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"Carts and Horses"--Strategy and Arms Control for a New Europe

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The adage that one should never place the cart before the horse is as true for states and organizations as it is for people. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization faces dramatic developments as it confronts simultaneously the daunting tasks of adopting a new strategic concept, incorporating new member states, ending conflict in the Balkans, and coping with enormous difficulties in the Russian Federation. When the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) is added to the mix, the hope of completing all these efforts in the time projected may seem to some rather forlorn, especially in the absence of an agreed strategic concept to guide work on the related tasks.

In a more nearly perfect world, NATO would have sorted out its strategic thinking well before attempting another round of accessions, and would have found the means to move beyond the status quo with the Russian Federation, particularly with respect to enlarging the Alliance. A new strategic concept would have addressed and clarified, if not settled, issues related to armed interventions by Alliance states, such as in the Balkans, and would conceivably even have established a basis for revisiting the CFE Treaty in response to Russian initiatives and the problems created by enlargement. But none of this was to be, and so NATO nations face the challenge of deciding just where to hop onto this diplomatic and strategic merry-go-round.

The pressures on the Alliance to deal with the foregoing challenges as a new strategic concept is being developed are revealed most clearly in the evolution of the CFE Treaty. After a brief review of the issues and processes marked for review, this article examines changes agreed or under way in the treaty, itself a symbol of the hopes and fears of nations and international institutions regarding the role of the Russian Federation in European affairs. Other aspects of the convergence of NATO-related initiatives are analyzed and summarized.

Context

There are two fundamental processes related to European security--developing Alliance strategy and adjusting the CFE Treaty--that are both driving and being driven by other activities within the Alliance. Foremost among the latter are the enlargement of NATO, the Alliance's search for consensus on dealing with conflicts outside NATO territory, and the evolution of the Russian Federation as a regional entity and as a partner in NATO activities. With all of these matters changing simultaneously, the risk is that the outlines of each may appear to be about right, but all could be deficient in the details, particularly in how each relates to the others.

Alliance member states agreed that they would have a new strategic concept ready for the Washington Summit in April 1999 to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of NATO. This document, intended to reflect enlargement and the new realities of European security, will be significantly different from the one that guided NATO throughout the Cold War (MC14/3) and from the strategic concept that was adopted at the Rome Summit in 1991. During its 1998 debate on enlargement, the US Senate took particular note of the strategy development process, and stated its views clearly in the resolution that endorsed the change to the existing NATO treaty that allowed new member states to join. The Senate underscored the fact that NATO remained a military alliance based on collective defense, promoted American vital interests, and must serve in the future to consider new emerging threats beyond its borders. Congress also required the President to report on the new strategic concept, describing proposed changes to NATO strategy, within 180 days of the passage of this particular resolution.[1]

A new strategic concept for NATO will inevitably describe an environment in which the defense of territory, the fundamental concern during the Cold War, has been replaced by the defense of common interests and values. Some experts have described this as a shift from an "alliance of necessity" (under the threat of Soviet attack) to an "alliance

of choice." If this is true, future operations could be much more ad hoc and include nonmember states as well as Alliance members.[2]

The new strategic concept must also define NATO's role in words that retain collective defense as a core Alliance requirement, a concept that will affect relations between the United States and its European partners. The changed nature of the security landscape and the demise of the Soviet Union demand that the future relationship between NATO and the Russian Federation be considered at every step in this process of strategic reappraisals. The ongoing strategic dialog includes collective defense and additional missions for the Alliance that should include deterrence and crisis management, NATO operations with or without a mandate from the UN or from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, cooperative security relationships with Russia, and NATO enlargement now and in the future.

Besides starting a quest for a new statement of purpose, the 1997 Madrid Summit also launched NATO on its most significant membership expansion. It is useful to recall that NATO enlargement is not an objective of Western security; NATO's purpose is to improve European security in general and to establish a basis for future stability in Central and Eastern Europe. Enlargement is seen as a method, a way to achieve an objective of far greater value than merely increasing the number of nations formally enrolled in the Alliance. While this may strike some as a matter of semantics, it underscores the fact that enlargement is a continuing process, one that started with the invitations to Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland, and is far from completed. Thus the April 1999 NATO Summit will end discussion of the entry of these particular states into the Alliance, but it will be only the beginning of two other difficult tasks: transforming them into effective members and deciding which states will be in the second group invited to join.[3]

Insofar as the CFE Treaty is concerned, the West has demonstrated repeatedly that "Russia-handling," as it's called, is of great importance during enlargement and the development of strategy, and there have been many attempts to assuage Moscow's concerns about the growth of the Alliance and the prospect of operations outside NATO territory. The Founding Act signed between Russia and the Alliance in May 1997 was an essential part of this effort. It provided for consultations, cooperation, possible joint action, and a NATO-Russia Council, but so far it has not been successful in solving disagreements such as the crisis in Kosovo. Western policymakers have described enlargement as non-threatening, but most (if not all) Russian leaders disagree.[4]

