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The CFE Treaty: Building European Security

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Conclusions:

- The November 17th final implementation date for the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty is in jeopardy due to Russian insistence that they cannot abide by the limitations imposed on their forces in the treaty's "flank zone." Domestic political factors in the West and in Russia, rather than purely foreign policy or military considerations, complicate finding a solution.
- Russian "flank zone" fixes, increasing the number of tanks, armored combat vehicles (ACV's) and artillery pieces allowed in the Caucasus, could be interpreted as significant thus allowing hardliners on both sides to insist on resubmitting the treaty to national legislatures for ratification.
- A proposed Western compromise permits more Russian equipment in the zone than originally allowed, but less than is there now. The objective is to find an interim solution until next Spring when a scheduled treaty review will allow a review of "flank zone" requirements and limitations in the context of the treaty as a whole.

Historical Context

The CFE Treaty, signed even as the Cold War ended, is without question the most comprehensive and complex conventional arms control accord in history. Treaty objectives include: 1) improving stability and security in Europe by creating balanced conventional forces; 2) decreasing levels of conventional armaments and equipment; and 3) precluding the capability for launching surprise attacks or large-scale offensive operations.

However, the dramatic changes in European politics that occurred between December 1988 and December 1991 altered the context of the agreement, almost immediately replacing its purposes with new requirements. CFE was of critical importance in the disengagement of the two military blocs, the demise of the Warsaw Pact, the repositioning of the Soviet Army to Soviet territory, and the creation of a security framework that allowed a united Germany to be perceived as less threatening. As the final date of implementation (November 17, 1995) approaches, the agreement is endangered by Russian insistence that they can no longer abide by the force limitations in the so-called "flank zone." CFE could thus

contribute to deterioration of Russia's relations with the West instead of helping build a new European security architecture.

The CFE Treaty

The CFE Treaty's 110 pages encompass 23 articles, several protocols, and two annexes. Two legally binding statements and four other political documents are also associated with the accord. The agreement limits five categories of weapons in the European territory of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Warsaw Pact (WTO). The area of the agreement is subdivided into geographic sub-zones intended to force relocation of Soviet forces eastward from the inter-German border and to prevent their concentration within the Soviet Union. A portion of southern Turkey is excluded from the treaty due to Turkish concerns about Syria and Iraq.

Despite the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the bloc-to-bloc character of the treaty will continue until at least the Review Conference in 1996. Overall limits for each alliance are: 20,000 main battle tanks; 30,000 ACV's; 20,000 artillery pieces; 6,800 combat aircraft (excluding trainers, strategic bombers, and land-based naval aircraft); and 2,000 attack helicopters. NATO and WTO have negotiated entitlements for its members consistent with these ceilings. At Tashkent on May 15, 1992, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the successor states negotiated limitations for each state. Additional adjustments were made upon the division of Czechoslovakia.

The treaty contains other specifications required of an agreement of this complexity--careful definitions, proper methods of verification, requirements for periodic exchanges of information, and establishment of the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) to monitor problems during implementation. Implementation proceeded in stages over the next 40 months, with each country reducing by 25 percent the first year, 60 percent by October 1994, and 100 percent by November 17, 1995. An additional 4 months (until March 1996) is allocated to verify residual levels, then a Review Conference will follow (probably May 1996).

All states met their reduction targets through October 1994 despite minor difficulties such as the ongoing war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. For almost 3 years, there was no evidence that any party tried to cheat or intentionally mislead inspection teams. The process also gave NATO opportunities to cooperate with Central and Eastern European states in arms control inspector training and transfer of data. Through September 1994 over 18,000 items of treaty limited equipment had been destroyed including 6,000 by the Russian Federation.

While the amount of equipment and geographic limitations imposed are important, they are still only a technical reflection of the strategic goals desired by both sides. Despite tremendous changes in the world since 1990, the treaty remains in the best interests of future European security for several reasons. First, the numerical limits and associated verification regimen reduce the pressure for a renewed arms race throughout the continent. Second, conventional deterrence is enhanced by expanding the "transparency" states have with each other's military forces, thus reducing the likelihood of accidental conflict. Third, the strict inspection and verification regimen insure compliance. This, coupled with information exchanges, ensures that all members have a great deal of predictability in forecasting the military forces of their neighbors. Lastly, by requiring all sides to live up to stringent requirements, the treaty establishes a clear momentum that may bear fruit in other areas. As a result the agreement is widely supported throughout the continent.

The "Flank" Problem

Despite the success to date, the final implementation of CFE by November is uncertain due to a growing disagreement between the Russian Federation and the West over the "flank zone." Article V of the treaty additionally restricts forces located in this zone (Figure 1). Russian forces are limited to 700 tanks, 1,280 artillery pieces, and 580 armored combat vehicles in active units for this area that includes the Leningrad and North Caucasus Military Districts. The Russian Federation is further allowed to place 600 tanks, 400 artillery pieces, and 800 ACV's in designated permanent storage sites (DPSS) in the northern portion of the flank (e.g., Leningrad Military District). This zone was created due to the insistence of Turkey and Norway, who did not want to see Soviet forces removed from the Central Region only to reappear on their borders.

