



The Precarious State of Flux of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE)

Conference Paper
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The conference took place at the Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund from June 1-3, 2011. Organized by the Carnegie Council in cooperation with the U.S. Army War College, the conference served to review and report on two years of program activity, and to generate new ideas and resources among an international group of innovative thinkers on U.S.-Russian relations, nuclear arms control and nonproliferation, European and NATO security challenges for the future, including Afghanistan, and competition and cooperation in the Arctic region.

U.S. Global Director David Speedie suggests reading this in tandem with [the paper by Sergey Rogov](#). Speedie writes,

"The CFE issue remains contentious between Russia and the West, even in the warm glow of New START and an apparently cordial dialogue between Presidents Obama and Medvedev on arms control in general. Here two experts on the Treaty, one Russian, one British offer different perspectives, but with the same bottom line: CFE is worth saving."

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Background

Updated analysis of interests, possibilities, and implications for the once ground-breaking Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty is timely. This is less because the diplomatic situation of CFE itself has been observably changing (attempts to modernize it into a universally functioning Adapted Treaty (ACFE) remain in long-term stalemate) but because there are new arguments over how much it might be worth paying for its reanimation. While the future of the CFE project is certainly gloomy, it defies resolution at present in Europe—though it may be replicable elsewhere.

Historical Significance

In considering CFE's disputed future and wider significance, it is paradoxically helpful to look at the deeper past. This offers an instructive contrast between the adaptation of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and the complex and long-running 19th century Schleswig-Holstein Question. The perennial British Foreign Secretary Palmerston said that *"Only three people have ever really understood the Schleswig-Holstein business—the Prince Consort, who is dead—a German professor, who has gone mad—and I, who have forgotten all about it."*¹ The group of specialist policymakers and academic commentators for CFE/ACFE often seems only slightly larger. Both the Schleswig-Holstein and CFE questions were not only famously complicated, but also largely incomprehensible to the public.

They also perfectly illustrate diametrically different approaches to military assertion and the role of armed force. The Schleswig Holstein Question was built on dynastic convolutions and the complexities of feudal law. It was resolved violently. The Second Schleswig War of 1864, in which a rising, revisionist Prussia took the dominant military role, can be seen as one of a series of moves from the concerted conservative stability of post-Napoleonic Europe into the cycle of 19th and 20th century nationalist and, later, ideological conflicts which tore Europe apart

until 1945 and kept it separated until 1989.² The CFE project is an attempt to prevent further wars or military blackmail in the Eurasian cockpit stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals, through rigorously formulated obligations to provide military transparency, and legally enshrined controls on allowable holdings of key weapons.

During the early days of CFE, Robert Cooper, now counselor to the European External Action Service, even erected a theory³ which framed and exalted CFE as the defining expression of global post-modernity, into which Europe would lead the world by seeking transparency and mutual trust rather than relying on balances of Westphalian national power, and threatened or actual resort to arms. *"Intrusive verification—which is at the heart of the CFE system—is a key element in a post-modern order where state sovereignty is no longer seen as an absolute"... [and]... "security is based on transparency, mutual openness, interdependence and mutual vulnerability."*⁴ The German Foreign Ministry, with its large arms control constituency, therefore characteristically tends to refer to CFE as *the cornerstone of European security*.⁵ They, like others, also point out that it is also a treaty that could be uniquely valuable in moving from codifying defense relations in the Cold War world to addressing post-Cold War arrangements, where agreements have to be multilateral and parity has no easy bipolar meaning.

This paper's main predictive theoretical proposition is that, in fact, progress on conventional arms control in Europe will continue to move at a pace dictated by nuclear atmospheric. This is because CFE, and, before it, Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR), have expressed the wider state of East-West strategic relations, above all between the United States and Russia. These relations have been anchored on an overriding concern for nuclear stability—although this does not mean that conventional arms control made no additional contribution to the relationship between Russia and America and its allies.

Negotiating Histories

The historical record bears this out:

