

### William Lippert:<sup>1</sup> Perspectives on Post-Russo–Ukraine War Conventional Arms Control for Hungary

#### Executive summary

- To prevent another, major conflict in Europe after the Russo–Ukraine War terminates, a broad, continent-wide conventional arms control (CAC) agreement with specific military system and capabilities limits, restrictions, and prohibitions may be necessary to stabilize the Russia–NATO relationship.
- The outlines of an agreement are difficult to formulate without knowing how the conflict will end, as CAC agreements often reflect the military balance at the time of signature.
- It is important to begin considering CAC options and preferences at the national, alliance, and continental levels as well, because conflicts can end unexpectedly, and policy-makers should be prepared to know their policy preferences and where they may be willing to compromise.
- Hungary may primarily be interested in a CAC agreement that preserves its land-based combat capability and ability to receive reinforcements, while reducing any threat from Russia. This means that Budapest may support concessions on NATO's north and south flanks, such as restrictions in the Baltic Sea while demanding Russian limits in central Europe.

#### Introduction

With major conventional combat in the Russo–Ukraine War having continued now for over two years, with the front lines relatively stable for over a year and no sign of either side seeking a negotiated settlement, thinking about post-war conventional arms control may seem premature or even a fool's errand. However, most major, conventional wars terminate, even if only temporarily, and do so at the literal or metaphorical negotiating table.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, though some deny this reality,<sup>3</sup> major conflicts have ended in a negotiation, even if the agreement was as simple as determining methods of surrender and transfer of power to the victors.<sup>4</sup> Yet a broader settlement of major conflicts incorporates a more systematic approach to establishing peace and attempting to prevent another outbreak of war. Major European wars in the past 200-plus years have ended in such efforts, such as the Concert of Vienna following the Napoleonic wars, the Paris peace treaties and the creation of the League of Nations following World War One, and the United Nations after the Second World War.

The 2014 Crimea annexation and separatist uprising in eastern Ukraine and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine was caused in part by a breakdown of conventional arms control (CAC); particularly Russia's objections to the military balance in favor of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and failure to redress this imbalance through CAC. While there is disagreement about Putin's reasons for

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<sup>2</sup> Dan REITER: *How Wars End*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> James SHERR: [Fallacy 1: 'Settle Now: All Wars End at the Negotiating Table'](#). [online], 27 06 2023, Chatham House (Accessed 08 10 2023).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Germany's surrender to the Allies included instructions for various locations about methods of surrender, turning over war equipment, etc. with the statement that failure to abide by the agreement would be dealt with by the Allied powers. See: [Documents Concerning the German Surrender \(May 1945\)](#). [online], Jewish Virtual Library (Accessed 08 10 2023). Following the initial instruments of surrender, the defeated Axis states signed other agreements which included occupation measures, arms control, and governance.



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invading Ukraine, not the least caused by his own inconsistent messaging, a primary reason was likely Putin's objection to the Russia–NATO military balance and the trajectory that balance was headed. Since at least 1999, when the Adapted Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (A/CFE) Treaty was signed, Russia has sought to stabilize the military balance between NATO and Russia. Moscow has continuously raised CAC issues over the past 20 years. It noted the failure of NATO members to ratify the A/CFE Treaty in its 2007 suspension of the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, and made various arms control-related proposals, with several specific proposals included in the December 2021 ultimatums delivered to the United States (US) and NATO. Ukraine's accession to NATO and/or deployment of NATO forces on Ukraine's territory would have, in Moscow's view, decisively altered the military balance in NATO's favor. A pro-NATO Ukraine would have put the whole of Ukraine's military in NATO's camp and give NATO a substantial geographic advantage.

The two ultimatums delivered to NATO and the US in December 2021 consisted of several CAC proposals such as limited military forces along the common border, restrictions on land-based short and intermediate range missiles, heavy bombers, naval forces, and a prohibition of US military bases in non-NATO former USSR states.<sup>5</sup> Any attempts to forestall a return to conflict following the Russo–Ukraine War's termination should have a significant CAC component.

Since the end of World War One, two major CAC categories are post-conflict and peacetime agreements. However, the situation in Europe today is complicated. A comparison might be made to the Cold War – during which the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) negotiations took place and the INF, CFE Treaty, and several nuclear arms-related treaties were signed. During the Cold War, both sides had been engaged in proxy wars but negotiated and agreed to arms control agreements. The major difference is that the proxy war is now in Europe, and thus may be more closely related to any agreement's formulation and implementation. Another complication is that any agreement would be primarily between an alliance of many states vs. one state – a substantial difference from the CFE Treaty, bilateral treaties, or multilateral treaties with a small number of states. NATO can be viewed as a single entity from some perspectives, but not others.

There are several reasons to consider post-Russo–Ukraine War CAC. First, when the conflict ceases, a framework, or even concrete proposals formed by offers from Hungary and NATO and demands from Russia are better to be considered in advance, having been deliberated by experts and policy makers. Second, all state parties have an interest in preventing another conflict, and formulating a comprehensive, mutually beneficial CAC agreement may be key to this. Third, to the extent to which the Russo–Ukraine War is the product of pre-existing disagreements over the military balance, a legally binding agreement that establishes and locks into place a new balance and thus may prevent another conflict in Europe. Fourth, how Hungary or NATO more broadly want the war to end (conditions, status, demands, power, etc.) dictates the victory conditions. The victory conditions are much different if Hungary or NATO wish to see Russian military capabilities significantly limited compared to acceptance of a Ukraine annexed by Russia, or a return to the 2014 lines. Similarly, NATO might have to accept major Russian CAC demands in the event of a Russian victory.

