

“Developing a New Approach to Conventional Arms Control”

Vienna, 4 March 2013

Landesverteidigungsakademie

Contribution by Mr. Paul Schulte in Panel 2: Future Conventional Arms Control in Europe

Introduction

I should point out in what follows that I do not speak for HMG or any other government or institution, and that I have never worked in the OSCE. I shall, nevertheless, offer an additional diagnosis of the current stalemate and suggest 3 options for the OSCE to respond to it, with varying degrees of ambition:

Option A: sponsoring consultations on future military balances and doctrines;

Option B: initiating discussions on a replacement agreement or series of agreements for CFE (and ACFE);

Option C: concentrating on resolving, mitigating or managing frozen conflicts with political prioritisation and arms-control options.

Background Realities

Simmering sub regional tensions remain, which could erupt into local conflicts (and we have heard echoes of them in various interventions today) Frozen Conflicts obviously demand continuing political attention. But there is no current risk of major war in Europe. Explanations for this historically unusual state of affairs include the end of ideological dispute, the background inhibiting influence of nuclear weapons, the CFE's success in reducing military equipment available for surprise attack (notably its famous, and justly trumpeted, destruction of 72,000 pieces of Treaty Limited Equipment.) Since the end of the Cold War, prolonged and progressive military build-downs have been enabled by greater trust and improved general predictability, so that military forces almost everywhere are well below their CFE caps.

This generally stable situation is obviously good in itself. But it is also, paradoxically, bad for reviving conventional arms-control. It provides insufficient incentive, for major powers or alliances at least, to compromise.

Yet now, at the strategic level within the OSCE area, there is also substantial and disturbing re- emerging distrust. This is why some action is needed to preserve the military transparency and predictability, which has been described as the jewel in the Euro Atlantic Crown.

To make today's discussion as useful and precise as it should be, some naming of names seems to be necessary, though perhaps unusual within OSCE events. It is therefore worth restating that the Russian Federation is a major and demanding security actor whose recent choices have redefined the landscape of this subject. (The absence of Russian representatives today is not , of course , accidental.) The attitudes and calculations of the Putin Regime may be far from eternal (and we should bear that consideration in mind), but they are consistent, distinctive, and will be critical. This disjunction between Russian security thinking and those of other OSCE nations will have to be taken seriously by those others. Russian diplomatic demands need not conceded, but they should neither be automatically demonized, nor disregarded as simply temporary misunderstandings.

Russia has made abundantly clear its own sense of the inequity of present geopolitical arrangements, its objections to the military behaviour of Western nations, and the limited , or even negative, value of transparency for its own security, especially during a period of military reconstruction. These views mean that some desirable and almost universally supported developments, such as the updating of the Vienna Document, may not be achievable. More generally, it is no longer possible to count on Russian reciprocity as a basis for future progress. On conventional arms-control, Russia has expressed very clear views on the unacceptability of ACFE. They should be attended to, as a guide to the limits of the possible. Mr Putin's speech on 27 February at the Ministry of Defence Collegium in Moscow seems a particularly instructive wider indicator:

"We need to complete the process of creating fully-manned formations in all strategic directions. All these units should be maintained in a state of permanent readiness.

Future drills must be as close to real conditions of modern methods of warfare as possible; in unfamiliar terrain, with rapid manoeuvre [and deployment] over long distances, and with the combat coordination of different types of troops.

There are to be organized multi-divisional exercises: "West-2013" [Zapad-2013, continuing the large eponymous Soviet series of offensive operations exercises] to test "in the field" new types of weapons, and the command and control systems and coordination of units'ⁱ

High readiness formations and large-scale manoeuvres will create cascading anxieties in Central and Eastern Europe. So may even resultant, smaller, anxiously non provocative, NATO exercises like Steadfast Jazz, which respond to the deteriorated strategic atmosphere.

In the worst case, the interactive consequences of such moves and counter moves could be the renationalisation of national security, the multiplication of suspicions and military apprehensions, and re-emergence of block to block confrontations. If it is asked why conventional arms control is still necessary, the larger background reason is surely to prevent, mitigate or manage that unpleasant, but no longer completely unimaginable, prospect of strategic entropy.

Politically, too, these negative prospects clash - to varying degrees -with growing expectations of ever widening cooperative security held as a central part of the national security cultures of many European states. Reversal of these expectations threatens the narrative that most governments want to offer their electorates about a better, progressively less militarised, future. Diplomats in particular will be expected to find creative ways of preserving that narrative and reversing strategic entropy.

So a notional Do Nothing Option (D) for the OSCE would be hard to accept.

Anxiety and frustration over conventional arms-control is at present confined to a relatively small group of experts, commentators and officials. It is also currently overlaid by the distractions of the Financial Crisis which is intensifying universal pressures on defence budgets. Some disarmament through unaffordability is inevitable. But it is far from clear that this will necessarily be stabilising in its effects. And continuous background transformation in military technologies, by UAVs, stealth, precision guidance, and cyber and network warfare leaves little certainty about the military potentials which are actually emerging.

Most challengingly, ACFE's long blockage and slow death creates a widely described hypothetical linkage between conventional arms-control, nuclear negotiations and missile defence. This approach, demanded by Russia, implies new, ambitiously, perhaps impossibly, holistic cross-domain arms control. The comprehensive vision of a complex bargain across the conventional-nuclear nexus has been dubbed '*The Big Enchilada*'. It may not be possible to bake The Big Enchilada successfully - and even if it can be done, the results may not be universally palatable. But while the crucial negotiations for such a deal would probably have to be conducted between NATO and Russia, the OSCE could consider helping in preparation of the Enchilada, or at least in sharing the research, informed debate, and examination of alternatives, to improve the chances of producing a well understood and widely acceptable recipe for future stability.

What Is to Be Done?

