

New European Architecture: Change of Wording or of the Concept?

Statement

by Dr. Vladimir Petrovsky
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva
at the Eighth Swiss-CIS Conference
17 December 1996

1. It is a historical paradox that though the cold war had ended more than seven years ago there is still no ^{pec} European system of international security. Sometimes it seems that the countries of the region are trapped by history and their own political rhetoric, and find themselves poised on the edge of a gulf of misunderstanding that few of them are able or willing to bridge. The West tend to act as the winner of a war that gives them the right to set the rules of the game. Russia, on the other hand, continues to feel betrayed by the West that, for all its talk of partnership, pursues policies that Moscow believes will leave it isolated and threatened. Meanwhile, after the end of the Cold war perhaps for the first time in history the continent has a chance to overcome its centuries-old divisions and divergences and to create a genuine system of all-European security. Plenty of time had already been wasted but the chance is not yet lost.

2. The peculiarity of the European situation is the existence of a considerable number of regional and subregional structures which claim the right to participate, to a greater or lesser extend, in the process of building a new European security system. Many of this structures are overlapping and the role and the place of some of them is not always clear.

3. To begin with, all European countries are the members of the OSCE - which is in fact a trans-continental rather than a regional organization. The Western part of the continent is integrated by NATO, the European Union and the WEU, their

“junior partner”. On the East of the continent there is the Commonwealth of Independent States. In between in the Central and Eastern Europe there is also a number of smaller entities such as the Central European Initiative, the Visegrad group, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the Council of Baltic States. Taking into account the diverse aims and capabilities of these organizations this is quite a chaotic arrangement. Accordingly, in the near future the European agenda will be dominated by painful and laborious efforts of putting it in order.

4. As you are aware, so far two major approaches had been put forward which to a considerable extent contradict each other. The first one envisages the security system based on the expansion of the West European organizations - NATO and the EU. The talks about the admission of new NATO members as well as the “Partnership for Peace” programme are basically aimed at putting NATO in the center of the European political system. Theoretically there is nothing wrong if one of the organizations becomes a dominant player in the region. However, due to many factors, in particular the burden of several decades of hostility and confrontation some East European countries, and most important Russia, are strongly opposed to NATO’s expansion.

5. May I remind you that in Lisbon the Russian Prime Minister Mr. Chernomyrdin, gave a rather strong warning if NATO goes ahead with plans to expand close to Russia's borders. “Yes, Russia has no veto over the enlargement of NATO,” he acknowledged. “But nor do others have a veto over our right to defend our national interests.” More recently, in Brussels, the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Primakov, again flatly rejected NATO expansion.

6. Regardless of the motives and intentions of NATO politicians their attempts to build European security on the basis of Western institutions appear to be doomed. Without cooperation with Russia no security system will be stable and the outcome inevitably will be the new division of the continent by the traditional East-West barrier which now seems to be more cultural and economic rather than ideological.

7. Another approach currently advocated by Russia is to base European security system on the OSCE. The experience of this organization in the international security issues is somewhat contradictory and its ability to play a leading role is sometimes put into question. However, the OSCE have considerable potential which deserves closer attention.

8. The assets of the OSCE include, first of all, the detailed discussion of the model of European security in the 21st century, the universally recognized contribution to Bosnian affairs, to the settlement of a number of other regional conflicts. The OSCE also has a big field of activity in ensuring human rights and the rights of minorities. Although its structures are as yet embryonic, the OSCE is developing diplomatic tools of conflict prediction, prevention and management. It is in the latter sphere that the organization's achievements are particularly impressive.

9. The OSCE currently has conflict prevention teams in 10 zones: Bosnia Herzegovina, Chechnya, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine. The organization has also provided a forum for troop reduction talks and is currently examining the possibility of extending the CFE to the whole of Europe. It should be noted, that the OSCE's capacity to act is

severely limited by its unanimity voting. However, it does provide an inclusive security forum and a bench marking system for human rights and minority rights that parallels that of the Council of Europe.