On the other hand, as the conflict currently is not directly between NATO and Russia, the translation from battlefield outcomes to a pan-European CAC agreement is less clear. Previous CAC agreements having reflected a relatively stable, peacetime military balance or post-conflict agreements having reflected a discriminatory relationship of vanquished and victor, it is uncertain to what extent both sides will equally perceive the current and future military balance – something key to CAC agreements. Indeed, there is the likelihood that continued disagreement about relative military and bargaining power will be largely unchanged from 2021, when Russia made the decision to launch its full-scale invasion. This suggests that – barring a CAC agreement to their satisfaction – under certain circumstances Moscow may again seek to resolve disputes about the military balance by force if it cannot be done through agreement.

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<sup>5</sup> William LIPPERT: [How Conventional Arms Control Failures Caused the Russo-Ukraine War](#). *Defense & Security Analysis*, 2024.



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There are several reasons to consider post-Russo–Ukraine War CAC that includes NATO, Russia, and Ukraine and possibly non-NATO EU members, Georgia, and Moldova. Going beyond CAC but closely tied to it could be security guarantees offered to Ukraine, whether it concerns NATO membership or non-aggression agreements. Depending on the outcome, agreements concerning Ukraine could also include not just NATO membership but geographic demilitarization along a new or the pre-existing Russia–Ukraine borders, restrictions on NATO activities within Ukraine, and/or limitations on the size and composition of Ukraine’s military. These would be more likely to apply in the event of a partial or decisive Russian victory that leaves some part of Ukraine sovereign. In the event of a partial or decisive Russian defeat, it is less likely that Ukraine or NATO presence in Ukraine would be subject to limits. Understanding preferred and potential CAC outcomes can drive important aspects of present, wartime policy and strategy. Consideration of future CAC agreements is important because Hungary’s preferences may be different than those of other NATO states.

A stalemate or frozen conflict, such as in Georgia, could very likely serve as a substantial brake to any CAC agreement – as was the case with the A/CFE Treaty which was signed but was not ratified by NATO states because of Russia’s refusal to withdraw forces from Moldova and Georgia. A primarily nation-based A/CFE approach would unlikely be applicable now due to NATO’s substantial expansion since that time, and an overall deepening of distrust and sense of mutual threat. If parties can move beyond a frozen state of the conflict in the interest of mutual security and longer-term peace, an agreement would more likely reflect a mutual balance, similar to the CFE Treaty, because neither side has demonstrated that it has the bargaining power to impose favorable terms on the other party. Prior to the Russo–Ukraine conflict, Russia’s view was that it had sufficient power that it could demand what amounted to an equal distribution of military capability (or at least something closer to equal) with NATO, while NATO viewed the growing gap as legitimate and fair. NATO did not view Russia’s demands as legitimate in part because Russia did not have the power to make such demands. A stalemate, however, would suggest that the two sides have more military power equality than was believed beforehand, so that Russia’s demands are more realistic. A comparison would be that a small naval power could not have demanded parity with the great naval powers in the 1920’s – unless they succeeded in proving that they were, in fact, on par with them.

Based in part on lessons learned from previous CAC agreements, this article discusses and focuses on Hungary’s major CAC considerations in detail, as those of a country that has been less critical of Russia. This article focuses on broad, systemic adversarial CAC agreements that cover at least several national territories, in contrast to arms control agreements with a humanitarian goal, such as the Anti-Personnel Landmine Treaty, or counter-proliferation agreements that, for example, seek to control exports. This article also excludes other peace agreement issues such as territorial claims, reparations, and minority rights. Confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs) are outside of this article’s scope, but it is notable that a range of new CSBMs or updating the Vienna Document (VD) could increase stability across a range of areas. However, CSBMs are neither legally binding and are less likely to be as stabilizing as Europe-wide and legally binding military capability limitations, restrictions, reductions, and prohibitions.

Lastly, the article focuses on establishing military capability limits rather than agreement implementation, monitoring, and verification. Implementation is beyond this article’s scope because monitoring and verification can depend on complicated processes, procedures, and questions of technologies, and implementation governance is also a complicated issue that raises questions of agreement executor delegation, governance, tasks, and resources. Nonetheless, a few, general observations can be made. Monitoring and verification are key parts of implementation and implementation processes. States are unlikely to include legally binding limits that cannot be monitored or verified, because cheating or perceptions of cheating become problematic.<sup>6</sup> Creation

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<sup>6</sup> George W. DOWNS – David M. ROCKE – Peter N. BARSOOM: [Is the Good News about Compliance Good News about Cooperation?](#) *International Organization*, Vol. 50, no. 3 (Summer 1996), pp. 379–406; James D. FEARON: [Bargaining, Enforcement, and International Cooperation.](#) *International Organization*, Vol. 52, no. 2



and design of a treaty body or agreement executor is also an important element of a CAC agreement and can contribute to the treaty's likelihood of success. Some data suggests that higher levels of delegation of state parties to an agreement executor increase the likelihood of success.<sup>7</sup> In general, two approaches could be to establish a weak agreement executor such as the CFE Treaty's Joint Consultative Group (JCG), or a robust executor such as the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine.