- The MBFR negotiations process was initiated as a result of U.S.-Soviet détente, which culminated in an agreement between Nixon and Brezhnev at the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) meeting to move forward by separate political and military negotiations.⁶ The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) would deal with political, economic and human rights matters, and MBFR would deal with military issues.
- Bloc to bloc MBFR negotiations began in Vienna in October 1973 to reduce conventional military forces in Central Europe to equal but significantly lower levels.⁷ The talks were stultified by disagreements over Limitations on Residual Forces (how national sub ceilings should apply after reductions); Associated Measures (NATO sought confidence-building measures (CBMs) such as prior notification of maneuvers and acceptance of observers; the Warsaw Pact rejected this as overly intrusive and insisted that National Technical Measures should suffice); and the Data Discrepancy (how large the Warsaw Pact forces actually were). No substantive progress was made, although the process itself, despite its protracted frustrations, was judged by many to have been worthwhile in facilitating strategic dialogue between East and West.
- MBFR was ostentatiously stalled in 1979, as one of many angry Soviet responses to NATO's decision to deploy new intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe. After the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) crisis was surmounted and the Cold War wound down, the MBFR talks were formally ended in 1989 and overtaken by negotiations in the new CFE framework.
- CFE achieved a historically rapid movement to signature in 1989 between the two blocs⁸ on tanks, armored combat vehicles (ACVs), heavy artillery, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters—the weaponry regarded as most important for large-scale offensive operations, collectively referred to as treaty-limited equipment (TLE). Thereafter, while the strategic atmosphere between Russia and the West remained benign, by the end of the Treaty's reduction period in 1995, the 30 States Parties completed and verified by inspection, the destruction or conversion of over 52,000 battle tanks, ACVs, artillery pieces, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters. By the end of 1996, CFE states had also accepted and conducted more than 2,700 intrusive on-site inspections.
- Subsequent events created the obvious imperative of adapting the Treaty to take account of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the possibility of NATO expansion. For this, the key agreed features were:⁹

National Ceilings on TLE: states can deploy within the treaty's area of application, which stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals (ATTU).

Territorial Ceilings on TLE: can be deployed in each country within the ATTU.

Temporary Deployments: requirements to notify additions to territorial ceilings for

military exercises, temporary deployments or "exceptional circumstances."

Transparency: a requirement on states parties to permit inspections of 20 percent of their "objects of verification," down to regimental level, storage, repair, and reduction sites with TLE present. Annual or quarterly reports on the actual location of tanks, ACVs, and artillery were also required, together with notification of increases in a state party's holdings of combat aircraft or attack helicopters anywhere within the ATTU.

Flank Limitations: CFE's biggest challenge has probably been Russia's discontent with treaty sub ceilings imposed to prevent dangerous concentrations of TLE in the so-called northern and southern "flank" zones of the ATTU, adjacent to, and including, Norway and Turkey. But Russia remains the only state with treaty limitations on deployment of its own forces on its own territory, in the sensitive St. Petersburg and North Caucasus military districts. Especially in the latter, there are active internal security operations and confrontations with neighbors which have turned into open conflict. The 1996 Review Conference agreed numerical and geographical changes to the flank rules for Russia and Ukraine, with additional transparency measures to meet the concerns of other flank states.

The ACFE Flank Accord set new and higher limits on Russian battle tanks, ACVs, and heavy artillery deployed or stored in the now-reconfigured flank zone. According to President Clinton, in his Letter of Transmittal to the Senate of 1997: "The Flank Document confirms the importance of sub-regional constraints on heavy military equipment. More specifically, it revalidates the idea, unique to CFE, of limits on the amount of equipment particular nations in the Treaty area can locate on certain portions of their own national territory."¹⁰

During the ratification process, there were Congressional anxieties that Moscow might use the new rules to prolong an imposed presence in Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Azerbaijan, together with fears that the Clinton Administration would be too accommodating to this pressure in order to facilitate NATO expansion. Before giving its consent, the Senate consequently insisted upon additional assurances with regard to the sovereignty of the former Soviet republics. Some commentators see the imposition of these constraints as an anti-Russian political move, which ran against the long-term sustainability of the Treaty.¹¹

The ACFE Treaty text was nevertheless signed at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Istanbul summit in November 1999, on the basis of Russian undertakings to withdraw from the Republic of Moldova, reduce equipment levels in Georgia, and agree with the Georgian authorities on the modalities and duration of the Russian forces stationed on Georgian territory, and reduce Russian forces in the flanks to the agreed levels of the Adapted CFE Treaty.¹²

But worsening disputes over NATO enlargement, and the intentions behind U.S. missile defense plans eroded Russian willingness to comply with its Istanbul Commitments. Consequently only Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine ratified the ACFE and Russia's ratification has been suspended.

In 2007, emphasizing the unacceptability of "*the extraordinary circumstance*" of the introduction of U.S. missile defenses in Europe, President Putin demanded a rewriting of the Treaty and warned of a moratorium on Russia's compliance. NATO refused to change its policy and Russia subsequently imposed the moratorium—almost certainly in legal violation of CFE provisions. Russia has halted verification visits since June 2007 and insists that it is no longer obligated by treaty to limit its conventional weapons. It also stresses, however, that it has not terminated participation in the CFE Treaty but only "suspended key elements," and Russian experts argue that this decision compares well with the unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty.