At some point- and this has been argued by a number of speakers today - the OSCE, collectively, will really have to accept that CFE cannot be revived. That means that another conversation about cooperative security in the Euro Atlantic space needs, *at some point*, to begin.

The new conversation may be slow and cumbersome. It may never reach consensus in all areas or perhaps at all. But that is no reason not to try to lubricate or start some kind of a process. It has been a maxim of past OSCE efforts that engagement itself helps prevent strategic entropy.

Simply calculating and designing the ingredients of The Big Enchilada would be a huge intellectual task, quite apart from the troublesome politics. We have little idea how qualitative cross domain arms-control could be conducted or what the exchange rates in units of account would be. But the subject needs opening up if progress is to be achieved, or blind alleys identified early. OSCE has obvious limitations but also offers special resources and opportunities for this preliminary task.

Option A

The OSCE could therefore sponsor preliminary technical military discussions on the assessment of military balance and stability in the new era. These would be slow, complicated and uncomfortable but relatively cheap. There may be an analogy here with the abortive Mutual Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) negotiations: long years of frustration and stalemate can pay off eventually and indirectly in terms of common understandings and relationships, facilitating rapid progress when the surrounding political conditions unfreeze. An OSCE Forum or Group of Friends could be the architecture for this long-term preliminary project, which could be run without distracting Ministers. An OSCE initiative could cheaply stimulate attention and wider debate from universities, think tanks and public intellectuals. It would almost certainly also be desirable to begin systematic Military Doctrinal discussions in the same way and probably in the same institutional framework. This could have an especially valuable and educative function for smaller states over the developing thinking of the US as the world's foremost military innovator.

More generally, it needs to be appreciated that without some signs, somewhere, of such preparatory collective thinking about modifying CFE arrangements for the 21st-Century, it will be increasingly hard to believe that either NATO or Russia or the OSCE are serious about helping to bring about a linked series of conventional and nuclear negotiations which now seems necessary to unlock or mitigate the current deadlock in European arms control. (That absence of activity may be because of tacit judgements that the task is intellectually or politically impossible. If so, it might be better to get this background conditioning factor out into the open, to improve political appreciation of the overall stalemate.)

Option B

More ambitiously, the OSCE could initiate ground-breaking discussions to define a post CFE Treaty or Series of arrangements or understandings.

(An outline of options for this at the Wilton Park Workshop last October , drawing on work from Hamburg and Switzerland, is annexed to this document.)

Those possibilities might include:

a) Building on technical military and doctrinal discussions, seek early agreement on the continuing adequacy and relevance of the 5 CFE categories of TLE

b) Bringing in these States (especially Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) anomalously excluded from present regimes, which ought obviously to be in Russia's interests as well.

c) Aiming for maximum, integration and synergy with other agreements such as Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty.

d) Looking especially at politically practical ways of managing anxieties raised among neighbours by revived large scale military exercises

e) Giving special attention, perhaps through the development of new rules, to the most difficult geostrategic configurations: concentrations of both NATO and Russian forces in sensitive border zones, such as the Baltic States and the Leningrad Military District. The aim might be to limit, but not prohibit, deployment of national forces on their own territory, perhaps as well as the stationing of foreign forces, even with a host nation's consent.

f) Identifying and carefully publicising possibilities of numerical self-limitation, restraint and unilateral transparency and maximise pressures for reciprocation.

g) Considering using current force levels in each zone as a cap, to satisfy the Russian demand for reduced levels of armaments for NATO member states.

h) Making maximum use, right from initial diplomatic language, of status - neutral descriptive solutions (such as geographical coordinates) to the definitional problems posed by protracted sub regional conflicts.

i) Deciding consciously not to try to contribute to the solution of long-running or frozen regional conflicts by arms control or confidence building provisions, unless in exceptional cases such as the Florence Agreement-but not new Dayton.

[And, as an additional wildcard Option

j) Exploring possibilities of developing common strategies with the EU, which would systematically and deliberately reduce aid and sympathy for countries which repeatedly block progress in the arms control field, most obviously over sub regional arms transparency arrangements.]

A Caveat on Organisational Ambition

In looking at other ways to safeguard CFE's achievements, OSCE needs to recognize the scarcity and importance of political bandwidth. Political Leaders cannot focus on everything, especially during a protracted financial crisis.

High level political involvement to break the current conventional arms-control stalemate will not happen without evidence that sufficient common ground can be found to make a CFE successor treaty achievable, and that long-running disputes like Host Nation Consent, or Flank Restrictions, can be overcome. Indeed it could be counterproductive to urge forward any high profile reanimating initiative which was judged genuinely doomed to failure.

So what is realistic? And on what basis can judgements about realistic ambition be constructed and checked?

Over conventional arms-control, the OSCE has to decipher what it might constructively set out to do in the context of at least 3 interacting major discussions:

- NATO: Russia
- within OSCE
- US: Russia

If there are sufficient positive indications, from the totality of these interchanges, then (and probably *only* then) a positive programme for reviving conventional arms-control could begin to be developed within the OSCE, as illustrated above. Unclassified commentators are in no position to form a reliable picture of these background indications. But optimistic commentary or positive signalling does not seem to be emerging from any government source.

If, on the other hand, the best collective judgement of OSCE members is that no major attempt at improving and modernising the overall Eurasian arms control architecture would be worthwhile even beginning, then logically it would be best to stop obsessing and talking about it, until background conditioning factors change. (Here, the arguments might be structurally similar to those over the short term future of Theatre Nuclear Weapons in Europe, for which there seem equally discouraging short-term prospects for any balanced agreement)

Option C

Holding back, at least temporarily, on wider scale initiatives, OSCE could concentrate and reintensify its efforts on resolving or moderating sub regional problems: especially re-examining the technical possibilities for arms control to contribute to stability in the various hot or frozen sub regional disputes, where Armed Forces remain conventional, measurable, limitable and less incalculably affected by the changing nature of war.

