

NEGOTIATING EUROPEAN SECURITY: Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions

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On October 30, 1980 Eastern and Western diplomats marked the seventh anniversary of negotiations in Vienna, Austria on the mutual reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe. For the past seven years representatives of twelve NATO nations and seven Warsaw Pact countries have been meeting weekly in the Redoutensaal of the Hapsburg, the palace of the Hapsburg Emperors of Austria, to discuss ways of contributing to a more stable military relationship between East and West and mechanisms for strengthening peace and security in Europe.¹

During the year prior to this anniversary, the mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) talks were characterized by more than the usual amount of activity. In December 1979 the West, in conjunction with NATO's decision to deploy new theater nuclear weapons in Europe, introduced a proposal for a simplified first phase agreement in Vienna. The following spring, both sides presented updated data, valid as of January 1, 1980, on the level of their armed forces in Central Europe. Beginning in July 1980 the East offered serious comments about the package of associated measures submitted by the West in December 1979, along with its proposal for a simplified first phase agreement. The East also introduced new proposals that scaled down the size of Soviet manpower reductions in a first phase. And the West agreed to consider this latest Eastern proposal once agreement has been reached on the essential elements of a first phase agreement, including data and associated measures. But, if success in arms control endeavors is defined as signing a formal agreement or treaty, the MBFR talks have failed: for, despite this flurry of activity in Vienna, an agreement was nowhere in sight.

MBFR is entering a critical period, one that will determine the future course ~ even, perhaps, the continued existence ~ of the negotiations. The absence of conclusive progress after seven years of talks, low visibility in the West European and, particularly, the American press, and a growing sense that political interest and momentum shifted in 1980-1981 at the Madrid review meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) away from MBFR to a follow-on meeting along the lines of the French proposal for a Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE), have collectively contributed to the atmosphere of crisis surrounding MBFR. That atmosphere has been intensified by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, President Carter's decision not to seek Senate ratification of the SALT II Treaty, and the political and economic upheaval in Poland (which is, by the way, a direct participant in the MBFR negotiations). Whether MBFR would ~ or even should ~ emerge from these challenges intact depended in large part on the willingness of Western participants to reassess their objectives, strategy, and negotiating tactics in Vienna ~ something that the West has not done since the negotiations began in October 1973.

This article has four objectives. The first is simply to indicate where the MBFR talks are and from whence they have come. The second is to summarize the negotiating principles that underlie the positions of East and West. The third is to outline the major outstanding issues that continue to block agreement in Vienna. And the fourth is to assess future prospects for MBFR, the relative merits of alternative forums for serious discussions about arms control in Europe, and the pressing need for an MBFR strategy.

BACKGROUND

When the MBFR negotiations were launched in 1973 they were viewed by participants and observers alike as a political component of detente, a price to be paid by the East for the West's agreement to enter into CSCE, or a means of delaying the unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).² No one involved in the preparatory stages of the talks had any illusions that the discussions would result in an early and significant reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe.

The opening of MBFR marked the introduction of a European dimension to what had been until then an essentially bilateral arms control process between the United States and the Soviet Union, epitomized by the SALT I agreement. When Presidents Nixon and Brezhnev, raised problems of European security in their joint statement of principles following the Moscow Summit in May 1972, West Europeans expressed concern about the possible compromise of their interests in a bilateral forum.³ MBFR provided a multilateral framework within which Allied security concerns would figure prominently, while the bloc-to-bloc nature of the talks assured U.S. influence.

Characterized by West German Chancellor Willy Brandt as "a proving ground for detente,"⁴ MBFR was seen as a way to test the seriousness of the Soviet Union's commitment to detente. With the groundwork for detente laid in the signing of a treaty normalizing relations with the FRG in 1971, the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin, and the SALT I agreement, the Soviets clearly wanted to pursue the political and economic aspects of detente. One of the most compelling Soviet proposals during this period was for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, designed by them to focus on the nonmilitary aspects of detente. Although Brandt's Ostpolitik had resulted in the acceptance of the political status quo in Europe, the West was not prepared to increase the pace of detente without serious consideration of its military dimension. Thus, in an effort both to resist further Soviet political demands and to test its seriousness of purpose, the West proposed talks to reduce the level of military confrontation in Central Europe. The West's price for its agreement to proceed with CSCE was Soviet agreement to pursue MBFR.