In a partially emollient response, NATO initially endorsed a "*parallel actions package*" in March 2008, calling for Alliance countries nevertheless to begin the ACFE ratification process, while Russia was expected and exhorted to have commenced its required withdrawals. It was hoped that Russia would resolve its issues with Georgia and Moldova; NATO nations could then quickly complete ratification of the Adapted Treaty, and address additional Russian security concerns.¹³

Russia rejected that expectation, and chances of agreement have since been further undermined by the August 2008 Conflict with Georgia, Moscow's decision in the same month to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent nations, and its continuing refusal to accept any reference to "host nation consent" as a fundamental principle. Both of these states have made clear that they will not ratify the Adapted CFE as long as Russian military forces remain on their territory without their consent, which is a violation of Article IV of the CFE Treaty and also would be a violation of Article IV of the Adapted CFE Treaty.

In the course of 2010, attempts were made towards resuscitation "Several bilateral as well as multilateral meetings (using the formula 30+6—30 CFE members and 6 non-CFE NATO members) took place. Russia and NATO submitted new proposals on escaping the deadlock, "although statements from both sides indicated little

chance of agreement."¹⁴ Yet, as a result of post-Cold War military reductions, actual holdings of TLE are, in almost all cases, well below permitted ceilings and the latest U.S. Government Compliance Report on CFE concedes that *"None of the compliance concerns identified and discussed in this Report are militarily significant to the United States or to NATO as a whole."*¹⁵ The same document nonetheless insists that *"the seriousness of the current compliance situation with regard to Russia's 'suspension' of implementation cannot be overstated. Russia's 'suspension' has eroded the implementation regime of the Treaty and undermined the cooperative approach to security that has been a core of the NATO-Russia relationship and European security for nearly two decades."*¹⁶

All this has created the continuing long-term logjam between NATO and Russia, leaving CFE on life support, with a diplomatic crisis approaching in the form of a Review Conference required before the end of the year.

The Balance of Interests

What are the evident balances of interest in reanimating, adapting, and preserving the gains of CFE inside such a framework?

Benefits to NATO

There are multiple reasons for NATO to want to preserve CFE.

- Arms Control is a continuing Alliance imperative. At least among European allies, public opinion, above all in Germany, would be alarmed and unforgiving if NATO appeared to be giving up on any hope of reviving CFE and bringing ACFE into force.
- Ostentatious concern to revive CFE may be essential to prevent dissension over NATO's *nuclear* deterrence posture, which is now being examined in the Alliance's Deterrence and Defense Review (DDPR).

It would seem, at least to those Westerners who are aware of the issue, axiomatically important to preserve the system of military transparency as widely as possible in Europe. Collapse of the CFE Treaty would damage European arms control in general, and hinder the work of all the institutions, transnational networks of experts, and trained specialist military observers dealing with cooperative security.

It is uncertain whether the Vienna Document 1999 procedures on confidence—and security-building measures—could survive if the CFE Treaty were formally declared dead by all parties, although Russia has emphasized that it values the procedures laid down in the Vienna Document.¹⁷ (But similar pessimism over the Dayton Accords would not seem to be warranted. They are buttressed by local and Balkan-wide regional pressures and incentives from NATO and EU, which are probably sufficiently powerful to hold the present situation together, even in the absence of CFE.)

Russia and ACFE

Russia's overall problem is that CFE originally codified rough parity at a moment of rough balance between the Warsaw Pact and the West, amidst honeymoon expectations of closer and closer security relations. Adapted CFE would have to be agreed, evolved and applied indefinitely in a situation of undisguisable, and probably growing, disparity between a Russia without close military allies and an expanded 28-nation NATO, and where security partnership between NATO and Russia is frequently proclaimed as an objective but is far from apparent.

Specific Russian objections are loud and numerous. The Russian Government now appears to be demanding:¹⁸

- ratification of the 1999 Adapted CFE Treaty by the NATO states;
- rapid accession of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to the ACFE and their early ratification, to restrict emergency deployments of NATO forces there (But while these countries are willing to accede to the ACFE, they cannot do so until it has entered into force);
- definition of the term *"substantial combat forces"* which would limit the forces which the Alliance could introduce into the new NATO states;¹⁹
- immediate renegotiation and modernization of ACFE if it were ever, temporarily, brought into force;
- balance of some kind between Russia and an expanded NATO through a "compensatory lowering" of overall NATO ceilings on Treaty limited equipment to take account of NATO's 1999, 2004, and presumably 2009 enlargements and the presence of American forces in new NATO nations;
- rejection of the principle of Host Nation Consent to limit Russian deployments. Russia considers the vexed troop withdrawal issues bilateral Russian-Georgian or Russian-Moldovan questions; and

- the abolition of "discriminatory" flank restrictions on Russian territory (which especially affect the volatile North Caucasus) by means of a "political decision" between NATO and Russia as necessary strategic compensation for NATO enlargement.