Addressing these complex and protracted problems is undoubtedly difficult, and it is not suggested that there has been any lack of energetic engagement within the OSCE. But is it possible to consider a group of specialist arms controller friends of the Minsk Group, for exampleⁱⁱ? (And if not, why not?) Attempting new geometries

like this would not, and should not, amount to camouflaging our lack of political agreement, but building on what incremental agreements may emerge, perhaps very grudgingly and informally, over the future of Nagorno-Karabakh and elsewhere. This case-by-case approach might seem unexciting, and could, at worst, face continuing blockages. But for the moment it might also be the only available way to build on what we have learned, about cooperative security since that uniquely productive period at the end of the Cold War, a consideration which has repeatedly emerged in discussion today. The collective achievements of the OSCE and member nations should not indeed be lost. But the Organisation may have limited choices to protect them, given its unique, but in many ways, restricted role in the European Security ecology. It must therefore make its choices with proper sensitivity- not just to mandate but to both international atmospherics and comparative advantage.

Paul Schulte
Carnegie Endowment and Kings College London
March 2013

ⁱ <http://www.president.kremlin.ru/news/17588> . I most grateful to Bruce Jones for bringing this speech to my attention.

ⁱⁱ I am indebted to Professor Jeff McCausland for this illustrative proposal.



Wilton Park



Image: Credit NASA Goddard Space Flight Center

Conference papers

Conventional arms control and the Euro-Atlantic security environment

Thursday 11 – Friday 12 October 2012 | WP1208

In association with:



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



Conference papers

Conventional arms control and the Euro-Atlantic security environment

Thursday 11 – Friday 12 October 2012 | WP1208

Overview: What can Conventional Arms Control do for the Euro-Atlantic Security Environment 1 2in 2012?

Paul Schulte, Non-resident Senior Associate, Nuclear Policy Programme, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, London

Introduction

The simplistic answer to the exam question is: nothing this year, little substantively in the short term, but potentially- though very far from certainly -the avoidance of considerable chaos and distrust in the long term.

There are strong and consistent indications that the Adapted Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (ACFE) cannot be revived, and that, given the disappointing experience of last year's Review Conferences³, little can be expected by way of compensatory reform or improvement in the Vienna Document, while the Open Skies Treaty will have difficulty in maintaining its relevance against obstruction from national point scoring over frozen conflicts⁴. Numbers of specialist conventional arms-control personnel are already being reduced in NATO member states⁵, beginning to erode the transnational military specialist communities of inspectors and observers. Further austerity-driven cuts in defence and foreign ministries will accelerate this process. And the interlocking arms-control and confidence building regimes themselves are widely thought to have lost relevance to the contemporary European situation.

This outline overview paper therefore addresses medium term conventional arms control options, which could be examined now, in preparation for decisions in 2013, framing wider negotiating possibilities, which would also cover nuclear strategic and non-strategic forces, conventional strategic weapons and missile defences. It argues that a diplomatic process will now be needed at least to try to develop and agree a successor to ACFE and that in the long term, it will be important to try to reverse the breakdown in agreed arms-control arrangements in Europe. NATO and Russia are evidently the 2 critical potential partners for conventional arms control. What remains of course unclear, and will certainly not be clarified before the Russian government reacts to the US election results, is whether sufficient harmony of interests can be found with Russia to rework and reinvent conventional arms control as a strategic partner.

¹ "The great swath of states stretching from North America across Europe through Russia [with] a crucial role to play in stabilizing an increasingly fragmented and stressed international order. ...By a Euro-Atlantic security community we mean an inclusive, undivided security space free of opposing blocs and gray areas. Within this space disputes would be expected to be resolved exclusively by diplomatic, legal or other non-violent means, without recourse to military force or the threat of its use. All would be bound together by a shared understanding of the major security challenges facing member states and ready to respond to them with effective organization and action... This is the order that the countries of the Euro-Atlantic area pledged to build at the Cold War's close. It is the vision at the very heart of the 1990 Paris Charter." Sam Nunn, Wolfgang Ischinger, Igor Ivanov, Robert Legvold "Why Euro-Atlantic Unity Matters to World Order" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Commentary, November 9, 2010

² But it is worth remembering the differences between

- (i) 'CFE Europe' (the former cold-war bloc area from the Atlantic to the Urals, ATTU),
- (ii) "CSBM Europe" (roughly the whole of Europe plus Central Asia), and
- (iii) The 'Open Skies area' covering the Northern Hemisphere 'from Vancouver to Vladivostok'.

"The Relevance of Conventional Arms Control in Europe" SIPRI 2005

Different tools and arrangements can apply each of these very different environments

³ Hans-Joachim Schmidt and Wolfgang Zellner "Confidence and Security Building Measures" in SIPRI Yearbook, Oxford University Press 2012

⁴ Since January 2011 the modernising agenda of the Open Skies Consultative Commission has been blocked by a dispute between Greece and Turkey over admitting Cyprus to the Open Skies Treaty.

⁵ Schmidt and Zellner SIPRI Yearbook, 2012 P442

The paper does not consider what, if anything, might be done without Russian cooperation. Nor does it look at the specifics of protracted disputes in the Balkans or Caucasus, important though their repercussions may be for the attainability of wider settlements. Finally, it is not assumed that new conventional arms control will be practically possible - or perhaps necessary-with other NATO neighbours like Syria, Iraq or Iran.

Current Obstacles to Conventional Arms Control in Europe

There are multiple components of the present impasse.

Political Difficulties and Distractions

The *international political climate* in relation to European arms control has deteriorated significantly over the past decade. Russia claims that lawless and aggressive NATO behaviour in Kosovo, and Libya, NATO enlargement, plans for missile defence in NATO Europe, and the appearance of US troops in former Warsaw Pact countries have all cumulatively damaged the concept of pan-European cooperative security. Others emphasise that Russia has become more assertive again, as a result of (perhaps temporary) economic recovery based upon high hydrocarbon prices, and that the war with Georgia in 2008 set back relationships more than any NATO decisions.