MBFR served yet another purpose for the U.S. In May 1967 NATO announced the withdrawal of 35,000 U.S. troops and a British brigade from Central Europe. The Federal Republic of Germany followed suit with an announcement of plans to cut its defense budget.⁵ The pressures for unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces from the FRG, led by Senator Mike Mansfield, escalated, threatening a major disengagement of U.S. forces from Europe. MBFR provided the Nixon Administration with an argument for delay — why proceed with unilateral withdrawals of U.S. forces from Germany when those forces could be used as bargaining chips in negotiations designed to reduce the level of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe? Although this argument was designed primarily for domestic consumption, it was also used effectively to influence the Allies to maintain their force levels in the face of pressures from their publics to cut defense budgets.

NEGOTIATING PRINCIPLES

Although the West had pressed for negotiations to begin in the fall of 1973, it entered the discussions with no clear strategy for reaching any agreements. Western participants did agree, however, that the East enjoyed a geographical advantage and superiority in military manpower over NATO forces in Central Europe. Western participants also agreed that a significant imbalance between the forces of East and West was potentially destabilizing.

Thus the West, from the beginning, has specified as its objectives in MBFR approximate parity or equality in the military manpower of the two sides in the NATO Guidelines Area (NGA). Parity has been defined as

acceptance of a common collective ceiling on the military manpower of each side after reductions of approximately 700,000 for ground forces and 900,000 for ground and air forces combined.

The West has also argued that East and West must agree on a data base covering the forces of both sides, by which to identify agreed starting points for reductions, the size of reductions necessary to reach the common collective ceiling, and any additional residual subceilings. The West contends that, without an agreement on the data base, a treaty involving manpower reductions and limitations is impossible.

Another important principle in the West's negotiating position has been that each group of participants would assure the other, in a collective fashion, that the agreed overall manpower levels obtained following reductions (i.e., the common collective ceiling) would not be exceeded. The West also believes that, due to geographical advantages enjoyed by the Soviet Union (i.e., its proximity to the NGA and the resulting ease of reinforcement from the Western Military Districts), there should be no sublimits on forces in the area of reductions.

The West's position on the place of armament reductions in MBFR has changed over time. The initial Western proposal, tabled in November 1973, called for the reduction of ground force manpower on both sides to the common collective ceiling of 700,000 men in two phases. In the first phase, the U.S. would withdraw 29,000 men, leaving their equipment behind. The Soviet Union would withdraw a tank army, consisting of 68,000 men and 1,700 tanks. That position was modified in December 1975, when the West added a "sweetener" to its earlier proposal, namely, that the U.S. would withdraw 1,000 nuclear warheads, 54 F-4 nuclear-capable aircraft, and 36 Pershing ballistic missile launchers, in addition to the 29,000 men. Known as "Option III," this initiative introduced the prospect of reductions and limitations on Western as well as Eastern armaments. A further modification of the West's position on armaments in MBFR occurred in December 1979 when ~ in conjunction with NATO's decision to deploy new theater nuclear weapons in Europe ~ the West presented a new proposed for a simplified first-phase agreement which deferred discussion of any armaments issues to a second phase.

Like the West, the East entered the talks without a clear strategy. This is not surprising, since Eastern motivations for entering MBFR were entirely different from those of the West. The East merely agreed to "go along" with MBFR in exchange for Western participation in CSCE, while the West initiated the process both for domestic political reasons and to add a military dimension to detente in Europe.

Eastern participants, based on "official" data on their forces, have claimed that parity already exists in Central Europe and, thus, that the West's demands for asymmetrical manpower reductions on the part of the East are merely thinly disguised efforts to achieve military advantage. Based on the assumption that parity already existed, the East initially pressed for equal percentage manpower reductions (amounting to approximately 17 percent of the forces of each side) taken in three annual stages, rather than for reductions to a common collective ceiling.

Eastern participants have also argued that manpower reductions could be taken without an agreed data base on the forces of East and West. Assuming that parity exists, both sides would take their manpower reductions from essentially the same level and thus accept limitations on their forces at the same residual level. Thus, from the East's perspective, the "data discrepancy" is a bogus issue which the West has used merely as a negotiating tactic to postpone serious discussion of elements of an initial agreement designed to reduce the military manpower of both sides in Central Europe.

The East, like the West, has called for a mechanism to control possible expansion of the forces of both sides following manpower reductions. Unlike the West, however, the East proposed what, in effect, amounted to

national ceilings on the forces of all direct participants. This principle reflected Eastern concerns about possible peacetime expansion of the Bundeswehr, which could occur under the West's collective limitations formulation. The fact that certain NATO countries (e.g., the U.K., Belgium, and the Netherlands, as well as the U.S.) were under pressure to reduce the size of their active forces in the early 1970's, and the perception that only the FRG would be capable of compensating for these reductions certainly must have fueled Eastern concerns.

