

NATO-Russia relations have entered a new stage

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Europe's conventional arms control architecture requires a thorough makeover. The Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs), originally adopted in 1990 and most recently updated in 2011, is politically binding and aims to increase the transparency of military postures and activities in Europe.

Today, these arrangements are either blocked or in dire need of modernization.

Political initiatives are required to start a new East-West detente and to avoid the steady escalation of bloc-to-bloc conflict and the hardening of positions.

Since 2014 the number of deployed troops in the Baltic region has been constantly increasing. However, NATO has found the good excuse "not to break" the Vienna Document which formally imposes restrictions on military activities in Europe. NATO deploys troops in the region on a "rotating basis" and conducting large-scale exercises.

So, U.S. and NATO conducted large-scale multinational exercise [DEFENDER-Europe 21](#).

DEFENDER-Europe 21 was involved more than 28,000 troops from 26 nations with nearly simultaneous operations across more than 30 training areas in 12 countries. As part of the exercise, thousands of American troops and hundreds of pieces of equipment have been deployed to Europe.

Unfortunately, such actions by the United States and NATO violate the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 and the Vienna Document 2011. Moreover, it could potentially lead to an

escalation of tension in the region.

Russia has demonstrated the capacity for rapid deployment of its armed forces, also through several large-scale “snap” exercises. And now Russia’s neighbors are argue that Russia’s armed forces are used as instruments of intimidation, and possibly even aggression against them.

The Ukraine crisis has resulted in an unfortunate militarization of European security, forcing conventional arms control and CSBMs higher up the political agenda in an effort to save what is still left of the dream of a Europe “founded on respect and cooperation.”

Russia’s Military Doctrine (2014) clearly identifies NATO enlargement as a danger to Russian national security, going against the OSCE objective of creating a common space of cooperative security. Russia blames the West (and the U.S. in particular) for destabilizing the post-Soviet space.

The language chosen by Russia is perfectly consistent with the narrative of 0an ever-expanding NATO slowly strangling Russia, an understanding of the evolution of European security which is the polar opposite of NATO members’ perception of Russia.

The irreconcilable Western and Russian approaches to the Vienna Document make it impossible to foresee ant rapid progression in the situation, despite the urgent need better to control the present volatile military situation in Europe.

NATO-Russia relations have entered a new mini-Ice Age, with both NATO and Russia moving troops and military infrastructure to each other’s borders.

Diverging threat perceptions between Russia and NATO countries now poison Europe’s political atmosphere, triggering the forward-stationing of troops, large-scale military maneuvers and “snap” exercises. Needless to say, this continuous show of force increases the risk of errors of judgment and unintended

hazardous incidents.

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