Various concepts have been proposed to give substance to the desire for cooperation with Russia--one is a mixed NATO-Russia military brigade--that would build upon the experience of combined military operations in the former Yugoslavia. But Russian fears about NATO enlargement will likely require radical revisions of the CFE Treaty. From the Russian perspective the treaty provides legal assurances about the size and deployment of NATO forces; those assurances are key assumptions in Russian appraisals of regional security. Consequently, while adjustments to the CFE Treaty are warranted by the dramatic changes that have occurred in Europe since its signing, the enlargement process has added new dimensions to Russian strategic assessments. The expected review of the CFE Treaty will include the initial proposals of the West and the Russian Federation as well as the July 1997 agreement on basic elements for a revised treaty.[5]

It would of course be preferable to have an agreed Alliance strategy to help define political interests and appropriate policies for enlargement, military operations outside Alliance territory, and relations with Russia, but the cart is truly before the horse in this work in progress. It remains to be seen whether assembling the parts of the puzzle in the absence of a unifying (strategic) concept will do NATO more harm than good. The first place to start that appraisal is with the CFE Treaty itself.

The Treaty in Perspective

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, signed in November 1990, limits the number of tanks, artillery, armored combat vehicles, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters--known collectively as treaty-limited equipment (TLE)--in an area stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains. Bloc limitations for NATO and the former Warsaw Pact were further circumscribed by a series of geographic zones. Subsequent national limits for each treaty signatory were determined before the demise of the Warsaw Pact in negotiations among the members of the two

organizations. The successor states of the Soviet Union (within the area of application) met in Tashkent in May 1992 and determined their respective limits from the total allocated to the Soviet Union.

Though the agreement was signed in November 1990, implementation was delayed by the end of the Warsaw Pact, the demise of the Soviet Union, and problems associated with Soviet treaty-limited equipment. The USSR had moved a sizable amount (roughly 14,000 items) of such equipment east of the Ural Mountains (outside of the area of application) and transferred other equipment to its naval infantry and coastal defense forces during the final year of negotiation. This caused serious disquiet among many Western states, as they argued Moscow had failed to negotiate in good faith in the period immediately preceding the actual signing of the treaty. Implementation began in November 1992 with the signing of two additional protocols covering this equipment movement and ratification by the final two states, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Despite this delay, by November 1995 (the end of the implementation period) more than 58,000 pieces of TLE had been destroyed and approximately 2700 inspections conducted to insure compliance.[6] The Russian Federation had the greatest burden of destruction, roughly 20 percent of this total.

Curiously, the CFE Treaty has produced unanticipated benefits. Some contend that inspections may have contributed more to reducing tensions during this transitional period than the actual reductions. For example, under the terms of the agreement, short-notice inspections were conducted of US forces in Germany as they were preparing for deployment to the former Yugoslavia in 1995. Furthermore, though the stated purpose of the agreement was to reduce the possibility of short-warning conventional attacks, the treaty proved particularly valuable in assuaging concerns about German unification and in facilitating the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe. The treaty has also been adapted to political changes besides the reunification of Germany and collapse of the Soviet Union. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were removed from the CFE area of application on 18 October 1991, once they regained their independence, and the Czech and Slovak Republics agreed on respective limitations as part of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia on 12 January 1993. The greatest value of the agreement may be the entire CFE "system" that provides a forum for the major European states to establish, discuss, and maintain a set of rules about conventional military power on the continent.[7]

Full and final compliance with the CFE Treaty was, however, endangered in late 1995 by Russian insistence that it could not comply with the limits on its forces in the "flank zone," which includes both the Leningrad and North Caucasus military districts. As the 17 November 1995 deadline for full implementation approached, it became clear that Russia would comply with its overall national limit, but not the flank requirement. In the waning moments, the 30 parties agreed to resolve this problem as quickly as possible based on specific agreed principles, thereby precluding the possibility of having to declare the Russian Federation in "non-compliance." A final compromise was achieved at the initial Review Conference (May 1996) that permitted Russia higher force levels in the flank zone, extended the period of time allowed to meet these adjusted levels until May 1999, and reduced the overall size of the flank zone.[8] The US Senate subsequently ratified this compromise in May 1997.

The West indicated its willingness to consider further adjustments to the treaty at the May 1996 Review Conference in Vienna. This intent was reiterated by then-Secretary of State Warren Christopher in a speech entitled "A New Atlantic Community for the 21st Century," delivered in Germany early in September 1996. In his address Secretary Christopher stated that the United States fully supported a policy of "launching negotiations to adapt the CFE Treaty to Europe's new security landscape." A formal decision to start adjustment discussions in the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) in Vienna was adopted at the Lisbon Summit of the OSCE in December 1996, and the parties agreed to a document covering the scope and parameters of the negotiations. The actual discussions began in Vienna early in 1997.

