



# AUSA BACKGROUND BRIEF



## CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL

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The recent agreement between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) to move forward with talks aimed at reducing the conventional forces of the two sides marks the beginning of what may be the most significant change in European defense since the end of World War II. The potential exists for far-reaching agreements, the results of which may drastically alter the structures and mechanisms which have served to keep the peace for the last 44 years.

### BACKGROUND

The desire by some parties to reduce the number of military forces stationed in Europe is not new. The Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks continued for some 14 years in Vienna, but yielded no results. The tactical reason for their failure was the lack of desire on the part of the Soviet Union for a meaningful agreement.

### GORBACHEV'S INITIATIVES

Soviet President Michael Gorbachev's dramatic December, 1988 announcement of unilateral reductions of Soviet Forces—following as it did the successful negotiation of a treaty limiting intermediate-range nuclear weapons—focused world attention on the possibility of future conventional arms reductions. Gorbachev announced the following reductions in Soviet military forces by 1990:

#### Soviet Union (Total)

- Reduction of 10,000 tanks—5,000 to be physically destroyed, 5,000 to be converted to civilian use.
- Reduction of 500,000 military personnel (83,000 officers): 240,000 from European areas, 200,000 from Asian areas and 60,000 from southern areas.
- Reduction of three-fourths of the 55,000 Soviet troops in Mongolia.
- Withdrawal from the European Groups of Forces of an unspecified number of nuclear-capable artillery and 24 short-range nuclear missiles.
- Reduction of military spending by 14.2 percent.
- A 19.5 percent reduction in the budget for production of arms and military technology.

#### Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GFSG)

- Withdrawal of four Soviet tank divisions by 1990. Divisions are the 25th and 32nd of the 20th Guards Army and the 7th and 12th of the 3d Shock Army.
- Withdrawal of an air assault brigade.
- Withdrawal of three tank training regiments, two additional training regiments, and 11 other battalions of various types.

## **Other**

- One Soviet division to be withdrawn from Czechoslovakia.
- One Soviet division to be withdrawn from Hungary

## **Warsaw Pact**

- Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary and Poland have also announced reductions in their military forces and military spending.

The fact that these unilateral reductions have been announced is significant. However, in comparison to the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Warsaw Treaty Organization forces over those of NATO, these reductions fall far short of redressing the existing imbalance.

## **EUROPEAN SECURITY**

While the Soviet Union has undertaken a massive, coordinated effort to convince Western publics that it wishes to eliminate the East-West arms competition and professes a willingness to relinquish its capacity to threaten Western Europe with both nuclear weapons and conventional forces, the following factors still govern Europe's security:

- Divided Europe is characterized by two antagonistic political systems that are based on fundamentally different values.
- The Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) has the advantage of direct and secure lines of communication for command and control.
- NATO, in contrast, lacks geographical depth for its defenses and must deploy reinforcements across the Atlantic along threatened lines of communication.
- In spite of recent political statements professing the defensive character of its armed forces, Soviet military doctrine and practice to date have provided little evidence of change from a long-standing offensive military doctrine.

## **THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

Thus far, NATO's focus has been on asymmetrical reductions by the WTO in the key ground systems of tanks, artillery and armored fighting vehicles to a point of parity; thereafter, reducing the arms of both sides to a level equal to 95 percent of NATO's current level. At that point, the levels of these systems would be stabilized.

## **CONVENTIONAL FORCES IN EUROPE (CFE) TALKS**

In an attempt to reach agreement on conventional arms control in Europe, the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) talks started in Vienna in early March, 1989. These talks include the 16 NATO member countries and seven members of the Warsaw Pact.