In comparison to the West, the East's position on the place of armaments reductions in MBFR has been consistent. The East's first proposal, tabled in November 1973, which called for equal percentage reductions by both sides, stipulated that all types of forces and armaments — ground, air, and nuclear would be included. The East has maintained the position that armaments should be included along with whatever manpower reductions are taken in both first and second phases of reductions; at a minimum, forces departing from the area of reductions would take their equipment with them.

The early stages of the negotiations thus revealed disagreement between the two sides on several major principles. First, East and West disagreed about the nature of the military balance in Central Europe and on the ultimate objective of the negotiations. The East argued that "balance" already existed and that equal percentage reductions in the military manpower of both sides should be the aim of the negotiations; the West argued that the East possessed military superiority and that genuine parity in the form of a common collective ceiling on the military manpower of both sides should be the objective of the talks. Second, East and West disagreed on the necessity of an agreed data base for the forces of both sides before reductions could be taken. The West argued that agreed data was required to calculate the size of reductions necessary to reach the common collective ceiling as well as to monitor limitations on manpower following reductions; the East claimed that data agreement was unnecessary, and merely a tactic adopted by the West to delay serious discussions of force reductions. Third, East and West disagreed on the nature of the limitations which would operate on the forces of both sides following reductions. The West argued for the principle of collectivity, that is, for a collective or overall limit on the forces of each side, with sublimits only on U.S. and Soviet forces; the East pressed for national limitations on the forces of all direct participants. Fourth, East and West initially disagreed on the place of armaments reductions and limitations in MBFR. The West's position on this issue vacillated until, in 1979, it proposed postponing discussion of armaments to a second phase of negotiations; the East pressed consistently for withdrawal of armaments with personnel.

In the course of the negotiations, the East has made concessions, in principle, on three of these four issues. In June 1978, Eastern participants accepted the idea of a common collective ceiling and parity at 700,000 ground forces as the objective of the talks. At the same time, however, they made this concession contingent upon Western acceptance of Eastern data on Warsaw Pact forces, data which the West considers inaccurate. More recently, on November 13, 1980, Eastern participants apparently abandoned their demand for national ceilings and proposed instead a collective freeze on the forces of all direct participants on each side for a three-year interim period. Nevertheless, the East argued that data already tabled in the negotiations provided a sufficient basis for such a collective freeze. Although the East's current position on armaments reductions and limitations is less clear, it seems to have accepted the Western proposal to postpone discussion of armaments to a second phase. Despite these concessions in principle, fundamental differences remain over the necessity of agreed data for an initial MBFR agreement.

CURRENT NEGOTIATION POSITIONS

In an effort to move the negotiations forward, the West introduced a proposal for a simplified first-phase 6 agreement on December 20, 1979. That proposal called for the reduction of 13,000 U.S. and 30,000 Soviet ground forces in a first phase, based on agreed data on U.S. and Soviet ground force manpower in the NGA. The

issue of armaments reductions, long a stumbling block to agreement, is postponed to a second phase of negotiations, in an effort to simplify discussions in Phase I. In addition, both sides would agree to a package of associated measures ~ or confidence-building measures designed to increase confidence as well as to help monitor provisions of the agreement.

In connection with a first-phase agreement, all direct participants would commit themselves to negotiations in a second phase and to cooperation toward resolution of the remaining data discrepancy, through agreement on data for the ground and air force manpower of both sides in the NGA. Each side would also agree to reduce its ground force manpower by the amount required to reach the common collective ceiling on ground forces set at approximately 700,000 men, based on agreement on overall data. Moreover, other provisions designed to ensure the security of flank participants could be negotiated.

The Eastern response to the West's December 1979 proposals was not long in coming. Initially, Eastern participants charged the West with having taken a step backward in the negotiations, pointing to the fact that the December proposals reduced the size of Phase I reductions by the U.S. to 13,000 men, and eliminated armaments reductions. The East tabled a more detailed response on July 10, 1980, in which it proposed a further adjustment in the size of U.S. and Soviet reductions in Phase I. Referring to Brezhnev's announcement on October 6, 1979, that the Soviet Union would withdraw up to 20,000 men from the German Democratic Republic within one year, and later claims by the Soviet Union that these withdrawals had been completed, the East proposed a reduction of 20,000 Soviet ground forces in Phase I in exchange for the reduction of 13,000 U.S. ground forces. Eastern participants claim that, in effect, this amounts to the reduction of 40,000 Soviets for only 13,000 Americans. For the first time, the East also indicated it could accept some form of associated measures ("special procedures," in its words) as a means of guaranteeing to the West that Eastern forces once withdrawn from the NGA would not be reintroduced.

At the same time, the East reiterated elements of its previous proposals, namely, that all direct participants must commit themselves in Phase I to take substantial, commensurate reductions to the common collective ceiling on ground forces in Phase II and that each participant's reductions must be approximately proportional to the total strength of its forces in the NGA.