10. The recent OSCE summit in Lisbon was an interesting manifestation of the controversial but nevertheless significant impact of this organization on the European security building process. In Budapest in 1994, Russia proposed the idea of a legally binding treaty on European security, based on the OSCE, and the focus of Lisbon was to be the tying up of conclusions on that “European Security Model”. Despite heated debates this idea appears to be getting growing support. The summit adopted as its main document a detailed declaration on the model of a general and comprehensive security for Europe of the 21st century. Its include provisions on the impermissibility of attempts to strengthen one's own security at the expense of the security of others, on the cooperation of various international organizations and institutions in the strengthening of the OSCE. The declaration also singles out the agreement on the working out in the future of a European security charter of comparable importance with the Helsinki Final Act.

11. OSCE went even further and tackled the military dimension of the European security adopting a document on the renewal of the treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe. Talks on this subject will begin already in January 1997. Other adopted documents strengthened the role of arms control as an important instrument of ensuring stability in Europe. They make it possible to use the all-European format to identify and consider future confidence-building and military security measures.

12. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is trying to find

a comprehensive format for relations among nations from North America to the former Soviet Union. However, the recent developments indicate that in its original form the second scenario also will not work.

13. The Western countries are quite reluctant to subordinate NATO to the OSCE. They feel that as the winners in the Cold war they should get what they perceive they deserve. However, despite strong retorics on both sides there are grounds for optimism. It is most important that both Russia and its Western counterparts wish to leave the door open and are willing to show flexibility that reflects today's realities. As it often happens in politics a compromise is the best solution. There are plenty of areas where Russia and NATO can move on together.

14. Both sides agree that the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty now needs revision. They understand that NATO and Russia are equals in devising future security arrangements in Europe, and that there is a need to establish fora between them to develop jointly a doctrine and procedures. Numerous international problems such as countering terrorism and the proliferation of weapons require their joint efforts. Small practical steps bringing the sides closer to each other are important as well. At a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Bergen in September, US Secretary of Defense, William Perry, offered the exchange of military liaison officers, the creation of joint crisis-management mechanisms, and regular ministerial meetings.

15. Today there is enough evidence that both Russia and NATO are ready to make concessions to each other. The recent NATO's statement that it has "no intention, no plan, and no reason" to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of

new members is one of the signs. At the same time Mr. Primakov welcomed NATO's proposal to open a formal dialogue with Russia over a NATO - Russia charter saying that it "basically paves the way for very constructive negotiations." It is expected that President Clinton will discuss the issue with Russian President Boris Yeltsin at their scheduled March meeting.

16. Still there is a long way to go and plenty of work needs to be done to develop a genuine system of international security in Europe. For example, NATO needs to undergo a process of reforms, to adjust to the new international environment and to develop a more European identity. In this connection the position of France on the role of Europeans in NATO's military structures, in particular the Southern Command issue is worth mentioning.

17. In view of all these developments, what could be the future place of the OSCE in Europe? It is obvious that this organization can play a larger role in European affairs and in fact nobody objects to this idea. The problem basically is: will the OSCE be able to become the driving-force behind the modern trends or it will be merely a hub around which all this activity takes place?

18. So far the problems of the OSCE were to a large extent methodological. This organization doesn't have enough experience and sophistication in conducting large multilateral negotiations or field operations, as for example the UN does. Because of its voting procedure the decision-making process at the OSCE is slow and painful and it doesn't have a sufficient executive branch to quickly and effectively implement the decisions. On the other hand OSCE is the only forum where all the European countries as well as some other states involved in European affairs can discuss issues of common concern. OSCE was quite

useful during the Cold war serving as the major political bridge between the two parts of the divided continent. It appears that in the foreseeable future such a bridge will still be needed.

19. From the United Nations point of view any regional security arrangements in Europe are welcome provided that they comply with the provisions of the UN Charter. The UN Security Council is the only multilateral body which is empowered, under Chapter VIII of the Charter, to undertake enforcement action and accordingly any use of force wherever it happens should be first approved by the Council. Traditionally the United Nations served as a roof for all regional structures. There is a special chapter within the UN Charter which deals with regional arrangements. It is already an established practice that the activities of other organizations are carefully linked to the resolutions and decisions of the UN Security Council and the General Assembly. This arrangement provides the best foundation for stability and the creation of the international security system not just in Europe but all over the world.

Thank you for your attention.