Some arms control approaches that have a national or global area of application (AoA), such as a national prohibition on missiles of a certain range or air defenses of a certain capability, will be complicated by rivalries beyond the Russia-US/NATO competition such as the US-China rivalry. Even some arms control limitations that only affect land-based systems in Europe could impact states' ability to support combat operations in the Pacific or elsewhere in the world in the future, should such a need arise. For example, if France or the United Kingdom (UK) agree to limits on armor and artillery, this could decrease what might be available for a conflict in the Pacific (unless the systems are based outside of Europe – but this option may not be available to all EU/NATO states).

### Baseline CAC considerations

Adversarial CAC agreements have multiple purposes but often reflect to varying degrees three important international relations sub-theories: deterrence, the security dilemma, and the offense-defense balance (ODB). These theories help explaining why agreement negotiations can be difficult, and why a state does not willingly offer substantially asymmetric concessions such as significantly imbalanced limits on military equipment to an adversary to merely save money on defense or to improve diplomatic relations. Other factors play an important role in the decision to enter into negotiations and how they may unfold, including the extent to which sides trust one another to negotiate and implement the agreement honestly, guarantees against cheating, internal alliance dynamics, and perceptions of oneself as defensive but the other party or bloc as offensive.

From a CAC perspective, deterrence is generally defined as dissuading an adversary from attacking due to the imposition of unacceptably high costs if they do so, ensuring (and convincing their adversary) that such an attack will not be militarily successful, or both.<sup>8</sup> Deterrence is an important component of adversarial CAC agreements because one (in the case of punitive peace agreements) or both (in the case of a peacetime agreement) states or groups of states will seek an agreement that will preserve their deterrence.

The security dilemma refers to the predicament between rivals that one's attempts to increase defensive capability (ensure deterrence) can appear threatening and offensive to the rival, compelling them to increase their military capability. The result is an arms race and spiral of negatively reinforcing relations. The security dilemma is an important consideration for states entering into CAC agreements because a goal of the agreement may be to mitigate the dilemma by reducing certain threats, particularly surprise attacks. For punitive agreements it is a one-way mitigation – the victors seek to ensure that the defeated states cannot attack again, while the victors may

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(1998), pp. 269–305; Thomas C. SCHELLING: A Framework for the Evaluation of Arms-Control Proposals, *Daedalus*, Vol. 104, no. 3 (Summer 1975), pp. 187–200.

<sup>7</sup> Robert L. BROWN: [Measuring Delegation](#), *The Review of International Organizations*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (November 19, 2009), pp. 141–75; William LIPPERT: Delegation to Treaty Bodies and International Organizations for Conventional Arms Control Agreements in Europe: A Sum Score Evaluation. Forthcoming.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example: Robert ART – Robert JERVIS: *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1983); Darrel W. DRIVER: Deterrence in Eastern Europe in Theory and Practice. *Connections*, Vol. 18, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 2019), pp. 5–10; Todor TAGAREV: Deterrence in International Security: Theory and Current Practice. *Connections*, Vol. 18, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 2019), p. 15.; Robert P. HAFFA: The Future of Conventional Deterrence. *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 12, no. 4 (Winter 2018), p. 23.; John STONE: Conventional Deterrence and the Challenge of Credibility. *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 33, no. 1 (2012), pp. 108–123.



retain the capability to retaliate against the defeated states for acts of aggression or failure to implement peace terms.<sup>9</sup>

The ODB is important to CAC agreements because almost all agreements set limits on certain military capabilities but not others. Typically, weapon systems that are viewed as offensive are the focus of any limitations while defensive systems may be left untouched. Again, this depends on whether the agreement is punitive or not; punitive agreements often seek to broadly disarm defeated states to the benefit of the victors. The overall approach for many adversarial CAC agreements is that restricting offensive weapons while placing no limits on defensive systems increases deterrence and mitigates the security dilemma.

This suggests that Hungary should seek an agreement that preserves its deterrence – either through national capabilities or through NATO; and it may seek to mitigate the security dilemma so that Russia does not view Hungarian forces as threatening and respond by increasing military capability aimed at Hungary or NATO in general. Hungary may seek to control weapons that it views as most offensive to itself but preserve weapons that it feels offer it defense.<sup>10</sup>

### Hungary's interests

Hungary will have a role in three capacities during potential CAC negotiations. First, as a NATO member Hungary sits on various committees, the North Atlantic Council, and has a seat at NATO ministerial and heads of government summits. In some of these, there will be votes, and Hungary will have a vote so its positions and views will necessarily count, formally and informally. Second, Hungary as an EU member has a role and voice in any EU forums such as the relevant Directorate-General (DG), European External Action Service (EEAS), the Parliament, and the higher-level forums such as the Council and Commission. Third, Hungary has a role as a state party – especially if the agreement is only formally signed by state parties (like the CFE Treaty) and requires all state parties to ratify the agreement if it enters into force.