Given the vigor with which Putin denounced CFE in 2007, there is now a self-inflicted restriction on Russian freedom of political manoeuver, because concessions in this area could now easily be perceived as loss of face in election years.

Benefits to Russia

But without CFE, Russia would lose assured transparency over the forces of existing or future members of a much larger and militarily superior Alliance (so far, Russia has benefited one-sidedly from other countries continuing to observe their CFE commitments. While it no longer conducts any inspection or verification visits itself, it is noteworthy that as soon as the moratorium was declared, Belarus stepped up its outbound visit schedule, and Belarusian inspectors received an injection of new cash and equipment to do so. So at present, Russia enjoys all the benefits and none of the commitments of CFE—the present situation of suspended animation is, in that sense, entirely favorable.)²⁰ But, above all, without CFE, Russia would lose the security of any legal limitation over deployment levels of NATO forces into the territory of the three geopolitically crucial Baltic Republics, who are not parties to CFE and yet are so neurally close to St Petersburg and Russia's "Window on Europe."

Solutions

A range of compromises designed to save the CFE process have been ingeniously charted by Professor Jeffrey McCausland and others.²¹

Summary of Options

Option 1

Continue the current policy of seeking parallel actions by NATO members and Russia leading to a resumption of Russian CFE implementation and a move toward the Adapted CFE Treaty, with some additional inducements to Moscow , perhaps by:

- a) declaring overall lower territorial and national ceilings, with only political effect until the ACFE entered into force; or by
- b) the Baltic States, in particular, declaring their future territorial and national ceilings.

Option 2

Continue current policies while opening the Adapted CFE Treaty to amendment.

As a variant, NATO could begin to address Russian concerns over flank limitations, providing Russia showed signs of restarting its implementation of CFE and began serious treaty-related negotiations with Georgia and Moldova. NATO allies could decide to offer discussion of flank limits in the framework of the parallel actions package.

Option 3

Begin provisional application of the Adapted CFE Treaty, but with conditions.

The Alliance could provisionally apply ACFE among its ten members for, say, 18 months, in the hope of reciprocation from Russia through resumption of her implementation, and progressive satisfaction of the Istanbul Commitments.

Option 4

Cease implementing the CFE Treaty and manage a "soft landing" for the end of the CFE regime.

NATO allies could signal to Russia that they had lost confidence in the parallel actions package, or in any other potential negotiated solution. Consequently, if Russia continued its refusal to resume implementation of the existing treaty, or to negotiate over forces in Georgia and Moldova, NATO would allow the Treaty to die—perhaps without any formal ending. To soften the impact on the international landscape, this position could, however, be combined with attempts to persuade all CFE states parties to make political commitments to continue observing CFE treaty ceilings. This would of course raise the question of how long they should do so and whether these self-imposed constraints should be observed unconditionally, irrespective of the international behavior of Russia or other actors. The underlying issue would remain Russia's good faith as a partner within the European security system.²²

Near-Term Prospects

What might now realistically happen?

Previous European arms control experience, and statements by both sides, suggest that it would be unrealistic to expect ACFE to be re-examined, ratified or otherwise revived *unless* it can be incorporated into a wider U.S.-Russian rapprochement—nearly certain to be dominated by nuclear aspects, as before.

Discussion in NATO-related conferences between March and May 2011 suggested that, while this would certainly be a demanding condition, it may not be entirely impossible. In particular, a well-informed yet still optimistic diplomat in the mission of a major ally repeatedly argued that the crucial inducement would be Russia's hope of getting access to advanced U.S. Missile Defense (MD) technologies through some kind of sharing arrangement. Others suggest that the additional nuclear security advantages of getting some control over U.S. strategic systems upload potential in a further treaty would add to the incentive for Russia at least to go through the motions of reopening the process to adapt CFE.

CFE's prospects consequently depend on the Russian leadership seeing a positive outcome from entering overlapping negotiations over nuclear reductions (in both Central Strategic and Theatre Nuclear Weapons, including upload capacity and weapons in storage), Missile Defenses, and Conventional Forces in Western Eurasia. This would amount to a tentative military-technical confirmation of the long-sought Russo-American "reset."