On October 2, 1980, Western participants responded to the East's suggestion that a further adjustment should be made in the size of U.S. and Soviet reductions in Phase I. The West's position is that, once agreement has been reached on the main elements of a Phase I agreement, including data and associated measures, it would be willing to consider the size of U.S. and Soviet reductions in Phase I. This was followed on November 13, 1980, by an Eastern proposal for a collective freeze on the forces of all direct participants on each side for a three-year interim period, based on data already tabled in the negotiations. Figure 1 illustrates the current negotiating positions of East and West.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES

There are three outstanding issues which have created obstacles to a first-phase agreement in MBFR. These issues are the "data discrepancy," the nature of limitations on residual forces, and the role of associated measures for verification and confidence building.

The Data Discrepancy

In November 1973 the West introduced its estimates of NATO and Warsaw Pact ground forces in the NGA, as well as separate figures for U.S. and Soviet ground forces in the area. Western figures revealed that there

were 925,000 Warsaw Pact ground force personnel in the NGA, 460,000 of which were Soviet. The West stated that there were 777,000 NATO ground force personnel in the NGA, 193,000 of which were Americans.¹⁰

The East presented no data of its own until June 1976, when it tabled figures on its ground and air forces in the NGA which it described as valid for January 1, 1976 ~ 805,000 ground, 182,300 air, 987,300 total. In December 1976, the West revised its earlier estimates

CURRENT NEGOTIATING POSITIONS

NATO

WARSAW PACT

Reductions

Phase I

US reduces 13,000 ground force personnel, two-thirds in units and subunits.

USSR reduces 30,000 ground force personnel in three divisions.

Phase II

NATO and WP reduce to common collective ceiling of about 700,000 ground forces within a combined ground and air common collective ceiling of approximately 900,000 men.

Limitations

US reduces 13,000 ground force personnel. East demands that at least a portion of the US reductions be in the form of a brigade.

USSR reduces 20,000 ground force personnel.

In Phase I, all direct participants commit themselves to take substantial commensurate reductions to the common collective ceiling in Phase II, reductions which are approximately proportional to the total strength of its forces in NGA; separate ceiling on air forces set at about 200,000 men. Following Phase I, sublimity on US and Soviet ground forces at their residual levels: once agreement has been reached on overall data, institute a collective freeze on the forces of all direct participants prior to reductions in Phase II.

Associated Measures

Agreement to the following package of associated measures in Phase I and their extension in some form in Phase II:

1. Prior notification of out-of-garrison activity.
2. Exchange of observers at notified activities.
3. Prior notification of movements of ground forces of direct participants into the area of reductions.
4. Inspection.
5. Declared exit/entry points and observers.
6. Exchange of information.
7. Non-interference with national technical means.

Plus establishment of a consultative mechanism and provisions to protect the security of flank states.

Following Phase I, sublimity on US and Soviet ground forces at their residual levels, a collective freeze on the forces of all direct participants prior to reductions in Phase II.

Agreement to some form of "special procedures" to guarantee that forces once withdrawn would not be reintroduced.

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of NATO ground forces and provided estimates of the air force personnel, updated to January 1, 1976. Figure 2 presents Eastern and Western data on NATO and Warsaw Pact forces in the NGA, valid as of January 1, 1976.

Comparison of Eastern and Western data on Warsaw Pact forces in the NGA reveals a sizable discrepancy. With respect to ground force personnel, Western estimates of Warsaw Pact forces are more than 150,000 men greater than Eastern estimates. The discrepancy with respect to Pact air force personnel is less, only 17,700 men. These differences are noted in Figure 3.

The implications of the data discrepancy, as these differences have been labeled, for the size of manpower reductions required to reach the common collective ceiling on military manpower set at approximately 700,000 for ground force personnel and 900,000 for ground and air forces combined in the West's position, are clear. From the West's perspective, the East would have to reduce more than 260,000 ground force personnel to reach the common collective ceiling of 700,000 men. Based on Eastern estimates of Warsaw Pact forces, the required Eastern reductions would be far less, only 105,000 men. This is the aux of the data issue.