Meanwhile, Euro Atlantic leadership attention has certainly ⁶been distracted by new and asymmetric security challenges: terrorism, debt, WMD proliferation, cyber security, socio-economic instability, transnational organized crime, ethnic tensions, fragile and failed states, environmental destruction, problems anticipated from climate change, competition over energy and other resources. As part of this, many countries have concentrated on extra-European threats, introducing new systems like missile defense to provide protection against future Iranian WMD intentions, at the cost of creating a pan-European dispute, whether or not this could have been avoided. At the same time, sub-regional disputes have become more evident in Europe. The *linkage approach* of tying the arms control regime to developments connected to certain protracted sub-regional conflicts has weakened overall arms control. One conclusion to be drawn is "*Arms control is unsuited as a vehicle to accomplish other political objectives.*"⁷ As a joint consequence, leading states have been described as having lost interest in conventional arms control in Europe, no longer seeing a need for such measures.⁸ Some particularly disenchanted observers argue that "*decisions in 2011 signal that the main actors - in NATO as well as in Russia-no longer believe that the implications of modern military technical developments can be discussed regionally ... However they have not yet agreed on whether or how to move this discussion into a bilateral framework.*"⁹

NATO's protracted debate with itself over Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons (NSNWs) and declaratory policy has also taken up bandwidth - and may take more.

Russian Objections to the CFE/Vienna Document System

Russia has special, severe and specific objections to the way that conventional arms control developed in Europe since the end of the Cold War¹⁰, which became familiar in the long disputes over ACFE and the Istanbul Commitments. Russia suspended its participation in 2007, ceased to provide information or accept CFE inspections, stated that it would no longer accept Treaty restraints on its deployments, and has benefited one-

⁶ Wolfgang Zellner "Conventional Arms Control in Europe: Is There a Last Chance?" Arms Control Today, March 2012

⁷ Daniel Mockli "Shaping a Security Community: addressing emerging global challenges. Developing a new approach to conventional arms control?" OSCE Vienna, June 2012

⁸ "Russia and NATO do not appear to care all that much about the current conventional forces situation and the fact that the CFE Treaty has broken down. There is little evidence that senior leaders—chancellors, prime ministers and presidents—worry about these issues or have engaged to find solutions. It will be difficult for OSCE to gain traction on these questions unless political leaders care." Ambassador Steve Pfifer, OSCE Security Days June 2012.

⁹ Ian Anthony, Overview of Conventional Arms Control, SIPRI Yearbook 2012, p415

¹⁰ See the short historical account by Jeffrey McCausland "The Conventional and Nuclear Nexus in Europe" in Nichols, Stuart, McCausland, Eds, "Tactical Nuclear Weapons and NATO" US Strategic Studies Institute 2012, pp 447-500

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. Although NATO has stressed that the treaty prohibits passing on information to states not entitled to receive it, at present, Russia informally seems to enjoy the transparency benefits and none of the transparency obligations of CFE.

Russia has nevertheless tried to insist upon

- ratification of the 1999 Adapted CFE Treaty by the NATO states;
- rejection of the '*artificial and legally unjustifiable*' linkage principle of Host Nation Consent to limit Russian deployments "*within internationally recognised borders*". (It considered the vexed troop withdrawal issues bilateral Russian-Georgian or Russian-Moldovan questions);
- rapid accession of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the ACFE, followed by their early ratification, in order to restrict hypothetical emergency deployments of NATO forces there (But while these countries have been consistently willing to accede, they remain unable to do so since the Adapted Treaty never entered into force);
- definition of the term "*substantial combat forces*", originally introduced in the 1997 NATO Russia Founding Act, which would further limit the forces which the Alliance could permanently station in the new NATO states; *but*
- immediate renegotiation and modernization of ACFE if it were ever, temporarily, brought into force, to achieve:
- a new, more satisfactory, 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 2009 enlargements and the presence of American forces in new NATO nations; and
- the abolition of "discriminatory" flank restrictions on Russian territory (which especially affect the volatile North Caucasus) by means of a "political decision okay" between NATO and Russia as further appropriate strategic compensation for NATO enlargements.

More generally, the Russian authorities appear to be concerned that existing arms-control arrangements freeze current military disparities, while not improving confidence in the stability of what is for them a deteriorating geopolitical situation. They argue that the overall CFE structure of agreements and limitations worked to Russia's disadvantage, particularly following successive NATO enlargements, which were less and less linked to arms control.¹¹ New arms categories in which the US has an advantage (missile defence, advanced conventional forces, space weaponry) remain, however, unregulated.

At present Russia, is pursuing its 2020 armament plan, intended to modernize strategic and tactical nuclear forces and create the foundation for "*a modern conventional military, which embraces command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR)*"¹² and prepare the country to cope with the challenges of "*6th Generation War*" (sometimes called "*Contactless War*" in Russian strategic terminology) already practised by the US and NATO partners in Libya and elsewhere. In these taxing transitional circumstances Russia has indicated, in its response to proposals for extra inspections and evaluation visits, in the update of the Vienna Document into its VD 2011 version, that it does not regard increased transparency of its military arrangements as desirable, at least at present. Nor is it prepared to see the Vienna Document develop to compensate for the stalemate over CFE.¹³ That judgement of the general inconsistency of increasing transparency with Russian security interests is a return to historic Tsarist and

¹¹ Michael Brzoska, Anne Finger, Oliver Meier, Gotz Neunek, Wolfgang Zellner, "Prospects for Arms Control in Europe, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, November 2011 p24

¹² Jacob Kipp in Russia and the Current State of Arms Control Edited by Dr. Stephen J. Blank, US Strategic Studies Institute 2012

¹³ SIPRI Yearbook 2012 p 449

Soviet attitudes. It certainly suggests that new approaches, based solely upon transparency rather than limitations, will fail to gain Russian consent.