Treaty Adaptation

From the onset the NATO states agreed that CFE adaptation could make a useful contribution to the consolidation of European security if it met the following objectives:

- assuage to some degree Russian concerns about NATO enlargement
- consider how adjustments would affect relations between NATO and new members
- reflect security concerns of East and Central European states not admitted (this applies particularly to the Baltic states and Ukraine)

enhance Alliance cohesion while fostering public support for enlargement

NATO members repeated the notion that the original CFE mandate sought a stable balance at lower numerical levels of conventional forces and the elimination of the capability for launching surprise conventional attacks. The Review Conference final communiqué in May 1996 noted the achievement of these objectives and suggested that the focus should become that of cementing these gains and building upon them. Furthermore, it seemed obvious as the JCG began its discussions that political goals would now have greater salience than the military objectives that had been the basis for the original negotiations.

NATO countries have agreed that four essential aspects of the extant agreement must be maintained:

- ceilings on the five categories of TLE
- the inspection regime
- regular information exchange between treaty signatories
- a treaty structure that allows for political change

Alliance countries also have accepted the need for progress in these discussions to parallel the NATO enlargement process, though they steadfastly oppose any artificial deadlines or direct linkage between the two.

In February 1997 NATO presented an initial proposal to adjust the treaty to reflect the dramatic changes in East and Central Europe since the treaty was adopted in 1990. NATO proposed replacing the existing concept of bloc-to-bloc and zone limits on TLE with "national" and "territorial" limits. This acknowledges that one of the original groups (the Warsaw Pact) had disappeared; it also takes into account the emerging European security architecture. Every country would declare its "national limits" for each equipment category at or below the level of its current entitlement. It also would be allowed "stationed forces" (the forces of another country on its soil), but the total of a nation's own equipment plus permanently stationed hardware could not exceed its "territorial" ceiling. As with current zone limits, these stationed forces restrictions would apply only to the three categories of ground equipment (tanks, artillery, and armored combat vehicles).

Each state also would have a maximum entitlement for air systems, but there would be no territorial limit on the number of attack helicopters or combat aircraft that NATO could place on the territory of new members. This obviously buttressed the arguments of military planners concerned about the Alliance's ability to capitalize on the rapid mobility of aerial weapon systems in order to provide the collective defense guarantee if required. Finally, all signatories would have to agree that the declared national and territorial levels were acceptable before they would be codified in an adjusted treaty.

This series of proposals implies that each state would certify its willingness to allow existing stationed forces on its territory, which has a potential effect on the United States, the Russian Federation, and others. US forces (primarily in Germany) are allowed under the current treaty text based on the United States receiving entitlement as a treaty signatory. It is logical to believe that an adjusted treaty text would specify national totals for each signatory, including the United States, though those countries where American forces are stationed would have to acquiesce. It is also important to consider that NATO forces (including American) are currently not allowed to be stationed in the territory of the former German Democratic Republic as part of the "Two Plus Four" agreement that resulted in German reunification. In similar fashion the Russian Federation would have to receive endorsements from Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine to continue stationing forces in those countries.

The replacement of the existing Cold War-based treaty zones with national and territorial ceilings would adjust the treaty in a fashion consistent with the emerging security landscape. One of the inherent problems with the arms control tool in post-Cold War strategy is that it has traditionally been used as a means to reduce tensions between current or potential antagonists. Arms control, almost by its nature, is confrontational; between allied states (for example, the United States and Canada) it makes little more sense than an arms control proposal between states engaged in open conflict. If, however, the new treaty structure rests on concepts of "cooperative security," in which the primary threat is instability instead of national rivalry, then this proposal would create 30 separate "zones" and would seem more appropriate to current and prospective strategic challenges.

The NATO proposal also included a clear definition of so-called "temporary deployments" for exercises and recommended a new stabilizing zone that encompasses the Visegrad Four (Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia), the Kaliningrad military district in the Russian Federation, Belarus, and western Ukraine. Greater restrictions would apply for "stationed forces" in this area: territorial ceilings for ground equipment could not be set any higher than current national maximum levels; additional information would be provided on stationed forces or temporary deployments in the zone; and special inspection quotas would apply to certain sites.

Finally, the Western proposal recognized that adding an "accession clause" to allow other European states to enter the CFE regime was appropriate. If adopted, such a proposal could have positive ramifications for both the Baltic and Balkan regions. For while the departure of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia from the treaty was primarily an issue of sovereignty, Baltic leaders have argued that they were neither signatories to the original agreement nor successor states to the Soviet Union. Consequently, they were unwilling to participate in the Tashkent Conference that negotiated residual national ceilings from the entitlements of the USSR. It seems logical that entry into the CFE regime now would underscore their sovereignty, offer additional security reassurances, and be viewed as a prerequisite to future entry into NATO.