FIGURE 3 IS OMITTED FROM THIS FORMATTED DOCUMENT

In March 1978 the East and West presented disaggregated data on their forces which revealed that the discrepancy between Eastern and Western estimates was greatest in Soviet and Polish forces.¹¹ Since that time, the West has made a major effort to clarify the reasons for the discrepancy and to obtain Eastern cooperation in resolving it. The East proposed a data update in February 1980. Based on the assumption that data tabled in 1976 were no longer valid for negotiations in 1980, the East proposed that each side update data for its own forces in the NGA as of January 1, 1980. The update took place in June 1980 and revealed the same magnitude of discrepancy ~ approximately 150,000 men between Eastern and Western estimates of Warsaw Pact ground force personnel in the NGA.¹²

The reason for the continuing data discrepancy may lie in the application of different counting rules by East and West, which results in the West counting certain types of personnel on the Warsaw Pact side as active duty military manpower which are not counted by the East. From the beginning of the talks, the West has applied a uniform counting rule in its estimates; that is, all personnel wearing army uniforms are counted as ground force personnel. The East, in contrast, has applied a functional counting rule; that is, all personnel performing functions

normally assigned to ground forces are counted as ground force personnel.

Western participants have argued that the solution to the data discrepancy lies in both sides providing additional data on their forces at a lower level of disaggregation, namely, divisional data, and in an extended discussion of the counting rules which each side has applied in the generation of its estimates. The East, for its part, claims that the West is simply using the data issue to extract information about the structure of Warsaw Pact forces. Since the West is unable to guarantee to the East that the next stage of disaggregation will provide the information required to resolve the data discrepancy, that effort — in the East's view — is a useless exercise which merely distracts attention from negotiating the elements of a Phase I agreement.

Limitations on Residual Forces

As a means of dealing with possible circumvention of an MB FR agreement through the reintroduction or the replacement of withdrawn forces, both East and West have proposed measures to limit the size of residual forces in the NGA. From the beginning of the negotiations, the West has called for collective ceilings on military manpower under which each group of participants would be responsible for assuring collectively that agreed manpower levels following reductions would not be exceeded. In addition, reflecting the geographical proximity to the reductions area of the USSR and the enormous military capabilities of the USSR as well as of the U.S., the West has called for a specific sublimit or subceiling on Soviet and U.S. military manpower in the NGA.

In 1976 the East began to charge the West with trying to exclude the Bundeswehr from reductions and limitations.¹³ This objective was evident — in the East's view — from the Western proposals for collective ceilings on military manpower for NATO and the Warsaw Pact and subceilings on U.S. and Soviet forces, which would result in limits on Soviet forces without specific limits on the Bundeswehr. In practice, this means that nearly 50 percent of NATO forces in the NGA — the proportional contribution of the Bundeswehr — would remain free of specific limitations.

On June 28, 1979, the East accepted the principle of collectivity, but at the same time called for each direct participant to reduce proportionally — i.e., according to the percentage of its contribution to its Alliance — and to make public these reduction commitments before signing a first-phase agreement. Moreover, the East called for national ceilings on the forces of all direct participants following reductions. 14

The implications of the Eastern position on proportional reductions for the size of reductions required to reach the common collective ceiling are clear. The FRG, which accounts for nearly 50 percent of NATO's forces in the NGA, would be required to reduce about 45,000 men — nearly 50 percent of the 91,000-man Western reduction commitment necessary to reach in Phase II the common collective ceiling of approximately 700,000 ground force personnel. The U.S., which accounts for about 25 percent of NATO's forces in the NGA, would be required to reduce about 23,000 men total (13,000 in Phase I, the rest in Phase II). The Eastern plan for "proportional reductions" thus requires major reductions in the size of the Bundeswehr.

Perhaps even more significant are the implications of the Eastern position on national ceilings for NATO force planning. In the West's view, the East's desire to impose national ceilings on the military manpower of all direct participants in the reductions area would decrease NATO's flexibility in adjusting the national composition of its forces in the NGA. Under the national ceiling formula, for example, decreases in the level of active duty military manpower of one NATO member could not be "made up" by

other Western direct participants. As a result, reductions by one participant would drop NATO below the common collective ceiling. In effect, the presence of national ceilings within the common ceiling would nullify the concept of collectivity, strictly limit each direct participant's forces in the NGA, and deny NATO flexibility to adjust the composition of its forces.

On March 9, 1979, during a Bundestag debate on security questions, FRG Chancellor Helmut Schmidt put forward a suggestion which he termed a "personal idea" that, in the context of MBFR, no direct participant would maintain or make up more than half of the forces of its Alliance in Central Europe. Widely touted as the "50 percent limitation proposal," Schmidt's suggestion implied FRG willingness to consider de facto rather than explicit limitations on the Bundeswehr. It is unclear whether Schmidt intended this proposal as a formal initiative in MBFR. During his address before the Bundestag, Schmidt commented that it is up to NATO alone, within the collectivity framework, to determine the national composition of its forces in the NGA. This suggests that the 50 percent limitation could be the result of an internal Alliance agreement, rather than an element in a formal MBFR agreement with the East. Whether viewed as a formal initiative or as a personal suggestion, Schmidt's proposal represented an effort at compromise between the East's desire for national ceilings and the West's commitment to collectivity.