Many Western observers also believe that the Russian government gains internal political legitimacy by representing NATO as a significant and determined military, political and cultural threat. It is unclear (and, for the next few years, perhaps academic) whether this is simply the paranoid style of the Putin regime or is likely to be a permanent feature of future Russian governments. But a concern to resist not only the alleged possibility of NATO surprise attack, but also, for similar reasons, the spread of Western soft power and "spiritual pollution", will obviously inhibit any easy agreement of dependable long-term cooperative security arrangements through arms control.

Nor is it evident how far Russia intends to take its self-imposed balancing role against US global hegemony. If the collapse of the Soviet Union was "the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century" in Putin's famous phrase, then maintaining the Russian Federation and reclaiming much of the USSR's former military and political influence as possible is a necessary redress for the early 21st. The Russians appear genuinely perturbed about the ultimate intentions behind the endless inventiveness of American military power. As Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Alexander Grushko, recently put it "*The bombings in Yugoslavia in 1999, and NATO's participation in the operation in Libya demonstrate that there is a danger of NATO turning into a 'global policeman' that operates beyond the boundaries of international law.*"¹⁴ Even more recently, in President Putin has described NATO as "*a throwback to the Cold War era*" which "*should be transformed into a political organization as soon as possible*" since it is "*incomprehensible why it's still around*"¹⁵

Without seeking to maximise, maintain, and assert every possible military advantage, can a suspicious Russian regime expect to maintain its Great Power status, and restrain what it frequently denounces as relentlessly self-interested, subversive and expansionary pressure from NATO: almost 900 million rich, well-armed, democracy-infatuated, and moralistically meddlesome citizens of an assertive superpower and its subordinate allies? If this is, and remains, Russia's underlying diagnosis of its strategic predicament, it will not easily lend itself to agreement with NATO on building conventional stability in Europe.

New, and Complicating, Techno Strategic Developments

Analysts have pointed to:

- a) Huge, cumulative and sustained US military investment may have made it impossible to find solutions based on balance, even if, as discussed below, it could be defined. Moreover the continued development of U.S. military capabilities for flexible force protection challenges regional arms control, especially in an era of remote warfare, when NATO might have available globally deployable assets from the CONUS in a crisis to enhance its military capabilities.
- b) Accelerating and interacting technological developments, blurring estimates and predictions of the "exchange rates" between capabilities, types, and ages of weapon systems which will most determine military power now and in the future. Cyber weapons and missile defences make it harder to define the scope of arms control, since no nation can be very confident that it fully understands the future implications of certain limits that it might accept.
- c) the lack of internationally agreed rules about the acceptable future use of force - which has been used for ostensibly protective, retaliatory or liberatory purposes, as in Kosovo, Georgia and Libya, and not only a defensive response to aggression - makes countries, especially Russia, but also its nervous neighbours, unwilling to sign away capabilities.¹⁶

¹⁴ Interview with Alexander Grushko "There's a threat of NATO turning into a global police state " Voice of Russia 12 September 2012

¹⁵ interview in Dushanbe, October 5 2012 (RIA Novosti)

¹⁶ Ian Anthony SIPRI Yearbook 2012

Future Possibilities

NATO Interests And Commitments

The Indispensability of Deep Engagement over Modernisation

The long-term underlying Alliance commitment to arms control was re-emphasised in the Chicago Summit. Strong and protracted efforts to achieve agreement may thus be a precondition for maintaining medium-term internal Alliance unity over its own nuclear posture and the consensual fleshing out of the Defence and Deterrence Posture Review (DDPR). Expectations have been built up. In April 2011, Secretary Clinton told the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting in Berlin, that "*Nothing would advance the spirit of Lisbon like launching new negotiations to strengthen and modernize conventional arms control for the 21st century.*" Even if well-meaning Alliance attempts merely accentuate Russian suspicions and meet total Russian obduracy, significant time would have to pass before all NATO members accepted that the task was hopeless.

There is also a strong economic argument for rescuing conventional arms-control. Successfully renewed reciprocal limitations could be expected to reduce costs to both sides when NATO will be struggling, through Smart Defence and reprioritisation, to maintain many of its present capabilities over the next decade and beyond.

Predictability is always desirable as an international objective, and additional transparency *might* further reduce risks of surprise attack on NATO (but with ever improving satellite reconnaissance and Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS), to be provided, at last, by Global Hawk drones and their successors) it is an empirical question whether such transparency is a feature of diminishing intelligence importance, at least for direct protection of Alliance members). But it would certainly be a better security environment for NATO, as well as many other states, if preparations for any military action, even far from NATO's borders, such as the Russian attack on Georgia in 2008 could be made more evident.

Inviolable NATO Red Lines?

But NATO, and especially the US, has a number of long-standing red lines from past negotiations which would need to be re-examined, and cogently justified, when inevitably questioned by Russian negotiators:

- a) No limits on naval forces or movements?
- b) No controls, limitations or verification obligations applying to CONUS -based systems (except in relation to the CW, BW, START and INF Treaties and their particular verification arrangements?)
- c) No treaty bound limitations without verification?
- d) No codified disparities relegating the US to military inferiority?
- e) No Russian veto over missile defence?
- f) Prioritisation of respect for sovereignty over potentially increased stability through arms control: Host Nation Consent as an absolute requirement for accepting cross-border deployments within a new conventional arms control framework?
- g) Continued Regional Limitation arrangements as far reaching as ACFE's Flank Agreement?
- h) No legally binding commitments over missile defence?
- i) No legal blockage for further NATO expansion?
- j) No experimentation with qualitative disclosures or controls over advanced non-nuclear systems?
- k) No major inhibitions on the transit of expeditionary forces from member nations, moving beyond the NATO area?
- l) Others, perhaps not previously required?