As regards the Balkans, the December 1995 General Framework Agreement on Peace for Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Dayton Peace Accords) called for confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) and force reductions which mirror the CFE agreement. These treaties were signed in the spring of 1996 and implemented over a period of roughly 18 months. This portion of the Dayton Agreement also calls for future sub-regional discussions with the goal of establishing a regional balance in and around the former Yugoslavia. A mandate for these negotiations, proposed in mid-1998, included not only the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Greece, Hungary, Italy, Germany, the United States, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Romania, Turkey, Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, and Slovenia.[9] A CFE accession clause would offer signatories to the Bosnian peace accords the opportunity to enter the CFE regime along with those countries participating in these discussions, such as Bulgaria, that are already members of the treaty regime.

NATO has also proposed lower equipment entitlements throughout the area of application, and made a commitment that the total of Alliance ground equipment entitlements under an adjusted treaty will be less than what NATO members are currently allowed. The Alliance has attempted throughout these discussions and elsewhere to emphasize the view that NATO poses no threat to the Russian Federation. Despite this fact, many Russian leaders continue to view NATO with undiminished suspicion, especially in light of enlargement. Consequently, a reduction in NATO entitlements would diminish not only the disparity between NATO and Russian forces (currently greater than two-to-one in some categories) but also serve to reduce lingering security anxieties. If this occurs, a large portion of the reductions would likely be from American TLE entitlements. This would bring the US entitlements closer to what is actually present on the continent (see Figure 1) and require little actual destruction of equipment.

<i>TLE</i>	<i>Current Holdings</i>	<i>Entitlements</i>
Tanks	927	4006
Artillery	497	2742
Armored Combat Vehicles	1809	5152
Helicopters	138	407
Combat Aircraft	218	784

Source: C. Dorn Crawford, "Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)--Key Treaty Elements Supplement" (Washington: US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, January 1998, pp. 9-13.

Figure 1. US holdings reported at the annual information

exchange (1 January 1998) and overall entitlements.

Alliance members also agree on two other issues. First, they seek verification enhancements and an improved flow of information to all signatories. These must include changes to the allocation of inspection quotas related to the elimination of the group structure. NATO countries agreed in 1989 and 1990, during their initial negotiations to establish national holdings, that there was no need for one NATO country to inspect another. Since the demise of the Warsaw Pact, however, its former members have frequently requested so-called "East-on-East" inspections. This has reduced the available inspection quotas for NATO countries, and several eastern states (most notably the Russian Federation) have complained that the resulting schedule of inspections is especially burdensome. Second, the negotiations to achieve a compromise over Russian force levels in the flank zone were both difficult and divisive. Consequently, all NATO members agreed that this issue should not be reopened in the adjustment discussions until at least 1999, by which time Russia would have complied with the adjusted flank totals.

The initial NATO proposal for revising the CFE Treaty responded to Russian fears in several respects. The first was to prevent the Alliance from dramatically expanding its own collective arsenal with weapon systems from new members. The second acknowledged that the proposed stabilizing zone, coupled with the system of national and territorial ceilings, would preclude force concentrations that might be deemed destabilizing. Furthermore, an adjusted treaty consistent with this proposal would not engender significant supplemental costs because of the modest requirement to destroy additional equipment. Finally, relatively minor adjustments to the verification regime would help to ensure that there would be few opportunities to cheat or advantages in doing so.

The Russian Position

Moscow presented its ideas for CFE modification during the May 1996 Review Conference, and Russian officials complained throughout the remainder of 1996 that NATO's failure to respond suggested a lack of political willingness in the West.[10] Moscow's recommendations at the Review Conference included, among other things, a shift toward national ceilings and an accession clause for new members. A formal Russian proposal was presented in March 1997 to the Joint Consultative Group which reflected many of Moscow's preliminary thoughts and demonstrated areas of agreement with what NATO had presented. For example, Russia continued its support for shifting from group to national totals, the addition of an accession clause, and elimination of separate counting rules for equipment placed in storage.

The Russian proposal also included several areas that were counter to the basic concerns of NATO members:

- limits on stationed forces that would largely preclude the Alliance from placing any equipment on the territory of new members
- elimination of the flank zone
- exemptions for equipment assigned to forces involved in so-called "peacekeeping operations" (Chechnya, for instance)
- an "alliance sufficiency rule" that would place a limit on the total TLE any alliance could have

Russian negotiators also suggested the addition of new pieces of equipment to the combat aircraft category (such as electronic warfare, refueling, and transport aircraft) and limitations on improvements to such infrastructure as airfields, harbors, and railways.

In the presentation of their proposals Russian officials argued that the full implementation of the treaty and the demise of the Warsaw Pact resulted in an asymmetrical force balance. Consequently, they asserted that an alliance sufficiency rule and restraints on stationed forces on new members' territories were appropriate. Moscow maintained that under the existing treaty (and subsequent Tashkent negotiations) Russia was allowed the TLE depicted below in Figure 2 (as compared to NATO), and that this disparity would grow following the Alliance enlargement.