The East maintained its firm position on national ceilings until July 10, 1980, when it proposed a mechanism similar to Schmidt's 50 percent limitation idea for maintaining the collective level of the forces of both sides following reductions. The East suggested that the numbers of troops of any one participant should not exceed 50 percent of the overall collective levels of 900,000 men for each Alliance following reductions to the common ceiling. 15

On November 13, 1980, the East again proposed a collective freeze on the forces of direct participants for a three-year interim period, based on data already tabled in the negotiations. The Soviet Ambassador to MBFR billed this new formulation of the Eastern freeze proposal as a concession to the West because, "what is now required is no longer separate commitments by the individual states not to increase their troop strength, but only a collective commitment which would ensure for both pacts a certain elbow room." ¹⁶ Although the idea of a collective freeze between the phases has been a central element of the Western negotiating position, the West has made agreement to a freeze contingent on resolution of the data discrepancy. Since the East's data on its forces already tabled in the negotiations is inaccurate in the West's view, this Eastern movement may be little more than a concession in principle. The West has yet to respond to this Eastern proposal.

Associated Measures

From the beginning of the negotiations, the West has insisted that more than manpower reductions are required to ensure military stability in Central Europe. Associated measures are needed to monitor withdrawals and to ensure that withdrawn forces are not reintroduced or replaced. Confidence-building measures, such as prior notification of the movement of forces out-of-garrison and the right to send observers to maneuvers, are required to enhance stability by reducing the capability to launch a surprise attack.

In its proposals of November 1973, the East argued that national technical means of verification (widely interpreted as satellite photography) are sufficient to verify an MBFR agreement and that negotiated verification measures are simply an excuse for Western spying. As to the need for confidence-building measures in MBFR, the East has insisted that CSCE or some other pan-European conference is the appropriate forum for discussions on this subject.

In response to the East's charges that negotiated verification measures are designed to extract information about the structure and activities of its forces, the West has argued that other means of verification are needed to cover the reductions area, especially when national technical means are rendered ineffective due to poor weather conditions. Moreover, the West believes that confidence-building measures in MBFR would complement rather than substitute for similar measures negotiated in the CSCE (or similar) framework.

On December 20, 1979, the West, in conjunction with its proposal for simplified first-phase agreement in MBFR, introduced a specific package of associated measures designed to aid verification and increase confidence in Central Europe. These measures involve prior notification of out-of-garrison activity, exchange of observers at notified activities, prior notification of movements of ground forces of direct participants into the area of reductions, inspection, declared exit/entry points and observers, exchange of information, and noninterference with national technical means. In addition, the West proposed establishment of a consultative mechanism to monitor post-reduction limitations.¹⁷

Perhaps the most controversial element of the Western package of associated measures is the requirement that the first two measures (prior notification and observers) should apply not only within the reductions area, but throughout Europe, including a significant portion of the western USSR.¹⁸ Until December 1979, the negotiations took as given the boundaries of the reductions area. The Western associated-measures proposals raised an issue which the East claimed had been resolved during the preparatory talks, namely, the limited geographic nature of the reductions area.

What this proposal to extend the area of application of associated measures means for Eastern and, particularly, Soviet interests is clear. Although similar confidence-building measures agreed to in the CSCE framework, including prior notification of major military maneuvers and exchange of observers, might extend to Soviet territory, they might also be more voluntary, less mandatory than similar measures negotiated in the MBFR framework, which would involve legally binding, treaty obligations.

Despite their earlier claims that associated measures of any sort are unnecessary to verify an MBFR agreement, Eastern representatives, in the spring of 1980, indicated they would be willing to discuss "special procedures" to guarantee that forces once withdrawn would not be reintroduced.⁹ However, the East has yet to propose its own package of such "special procedures" for MBFR.

Future Prospects, Alternative Forums, And the Need for an MBFR Strategy

As Eastern and Western participants enter the eighth year of discussions about mutual and balanced force reductions in Central Europe, they do so with increasing pessimism concerning the future of their joint endeavor. The reasons for this pessimism are multiple and complex. The absence of demonstrable progress on the specifics of the talks, including resolution of the data discrepancy, the critical question of the nature of limitations on residual forces, and the role of associated measures for verification and confidence-building means that it is unrealistic to expect an agreement in MBFR in the near term. Progress toward an agreement requires that

the East make a political-level decision to move toward the Western position on the critical issues of data and associated measures ~ a prospect which most observers of the negotiations view as unlikely at present.

