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STRATEGIQUE (PARIS), AT THE MEETING OF THE
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Strengthening European security

Has security in Europe gained ground during the past ten years?

On the face of it, yes:

1. The European Union has become a producer of security.
2. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been reformed and has established close partnerships with the rest of the continent.
3. The two organizations have been enlarged peacefully.
4. After a decade of conflict, the Western Balkans are at peace and on the road to full integration into the European system.
5. The OSCE remains an active pan-European forum on various security issues and has become involved in regions in which it was hardly present (the Caucasus, Central Asia).

This optimistic picture must, however, be qualified:

- New threats have appeared (terrorism) and now weigh on the security of Europeans.

Other worrying signals must be mentioned:

- OSCE and other co-operation and conflict prevention mechanisms were not able to prevent the return of conflict to the Euro-Atlantic zone, and several regions (the Caucasus in particular) remain areas of very high tension in which major armed conflicts have taken place and the use of force remains a serious possibility.
- The sophisticated arms control system built up from the late 1980s to the late 1990s is threatened by a combination of stalemate and unilateral measures. The consequences of this development should not be underestimated: it is changing our security system from one based on confidence, transparency, predictability and co-operation to a

system in which distrust and errors of perception and calculation could once again become the norm. This poses a major risk in the medium term: the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), in particular, has made major conventional conflicts impossible in Europe by imposing regional ceilings and subceilings that are incompatible with conventional imbalances and the threat of a surprise attack. Make no mistake about it: since the Russian decision to declare a moratorium, the system is crumbling faster than one might think.

- The perception of a continent in which democratic values are shared and security is indivisible has also clearly diminished, and it is no secret that forums dealing with security co-operation, such as the FSC, are in real crisis.

These last three items are deeply bound up with the question of security relations between Russia and the West, a subject that has made a remarkable “comeback” on the agenda of the European countries and the United States of America during the past year.

In this context, three errors must be avoided:

- Neglect: “Is this all so important?”;
- A return to a cold war mindset: “Old problems, old solutions!”;
- A return to Westphalian geopolitics, consisting of compromises based on spheres of influence and the relationship of forces.

Bearing all of this in mind, it seems interesting to look at President Medvedev’s proposal — which is now a well-structured proposal for reorganizing the European security agenda around an ambitious draft treaty on European security — through slightly different lenses, even though tactical considerations may of course come into play and warrant a certain distrust on the part of Westerners.

This approach must, in my view, be based on several conditions so as to enable a truly co-operative approach:

- The link between the human dimension, soft security and hard security must be reaffirmed;
- The issue is one that involves all OSCE members; the United States and Canada are fully fledged stakeholders in European security;
- Sovereignty and territorial integrity are basic principles;
- The existing military alliances contribute to the continent’s security;
- The challenge is to reduce the use of force.

The agenda for security discussions could then have three dimensions:

1. Arms control;

2. Crisis management and conflict prevention within the OSCE area;
3. A political dialogue to deal with the common threats hanging over the Euro-Atlantic area (terrorism, organized crime, proliferation).

In conclusion, it seems to me that several ideas could guide these discussions:

- Confidence is not essential to this process, which should be based more on the parties' well-understood security interests, in particular with regard to arms control;
- The gains of past decades must be preserved (it is important not to move towards a less effective system), but must not indefinitely prevent consideration of new frameworks;
- Preconditions seem to me to be incompatible with a thorough discussion; while all participants must have the clearest possible expectations and proposals, it is nonetheless important not to make "take it or leave it" demands at the outset;
- The three dimensions should have a place in this discussion (this has always been the added value of the OSCE/CSCE);
- The end result should remain open, whether what is envisaged is a political declaration, a legally binding text, or a combination of these two approaches.