The Russian analysis, however, is flawed in several ways. First, NATO is not a party to or signatory of the CFE Treaty. Certainly the Alliance has been involved in the negotiation and implementation of the agreement in several respects and is mentioned a number of times in the actual treaty text. But the treaty is still based on negotiations among 30 sovereign states. Second, actual force comparisons are based on a Cold War environment. This is no longer

accurate, a point that is clearly stated in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act. Russia is also a member of the Partnership for Peace (PfP), and the NATO-Russia Council was established to provide Moscow a voice (but no veto) over European security issues. Third, NATO stated in its proposal and in the Founding Act that it sought lower force levels as an objective in the adjustment discussions.

Fourth, as can be clearly seen in Figure 2 below, NATO currently maintains force levels that are far below its entitlements in every TLE category. It is certainly true that the total entitlement for all NATO members would increase with the addition of new members, but the sum of the current holdings of NATO members plus the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary would still be far below the entitlement for the membership as it exists prior to enlargement. It is also difficult to imagine NATO countries expanding their arsenals so actual holdings more closely approximate their entitlements given current economic conditions and budgetary pressures.

<i>TLE</i>	<i>Russian Federation</i>	<i>NATO</i>	<i>NATO(+)</i>
Tanks	6400 \ 5693	20,000 \ 13,591	23,522 \ 17,101
Artillery	6415 \ 6128	20,000 \ 13,439	23,217 \ 16,626
ACVs	11,480 \ 10,299	30,000 \ 21,344	35,217 \ 25,338
Helicopters	890 \ 805	2000 \ 1194	2288 \ 1394
Aircraft	3416 \ 2868	6800 \ 4118	7670 \ 4684
The initial number is the full entitlement. The second number indicates actual holdings as of 1 January 1998. "NATO(+)" refers to the Alliance with the addition of Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary.			
Source: C. Dorn Crawford, "Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)--Key Treaty Elements Supplement" (Washington: US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, January 1998, pp. 9-13.			

Figure 2. Comparison of Russian and NATO Force Levels.

Fifth, Russia currently maintains fewer forces than it is allowed under the ceilings established for each category of equipment. Furthermore, the treaty applies only to Russian forces west of the Ural Mountains and has no bearing on forces positioned in the east. Consequently, Russia can (if it desires) expand its forces significantly within the limitations of the agreement. Finally, Russian spokesmen are quick to portray their position as totally isolated in comparison to a NATO of 16 and soon 19 states. This ignores the close relations that exist between the Russian Federation and Belarus, plus the sizable CFE force entitlement for the Belarussian army.

On 23 July 1997, in fulfillment of a requirement in the military portion of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the 30 states involved in the adaptation negotiations announced a decision on certain basic elements for treaty adaptation (referred to as the "Basic Elements Document" or BED).[11] In this document all parties agreed that the original bloc-to-bloc structure of the agreement was outmoded and should be replaced by national limits for all categories of treaty-limited equipment. They further concluded that:

- National ceilings for each country should not exceed its existing allocations.
- Rules governing equipment in storage must be changed.
- Stabilizing measures were required to preclude force concentrations.
- Each state should adopt a territorial ceiling that equaled the total of national and stationed forces.
- Rules governing "temporary deployments" must be clarified.
- An accession clause should be added to the treaty.

Most NATO countries also indicated a willingness to take at least a five-percent reduction in current entitlements.

There can be no doubt that this was a significant development. Still, it was clearly "a lowest common denominator" agreement based on the initial positions previously discussed, and it was timed to occur at approximately the same moment as the Madrid Summit to demonstrate Alliance efforts to acknowledge Russian security concerns. But the July 1997 Basic Elements Document still left many important issues unresolved and suggested that a final adjusted treaty would require difficult negotiations. All sides had already indicated their willingness to move to national totals and to constrain stationed forces by using an additional territorial limit that would be the sum of national and stationed forces. NATO and Russia had both also proposed the addition of an accession clause for other countries. The remaining areas of the BED simply underscored those things that remained to be clarified in an adjusted treaty--such as rules for temporary deployments, stabilizing measures, and new rules for equipment in storage--and many of these were particularly contentious.

Some Western observers argued that the BED showed the willingness of the Russian Federation to drop its insistence on an "alliance sufficiency rule" and accept several other aspects of NATO's original proposal. Some experts even suggested that achieving a framework agreement by the Copenhagen OSCE Summit (in December 1997) was feasible. Moscow, however, was far more cautious in response to the BED than the West,[12] and it is still unclear whether Moscow ever considered the Basic Elements Document "inclusive or exclusive." The OSCE meeting came and passed without resolution, so it was reasonable to believe that Russian negotiators accepted the areas described in the BED as essential for the adjusted treaty text. But they have not totally forsaken other issues, such as an alliance sufficiency rule, removal of the flank limitations, expanding the definition of "combat aircraft," and limits on the deployment of NATO forces on the territory of new members. While Moscow embraced the need for stabilizing measures, it steadfastly rejected the NATO proposed "stabilizing zone" that would place special limits on another portion of the Russian Federation (in this case Kaliningrad) not unlike those applied to the flank zone.