In the West, the pressures for unilateral withdrawal of forces from Europe which, at least in part, provided the impetus for U.S. entry into MBFR seem to have subsided, leading to the conclusion that MBFR may have outlived its usefulness. Moreover, some critics argue that the negotiations have become increasingly irrelevant to the critical military problem facing the West in Central Europe, namely, defending Europe against a Soviet blitzkrieg attack.²¹ This is because the long-term Western objective in the talks — a common collective ceiling on military manpower in the NGA - puts the West at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the East due to structural and geographical asymmetries. It is not the level at which the ceiling is set that prejudices the West, according to this argument, but the existence of a common ceiling that puts Western forces in an unfavorable position should a war of maneuver occur, given Soviet abilities to reinforce and concentrate forces much faster than the West.²²

The pessimism reflected in these specific criticisms of MBFR has been compounded by the emerging belief that in the future, the U.S. should expect arms control to do less rather than more in support of our national security interests.²³ (By less is generally meant the negotiation of narrow-gauge agreements of limited duration which interfere less with force improvement efforts.) This general principle has given rise to the suggestion that the U.S. focus on the use rather than the size of military forces in Central Europe — i.e., focus on confidence-building measures. In the MBFR context, this means much greater emphasis on associated measures and much less on the size of U.S. and Soviet manpower reductions in the near term.

It also suggests that the French-proposed Conference on Disarmament in Europe may provide a better forum in which to negotiate future European security issues.²⁴ Should such a meeting emerge from the CSCE Review Conference in Madrid, it could provide an alternative to the more geographically and structurally limited Vienna talks. This is because the French proposal calls for the negotiation of confidence-building measures in a first phase which would apply "from the Atlantic to the Urals," and thus cover a significant part of the western Soviet Union, territory which is not covered in the MBFR talks. It also provides for coverage of Soviet forces in Hungary and other Pact forces (e.g., Bulgaria). In theory at least, confidence-building measures in CDE such as prior notification of out-of-garrison activities could decrease the risk of surprise attack further by applying to more Soviet forces on all Soviet territory in Europe, not simply Soviet forces in Eastern Europe.

Moreover, from the standpoint of political acceptability, the widening of the area in a post-Madrid forum could respond to concerns expressed repeatedly by the FRG that its territory not become a special arms control zone in Europe.

Those who argue the advantages of a post-Madrid forum for negotiating European security propose a transition from MBFR to CDE through the negotiation of a simplified Phase I agreement in MBFR along the lines of the current Western position in Vienna — which would allow both sides to claim success and permit the parties to move into a negotiation about confidence-building measures in a post-Madrid forum.²⁵ Since the manpower reductions called for by this approach are "modest," so the argument goes, they would not damage the West's security. Yet the reduction of some forces, however token or symbolic, provides both East and West with a successful conclusion to MBFR.

But there are problems associated with this strategy. In the first place, a post-Madrid conference to discuss confidence-building measures may not emerge from the discussion of new proposals during the second half of

the CSCE Review Conference. The CSCE agenda calls for review of the French- proposed CD E, among others, but there are no assurances that, before the Review Conference adjourns in mid-July or later, the 35 participants in Madrid will approve a mandate for further discussion of confidence-building measures. To transfer hopes for negotiating European security from MB FR to a post-Madrid forum which is not yet a reality is a risky proposition, and will continue to be so until we know the outcome of the CSCE Review Conference. And, even if a post-Madrid conference emerges in 1981 or 1982, there is no guarantee that militarily significant and mandatory confidence- building measures could be negotiated in a broader forum. Thus, in practice, efforts to negotiate militarily significant confidence-building measures in a post-Madrid forum may not decrease the risk of surprise attack. Moreover, it is not clear that the "modest" manpower reductions and residual limitations called for in proposals to transition from MB FR to CD E through the negotiation of a simplified Phase agreement in Vienna are compatible with Western defense objectives.²⁶

During the past year, it has become fashionable to argue that arms control efforts should support force improvements, and that narrow- gauge arms control agreements with limited objectives are the best means to that end. In the near term, the West should not become involved in arms control regimes which interfere with force improvement efforts such as the Long Term Defense Program and the modernization of theater nuclear forces in Europe. At the same time, the U.S. must recognize that ongoing arms control discussions are necessary to obtain domestic support, both here and in Western Europe, for increased defense spending and force modernization programs. Thus, the West needs a flexible arms control position to deal with military problems facing the Alliance.

But, over the long term, Western arms control objectives are less clear. This is because we have not addressed the question of how arms control in Europe should work. Should we view arms control merely as a way to protect U.S. defense programs while maximizing Allied contributions to Western defense efforts? Or should we pursue arms control ambitiously, with the aim of achieving a militarily significant agreement that results in drastic cuts in the level of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe? Western responses to these questions will lay the basis for a strategy for arms control in Europe which takes as its central premise that arms control efforts should support defense objectives. Whether that strategy will call for the negotiation of narrow-gauge agreements of limited duration or more drastic cuts in the levels of forces in Central Europe remains to be seen ~ and the answer should not be presumed, one way or the other.