The Russian Federation initially protested these limitations in a letter from President Yeltsin to President Clinton and other Western leaders in September 1993. Senior Russian officials argued even before the invasion of Chechnya that they would need roughly 400 additional tanks, 2,400 armored combat vehicles, and 800 artillery pieces above what the treaty allowed. These increases in the flanks would not, however, be in excess of Russian national entitlements. They further argued that the changed geostrategic situation invalidated the flank requirement and imposed upon the Russian Federation an unnecessary restriction on positioning forces on its own soil.

The Russians have proposed various solutions to this impasse in the JCG during the intervening two years. Most of these initiatives (e.g., the wholesale removal of Article V) would require a significant change to the treaty that might require the agreement to be resubmitted to national assemblies to be reratified--a prospect the West wishes to avoid. Furthermore, many Western states fear that any adjustment to the treaty before the Review Conference might result in a "flood" of proposed changes from East European states that could endanger the treaty as a whole.

Consequently, NATO has opposed Russian proposed "solutions" since September 1993 and steadfastly insisted that they live within the "flexibility of the treaty."

Turkey and Norway (the NATO countries most directly affected by any increase in Russian forces) have strongly opposed any concession. The Turks have even suggested that they might withdraw from CFE if Russian demands are met. Turkish opposition appears motivated more by political rather than military considerations. The suggested increase in Russian military strength in the North Caucasus does not create a major military threat to Turkey, particularly since Turkey continues to enjoy the NATO collective defense guarantee and will have larger, more modern forces after the CFE reduction period than it enjoyed in November 1990. Increased Russian forces do, however, pose a significant threat to the independence of the former members of the Soviet Union in the North Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan) that is contrary to Turkish foreign policy objectives.

RUSSIA

CFE ARTICLE V

Implications of the Ongoing Disagreement

The position of the Russian Federation reflects problems of domestic as well as foreign policy. Domestically, the various "players" in the Russian national security process (Ministry of Defense, General Staff, President, Foreign Ministry, and Ministry of Interior) have openly disagreed about Russian policy with the West. The aftermath of the Chechnya intervention and reactions to the NATO

bombing campaign in Bosnia suggest that "hardliners" led by General Grachev are now in the ascendancy. General Grachev publicly stated in April that Russia would not meet the flank limitations. Then Foreign Minister Kozyrev underscored Russia's requirement to defend the "near abroad"--including ethnic Russians living outside the confines of the Russian Federation. The issue was further complicated by the NATO air campaign against the Bosnian Serbs. Russian reaction to these attacks has been vitriolic. General Grachev has warned U.S. Secretary of Defense Perry that Russia's participation in Partnership for Peace and a whole series of arms control agreements are now endangered. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Kozyrev, long a supporter of the treaty among Russian elites, could be forced from office.

As the deadline looms, NATO has proposed redrawing the map that describes the military districts in the flank zone. This proposal would deal with Russia's basic tank and artillery problem and would meet them halfway on ACV's. The Western proposal in combination with concessions by the Russian Federation could form the basis of a compromise that would be acceptable to all 30 CFE parties. Additional efforts allowed by the treaty that would not require approval by national assemblies are possible. They include:

- encouraging Russia to negotiate with former members of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union having forces in the "flank" to secure a portion of their entitlement
- transferring additional Russian armored troop carriers to Interior Security Forces operating in the area
- using the allowed "temporary deployments" to justify increased force levels until the Review Conference can deal with the flank issue
- deferring the inclusion of treaty-limited equipment assigned to naval infantry and coastal defense forces until the final settlement with Ukraine over the Black Sea fleet (scheduled for late November)
- offering additional reassurances such as increased inspections, to Turkey and Norway

These options still require initiative by the Russian government. Consequently, the essence of the problem may lie in Russian domestic politics and attitude. CFE could fall victim to the ongoing struggle between democratic and nationalist forces in the Russian Federation. Can President Yeltsin appear in any way to be making a concession to the West that might be widely described as inimical to Russian national security interests? Will the Russian leadership adopt a conciliatory position that stresses the treaty's value despite problem areas? Or, will the Russian president declare his country's opposition to the flank limits and challenge NATO to react?

The treaty's failure could make successful passage of START II in the Duma or the U.S. Congress much more difficult, delay additional economic assistance to the Russian Federation, and have a profound effect upon NATO. Even if a compromise is found prior to the November deadline, NATO national legislatures may question the compromise. Western efforts to seek a solution should include a firm description of the consequences of non-compliance to the Russian Federation as well as respect for the security concerns not only of those countries most affected by the "flanks" but also the broader future of European security.

Recommendations:

Western and Russian leaders could redraw the map that describes the military districts in the flank zone. (This in combination with concessions by the Russian Federation could form the basis of a compromise. Although not a formal treaty amendment, a map realignment could, in some countries, require parliamentary approval.)

All sides should follow the existing treaty language allowing changes which would not require a treaty amendment and subsequent review by national legislatures.

The Russian Federation should secure a portion of the entitlement for forces allocated to former members of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union.

Russia could transfer troop carriers to interior security forces operating in the area.

Temporary deployments could cover increased force levels until the Review Conference.

Increased inspections would help assuage Norwegian and Turkish concerns.

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