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The Future of the Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture

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The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the NPT, was signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970, and came to be recognized as the principal reason- along with the parallel extended deterrence policies of the United States and the Soviet Union- that the darkest fears of world-wide nuclear weapon proliferation were not realized during the Cold War. Indeed since 1970 and the entry into force of the NPT, at least until now, there has been very little nuclear weapon proliferation. In addition to the five nuclear weapon states recognized by the NPT- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China, three states, India, Pakistan and Israel and perhaps North Korea have built nuclear weapon arsenals- but India and Israel were already well along in 1970.

But the success of the NPT was no accident. It was rooted in a carefully crafted central bargain. In exchange for a commitment from the non nuclear weapon states (today more than 180 nations, most of the world) not to acquire nuclear weapons and to submit to international safeguards to verify compliance with this commitment, the NPT nuclear weapon states pledged unfettered access to peaceful nuclear technologies and undertook to engage in nuclear disarmament negotiations aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals. It is this basic bargain that for the last three decades has formed the central underpinnings of the international non proliferation regime.

However, one of the principal problems with all this has been that the NPT nuclear weapon states have never fully delivered on the disarmament part of this bargain. And in recent years the other side of the bargain began to fall apart. One must remember that the NPT is a strategic international political bargain, it is not a gift from the non-nuclear weapon states. Thus, few deny that the NPT is in crisis. The question is how long can it remain viable as an

unbalanced treaty with one-half of its basic strategic bargain unrealized and the other half unraveling. It is true that the norm of nonproliferation runs deep after forty years. It may be that the NPT can limp along for some years with only limited further proliferation or maybe not. However, the world community could be on the verge of a new wave of proliferation, there are a number of experts who think so, and it will take a strong NPT regime to prevent it. But also it will take close U.S.-Russian cooperation to prevent further nuclear weapon proliferation. The relationship between the West and Russia is an extremely important international relationship. We must take care to try to understand the way Russia sees the world and not drive the one state essential to the objective of a peaceful and stable 21st Century into a corner.

So in considering further NATO expansion to include Ukraine and Georgia, this issue must also be viewed in the light of overall NATO-Russia relations and the long term security interest of the West. Do we really want Article V of the NATO Treaty –an attack on one is an attack on all- to cover Ukraine and Georgia and other former constituent parts of the Soviet Union and before that of the Russian empire? Last summer that could have meant a NATO-Russia war. Do we want to risk further isolating Russia by bringing the Western military alliance even beyond their doorstep? The well being of the people of Ukraine and Georgia is highly important in its own right and important to the United States and the West but so is reducing worldwide nuclear dangers and the achievement of a peaceful stable 21st Century world. To gain the requisite Russian cooperation, policies must be different from the past.

The same dynamic seems to apply with respect to conventional forces as well. It is important to remember that for many centuries Europe was a very violent continent. In the last half century institutions such as the European Union have profoundly changed the situation in Europe, continent-wide war has now become almost unthinkable. A major contributor to this was the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, the CFE Treaty, arguably the treaty that ended the Cold War.

But in ending the Cold War, the CFE Treaty undermined its own bloc to bloc structure. By the time of the first CFE Treaty Review Conference in 1996, it was clear to all that the Treaty would need to be modified. Also, there was the issue of excessive Russian deployments of treaty limited equipment in the Flank zones, primarily the southern Flank, partly caused by the war in Chechnya, but much more by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resultant disruption of the

Treaty's Flank zones. A new agreement on Flank Zone deployments was reached at the Review Conference and the treaty adaptation process began shortly thereafter.

In 1999 agreement on the adapted CFE Treaty was reached and signed at Istanbul, Turkey. The revised Treaty moves away from the old bloc-based limits and imposes national and territorial equipment ceilings. Also, the new Treaty was conditioned on a number of political commitments contained in the Final Act of the Conference at which the Treaty was signed. They are referred to as the Istanbul Commitments. Most prominent among them were Russian commitments to withdraw its forces from Georgia and Moldova.

Russia did withdraw its treaty limited equipment from Moldova, but not its troops and armaments in the Trans-Dniester region. There has been no progress on this since 2004. Russia largely did withdraw its forces from Georgia but they returned during the war in the summer of 2008. Subsequently, Russian forces were withdrawn from Georgia proper but not from the two breakaway regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, defacto independent for 20 years and now recognized as such by Russia. Also, Russia remains in violation of the Flank limits.

NATO states have indicated that they will not ratify the adapted CFE Treaty until Russia fulfills the Istanbul commitments in particular the withdrawal of forces from Moldova and Georgia. Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus have ratified the 1999 treaty but not the NATO countries. Russia has also complained of a "legal loophole" since the Baltic States joined NATO but they cannot be parties to the 1990 Treaty, although they could join the adapted Treaty should it ever come into force. In 2007 Russia "suspended" its obligation under the CFE Treaty and no longer cooperates with the inspection and information disclosure provisions of the Treaty.

So now where are we? We appear to be on the verge of the entire CFE structure coming apart as a result of Russian non-observance and related possible encouragement of others to breach CFE ceilings as they see the Russians no longer observing the Treaty limits. The potential loss to peace, security and stability is great. The transparency, the predictability and the verification cooperation brought by the CFE Treaty could not be reestablished without it. And if the CFE Treaty is abandoned, its benefits would be difficult if not impossible to replace. Given the lessons of history we should never take peace and stability for granted.

So what is to be done? It would seem to me that the only viable solution is to find a way through creative diplomacy to bring the adapted CFE Treaty into force. This would appear to require easing of some of the Istanbul commitments. Perhaps NATO states should go ahead and ratify the Treaty and argue later about further withdrawals from Georgia and Moldova- not big issues when compared with the potential loss of the CFE Treaty structure, an outcome no one wants, including Russia. On the other hand Russia probably should be held to the Treaty Flank limits.

The observations of the famous international security scholar Hans Morgenthau are indeed apt here. First, diplomacy must be rescued from crusading spirits. Second, diplomacy must look at the political scene from the point of view of other nations. And third, the objective of foreign policy must be defined in terms of national interests and supported by adequate power. Europe has been a relative island of peace and stability in a tumultuous post Cold War world. Let it remain so.