Neither should we assume that MBFR has outlived its usefulness. In the long term, the West may decide that MBFR or an MBFR- l i ke forum is more conducive to the negotiation of European security than is CSCE or a post-Madrid conference on confidence-building measures, should one occur. But the answer to the question of which forum or forums are most appropriate for the discussion of arms control in Europe must await the determination of U.S. and Allied objectives.

NOTES

1. The Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions negotiations began in Vienna, Austria, on October 30, 1973. On the Western side, the "direct" participants (those with armed forces in the agreed area of reductions) are Belgium, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. "Indirect" participants (those without armed forces in the agreed area of reductions) are Denmark, Greece, Italy, Norway, and Turkey. For the East, the direct participants are Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Poland, and the Soviet Union. Indirect participants are Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania. The agreed area of reductions (the NATO Guidelines Area, or NGA) includes the FRG, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. For an excellent summary of the history of MBFR which includes an analysis of proposals submitted by Eastern and Western participants over the years, see John G. Keliher, *The Negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions: The Search for Arms Control in Europe* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980). For a good, short summary of the rationale behind MBFR, see John N. Yochelson, "MFR: West European and American Perspectives," in Wolfram Hanrieder (ed), *The United States and Western Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1974).
2. Robert E. Hunter, "Beyond Military Security in Europe," in Hanrieder (ed), *The United States and Western Europe*, pp 234-235.
3. Willy Brandt, *People and Politics: The Years 1960-1975* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1976), p 428.
4. Yochelson, "MFR: West European and American Perspectives," p 257.
5. Post-Plenary Session Press Conference, Vienna, December 20, 1979.
6. Soviet Ambassador Tarasov, at Post-Plenary Press Conference, Vienna, July 10, 1980.
7. Post-Plenary Press Conference, Vienna, October 2, 1980.
8. Post-Plenary Press Conference, Vienna, November 13, 1980.
9. Keliher, *The Negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions*, p 120.
10. Stanley Sloan, *Prospects for the Vienna Force Reduction Talks* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Office, 1978), p 16.
11. Post-Plenary Press Conference, Vienna, July 19, 1980.
12. Keliher, *The Negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force* 112.
13. Post-Plenary Press Conference, Vienna, June 28, 1979.
14. A. Gromyko, "Disarmament ~ An Urgent Present-Day Problem," *Kommunist* (July 1980).
15. *Vienna Wiener Zeitung* (November 14, 1980), p 2.
16. Post-Plenary Press Conference, Vienna, December 20, 1979.
17. GDR Ambassador Wieland, at Post-Plenary Press Conference, Vienna, December 20, 1979.
18. Post-Plenary Press Conference, Vienna, July 10, 1980.
19. This argument is made in Barry M. Blechman, "Do Negotiated Arms Limitations Have a Future?" *Foreign Affairs* (Fall 1980), and Richard Burt, "The Relevance of Arms Control in the 1980s," *Daedalus* (Winter 1981).
20. Richard Burt, "The Future of Arms Control: A Glass Half Empty," *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1979), p 36.
21. Steven L Canby, "Mutual Force Reductions: A Military Perspective," *International Security* (Winter 1978), p 124.
22. For this argument, see Leslie H. Gelb, "The Future of Arms Control: A Glass Half Full," *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1979), and Christoph Bertram, "Rethinking Arms Control," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1980/81).
23. Burt, "The Relevance of Arms Control in the 1980s," p 175; Blechman, "Do Do Arms

Limitations Have a Future?" p 121.

24. This proposal is presented by Gelb, "The Future of Arms Control: A Glass Half Full," p 30 and Blechman, "Do Negotiated Arms Limitations Have a Future?" p 121. A similar proposal which calls for token or, perhaps, no manpower reductions, but emphasizes associated measures, is presented by Jeffrey Record, Force Reductions in Europe: Starting Over (Cambridge, Mass.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., 1980), p 73.
25. Ten years ago, in a memorandum to the President, Henry Kissinger expressed his frustrations about MB FR in similar terms: "We have not been able to develop an approach to M B FR which would either maintain or improve NATO's military position although small mutual reductions could have a minimal adverse effect. We have not been able to identify negotiable `collateral restraints' which would inhibit Pact mobilization and reinforcement without harming NA'IL) at the same time." See Henry A. Kissinger, White House Years (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, and Co., 1979), P 402.