1998--A Period of Alliance Introspection

As talks in Vienna on the CFE Treaty passed their first anniversary in early 1998, it became clear that NATO had a serious problem defining what its member states considered appropriate operational flexibility in temporary deployments. This matter was important because NATO had stated it had no immediate intention or need to deploy forces permanently on the territory of new member states. The NATO announcement had clear implications for carrying out its new strategic concept, for absent stationed forces, temporary deployment would be the only mechanism that would allow policymakers in times of crisis to legally position ground forces in Hungary, Poland, or the Czech Republic, whether to prevent conflict or to conduct collective defense.

Discussions in the spring and early summer of 1998 revealed not only disagreements among members related to negotiating tactics but also serious differences in strategic thinking. American military officials sought a level of temporary deployments at approximately two divisions, insisting that this could occur absent a mandate from either the United Nations or OSCE. They argued that this position was necessary to allow NATO to undertake preventive or deterrent deployments without violating the treaty. Many European officials (led by Germany) argued that this level of forces was too high and would be destabilizing. These same officials professed to believe that any effort involving NATO in collective security or peace support operations, such as in Bosnia, would require an OSCE or UN mandate.

As time progressed it became clear that Europeans believed improved stability was derived from reduced operational flexibility, while Americans believed the opposite: that the maintenance of operational flexibility provided the possibility for greater security. Furthermore, many Europeans were openly disturbed by the fact that the United States would be allowed to take unilateral military action on the European continent without first requiring an endorsement by other Alliance members or a mandate from the UN or the OSCE. Finally, some observers worried that while temporary deployments might provide reassurance to new NATO countries in Central Europe, they could potentially be used by the Russian Federation to assert greater control over states on its own borders, particularly in the North Caucasus region.

These obvious differences in strategic perspective between the United States and its European allies accentuate the challenge to achieve unity not only in arms control but also in the new NATO strategic concept. There can be little doubt that the United States will seek to insure that the strategic concept describes: a strong US presence and leadership in Europe; NATO as the ultimate guarantor of European security; collective defense through deterrence,

crisis management, and possible reinforcement; possible expanded missions, particularly due to peace support requirements with or without a mandate; and operational and strategic flexibility.

NATO finally was able to agree to a package of force flexibilities largely along the lines of what Washington had proposed. It also included provisions that if a temporary deployment exceeded certain levels, a conference of the treaty signatories would be convened, at which time the states involved would explain the rationale for the exceptional circumstances that required this action. This proposal was provided to all the Joint Consultative Group participants shortly before recess in July 1998. While this document had the support of all NATO states, roughly six months had transpired during which little of true substance actually occurred in Vienna. Furthermore, it became clear that it would be extremely difficult to reach closure on an adapted treaty or even on a framework agreement prior to the Washington Summit in April 1999 while maintaining an implicit balance between enlargement and "Russia handling."

Prospects

Arms control negotiations do not occur in a vacuum; they are affected by other aspects of international relations, sometimes even by domestic events. Consequently, several related issues may affect discussions of a revision to the CFE Treaty. From the onset some treaty signatories have harbored resentment over the manner in which the flank problem was resolved at the CFE Review Conference in May 1996. Many Europeans and others believed the United States became frustrated with NATO's inability to achieve consensus on a compromise and conducted bilateral negotiations with Russia in search of resolution. The resulting agreement was then forced on the Alliance and other signatories.[13] Consequently, there is concern in Europe that Washington might adopt this approach again if progress stalls in the CFE Treaty adjustment negotiations.

Continuing economic and political turmoil in the Russian Federation may make it difficult for Moscow to agree internally on an adapted CFE Treaty. It would appear logical that Russia cannot afford to maintain the level of forces it now has and may not need forces of this size for its security. Many studies, even before the recent downturn in the economy, have reported the poor state of Russian military forces. Russian military and civilian leaders have urged military reform for the past several years that included a significant reduction in force totals, but to little avail.[14] Consequently, an agreement that would allow Russia to be reassured that additional force reductions were not inimical to its security would seem appropriate. The continuing economic crisis, the weakened state of President Yeltsin (both physically and politically), the mid-1998 move of Primakov from the Foreign Ministry to the Prime Minister's office, and the serious decline in the general state of the army make it increasingly problematical that Moscow can truly find a policy it deems appropriate. Even if the Yeltsin government was able to produce one, ratification of an adapted CFE Treaty could face serious opposition in the Duma.