Hungary has fundamental, and in many cases unique interests in any post-war CAC agreement. First, Hungary is one of NATO's easternmost states. One implication is that if Russia is victorious, Hungary could find itself bordering either a Russian satellite state along the lines of Belarus, or if some of its claims have merit, Moscow will annex Ukraine in its entirety<sup>11</sup> and Hungary will become a front-line state. Second, Hungary has a high interest in transportation infrastructure to move NATO reinforcements into its territory. Third, in any Russia–NATO conflict, Hungary's eastern position makes it more subject to strikes than states further west.

These collectively suggest that if Hungary perceives Russia as an aggressor or predatory state<sup>12</sup> it should seek to retain a stronger Hungarian military – meaning accepting less limits –

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<sup>9</sup> Charles L. GLASER: [The Security Dilemma Revisited](#). *World Politics*, Vol. 50, no. 1 (October 1997), pp. 171–201; Robert JERVIS: Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma. *World Politics*, Vol. 30, no. 2 (January 1978), pp. 167–214; Evan Braden MONTGOMERY: Breaking Out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and the Problem of Uncertainty. *International Security*, Vol. 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006), pp. 151–85.

<sup>10</sup> Determining what weapon systems are more offensive or more defensive is subjective, and scholars are divided about how to define and measure this, with states sometimes claiming that weapons that gave them the most advantage were defensive, while those they felt most threatened by were offensive. This was discussed extensively in the League of Nations. See: Arthur HENDERSON: Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments: Preliminary Report of the Work of the Conference. Geneva: League of Nations, November 1935; James W. DAVIS et al.: [Taking Offense at Offense-Defense Theory](#). *International Security*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998), pp. 179–206; Sean LYNN-JONES: Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics. *Security Studies*, Vol. 4, no. 4 (Summer 1995), pp. 660–91. The debate continues even concerning the Russo–Ukraine War; see: Stephen D. BIDDLE: [Is There a Difference between 'defensive' and 'offensive' weapons?](#) [online], 28 04 2022, The Washington Post (Accessed 08 10 2023).

<sup>11</sup> Peter DICKINSON: [Putin Admits Ukraine Invasion Is an Imperial War to 'Return' Russian Land](#). [online], 10 06 2022, Atlantic Council blog (Accessed 08 10 2023).

<sup>12</sup> Robert JERVIS: Arms Control, Stability, and Causes of War. *Daedalus*, Vol. 120, no. 1 (Winter 1991), pp. 167–181; Alexander WENDT: Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics. *International Organization*, Vol. 46, no. 2 (1992), pp. 391–425.



and impose more limits on Russia. That is, it should seek to have a ratio of forces more favorable to NATO, and likely to Hungary specifically, to ensure deterrence.

As a landlocked country, Hungary has no interests in preserving a naval capability, an important consideration given other NATO members' strong navies that Russia may view as threatening and seek to limit. Lastly, as with all states, Hungary may seek to preserve as strong a military as possible not just to deter Russia, but for other operations and contingencies. Moreover, Budapest may not wish to be dependent on other EU or NATO states, which might give them more bargaining power in other areas of EU and NATO relations, such as trade, democracy, and migration issues. This dependency would be especially pronounced because of Hungary's eastern location where, for example, it might struggle to receive sufficient reinforcements in the event of a conflict.

### **The Russo-Ukraine War shapes CAC**

How the war ends may shape the details of any CAC agreement.<sup>13</sup> Peacetime and post-conflict agreements reflect, to varying degrees, the current and projected military balance at the time of the agreement. The post-World War agreements were punitive and imbalanced, setting very strict limits on the military capabilities of the defeated states because the victories were decisive and overwhelming. In contrast, the CAC aspects of the agreement ending the 1999 Kosovo war was much narrower as NATO had defeated Serbia in an air campaign but had not committed ground forces and had not seized any Serbian territory. The Western Balkans version of the CFE Treaty, called the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control: Article IV, and the interwar naval agreements all set ratios of military equipment that were close to the inventories in possession at that time.

Conflicts are, as Clausewitz famously noted, an extension of politics. One cause of conflict is differing perceptions about relative power and bargaining strength, which conflicts help in resolving.<sup>14</sup> A decisive Ukrainian defeat will have demonstrated Russia's relative strength, giving it a stronger bargaining position. Demands it might impose could include demilitarization along a certain distance from the common borders, locking in a ratio of military forces that are equal or favorable to Russia, or substantial military capability limitations in all eastern European states. Such severe limits would be consistent with a victor's goals of ensuring deterrence, preventing the defeated from restarting the conflict to revise the agreement, prevent a costly arms race, and demonstrate to domestic audiences that the war was worth the costs. The latter point is especially important for President Putin, who has repeatedly stated that one reason for the war is to reduce the threat from NATO.<sup>15</sup>

If the war ends in a stalemate wherein neither side has achieved a decisive victory (which for Ukraine means a return to pre-2014 borders, and for Russia the conquest of all Ukraine), this would suggest relative power parity between NATO and Russia – the kind of parity that existed in the early 1920's between the global naval powers and between NATO and the Warsaw Pact when the CFE Treaty was negotiated. As a result, both sides might be more willing to accept equivalent limits.