It is presumably in recognition of these interactions that responsibility for CFE within the U.S. State Department has been transferred to Rose Gottemoeller's already impressively full State Department negotiating portfolio as assistant secretary in the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance. At the Carnegie Nuclear Conference in March 2011, Sergey Kislyak, Russia's Ambassador to the United States, stated to Mrs. Gottemoeller that Russia was open to such a multiple negotiation process addressing strategic and theatre nuclear weapons, missile defenses, and conventional forces.

If the political hurdles to setting up the negotiations could be surmounted, as these overtures tantalizingly suggest, the actual negotiating complexities would, of course, remain formidable: huge and novel verification difficulties, agreement on counting methodologies for defining balances between diverse conventional forces, or, harder still, between conventional and nuclear forces. (MBFR as a whole illustrated how long a stalemate could be maintained over relatively simple issues such as numbers of militarily identical counting units like numbers of troops or main battle tanks, while attempts by NATO to trade-off Soviet tank units for the withdrawal of American tactical nuclear weapons came to nothing.) Russia's aspiration would be towards a wide-scale multiple rebalancing with NATO. There is little public, or academic, indication of new efforts to think through the fundamental methodological problems involved. Nor is the U.S. Government signaling that believes a single arms control negotiation with complex multiple strands is a practicable way ahead with Russia.²³

Still, while exact calculations are obviously impossible, a *"good enough equivalency"* in a wide scale multiple rebalancing might be agreed as the de facto objective. And even the preliminaries to an ambitious forward-looking negotiation (or set of negotiations) of that kind could have attractions in confidence building and creation of a positive diplomatic atmosphere.

Longer Term Possibilities

At best, revival of CFE to allow ratification of ACFE would mean formal, legalistic, and short-lived transitional steps to a very slow substantive new negotiation.²⁴ Even going that far would, however, undoubtedly encounter intra-alliance difficulties, though the anxieties of flank allies might be diminished by more assured reinforcements and continuous improvement in electronics, unmanned airpower, precision weapons, and reinforcement planning. But these developments would also have to be addressed in the negotiations. An ACFE follow-on agreement would probably look very different: as much of a transformation as CFE was to MBFR. The Russian preference would be to move towards an overarching European Security Treaty (EST) and Russia has in fact already presented a draft EST treaty in November 2009, with an emphasis on participation by states not blocs.²⁵

If a new negotiation could be started, it might be possible to reach compromises on numbers and even flank limits. But it will be harder to relent on the principal of host country consent, which is integral to both the current and Adapted CFE treaties. The Adapted CFE Treaty would never have been signed if Russia had not first signed the bilateral agreements involving withdrawal from Georgia and Moldova.²⁶

There is no public indication of whatever compromises may have been formulated by the United States to coax Russia back into a conventional arms control process. But diplomatic ingenuity and high-minded fudging might offer sufficient promise within an inevitably long and complex negotiation, cross-linked with parallel high stakes U.S.-Russian nuclear and missile defense talks.

Correlations of Forces, National Strategic Cultural Judgments, and Arms Control Methodology

Certain issues raised by the situation of conventional arms control in Europe have wider implications. Part of the unpredictability of the CFE decision, and indeed wider uncertainty about Russia's future strategic intent, derives from uncertainty in understanding how others see the effects of military power outside actual warfare. Such inescapable, often implicit, judgments, constitute a key aspect of national strategic culture (*"a distinctive body of beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding the use of force... held by a collective (usually a nation) arising gradually*

over time, through a unique protracted historical process"), and differ from the abstract military-on-military calculations of the impact of arms control proposals on combat outcomes, which are complex enough in themselves.²⁷

It appears publicly difficult to acknowledge, and even more to agree upon, the wider significance of the military contribution to what Russian commentators continue to call, even after the end of sophisticated Marxist theories of conflict, *the balance* or "*Correlation*" of Forces.²⁸ Calculation of the Correlation of Forces should ideally address, in a quasi-scientific manner, all relevant strategic factors, including the political and psychological force fields generated in peacetime or incipient crisis by military power. This, again, is not identical with the predicted utility of forces in professional military calculations. (To give one recent example "*After study of the correlation (or balance) of forces and the tactical situation several years in advance of August 2008, the necessity became evident for direct military intervention if the Georgian army undertook an attack on Tskhinvali.*"²⁹

The literature of arms control does not easily capture this aspect. Formally, ACFE or its successor would solely affect the top level of Professor Joseph Nye's now famous three-dimensional 21st-century security chess board (another conceptual framework for holistic strategic calculation), which involves, successively, economic power on the next level down and NGO activities and cultural flows below that.³⁰ ACFE would limit and oversee a set-up of military counters on that top playing surface which would be deliberately and explicitly intended to make successful ground offensives harder to conduct and therefore less potentially psychologically significant. In general, Western politicians and analysts tend to doubt the utility of power constellations on the top board in radiating influence down to the other non-military political, economic, and playing surfaces, and it is not generally stressed in public statements. Even so, there is some informal acknowledgement, in the discourse of reassurance of exposed allies. A recently retired and high profile senior NATO official, for example, was well-known for his provocative repeated insistence to various audiences that "we use nuclear weapons every day,"³¹ in influencing Eurasian geopolitics to wage deterrence and assurance. Presumably, conventional force balances have analogous expected psychological effects.

