
THE FUTURE OF CONVENTIONAL
ARMS CONTROL IN EUROPE

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I

Chancellor Helmut Kohl expressed his appreciation of the CFE Treaty signed on 19 November 1990 by 22 heads of state and government in Paris before the German Bundestag thus: «In the shape of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe the 22 countries simultaneously signed the most extensive agreement in the history of disarmament and arms control. In negotiations lasting only 20 months, they created an unprecedented set of provisions for limiting the main conventional weapon systems in the region from the Atlantic to the Urals and for subjecting these limitations to stringent monitoring.»

This assessment remains valid, even though the significance of the Treaty has been overshadowed in the public view by German unification, the events in the Gulf and developments in the Soviet Union. Indeed, a recent unilateral interpretation of a Treaty detail by the Soviet Union has raised doubts as to whether the Treaty will actually become valid under international law or whether it will share the fate of SALT II. I am sure that Soviet Union will soon find an acceptable solution to this dispute. For in the last analysis, the alternative would be to risk a return to confrontation in Europe, which can be in no one's interest.

As the Chancellor has said, the CFE Treaty is a milestone in arms control; at the same time, however, it is also a turning-point. In future, arms control will have to seek new paths and further arenas — in the Middle East, for example — in order to do justice to the changed global situation.

II

In the early eighties Paul Nitze, the grand old man of arms control, described the main features of arms control in his Alistair Buchan Memorial Speech, given before the IISS. He showed how arms control originated when,

following the Cuban crisis and the first-time risk of nuclear war which it entailed, the Kennedy Administration had begun to reflect on practical means to control arms, particularly nuclear weapons. Whereas up until then, objectives such as general and complete disarmament or the establishment of a world authority with exclusive, extensive responsibility for nuclear questions had been under discussion, the Kennedy Administration dealt with the concept of preventing war between the United States and the Soviet Union by means of concrete stabilizing arrangements based on the balance of power. This presupposed on the one hand the acceptance of a security system based on deterrence, and on the other, the undertaking of efforts to strengthen the military balance and improve political relations between the superpowers by means of arms control agreements to establish instruments for crisis management and to restrict arms expenditure if possible.

The foremost question was how to achieve agreements capables of playing a major part in reducing the risk of nuclear war between East and West. Thus as early as the spring of 1963, the US Administration considered the possibility of initiating a process for limiting strategic nuclear weapons through bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union. The central idea was to seek not the total elimination of nuclear weapons, but a stable minimum which was to be equal for both sides, i. e. parity. Due to the Czechoslovak crisis, negotiations under the name of SALT did not begin until 1969, which marks the true start of modern arms control.

Outstanding results were achieved in the shape of the interim agreement of May 1972 on strategic offensive weapons (SALT I) and the ABM Treaty limiting the deployment of strategic defensive systems, SALT II, which became only politically effective because it was never ratified, as well as the more recent INF Treaty of December 1987, which eliminates American and Soviet land-based medium-range missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 km, that is, it establishes zero parity. The START negotiations about to be concluded on strategic nuclear offensive weapons are a typical current example of this approach.

The key concepts of this arms control policy initiated and actively pursued by the West were the prevention of war, as well as parity and stability. On the one hand this policy proceeded on the understanding that East and West were armed, confrontational and antagonistic, on the other hand it aimed to take advantage of the interests of both sides in concrete measures of war prevention and crisis management. Defence and arms control efforts

were seen as complementary concepts: While defence efforts were aimed at maintaining balance arms control sought a contractually agreed balance at the lowest possible level.

The CFE Treaty, too, pursues this basic arms control structure. Within Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, it limits the five major conventional weapons systems most critical for military offensive action the 22 countries belonging to NATO and, until recently, the Warsaw Pact, viz. battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft and attack helicopters. With respect to these systems, which are precisely defined in the Treaty, the 6 Eastern and the 16 Western nations are allocated equal collective ceilings which, for their part, are sub-divided into differentiated regional sub-ceilings. When the CFE Treaty has been implemented by means of appropriate reductions 40 months after signature, East-West parity will have been established in Europe for these weapons.

However, «the East» as such now no longer exists, particularly since the military structure of the Warsaw Pact was broken up with effect from 1 April 1991. This raises the justifiable question: Is the CFE Treaty really up-to-date?

The answer is that, in addition to these politically outdated elements, the CFE Treaty contains important elements which look to the future. Although the negotiators were unable to change the basic structure of the ongoing negotiations, they did take as far as possible into account the far-reaching new political developments in Europe. Moreover, it is questionable whether it would have been at all possible to reach a conclusion if negotiations had gone back to square one.