Lastly, a Ukrainian victory would demonstrate NATO's military and political superiority. In this case, Russia might be compelled to accept limits, potentially severe, on its military capabilities – a stark contrast to the December 2021 ultimatums which demanded substantial NATO limitations. In this situation, Russia might be compelled to accept NATO demands because it might face an arms race it cannot win, or continued attacks from Ukraine with NATO weapons.

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<sup>13</sup> Hans-Joachim SCHMIDT: [How the Russia-Ukraine War Could End, and Its Impact on Conventional Arms Control](#). *IAI Papers*, 2013/10. [online], May 2023. (Accessed 08 10 2023).

<sup>14</sup> Samuel CHARAP – Miranda PRIEBE: *Avoiding a Long War: U.S. Policy and the Trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict*. Washington D.C.: RAND Corporation, 2023; Robert JERVIS: *War and Misperception*. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, no. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 675–700.

<sup>15</sup> [Transcript of Vladimir Putin's Televised Address on Ukraine](#). [online], 24 02 2022, Bloomberg (Accessed 08 10 2023).



### State Parties and Area of Application

The two likely contentious issues in any CAC agreement are: which states should become party to an agreement, and the agreement's area of application. One of Russia's objections to the CAC agreements in force was that they did not include the three Baltic states. This concern was amplified as NATO – including Hungary which is participating in the Baltic air policing operation – began to rotate battalion-size forces into the Baltics following the 2014 conflict in eastern Ukraine.<sup>16</sup> The battalions did not pose an offensive threat in and of themselves, but they suggested three important facts: 1) NATO was willing to deploy forces in the Baltic states to an extent to which they had not previously, with (in Moscow's view) the distinction between rotation and permanent basing rather artificial; 2) the battalions could merely be the beginning of much larger force deployments, whether rotational, permanent, or for exercises that could eventually pose an actual threat to Russia; and 3) there was no CAC agreement in place to restrict the quantity of US or foreign NATO forces in the Baltic states, as they were not state parties to the CFE Treaty. During the Cold War-era Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) negotiations, the question of state parties was a significant sticking point.<sup>17</sup> The CFE Treaty successfully resolved the issue by including all NATO and Warsaw Pact members but no other states.

The geopolitical situation today, however, is much more complicated. While any agreement should include all NATO members, a question might be the inclusion of non-NATO EU members (Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, Malta, and depending on its NATO candidacy outcome, Sweden) and other states such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.<sup>18</sup> NATO might have an interest in excluding these, as these states could then become havens of exception for any NATO Treaty Limited Equipment (TLE). Russia, for the very same reason, might insist that these states be included in any CAC agreement. Arguments for including non-NATO EU states are stronger than excluding them. The EU has two key clauses which suggest a Union-wide commitment to common and collective defense: the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) Article 42.7 and the solidarity clause, Article 222, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Neither is held to be as clear and firm as the NATO collective defense Article 5, but the texts suggest more than the absence of commitment.<sup>19</sup> Another substantive reason to include the non-NATO EU neutrals would be that some of these states have provided direct military aid or at a minimum humanitarian support whose goal is to support Ukraine's capacity to withstand Russia's attacks, and broad support for Ukraine through the EU.<sup>20</sup>

On Russia's side, state parties should include Belarus due to its substantive support for Russia's invasion but is unclear if any other states should be included. None of the other Central Treaty Security Organization (CSTO) members have substantially supported Russia's invasion, and two other states that have – Iran and North Korea – fall well outside of Europe.

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<sup>16</sup> Alexander LANOSZKA – Alexander MOENS – Christian LEUPRECHT (eds.): [Lessons from the Enhanced Forward Presence, 2017-2020](#), *NDC Research Papers Series*, No. 14. Rome, Italy: NATO Defense College, 2020; Christian LEUPRECHT et al.: [Leveraging the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Two Years On](#). *The Riga Conference Papers 2019: NATO at 70 in the Baltic Sea Region*. Riga: Latvia Institute of International Affairs, 2019; Jüri LUIK – Henrik PRAKS: *Boosting the Deterrent Effect of Allied Enhanced Forward Presence*. Tallinn: ICDS, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Christoph BLUTH: [Arms Control as a Part of Strategy: The Warsaw Pact in MBFR Negotiations](#). *Cold War History*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (2012), pp. 245–268.

<sup>18</sup> Clara Sophie CRAMER – Ulrike FRANKE (eds.): *Ambiguous Alliance: Neutrality, Opt-outs, and European Defence*. Berlin: ECFR, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example: Karen DEVINE: [Neutrality and the Development of the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy: Compatible or Competing? Cooperation and Conflict](#), Vol. 46, no. 3 (2011), pp. 334–369; Henna VIRKKUNEN: [The EU's Mutual Defence Clause? Article 42\(7\) of the Treaty on European Union](#). *European View*, Vol. 21, no. 1 (2022), pp. 22–26.

<sup>20</sup> EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine: [About EU Military Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine \(EUMAM Ukraine\)](#) [online], 08 12 2022, EEAS.europa.eu (Accessed 08 10 2023); Luke HARDING – Lisa O'CARROLL: [EU Proposes €5bn Military Aid Package for Ukraine after 'Historic' Meeting](#). [online], 02 10 2023, The Guardian (Accessed 08 10 2023).