Russian Interests-Current and Potential

As currently interpreted by the Putin government, these appear to be to:

- a) prevent further deterioration in the correlation of forces determining her geopolitical position, including loss of control, or influence, especially in Belarus, Ukraine or the Caucasus - and as a special priority, to prevent the further expansion of NATO.
- b) obtain legally binding assurances constraining NATO options for deployments and operations.
- c) preserve Russian freedom of action in terms of operational possibilities for the conduct or threat of effective military intervention against unacceptable developments in Russia's "sphere of privileged interest".
- d) resist attempts to impose the principle of host nation consent for current and, presumably future, Russian military deployments and garrisons.

Overall, to maintain Russian influence, rather than to prepare to deter any ground attack by NATO forces, which Russian military deployments indicate that Russia does not in fact expect, for numerous political, military and intelligence reasons.

Potentially Reinterpreted Russian Interests?

In the medium term, in response to unpalatable but undeniable strategic developments, the development of Russian policies might enable them to reinterpret their interests and to respond positively to sufficiently attractive offers of cooperative security arrangements from NATO, given:

- a) renewed economic challenges, when it is now estimated that, by 2015 , Russia's current account will change from strong surplus to deficit¹⁷
- b) unavoidable demographic shortfall (on some views a "catastrophe"): numbers of available men of military age will fall to problematic levels, even allowing for plans to move to smaller , volunteer, forces and to permit non-Russian CIS citizens to serve in the Russian Armed Forces. ¹⁸
- c) growing strategic threats elsewhere, where Russia faces asymmetric challenges on its Southern Front, and ever-increasing Chinese conventional and nuclear power to the East.
- d) uncertainly repeatable diplomatic opportunity: the case for trying to benefit from negotiated arrangements which might be obtained from a relatively concessionary US position (assuming the new Administration maintains this complexion) The Russians will remember previous volatility of US policy and may well conclude that future Presidents may choose to take a harder line.¹⁹

Without a successor to CFE, Russia would lose assured transparency over the forces of existing or future members of a much larger and militarily superior Alliance. It would also lose the security of any legal limitation (and Russian behaviour repeatedly illustrates that it has a very strong desire to obtain enforceable legal obligations) 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."

¹⁷ "The longer-picture is most troubling. A major source of support for the rouble has been Russia's current account surplus. But ING calculates this will more than halve in 2013 from this year's expected levels around \$80 billion — a consequence of lower oil prices and Russia's WTO accession which will encourage imports. The central bank has gone a step further to concede Russia will actually swing into deficit by 2015. " Sujata Rao "Is the rouble overhyped?" Global Investing, Reuters, 4 Oct 2012

¹⁸ In 2011 the Russian Defence Ministry had to halve the number of conscripts originally envisaged, and the effect of the 1990s demographic crisis will not reach its peak until 2014.

¹⁹ Ulrich Kuehn "CFE: Overcoming the Impasse" eng.globalaffairs.ru Original Page 7 July 2010 based on a presentation held at the 18th Partnership for Peace International Research Seminar, Vienna, February 4-5, 2010.

A Straw Man's Way Forward: Possible Sequencing, and Negotiating Options The possibility of success in improving the Euro Atlantic security environment through conventional arms control is therefore neither encouragingly high nor negligently low. Much will consequently depend upon general, especially US-Russian bilateral, relationships and atmospherics, trade-offs in other security domains, careful sequencing, tireless background Alliance management, reconceptualization of underlying military problems, and creative, problem-solving, negotiation.

Some sequencing proposals and negotiating options, mostly derived from recent open literature, are outlined below to assist discussion. It is accepted from the start that many may already have been thought through, discreetly tried out, discarded, planned or deemed unrealistic or counterproductive, in Alliance discussions which have so far remained very closed.

Sequencing

- a) Build on the understandings, within NATO and with Russian counterparts, that continued stalemate is intolerable but early agreements are unrealistic.
- b) Continue NATO's intellectual preparation for future negotiations. Complete a comprehensive assessment within NATO of major future threats. In the conventional field it will presumably be necessary to further downgrade Cold War style scenarios of major Russian offensives, and emphasise, instead, the risks of small-scale Russian intimidation, blackmail or adventurism, threatening, perhaps by repetitive nuclear sabre rattling, to take advantage of unavoidable local and temporary superiorities of force²⁰. This is a nightmare of exposed allies, above all in the Baltic Republics, which face the economically damaging possibility of politico military adventures conducted (with cyber assistance) under the pretext of protecting Russian minorities, especially while American attention is distracted elsewhere.

Expressing and focusing on this strategic preoccupation may be unpopular with some allies because of (realistic) concerns that it will leak, causing offence in Russia, and because competing concepts of Alliance relations with Russia coexist²¹, differing over the relative importance of avoiding tension and arms racing on the one hand, and maintaining militarily credible collective security on the other.

Necessary force requirements for NATO conventional responses against various levels of aggression are already being examined in contingency plans.²² The physical capability to guarantee a robust and early repulse of incursions into NATO territory is central to Alliance credibility - as East Europeans tend to emphasise. But it risks setting up a familiar security dilemma in sensitive border areas - as allies to their West tend to warn.