Two of the forward-looking elements are particularly outstanding: In the long term, more significant than the establishment of equal ceilings for East and West are the resulting maximum levels for holdings of each State Party. The ceilings on each side have been allocated in such a way as to allow each State Party a specific proportion of the equipment limited by the Treaty. Within the Western alliance, this distribution was agreed by a NATO decision, within the Eastern group it was achieved through an agreement which was signed in November last year in Budapest. It is possible for these national maximum levels for holdings to be raised only if another state in the respective group accepts a reduction in its level. Thus de facto, increases can be made only on the basis of an agreement between two or more states. In the West, this appears perfectly feasible; in the East, it is unlikely. Future conventional arms control measures in Europe can

be based on these national maximum levels for holdings, instead of group ceilings, and thus no longer on parity between East and West.

The ongoing follow-on negotiations conducted pursuant to Article XVIII of the CFE Treaty, which are concerned particularly with the limitation of military personnel, reflect the transitional situation today and are no longer geared to the establishment of East-West parity. Rather, the emphasis will be on national limitations by the 22 participants and the willingness of each of them to restrict its own active military personnel strength. The limitations already bindingly agreed upon by Germany in connection with the CFE Treaty represent a decisive reduction in its military personnel, and should set an example to others.

The second point is that the CFE negotiations took place not in isolation as an undertaking geared towards solely military questions, but "within the framework of the CSCE process". This arrangement, which was reflected in the mandate at European insistence following fierce conflict amongst the West enabled the integration of the negotiations into the wider CSCE framework aiming at comprehensive cooperation among all European states. This was symbolically expressed by the signing of the CFE Treaty within the context of the CSCE Summit Meeting in Paris which, for its part, adopted a document which is fundamental to the future European order, the «Charter of Paris for a New Europe».

In this way, through the changes last year in Europe the CFE Treaty acquired far more extensive perspectives than originally expected. One may well ask how much importance still attaches to the military objective, described in the mandate as «a matter of priority», of eliminating «the capability for launching surprise attack and for initiating large-scale offensive action» which will have been realized upon implementation of Treaty. From our present standpoint it seems far more important that, when the CFE Treaty enters into force, it will form the sound security basis for the development of the cooperative structures which will embrace the whole of Europe as envisaged in the Charter of Paris, as basis for the new European peaceful order of the CSCE states.

III

As the foundation of the security architecture of the future Europe, the CFE Treaty includes the Soviet Union in the new cooperative security structure. The Soviet Union is assigned a particularly important role due to its

right under Article VI of the Treaty to possess around one-third of the limited armaments and equipment of all participants on its territory west of the Urals. Part of this architecture's foundation is formed by the 2+4 Treaty, which I should like to return to later.

This will be supplemented by several complementary, interdependent elements. The Atlantic Alliance, which can refer back to its proven political course based on the Harmel concept with its pillars of security, disarmament and détente, remains central to the transatlantic link. The Alliance new thinking is laid down not least in the «Joint Declaration of Twenty-Two States» signed in Paris, where the signatories declare that, «in the new era of European relations which is beginning, they are no longer adversaries (but) will build new partnerships and extend to each other the hand of friendship». The Alliance will also change in other respects. The transition from the large-scale, acute threatening of Western Europe to a risk arising from the uncertainty of internal developments in the Soviet Union is also leading to changes in Europe's military dependence on the United States. Chancellor Kohl has pointed out the political consequences of this when he said that our defence alliance was not an end in itself, but a reflection of the political situation. If this changed, the Alliance, too, would change. The alliance of tomorrow including the united Germany, he went on to say, would thus be different from the one we know today.

The second element is the European Community. Present circumstances in Europe have increased the importance not only in political, but also in security terms, of the Community's economic weight. A policy geared to stability throughout Europe must therefore also be more strongly oriented towards the establishment of economic, ecological and technological links and interdependence. This principle for conflict settlement and the safeguarding of peace stood at the beginning of the European Communities and is now acquiring importance for the whole of Europe. As you know, when and how the E. C. will be allocated its own tasks in the field of security policy is the subject of lively political discussion at present, as is the role which might be assumed by the WEU, as the nucleus of defence cooperation, in the establishment of a genuinely European pillar of defence policy.