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The area of application (AoA) is difficult to determine. The CFE Treaty's AoA was from the North Atlantic to the Urals (ATTU) – leaving, for example, forces in North America outside of the treaty (unless they were deployed or based in Europe). In contrast, the interwar naval agreements applied to national inventories no matter what their location. There are advantages and disadvantages to wider versus narrower AoAs, although in general a side will prefer a narrow area to apply to them (if any) and a broader area apply to their adversary.<sup>21</sup>

### Quantitative limits and ratios

Beyond the broad approaches and frameworks discussed above, CAC agreements often set quantitative precise limits on military capabilities, with agreements or their protocols identifying specific models or system characteristics to determine whether a weapon system is covered, and under which category.<sup>22</sup> The military balance ratios are most apparent in these quantitative figures. For example, the Washington Naval Treaty set a ratio of approximately 5.25:5.25:3:15:1.75:1.75 ratio for total capital ship tonnage for the US, UK, Japan, France, and Italy, respectively. The CFE Treaty set a ratio of 1:1 for five categories of TLE (armored vehicles, battle tanks, combat aircraft, artillery, and attack helicopters) for NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

In addition to the ratio between adversaries, there is the internal distribution of limits within groups of state parties, or alliances. For the CFE Treaty, NATO and the Warsaw Pact agreed on the limits for each bloc, and then internally (in compliance with the zonal limits) set national limits. When the Soviet Union dissolved, the former Soviet states had to divide amongst themselves TLE limits, with the total remaining the same.

The last time an agreement was made within NATO to divide TLE between states was when the 1999 A/CFE Treaty was signed (but never entered into force). This treaty dropped the CFE's zonal approach and instead created two ceilings – a national ceiling which referred to a state's limits on its national military forces, and a territorial ceiling, which referred to the amount of TLE a state could have with allied reinforcement.

NATO has grown since 1999, but the A/CFE limits offers a reference point for any future TLE figures. Among the then-NATO members, Hungary was allocated 4 to 5 percent of both national and territorial TLE limits. Today, however, with more members including Finland, Hungary's share of CFE-category TLE is less than 0.5 percent.<sup>23</sup> Hungary may want to press for a higher proportion of TLE to provide it with a stronger military, which a lower ceiling would prevent. Realistically, as a percentage, this is unlikely to be very high, but Hungary might seek to be authorized to have, whether as a national or territorial limit (it is unclear if a future agreement should have this approach) closer to 1.5 percent.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Hungary may want to balance any national limits with territorial limits – that is, Hungary may determine that it does not want to set too low of a limit on allied reinforcements, which a low territorial ceiling might do. Moreover, Hungary will need to ensure that its own Zrínyi modernization plans<sup>25</sup> are also considered in how limitations are set, especially if these limitations require reductions.

### Old and new TLE categories

The CFE and A/CFE Treaties identified five major categories of weapons to limit, but warfare has changed since these had been agreed upon in 1990. Moreover, mutually limiting ratio-based

<sup>21</sup> For a Cold War discussion on this issue see: Jack SNYDER: [Limiting Offensive Conventional Forces: Soviet Proposals and Western Options](#). *International Security*, Vol. 12, no. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 48–77.

<sup>22</sup> Sarah E. KREPS: [The Institutional Design of Arms Control Agreements](#). *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 14 (2018), pp. 127–147.

<sup>23</sup> [Chapter Four: Europe](#). *The Military Balance 2023*, pp. 50–149. This authoritative publication does not provide quantitative data on US or Canadian weapon systems in Europe.

<sup>24</sup> CAC agreements set maximum quantities for weapon systems, but states are under no obligation to be at the maximum level.

<sup>25</sup> Olivér BALOGH: [The Importance of the Zrínyi 2026 Defence and Military Development Program](#). *Vojenské Rozhledy*, Vol. 28 no. 4 (2019), pp. 55–70.





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treaties have balanced similar types of weapons against one another, though it is also possible to exchange entirely different sets of weapons for limitations.<sup>26</sup>

Several weapon systems might be considered for limitations, and Hungary will have a different perspective on these than other states. For example, surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems have proven to be moderately effective in denying airspace and countering strike weapons. On the one hand, SAMs can offer a defense against first strikes – but they can also provide an attacking force with a defensive umbrella. Even if SAMs provide a potentially equal offense and defense capability, Hungary may not have an interest in its SAMs being limited as an East Central European state that will be in range of Russian strikes from a variety of weapon systems.

Another system that could be banned would be certain types of land-based missiles, from short-range to the shorter- and intermediate-range missiles that were banned by the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) agreement. Hungary has an interest in short- and shorter-range missiles being banned, as such weapons would primarily only be able to target Eastern and Central European countries. As Volker Ruehe stated during the Cold War, which now sees the Iron Curtain falling between Russia and East European NATO members, 'The shorter the range, the deader the Germans'<sup>27</sup> – although in this case it would more likely be Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, etc.