Russia might look to other policy options should an adapted treaty not be concluded by April 1999. Under one scenario Moscow might announce that enlargement had created a new situation, and the treaty was no longer applicable or legally binding. Russian leaders also could argue that they considered the agreement to be politically important, and would make a "political commitment" to observe most parts of it while ignoring others, most notably the flank restrictions. Russia also could call for an "extraordinary conference," allowed under the current agreement, in order to assert its position and make demands. Finally, Moscow could consider withdrawing from the treaty altogether.

Two other aspects may also affect the calculus in Moscow. First, Russia is still required under the adjusted flank agreement reached at the Review Conference in May 1996 to reduce its forces in the Leningrad and North Caucasus military districts by May 1999. So far there have been only marginal reductions, and this could become a major stumbling block as the deadline approaches. The failure of the Russian Federation to meet these force levels could result in Moscow being in noncompliance. Second, while Russian leaders realized their opposition to enlargement had failed to forestall it, they may well believe that preventing a so-called "second tranche" of NATO enlargement that could potentially include some or all of the Baltic states is Russia's most important objective in the coming year. As a result, concluding an adapted treaty prior to the Washington Summit might be considered poor strategy.

While these observations may appear pessimistic, some European experts take a more optimistic view. They believe that the general outline of an agreement between Russia and the West has taken form and that concerted action between now and the spring of 1999 could yield success. They believe that the central issue for Moscow is the removal

or at least the loosening of the flank limits. Consequently, Russia might be willing to accept Western proposals on matters such as temporary deployments and national and territorial ceilings if the flank restrictions were lifted or reduced. While this may appear to be a "quid pro quo," it presupposes that NATO states in the flank areas (most notably Turkey and Norway) and other countries (Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) would concur. Azerbaijan, for example, has raised repeated objections since its independence from the Soviet Union to the presence of Russian forces in the North Caucasus (Georgia and Armenia). In the past the Azeris have often accused Moscow of providing arms to Armenia without announcing such transfers in accordance with existing rules on data exchanges. Turkish leaders are also concerned that concessions to Moscow are a green light to deploy more forces in the Caucasus in exchange for certain concessions in Central Europe.[15]

The Federal Republic of Germany also has recently completed national elections that could fundamentally alter German security policy. The election of Gerhard Schroeder as the new Chancellor and the departure of Helmut Kohl after 16 years in office came as somewhat of a surprise to many policymakers. Schroeder's governing coalition--it includes his own Social Democratic Party (SPD) as well as the Greens--will be a dramatic change for Bonn and all of Europe. Though foreign policy issues played very little role during this campaign, it is highly likely that the new German government will not be able to respond quickly to many issues, not the least of which are the ongoing adaptation negotiations. This will be particularly true with Joschka Fischer (head of the Green Party) as Foreign Minister.[16]

There are further indications that problems in the US-German relationship could arise in the near term. Mr. Schroeder's initial pronouncements as Chancellor reiterated the belief of many European leaders that the use of force in Europe in future required a UN or OSCE imprimatur, and his suggestion that NATO should renounce the first use of nuclear weapons was immediately rejected by Washington. Furthermore, it is likely that the Schroeder government will continue to reduce defense spending in order to maintain the budgetary requirements of the Euro. These potential policy shifts could be caused by several factors: possible future economic difficulties in Germany due to the crisis in Russia and elsewhere, significant deficit spending by the Kohl government to create jobs in the period immediately preceding the elections, and the stated intent of the SPD to reinstate even the modest cuts in social programs enacted by the Kohl government in the last few years.

Finally, time itself could become an issue. Though as previously mentioned there is no direct link between adjusting the CFE Treaty and NATO enlargement, achieving agreement on CFE adjustments at roughly the same pace as the actual entry of new states into the Alliance in April 1999 is certainly a goal. Secretary of State Madeline Albright noted in her remarks at the OSCE in early September 1998:

Our nations must also make steady progress towards completing the adaptation of the CFE Treaty. This week in Moscow, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin highlighted the importance of this goal. They affirmed the importance of full compliance with existing CFE obligations until the adapted treaty takes effect We should seek to record significant progress by the Oslo Ministerial this December, and we should make signature of an adapted treaty a centerpiece of the 1999 OSCE Summit.

Such hopes have been raised before, but to little avail. Many Western officials had hoped in early 1997 that the framework of an adjusted CFE Treaty could be in place prior to the Madrid Summit. This did not occur due largely to intense efforts to resolve many outstanding issues surrounding the NATO-Russia Founding Act. The Russian Federation did make significant concessions from its initial position for the Founding Act, but some experts believe that the act would not have been concluded had the Russians not seen CFE adjustment as the final escape hatch for any demands related to the Founding Act that were not satisfied.