Russian perceptions of the impact of military capabilities and even tenuous offensive options are neither likely to mirror-image NATO's, nor to put a lower political value on military numbers. But conventional arms control in Europe now seems to depend, in the near-term at least, on Russian conclusions about the impact of ACFE and associated negotiations on the Correlation of Forces affecting Russia's preservation as a Great Power. Decisions on entering some large-scale holistic negotiation will form part of Russia's latest iteration of its fateful national choice of either trust in or suspicion of the West.

It cannot be easy to determine the best way of inhibiting what Russia frequently denounces as relentless pressure from NATO: 800 million rich, well-armed democracy-infatuated and moralistically meddlesome citizens of a superpower and its subordinate allies—currently attacking the Libyan Regime. It is a novel and challenging historical experience for a Great Power, determined to preserve its international status, to have to deal with a security community progressively expanding, by democratic invitation, up to its borders. The Russians appear genuinely perturbed about the ultimate intentions behind the endless inventiveness of American military power. In the worst case, they indicate their fear that NATO might impose, or try continuously to threaten, "Kosovo style solutions" to future crises by "sixth generation"³² high-technology, conventional stand-off firepower, capable of decapitation attacks, backed by nuclear missiles and, in future, missile defense.³³

Little in Russia's strategic culture and political history indicates that the present Russian leadership sees their Great Power status and regime security being tidily accommodated, insulated from wider political and economic considerations, within hygienic, legally enforceable, Kantian "Euro Atlantic Security Structures," the Holy Grail of the European vision.

Instead, and, in relation to their own objectives, not necessarily stupidly, Russian decision makers are likely to see Eurasian security as a complex, continuously changing mixture of pressures, counter pressures, reciprocal inhibitions, anxieties, intimidation, accommodations, cross-border political and cultural subversion, fomented secessions, orchestrated ethnic minority discontents, externally sponsored color revolutions, self-interestedly subsidized scholarships, cyber offensive and defensive capabilities, technological threats, trade deals, energy dependencies and vulnerabilities, historical emotions, fears and resentments, intra Alliance fault lines, and mixes of inducements ranging between negotiated strategic bargains, saber-rattling manoeuvres, co-optation of decision-makers, soft loans, and straightforward bribery. This hybrid conception of security, involving endless state competition on many levels, with few clear boundaries between peace and war, is one in which the present regime feels itself profoundly threatened (as perhaps alternative politico-economic systems in Moscow might not) and required to respond with appropriate vigor. The result is that Russia is described as a "*challenging neighbor*" by small outspoken adjacent states like Estonia, who speak openly of their consequent need to "maintain and expand a system of broad-based conscription and reserve duty."³⁴

"From Russia's perspective, the region encompassing the former Soviet republics is its 'sphere of privileged

interests,' and Moscow views U.S. and Western expansion in this area as a threat."³⁵ A militarily positive Correlation of Forces, as existed in relation to Georgia in 2008, is very likely to seem positive in maintaining that sphere and countering Western, and other, threats.³⁶ But it is not easily reconcilable with the intentions of CFE.

Will Russia's difficult and probably weakening (and most certainly demographically declining) strategic hand seem best strengthened by agreeing to examine progressive merger into postmodern transparency and military predictability within an ACFE follow on system? Or would Russia maintain the best possible Correlation of Forces, which could most confidently ensure that its Near Abroad does in fact prove to be a privileged sphere of influence, by keeping itself unconstrained by treaty limits and transparencies, in order to remain (and be perceived as) more capable of launching military actions to support its national interests in that crucial geopolitical zone, as it did in 2008 against Georgia?

In reaching conclusions on these dilemmas, Russia's leaders may need significant inducements to conclude that, in the foreseeable strategic climate, the impact on the Correlation of Forces of the potential combined negotiations now on offer would be positive, (and there may be different views on that between Putin and Medvedev and their factions, or perhaps more vigorously, between civilians and military). Otherwise a paralyzed CFE will continue on life support, which will only be turned off in some way if NATO could risk the painful internal dispute.