- c) To mitigate the security dilemma, and reduce future contradictions between its arms control preferences and its own stationing requirements, NATO planning and investment could be focused more and more against short term scenarios of provocation and intimidation. The aim could be to prioritise the enhancement of stability through improved Alliance agility rather than forward stationing. The result would be further remove temptation from Russia in hypothetical future crises, by becoming evidently capable of the rapid abortion of emergent crisis threats to the security of exposed members. At some extra expense, agility could be further enhanced and operationalized by short notice units, better transport infra-structure, and effective contingency plans.
- d) Having established and emphasised these shared understandings and intentions, arrange an announcement in 2013, ideally by the NATO Russia Forum, that CFE is definitively dead. Determine the most acceptable diplomatic formula to bury it, and to hail

²⁰ In early 2010, for example, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia together fielded only 18,000 troops, 3 battle tanks, 400 artillery pieces, 19 attack helicopters and 10 combat aircraft - compared to totals of 39,200, 1137, 1168, 147, and 256 in adjacent Russian military districts: James Acton "Low Numbers: a Practical Path to Deep Nuclear Reductions" Carnegie Endowment, Washington, 2011 quoted in Finger p 6

²¹ Brzoska et al, 2011, p223

²² Hans Binnendijk and Catherine McArdle Kelleher, "NATO Reassurance and Nuclear Reductions: Creating the Conditions," Institute for National Security Studies, National Defense University, January 2012.

negotiation(s) intended to create its successor.

- e) Declare that the process of conventional arms control in Europe can be restarted only on the basis of a new, modernised, conceptual approach that supersedes ACFE. This will fit with earlier Russian proposals.
- f) But emphasise that a suitably comprehensive concept cannot be elaborated and developed quickly, and many countries will have to appreciate the full importance and complexity of the enterprise, if there is to be a chance of modifying long-held and contradictory positions, which is an essential condition for success²³
- g) Propose launching of preliminary military technical discussions, “ at 36,²⁴ “ on the future military environment, technologies, equivalences, interactions exchange rates, and if possible, doctrines. (Consider inviting Chinese and perhaps Indian and Japanese observers, since decisions taken in the Euro Atlantic space will affect them, and this might as well be acknowledged)
- h) Emphasise that it is essential to move as far as possible towards common understandings of underlying choices on future components of military power and stability. This is a major intellectual endeavour, paralleling and in some ways preceding diplomatic efforts. But, in negotiations of this kind, “no weighting formula to score the potency of one model of weapons system over another, or one category of equipment against another, has ever gained serious consideration... conventional or nuclear”
²⁵Complete success, in the form of new consensus agreements, may quite possibly be unattainable. The original CFE could aim at establishing “a secure and stable balance of conventional armed forces” But “the notion of such “balance”, amounting to a mathematical equation” may now have “ no feasible contemporary solution”.²⁶
Nevertheless there will need to be evidence that an appropriately serious effort is being attempted in good faith to pursue a good enough set of counting rules and plausible opening bids for military ceilings to have a prospect of achieving eventual politically satisfactory balance. There is as yet no public indication that such work has started.
- i) Ensure that Russia is unequivocally drawn out on what kind of balance, or set of balances, it wants: total military parity on the continent of Europe between 143 million Russians (declining at -0.48% a year²⁷) and over 800 million more prosperous NATO citizens? Or something less ambitious, in line with relative industrial capabilities? (Russia’s military procurement expenditure from between 2000-2009 has been estimated at only 16% of that European NATO states²⁸) *“Luckily, the concept of stability does not rest solely on the concept of equality, in which area CFE already provides the mechanism of the sufficiency rule.”*²⁹
- j) Discover, through Russia’s reaction to NATO offers of options for substantive negotiations, the areas, if any, in which it shows interest in reaching agreements to reduce tensions and spending through some combination of improved and revived transparency, CSBMs (including notifications of manoeuvres) and force limitations.
- k) Ensure that Russian positions are well communicated to all OSCE countries, and especially to NATO opinion formers (The whole issue of conventional arms control has become so ingrown and esoteric that the general public probably cannot be engaged.)
- l) From contacts during the preliminary military technical process, determine the best

²³ Zellner 2012

²⁴ i.e. the 30 CFE Treaty states-parties plus the six new NATO member states that are not parties (Albania, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia).

²⁵ Dorn Crawford "A Conventional Arms Control Perspective" in Nichols, Stuart , McCausland , Eds, "Tactical Nuclear Weapons and NATO" US Strategic Studies Institute 2012, P 442

²⁶ Crawford, 2012,p 442

²⁷ figures from CIA World Factbook 2012

²⁸ Brzoska et al , 2011, p6

²⁹ Ulrich Kuehn "CFE: Overcoming the Impasse" eng.globalaffairs.ru Original Page 7 July 2010 based on a presentation held at the 18th Partnership for Peace International Research Seminar, Vienna, February 4-5, 2010.

achievable title, mandate and composition for substantive discussions for a CFE replacement, and arrange the most propitious announcement.

Possible Negotiating Priorities in a Substantive Conventional Arms Control Phase

- a) Determine whether the ATTU and its subdivisions are still the necessary and comprehensive field for arms control in the Euro Atlantic region
- b) But ensure that the Baltic and Balkan States are included as full potential signatories. (The Florence Agreement has continue to work encouragingly well in the Balkans. It could, and probably should, be transplanted into a new pan-European structure.)
- c) Seek early agreement on the continuing adequacy and relevance of the 5 CFE categories of TLE: Tanks, Artillery, Armoured Combat Vehicles, Attack Helicopters, Combat Aircraft. Armed Drones are an obviously high profile potential new category but would throw up taxing problems of verification and mobility of infrastructure.
- d) Insist, during the inevitably lengthy new negotiations, on maintaining firm conventional ceilings, however they are denominated, especially in areas of volatility and past conflict.
- e) Aim for maximum integration and synergy with other agreements such as Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty.
- f) Give special attention, perhaps through the development of new rules, to the most difficult geostrategic configurations: concentrations of both NATO and Russian forces in sensitive border zones, such as the Baltic States and the Leningrad Military District. The aim might be to limit, but not prohibit, deployment of national forces on their own territory, perhaps as well as the stationing of foreign forces, even with a host nation's consent.³⁰