Implications

NATO enlargement is a way to improve European security, not an objective in isolation. In this context the effort to adjust the CFE Treaty is simply a policy tool in this overall process and not a panacea. While it certainly would have been preferable to have the strategy "horse" clearly in front of the policy "cart," circumstances dictated otherwise. Many of the seemingly tactical disagreements that have colored the intra-Alliance discussions during the negotiations suggest issues that must be addressed in the new strategic concept. Consequently, it is important for the Alliance to

consider the role of arms control in its revised strategy while remembering that it remains only one means for enhancing security.

Renewed interest in a revised CFE Treaty is not based solely on Western altruism, since NATO remains in a position of military strength in the region. It is, rather, based on the view that the foundations of European security have been inextricably altered. The NATO communiqué from the Brussels Summit in January 1994 announcing NATO enlargement clearly suggested this goal:

We expect and would welcome NATO expansion that would reach to democratic states to our East, as part of an evolutionary process, taking into account political and security developments in the whole.[17]

The efforts described in the NATO proposal and 1997 Basic Elements Document for adjusting the CFE Treaty move the process in the direction of an adjusted security architecture. They further reflect the requirements of assuaging Russian concerns, considering relations with new members, reflecting the fears of those states not offered admission, and enhancing Alliance cohesion.

Adjusting the CFE Treaty is essential to reducing Moscow's concerns over NATO enlargement and may also enhance the chances for serious Russian military reform. It would be a serious error to interpret Moscow's acceptance of the NATO-Russia Founding Act as support for NATO enlargement. Russian elites remain firmly opposed to enlargement, and turmoil in the Russian Federation provides opportunities for those seeking power to blame Russia's ills on external forces. It remains to be seen whether populist leaders in the Russian Federation, to gain electoral support, will continue to trumpet their opposition to the nexus defined by NATO enlargement, Russian military reform, and adjustment of the CFE Treaty. An adjusted CFE Treaty can offer greater security not only for Russia but also for all signatories if handled properly. Treaty revisions that consider these vital concerns must be accompanied by a coordinated effort to breathe greater life into the NATO-Russia Founding Act as well as the agreement between the Alliance and Ukraine.

While this process seeks to create a greater sense of cooperative security on the continent, the system in place to reach that goal has become increasingly more complex. Negotiations in 1989 and 1990 were essentially between the two alliances; discussions today underscore the new reality of 30 truly sovereign states at the table. The fears of new NATO member states (the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary) must also be considered; these countries must feel that they are entering NATO as full and not second-class members. Consequently, the Alliance must be steadfast in protecting the right to station forces on their territory (at least for exercise purposes) while underscoring the fact that the West sees no need for the permanent stationing of a large number of forces in those countries. It is important, however, to remind these states that while the collective defense guarantee is still an essential part of the Alliance, the NATO of 1999 is far different from the NATO of 1987. CFE Treaty adjustment in concert with other efforts (i.e., an enhanced Partnership for Peace program) will help to reshape NATO as it considers new problems of conflict prevention and cooperative security.

If an adapted CFE Treaty is to be accepted and make a contribution to security issues in Europe, it must find support among states that have not sought or been offered NATO membership as well as states currently outside the regime. Obviously, the support of those states will be based on their calculations of how well an adapted treaty improves their individual security. The possibility of acceding to the CFE Treaty will not only provide modest security assurances for the Baltic states (and potentially the Balkans) but must be considered an essential preliminary step toward eventually joining NATO. Both these groups will benefit from the move toward national totals, which makes every country a "zone" and thereby reduces the possibility of large-scale force concentrations in one state threatening a neighbor. This outcome must be coupled with a mechanism to handle the thorny issue of "stationed forces," as many of the former members of the Soviet Union fear any legal basis for the potential (or continuing) presence of Russian troops on their territory. Furthermore, enhanced transparency measures and data exchanges will further the security of all.

Ultimately the effort to determine a new strategic concept for NATO must answer the key question: What is the purpose of the Alliance? Despite shared values and interests, alliances historically have not been able to maintain unity absent an external threat. NATO enlargement and adaptation of the CFE Treaty may solve the strategic problem of northern and central Europe by bringing stability to the region between Germany and Russia. NATO may find that its future mission is to extend that region of stability to the southern and eastern Mediterranean.[18] This will require

careful consideration of the role that arms control plays in future strategy, including an examination of how to use agreements that now exist--Open Skies, Vienna Document, Waasenaar Accord, and others--in addition to the CFE Treaty.

Alliance cohesion in this effort is both a prerequisite and an objective. Despite intra-Alliance disagreements that characterized most of 1998, NATO has shown surprising solidarity in the initial phase of the negotiations and creation of a NATO-agreed position on the CFE Treaty. It is less certain that this cohesion will endure the pace of the negotiations, which will intensify as external issues press upon policymakers. Ultimately, the success of this process can be measured only in how well NATO satisfies conflicting requirements and sets a course for the future.

NOTES

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