms control implementation and development and is a component of the Regional Implementation Plan on Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) formulated and adopted by the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe in November 2001.¹⁶ The Stability Pact was a conflict prevention strategy of the international community set up in 1999 to achieve regional stability by developing and supporting a strong regional framework by which international partners could work closely with states in South Eastern Europe on joint programmes. Since 2006 the Stability Pact has included a Regional Steering Group on SALW.¹⁷

Under SEESAC states have established national focal points and the Regional Micro-Disarmament Standards and Guidelines. SEESAC's activities focus on SALW destruction, collection, storage management, marking, tracing and registration, and on arms export controls. The organization provides support to governments, institutions and other SALW stakeholders in the form of capacity building, coordination, information

¹³ Torres, M. (Maj. Gen.), Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship in Office for Article IV, Annex 1-B, Dayton Peace Accords, 'Post-agreement reflections on the Dayton Peace Accord: the importance of regional arms control agreement', Presentation at the RACVIAC Centre for Security Cooperation Arms Control Symposium, Zagreb, 21 Nov. 2012.

¹⁴ 'Dayton Article IV course conducted', *RACVIAC Newsletter*, no. 32 (Apr.–June 2012), p. 14.

¹⁵ Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction (RASR), 'Speech of the Albania Minister of Defence Mr Arben Imami', RASR conference, Durrës, 24 Apr. 2012, <<http://www.rasrinitiative.org/pdfs/workshop-5/RASR-Workshop-5-Albania-MOD-Speech.pdf>>, p. 2.

¹⁶ South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), <<http://www.seesac.org/about-seesac/1/>>.

¹⁷ Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, 'Combating the proliferation and impact of small arms and light weapons', Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Regional Implementation Plan (revised 2006), <http://www.stabilitypact.org/salw/sp_rip_2006.pdf>, p. 1.

management and exchange activities, training and research, and the like.¹⁸ SEESAC's work has enhanced transparency in arms transfers, including through national reports and annual meetings on arms exports. SEESAC's activities in 2012 included the Seventh Meeting of the Regional Arms Export Information Exchange Process, a workshop on gender mainstreaming in security sector reform and a Workshop on Gender and Security for the Women Police Officers Network Council.¹⁹

The Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction (RASR) is an initiative of nine states in South Eastern Europe that aims to address the threats posed by stockpiles of conventional weapons and munitions in the region, to prevent proliferation and disastrous explosions.²⁰ RASR's activities include publications, outreach and capacity building. RASR's fifth annual conference took place in Durrës, Albania, in April 2012, and gathered states and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to exchange information and best practices on the range of issues under RASR.²¹ The Regional Arms Control, Verification and Information Centre (RACVIAC), established in 2000 and based in Zagreb, also holds training programmes on the verification of arms control and confidence-building regimes in the region.

Conventional arms control programmes have been a precondition for European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership as neither organization could admit members that have large quantities of weapons outside state control and in general circulation.²² However, states such as Croatia—which joined NATO in 2009 and will join the EU in 2013—have found arms control so useful that they have continued to participate in regional arrangements after integration into wider European institutions. The EU has taken the lead from the United Nations Development Programme in terms of financial support to SALW programmes within the region, and a key objective of the South East European strategy is harmonization with the EU security policies in the field of SALW, thus preparing South East European countries for EU membership.²³

¹⁸ On the 2008 SEESAC Strategy Plan see SEESAC (note 16).

¹⁹ South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), 'Events calendar', <<http://www.seesac.org/new-events/events-calendar/1/>>.

²⁰ Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction (RASR), <<http://www.rasrinitiative.org/rasr.php>>. The 9 states are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia.

²¹ Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction (note 15), p. 2.

²² Grillot, S., 'Guns in the Balkans: controlling small arms and light weapons in seven Western Balkan countries', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (June 2010), p. 148; and Ryabikhin, L. and Jevgenia Viktorova, J., 'Weapons transfers as a soft security issue in Eastern Europe: legal and illicit aspects', *European Security*, vol. 13, nos 1–2 (2004), pp. 78, 80.

²³ Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (note 17), pp. 6, 10.