Russia's decision over negotiation packages and possibilities, including an ACFE follow-on, will be far reaching and, publicly at least, is still in the balance. But it will not be irreversible. It should be seen as just the latest movement in the long Eurasian strategic dance stretching out into the decades to come.

Wider Issues and Global Possibilities

Current commentary and recent conferences, then, have revealed few reasons to expect a positive transformation in CFE's prospects in the near future. Nevertheless, whatever choices may emerge from Russia's strategic culture and its unique sense predicament and destiny, it is worth looking forward and outward. Nobody would want to call the CFE process mankind's last best hope, but, equally certainly, it *has* been the world's most successful attempt so far at reducing military insecurity and suspicion on a Continental scale. Secure and peaceful conditions may not have arrived throughout Eurasia (although most parts of Europe are now a security community in which resumption of historical conflicts seem inconceivable) but we should not ignore the moral and political case for assisting similar developments elsewhere.

CSBM (Confidence and Security Building Measures) arrangements in Europe are not perfect or universal, and quite evidently not eternal, nor will they necessarily prove to be the only model. But they unquestionably helped transform Europe from the Dark Continent of the early and mid-20th century to the enormously more open, prosperous and largely demilitarized space that it is today.

In Europe, with enormous assistance from the United States, and frequently positive reactions from Russia, laborious negotiations in Helsinki, Stockholm, Vienna, and elsewhere have created, since the 1970s, a benign diplomatic technology, overseeing an interlocking system of:

- Force Declarations
- Data Exchanges
- Inspections
- Discussions of military doctrines
- Notifications of maneuvers
- Overflights Permitted by an Open Skies Treaty
- Transnational military specialist communities of inspectors and observers. And crucially
- A Joint Consultative Group to take up and resolve anomalies, directly, promptly and discreetly.

This effort culminated, as we have seen, in the large-scale reductions of forces achieved by CFE, increasing stability and saving tens of millions of dollars.

This record prompts the question of how the widely internationally applauded goal of Global Zero could ever be achieved without the spread of such arrangements throughout the world. Most immediately, how realistic is it for diplomats to busy themselves debating the modalities of a Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Their Means of Delivery (MEZFWMD), with the huge problems in trust and verification that implies, if the regional states cannot even agree on how to monitor the declared location and size of an armored division?

It is, however, encouraging that the underreported Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), which is modeled on the OSCE, seems to be willing to examine many of the most positive CSBM lessons from Europe.³⁷ And it may be possible to take the model still further afield. Systematic consideration of how conventional arms control lessons from Europe might be globalized and adapted on other continents, in order to make maximum use of inexpensive new aerial surveillance technologies and to contribute to regional security and nation building, is the subject of a continuing project at the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at

the School of Oriental and African Studies in London University.³⁸ Even if baffled and frustrated in its continent of birth, the CFE vision may flourish again in unexpected and exotic regions. But if, in fact, it never does, global expectations for improved international security, far-reaching disarmament, economic growth, and prosperity will remain seriously bounded.

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NOTES

[1](#) As referenced in "[Guest post: Denmark.](#)"

[2](#) See, amongst other historical analyses, Russell J Leng, "Interstate Crisis Behaviour, 1816-1980: Realism Vs Reciprocity" Cambridge University Press, 1993.

[3](#) Robert Cooper, "[The Post Modern State and the World Order](#)"

[4](#) Cooper was not the only writer to see far-reaching significance in CFE: for example Christopher Coker: 'Post-modernity and the end of the Cold War,' Review of International Studies, July 1992.

[5](#) The Russian government often refers to CFE in similar terms, but from an evidently more state centric and "modern" perspective.

[6](#) Federation of American Scientists, "[Chronology: CFE Treaty Negotiations and Implementation, 1972-1996](#)"

[7](#) Although a skeptical France abstained from the MBFR negotiations process.

[8](#) For the authoritative account of the genesis and nemesis of CFE see Jane M. O. Sharp "Striving for Military Stability in Europe: Negotiation, implementation and adaptation of the CFE Treaty" Routledge 2006.

[9](#) For a convenient brief overview, see <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/cfe>.

[10](#) Letter of Transmittal to Congress by President William J. Clinton April 7, 1997

[11](#) For example: Ulrich Kühn "[From Capitol Hill To Istanbul: The Origins of The Current CFE Deadlock](#)" Centre for OSCE Research, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, December 2009 which argues that "The undertakings of Congress resulted in a situation in which CFE became 'hostage' to the solution of these sub-regional conflicts, thereby promoting national American agendas which were partially confrontational, at least in Moscow's perception."