The third element is the further development of the CSCE process on the basis of the Charter of Paris. This significant document has codified the achievements of the CSCE, particularly in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as in the market economy and security

spheres. Moreover, it has set up a number of institutions, particularly the Council of Foreign Ministers and the Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna, whose task is to support the Council in reducing the risk of conflict. The CSCE is the overarching framework for the European process, which links the potential and the willingness to cooperate of Western Europe and North America with the dynamic reform processes and development needs in the countries of Eastern Europe, and thus contributes to Europe's internal stabilization.

IV

The «Treaty on the Final Settlement with respect to Germany», as the 2+4 Treaty is correctly known, contains a multiplicity of elements. I can mention only a few of them at this point:

- confirmation of the definitive nature of the borders of the united Germany,
- reduction of the personnel strength of the German armed forces, anticipating a solution on this issue for all other participating states in the abovementioned ongoing Vienna follow-on negotiations,
- withdrawal of Soviet forces from Germany by the end of 1994,
- the right of the united Germany to belong to alliances of its own choice in other words the Atlantic Alliance,
- establishment of full German sovereignty over its internal and external affairs.

In this context I should like to emphasize four respects in which the second German unification differs fundamentally from the first, which took place in 1871:

- The first aspect is the abovementioned confirmation of the definitive nature of the German borders. For the first time in history, the German state is saturated; a German irredenta is no longer conceivable against the background of the experiences of German history.
- For the first time, Germans will have both unity and freedom. In future the German nation-state will house the freedom-based institutions of the Basic Law.

- For the first time, the Germans have united not against the wishes of their neighbours, but with their agreement. Our neighbours accept the united Germany as a necessary element of the European System. The task of the new German nation-state, transcending its separate existence, involves integration into a larger European commonwealth of the future — the European Political Community.
- And finally, the German nation-state is irrevocably linked to the West. The revolution in the former GDR in particular has shown the whole world that the people in Eastern Germany, too, wish to belong not only to the economic order, but also to the political culture of the West.

V

After this digression, I should like now to consider, on a personal basis, the future of conventional arms control in Europe. This is referred to in the Charter of Paris, which states that consultations should be held with a view to «establishing by 1992, from the conclusion of the Helsinki Follow-up Meeting, new negotiations on disarmament and confidence and security building open to all participating states». The difference between these post-Helsinki negotiations, which take place within the context of a new, cooperative Europe, and previous arms control can be clearly seen in the mandate, adopted in Vienna in January 1988, for the CFE negotiations. There the aim of the negotiations is described as “the establishment of a stable and secure balance of forces ... at lower levels”, the priority task being “the elimination of the capability for launching surprise attack and for initiating large-scale offensive action”.

Today, there is no longer an overwhelming risk such as that linked to the capability of the Warsaw Pact to launch surprise attack and large-scale offensives. Similarly, stability can no longer be based on the previous arms control objective of parity. This does not mean, however, that arms control has become redundant. Rather, it must adapt to changing conditions.

Let us not forget that, as Nitze said, arms control was from the outset concerned with the stabilization of the military balance through arms control agreements, the establishment of instruments for crisis management and the improvement of political relations by reducing military risks.

Even in the context of a cooperative Europe, the importance of these objectives has not changed. The only novelty lies in the multidimensional character of European security. Nonetheless it is true that the Soviet Union as a whole continues to possess a massive conventional and nuclear military machine, in addition to which there is a lack of certainty regarding future internal developments there.

Arms control will in future have to find responses to these changed of the European security situation. It will therefore need to adopt a more comprehensive approach and flexible methods, and in particular will have to make use not only of legal but also, if not primarily, of political agreements.

Moreover, a case can be made for including issues which up to now have not been seen as the object of arms control properly speaking, e.g., questions of arms exports or military strategy. I also regard the following points as important:

Major importance will continue to attach to the dialogue character of arms control, that is, the possibility of establishing greater mutual understanding on security and military questions by negotiating on concrete arms control proposals. Henry Kissinger recently underlined this by pointing out that it was necessary to remain in contact with the Soviet military leadership, which is gaining in power and influence. This dialogue function is just as vital for eliminating the fear of a security vacuum harboured by the new democracies, who for the time being stay outside the Western system.

Great attention will have to be paid to regional conflict potentials and the possibility of regional solutions. In this context the emphasis should be on confidence-building and cooperation on the basis of agreements, in which only countries from the regions concerned participate.