Naval systems – ships, naval aircraft, and other naval-based capabilities – were excluded from the CFE Treaty. Today, the only naval force limitations are for ballistic nuclear missile submarines. However, were Russia to insist on any naval limitations, whether from a geographic perspective (for example, limiting NATO naval vessels in the Black and Baltic Seas), such restrictions would not affect Hungary's immediate military capabilities. From a bargaining perspective, especially in an environment where neither side is victorious, an agreement for the Baltic Sea along the lines of the Montreux Convention might be enticing to Russia. These agreements focus on access to the seas, but an agreement that sets specific limits on the size and number of vessels is also possible.<sup>28</sup> NATO might also be interested in limiting Russian naval capabilities (outside of the existing nuclear weapons agreements) due to its ability to launch long-range strike weapons from submarines in particular, and the low but potential threat of Russia seizing islands in the Baltic Sea such as Sweden's Gotland, Denmark's Bornholm, and Estonia's coastal islands. This, however, would not necessarily be a priority for Hungary as the Russian navy poses a minimal threat to Hungary. Hungary's advantage for these agreements is that they offer Russia a bargaining chip that is of no cost to Hungary.

In Russia's December 2021 ultimatum to the US, one of the TLE's they raised was 'heavy bombers'.<sup>29</sup> Russia proposed that these aircraft would be prohibited from flying in any location outside of their national territory from which they could attack the territory of the other state. Setting aside issues of feasibility and fairness – as Russian long-range bombers can threaten NATO (including Hungary) from within Russian airspace, while the US cannot as easily threaten much of Russia from within US airspace – any limitations on long-range bombers could be acceptable for Hungary as they lack such aircraft. Like naval limitations, Hungary's interest would be in supporting limits on a weapon system they lack to reduce or prevent limitations on weapon systems it has.

Drones have clearly transformed modern warfare, and have likely contributed to a substantial strengthening of the defense. Attackers, who must move out of cover and become exposed, can now be observed and targeted quickly by drones or drone-cued weapons.<sup>30</sup> Although drones can

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<sup>26</sup> The US considered offsetting tactical nuclear weapons for Warsaw Pact tank units. See: Thomas MÜLLER – Mathias ALBERT: [Whose Balance? A Constructivist Approach to Balance of Power Politics](#). *European Journal of International Security*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (February 2021), pp. 109–28.

<sup>27</sup> Robert J. MCCARTNEY: [Kohl Wants Wider Accord on Missiles](#). [online], 16 05 1987, The Washington Post (Accessed 08 10 2023)

<sup>28</sup> Evgeny BUZHINSKIY – Oleg SHAKIROV: *Outlines for Future Conventional Arms Control in Europe: A Sub-Regional Regime in the Baltics*. London: European Leadership Network, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Russian Foreign Ministry: Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on Security Guarantees. 17 12 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen BIDDLE: [Ukraine and the Future of Offensive Maneuver](#). [online], 22 11 2022, War on the Rocks (Accessed 08 10 2023); Michael KOFMAN – Rob LEE: [Perseverance and Adaptation: Ukraine's Counteroffensive](#)



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be used in various offensive roles, experience in the Russo–Ukraine War suggests they are more valuable for the defense than offense. As a result, Hungary, especially if it faces Russian forces across its borders, should resist efforts to limit shorter-range drones which support front-line forces. Medium- and long-range drones, on the other hand, may have a primarily deep-strike role. As used by Russia and Ukraine, these types of drones are limited to hitting fixed targets such as buildings and infrastructure. Hungary might find itself more vulnerable than other NATO states to such weapons, while they might not be as useful in Hungary's inventory. Thus, limiting them might be in Hungary's interest.

Stealth, fifth-generation combat aircraft such as the F-35 Lightning II could also be subject to arms control (setting aside definitional challenges) because of their destabilizing nature. These aircraft may be able to penetrate enemy airspace, evading radar and hitting without warning. At the same time, they are much more vulnerable on the ground. This offers an attacker a substantial first-move advantage.<sup>31</sup> Offering stealth combat aircraft limits to Russia would not only contribute to NATO bargaining to make more demands on Russia but could substantively reduce the risk of a surprise attack by either side. Hungary does not have a 5<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft and thus would not be sacrificing any national military capabilities as it intends to fly the Gripen as its primary multi-purpose fighter jet.<sup>32</sup>

President Putin has highlighted the threat posed by what he refers to as offensive military infrastructure.<sup>33</sup> His view is that even if NATO does not have forces directly facing Russia along the common border, a robust transportation infrastructure would enable a faster flow of forces, even to launch a surprise attack. Though defining an offensive, military infrastructure poses some challenges, the notion is not unreasonable.<sup>34</sup> Lacking such infrastructure, it might take the US 45 days to move an armored brigade from the continental US (CONUS) to eastern Europe.<sup>35</sup> A robust infrastructure might realistically cut this in half – a critical difference in NATO's ability to respond to crises or – from Russia's perspective – launch a surprise attack.<sup>36</sup> Russia's concern about infrastructure and eastward movement of forces is centered on how many forces both might be able to deploy between the day of mobilization and the onset of hostilities (from M-Day to D-Day), as well as provide reinforcements during the conflict. The latter question is key to deterrence – because the side that can reinforce more rapidly is more likely to win. During the Cold War, scholars carefully considered this question to determine likely World War Three outcomes.<sup>37</sup> Hungary's defensive capability may hinge on reinforcements, thus it might resist transport infrastructure limitations. Its feasibility is uncertain as such limitations have not been attempted in at least the past 100 years though there may be various, potential methods of implementation. It could include restrictions of pre-positioned equipment, and any restrictions on specialized equipment only useful for military mobility.