Negotiating Resources, Options and Choices

- a) Within the force structures internally agreed by the Alliance as necessary to deter, abort or repel possible Russian aggression, identify and carefully publicise possibilities of NATO numerical self-limitation, restraint and unilateral transparency (Finger 25)³¹. Aim to elicit similar Russian responses or to raise the public international costs of Russian refusal to reciprocate
- b) Actual TLE holdings of all NATO states are already considerably lower than ACFE agreed ceilings. So, to overcome deadlocks over future force levels, NATO could generally consider using its current force levels in each zone as a cap, to satisfy the Russian demand for reduced levels of armaments for NATO member states.³²
- c) Make maximum use, right from initial diplomatic language, of status - neutral descriptive solutions (such as geographical coordinates) to the definitional problems posed by protracted sub regional conflicts.
- d) To develop workable solutions to the Flank Problem, the special sensitivities of the Baltic Region, perhaps also Norwegian and Turkish concerns, and possibly those surrounding areas in the Caucasus, consider developing agreements on "Sensitive Zones". These could involve could be special limitations on military holdings, and possibly special inspection arrangements. Sub regional regimes of this kind are unlikely to work without limitations, and it would be generally desirable for forces in them to be thinned out; yet they do not necessarily need a legally binding framework. "Sensitive Zones" might be set through by bilateral declarations in particular border areas, defined in a more flexible manner than the CFE Flank Zones and better able to reflect local case-by-case idiosyncrasies.³³
- e) Depending upon the likelihood of worthwhile Russian reciprocity and the strength of

³⁰ these suggestions come from McCausland 2012, pp 496-497

³¹ Interview with Alexander Grushko "There's a threat of NATO turning into a global police state " Voice of Russia 12 September 2012

³² Kuehn 2010

³³ Zellner March 2012

insistences within the Alliance, consider the scope for relenting over previous insistence upon Red Lines, most importantly: Host Nation Consent and Flank Restrictions.

- f) Decide consciously *not* to try to contribute to the solution of long-running or frozen regional conflicts by arms control or confidence building provisions, unless in exceptional cases such as the Florence Agreement-but not new Dayton.

A Few Additional Wildcard Options

- a) Explore possibilities of developing common strategies with the EU which would systematically and deliberately reduce aid and sympathy for countries which repeatedly block progress in the arms control field, most obviously over sub regional arms transparency arrangements.
- c)If Russia proves strongly resistant to transparency, consider hinting at a planned initiative to combine continuous enhanced high altitude drone activity just inside NATO's Eastern borders with high-level aerostat (for which designs are currently available able to operate at a height of 45 km) or long endurance blimp surveillance platforms, looking down deep into Russian Federation territory. The plausible possibility of introducing these entirely purchasable technologies might incentivise Russia to agree to providing transparency details through diplomatic means instead.
- d) Consider options which could benefit from cross domain assurances possible within the "*conventional - nuclear nexus*" in Europe. While NATO policy is to seek mutual dismantlement, or at least reciprocal reductions, of NSNWs, there are few indications to think that either will be easily achieved. It is therefore worth remembering that one relatively stable outcome, which might leave the Russians sufficiently reassured to accept agreements in other areas, would be to accept, and base negotiating expectations around, the anyway largely unavoidable continuation of significant disparities over NSNWs. Large Russian NSNW numbers could provide greater reassurance to Russian governments against:
- having to accept complete conventional defeat in the event of NATO ground attack;
 - having to accept conventional exploitation by NATO of a successful counter-attack in response to a Russian conventional adventure (which could bring down the Russian government had launched it): and
 - hypothetical NATO pre-emptive strikes, especially involving US precision assets, intended to create an invincible sword and shield scenario in which Russian strategic nuclear assets and command and control became too degraded to strike back. In this eventuality, as Russia has already threatened, its TNW could certainly strike rapidly at NATO missile defence launchers and infrastructure. This would create frightening collateral destruction within Europe and resultant escalation. But it would prevent any additional interception threat to the assured retaliation capability of Russian strategic systems. If unimpeded escalation to strategic nuclear exchange, and mutual annihilation, despite missile defence in Europe, is what the Russians really want to guarantee, then leaving them relatively large TNW numbers would help to secure it, as well as diminishing their anxieties over conventional disparities.

What Is at Stake?

The powerfully and benignly interlocking triad of CFE, the Vienna Document, and Open Skies Treaty have unquestionably helped transform "CFE Europe", stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the Dark Continent of the early and mid-20th century to the vastly more open, prosperous and largely demilitarized space that it is today. Security arrangements across the Euro Atlantic security space are still variable, and, in many places, second-best, straining to hold onto effective cooperative security regimes and very far from the genuine security communities of North America or Western Europe. But, after the high hopes of the end of the Cold War, it is only in the last few years that it has begun to seem possible that positive trends might peter out or go into reverse.

Conventional stability in Europe can therefore evidently no longer be taken for granted. It is

not self renewing or self righting. It will require an input of energy, high bandwidth political attention and very difficult thinking over complicated diplomatic and military questions. Many may consequently find it tempting to reach private judgements that, that given frequently expressed Russian attitudes, time spent on trying to revive conventional arms control would be wasted, given the scale of other contemporary challenges. But in fact the risk is that those other problems may significantly worsen if underlying strategic confidence in the larger framework of strategic stability is allowed to wither without repair.” *Against the background of the debt and euro crisis, scenarios leading to large-scale economic havoc, political fragmentation, massive social unrest, and the rise of populism in Europe look far less far-fetched than a few years ago. In such an environment, the perseverance of the Euro-Atlantic security community could well be put to a serious test.* “.34 And, given public commitments, responsible Western governments, inside or outside NATO, have very little alternative to making a convincing try.

34 Daniel Mockli ISN Blog » The OSCE and Conventional Arms Control in Europe: Towards a Double Relaunch " isnblog.ethz.ch , 201