Non-European aspects will acquire increasing weight. This will also entail growing interest in confidence-building and cooperation the territory of participants beyond Europe. One example of this is the importance which European states attach to the speedy resumption of the Open Skies negotiations in view of the withdrawal of huge Soviet arsenals to areas east of the Urals.

Finally, a capability is required to deal with conflict situations on an ad hoc basis ⁽¹⁾. This is why the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) set up in

⁽¹⁾ In the future, ethnic struggles constitute most likely risks for conflict in Europe.

Vienna under the Charter of Paris is so significant. For this reason, a close link should be maintained between it and the body conducting the post-Helsinki negotiations.

For the above reasons, a mandate like the Vienna one, geared to one single comprehensive negotiation and one narrowly defined objective, seems scarcely conceivable for the post-Helsinki phase. Rather, it must take the form of a broad framework leaving room for manifold initiatives. One might also consider establishing a standing conference like the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, as a forum for discussing issues connected with European security, but also for concrete negotiations.

The new arms control forum will be based on the principle of equality among all participating states — irrespective of membership of security alliances — and will represent another key element of the abovementioned European security architecture.

Finally, allow me to look at a few specific aspects of conventional arms control.

Further reductions should continue to be an objective, in view of the armaments still remaining in Europe after the implementation of the CFE Treaty (40 000 battle tanks, 40 000 artillery pieces, 60 000 armoured combat vehicles, 13 600 combat aircraft and 4000 attack helicopters). Nonetheless, account will have to be taken of the new negotiation problems occurring in a forum made up of individual states, and of increased time spans. Following the breakup of the Warsaw Pact, new national security interests have formed in Central and Eastern Europe. At the end of last year this led to a cautious outlook on extensive arms reductions in the individual Eastern states, and made it necessary to establish CFE ceilings for four of the five weapon categories at levels above those of actual Western stocks. Not until a certain stability has been achieved, and depending on future overall developments in Europe, are arms reductions likely to become a realistic possibility once again.

The CFE Treaty contains no measures directly geared to qualitative arms limitation, so that the scope for modernizing weapon systems limited by the Treaty remains largely unrestricted. Efforts have been made, however, to take account of perceivable technological developments in the agreed definitions. Thus the given definitions for battle tanks and attack helicopters clearly show the attempt made to do justice to the complexity of current technological developments. In the future it might, however, be possible to develop new equipment which circumvents certain parameters laid down in the CFE

Treaty. One of the tasks of the joint Consultative Group established by the Treaty is to keep possible developments in this field under control by amending definitions as appropriate; however, such decisions must be carried unanimously. Generally speaking, it is impossible to predict future developments in arms technology, and thus to define and limit them in agreements. Further limitations can be negotiated only when new technological developments become important for arms production. In the last analysis, the avoidance of a qualitative arms race depends on overall political developments, particularly the commitment of all those concerned and the future of relations between the West and the Soviet Union.

As regards further transparency and confidence-building measures, it can be said to begin with that the intensive verification system enshrined in the CFE Treaty establishes an unprecedented degree of military transparency in Europe. This verification system must now be developed further in a practical context; I see little need for negotiations on further arrangements. There are still deficiencies in the area of confidence-building in the case of military activities such as exercises, movements of units and the call-up of reservists, but it should be possible to agree on pertinent regulations before the Helsinki Follow-up Meeting to be held in the coming spring. Another area capable of development is the procedure agreed in Vienna at the end of last year for exchanges of information on plans for the deployment of major weapon and equipment systems.

One interesting, future-oriented aspect concerns the restructuring of conventional forces into a defensive direction. The limitation of the most important types of conventional major equipment under the CFE Treaty can be regarded as a first step in this direction. While it is true that the limitation of other equipment such as support systems (bridge construction equipment, mine detection equipment) or conventional missiles would strengthen the defensive orientation of forces, it would, on the other hand, require intensive negotiations yielding only marginal returns. Preference should therefore be given to covering the areas which are important for forces build-up potential, that is, logistics, peace-time strength, deployment and military transport, through confidence-building and restrictive measures. These could include, for example, arrangements on actual forces levels troop deployment at borders, increased openness regarding the call-up and training of reservists, and regulations regarding the ratio between active and cadre units. Limitations on logistic supplies and military transport capacities could also be considered.

All the above would emphasize the aspect of the shift towards defensive structures.

Thus there are still many important, difficult tasks to be met by conventional arms control in Europe. We must be clear about the fact that the central task is ultimately to safeguard peace. Thus we can also apply a well-known advertising slogan to arms control in Europe: "The road is our destination".

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