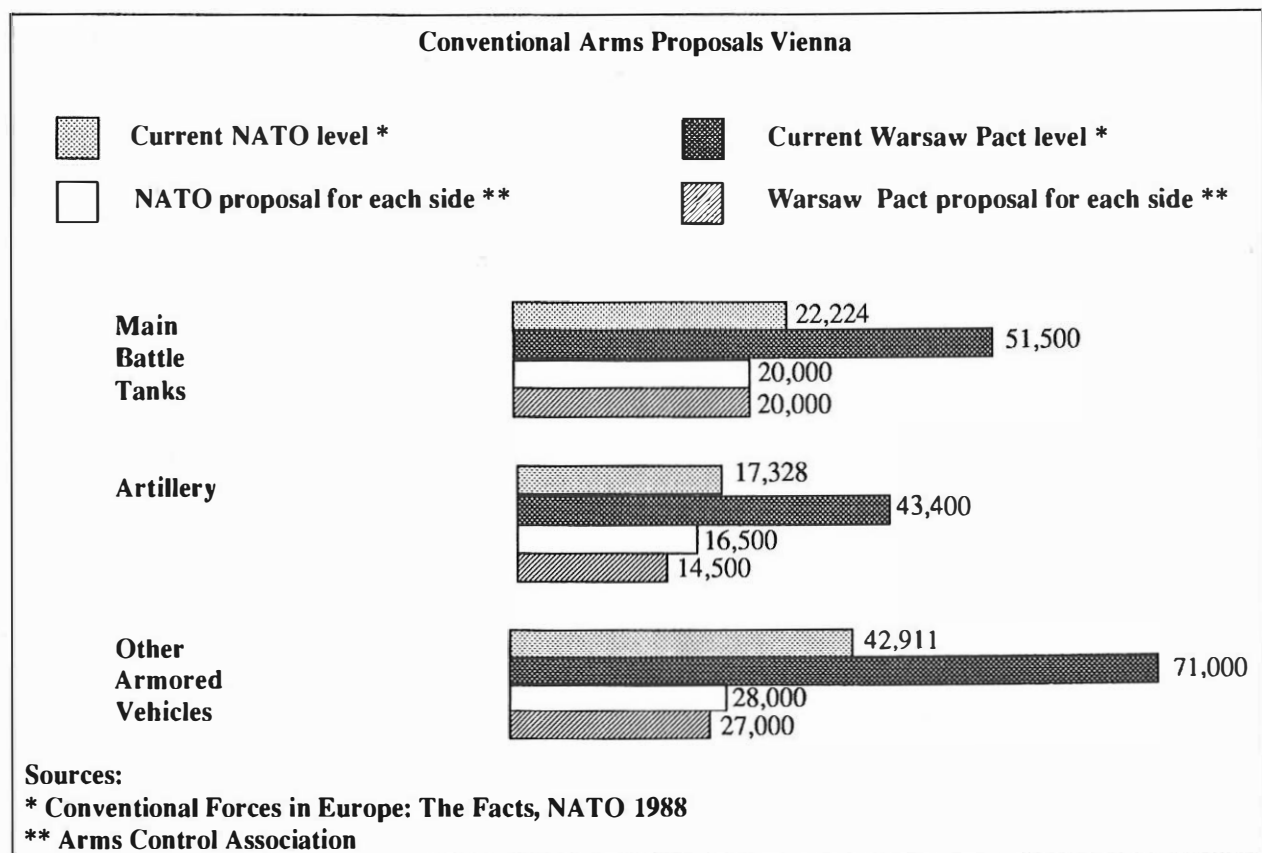
Their considerations will include the entire European continent, from the Ural Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean, with special focus on a zone in Central Europe running along either side of the border of West Germany with East Germany and Czechoslovakia—specifically the area from which offensive forces might be banned.

CFE will consider not only where forces are to be deployed, but the degree to which they are equipped for offensive or defensive combat.

Basic disagreements exist between the Warsaw Pact and NATO on some of the objectives of conventional arms control. Moscow, as stated by Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, desires to discuss restraint of naval forces, contending that the West has a distinct naval advantage. He has also indicated a desire to begin early talks on controlling tactical nuclear weapons. It is NATO's contention, however, that ships are quite another matter, and that for reinforcement and supply, the sea lanes are to the West what highways and railroads are to the Warsaw Pact. In any event, preliminary negotiations have excluded these items from the CFE talks.

Within the more narrowly defined CFE Charter, there are still some outstanding issues. NATO wants to concentrate initial negotiations on equipment most suited to large scale conventional surprise attacks, specifically main battle tanks, artillery and armored personnel carriers. The Warsaw Pact wants to expand this to include aircraft, combat helicopters and the number of troops. These differences are not yet settled, and there needs to be a clear consensus on how to count both weapons and people.

It is interesting to note that the proposed after-reduction target figure for tanks, artillery and other armored vehicles are not very far apart as reflected by the following chart.



### ARMY CHALLENGES

For the remainder of this century, the Army will be faced with a host of challenges posed by changing world conditions. Not the least of which will be defining the Army's role and its future structure and modernization needs in the climate of arms control negotiations.

It seems that significant change is in the Army's future. Successfully concluding a conventional arms control agreement would certainly see major units of USAREUR redeployed to the continental United States. Concurrent with the ongoing CFE talks there must be a new look at security requirements for Europe during the 21st Century and a determination as to how security can best be achieved.

(Note: This brief was extracted largely from a paper prepared for AUSA by Col (Ret.) James Motley.)