[12](#) NATO, [Questions and Answers on CFE](#), May 2007., p. 2

[13](#) [North Atlantic Council statement on CFE](#) 28 May 2008

[14](#) Jacek Durkalec "The Russian Approach towards Revival of Conventional Arms Control Regime in Europe" the Polish Institute of International affairs (*PISM*) November 2010

[15](#) U.S. Department of State Condition (5) (C) Report "COMPLIANCE WITH THE TREATY ON CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE" August 2011, Page 14

[16](#) Ibid.

[17](#) These are overseen by the OSCE, and well described in http://summit2010.osce.org/en/in_focus/node/248.

[18](#) V. Socor, "[Kremlin Would Re-write Or Kill CFE Treaty](#)" by *The Jamestown Foundation*, July 18, 2007

[19](#) But this is not, in fact, strictly a CFE issue. The purposefully ambiguous term "substantial combat forces" was originally employed in the May 1997 [NATO Russia Founding Act](#). "*NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defense and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces*". In 2008 the North Atlantic Council statement on CFE promised that "*Upon agreement by NATO and Russia on the parallel actions package..., NATO and Russia will develop a definition of the term "substantial combat forces" as it is used in the NATO-Russia Founding Act*" (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-C29803BD-11807257/natolive/official_texts_8439.htm).

[20](#) Keir Giles, director of the Conflict Studies Research Centre

[21](#) Anne Witkowsky, Sherman Garnett, and Jeff McCausland "[Salvaging the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe](#)

[Treaty Regime: Options for Washington" Brookings Inst](#) March 2010

[22](#) I'm indebted for this observation to Prof David Yost.

[23](#) This was Mrs. Goettemoeller's carefully spelt-out position in a public question-and-answer session in August.

[24](#) Professor McCausland argues that the only issue at this stage is the style of CFE's funeral: sour recrimination among the mourners, or celebration of the departed and a willingness to move on more or less together into the future. Jeffrey McCausland, private communication.

[25](#) Keir Giles, Vanja Rokvic, Catharine Melvin, and Novak Pesic "Discussion Paper: Prospects for CFE—A Literature Search," Advanced Research and Assessment Group, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 2008

[26](#) Peter Perenyi "Key CFE Obstacles are Not 'Subregional'" [Arms Control Today](#), December 2009

[27](#) K Longhurst, "Germany and the Use of Force", Manchester: Manchester University Press 2004 pages 17-18

[28](#) See Richard E. Porter "[Correlation of Forces: Revolutionary Legacy](#)," Air University Review, March-April 1977.

[29](#) Anton Lavrov, [Moscow Defense Brief #2](#) (24), 2011

[30](#) [See the explication of this fashionable and useful model](#), combined with calls for more American attention to the lower playing surfaces.

[31](#) Guy Roberts, former NATO deputy assistant secretary general for Weapons of Mass Destruction Policy

[32](#) According to Russian military terminology.

[33](#) "We forecast that by 2020 Western countries will be armed with about 80,000 cruise missiles, including about 2,000 with nuclear warheads...It is clear that such arsenals are being created [not] just for exercises or intimidation. These weapons are quite capable of disarming and decapitation strikes", Russian Army General Staff Deputy Head Maj. Gen. Igor Sheremet interviewed on Ekho Moskvyy radio and reported in Global Security Newswire 31 May 2011 http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20110531_9890.php. To the extent that this view is genuinely held, and not simply projected-especially over the improbably large nuclear statistic-to support Russian diplomatic positions, it must be unclear how CFE (which does not for example apply at all to the new and explosively expanding weapons category of UAVs) or other negotiations would reduce Russian concerns about endless Western military-technical fertility.

[34](#) Interview with Mart Laar, Estonian Minister of Defence, Baltic, and Russian Affairs specialist Bruce Jones, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 6 July 2011

[35](#) Moscow, *Interfax-AVN Online*, in English, January 26, 2011, *FBIS SOV*, and January 26, 2011 indicates Defense Minister Sedyukov's open statement that Russia is continuing to build its own missile defense system.

[36](#) Steve Andreasen and Michael Gerson "Deterrence Seen through the Eyes of Other Nations" In George P. Shultz, Sidney D. Drell, James E. Goodby "Deterrence Its Past and Future," Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University Stanford, California 2011, page 107

[37](#) The political and strategic costs and distortions for Russia involved in the concept of "a privileged sphere of interests" are discussed in Dmitri Trenin, "Post Imperium—A Eurasian Story" Carnegie Endowment For International Peace 2011.

[38](#) See the website of the [Secretariat on Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia](#) (CICA).

[39](#) Center for International Studies and Diplomacy, [Confidence and Regional Security Building Process](#)

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