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[at Three Months](#). [online], 04 09 2023, War on the Rocks (Accessed 08 10 2023); Jack WATLING – Nick REYNOLDS: *Stormbreak: Fighting Through Russian Defences in Ukraine's 2023 Offensive*. London: Royal United Services Institute, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Caitlin TALMADGE: [Emerging Technology and Intra-War Escalation Risks: Evidence from the Cold War, Implications for Today](#). *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 42, no. 6 (2019), pp. 864-887.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel DEME: [Hungary Reveals Details about Modernization of Its Fighter Jets](#). [online], 23 12 2021, Remix News (Accessed 08 10 2023).

<sup>33</sup> [Putin Slams 'aggressive' New US Defence Strategy](#). [online], 22 12 2017, France24 (Accessed 08 10 2023); [Transcript of Vladimir Putin's Televised Address on Ukraine](#).

<sup>34</sup> For examples of NATO and the EU improving military mobility infrastructure, see: [Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport: EU Transport Infrastructure: Speeding-up Investment in Military Mobility](#). [online], 21 12 2022, European Commission (Accessed 08 10 2023); CEPA Task Group: *The CEPA Military Mobility Project: Moving Mountains for Europe's Defense*. Washington, DC: Center for European Policy Analysis, 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Jakob GUSTAFSSON – John RYDQVIST – Robert DALSIÖ: *Deterrence by Reinforcement: The Strengths and Weaknesses of NATO's Evolving Defence Strategy*. Stockholm: FOI, 2019, p. 41.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander VELEZ-GREEN: [Russian Strategists Debate Preemption as Defense Against NATO Surprise Attack](#). [online], 14 03 2018, Russia Matters (Accessed 08 10 2023).

<sup>37</sup> Barry R. POSEN: [Measuring the European Conventional Balance: Coping with Complexity in Threat Assessment](#). *International Security*, Vol. 9, no. 3 (Winter 1984-1985), pp. 47-88.



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Lastly, Russia has stated that it views the broad category of NATO long-range precision strike capability as threatening – especially when coupled with regime change goals such as in Libya, Iraq, and the former Yugoslavia.<sup>38</sup> Though this is a broad category as precision strike can be based on a system of capabilities, Russia's concern about this capability based on their perception of recent history is important to formulating any agreement. Precision-strike concerns and overall, military balancing CAC go hand-in-hand. Precision strike capability is enhanced by broader conventional arms capability; and if NATO possesses a substantial military balance advantage, it will reduce Russia's capacity to respond to regime-targeting precision strikes (which means that Russia's deterrence is reduced).

### Conclusions

Any post-Russo-Ukraine War CAC agreement may reflect the situation at the time of negotiation and signature, which is impossible to predict at this time, because both sides are mutually optimistic about the course of the war.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, Hungary would be wise to consider potential CAC policies and priorities based on the war's three potential outcomes of victory for Ukraine and its coalition, victory for Russia, or a stalemate. CAC agreements are complicated and incorporate perspectives from not just opposing sides, but also states' perspectives within each bloc. A continental-wide CAC agreement will require bargaining between NATO and Russia, and within NATO. The NATO secretariat itself may also have its own perspectives on approaches and priorities. Preparing for CAC negotiations, with proposals and justifications available from their commencement, can provide Hungary with many advantages while bearing in mind that Budapest will need to balance national prerogatives with those of other NATO states, NATO's overall capabilities, and Russia's interests. Narrowly focusing national priorities to the detriment of alliance cohesion, harmony, and military capability may in the long-term be self-damaging.

This article has presented geographic issues, TLE ratios, and equipment categories that Hungary will need to consider within the context of preserving deterrence, mitigating the security dilemma with Russia if necessary, and the ODB. This article has not covered some important CAC agreement issues where Hungary's interests are unclear, such as the zonal approaches that the CFE Treaty adopted,<sup>40</sup> flanks restrictions later amended to the CFE Treaty,<sup>41</sup> and military personnel limits.<sup>42</sup>

A fundamental element of any agreement is bargaining. Even when a state faces defeat (or is defeated), it retains some bargaining power as failure to come to an agreement will still cost the victor lives and resources if the conflict continues. Similarly, an agreement that is wholly disadvantageous given the relative power balance at the time of the agreement's signature may result not just in violent resistance, but also a state's desire to violate or escape from the agreement. Thus, NATO and Hungary have an interest in aspiring for an agreement that Russia will not just accept but be willing to abide by because of a perception of fairness.

The prospects for any agreement are uncertain, and even the prospects of negotiation are uncertain given the atmosphere of mutual distrust and hostility. A post-Russo-Ukraine War CAC

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<sup>38</sup> [Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation](#). [online], 29 06 2015, Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Accessed 08 10 2023); [English Translation of the 2015 Russian National Security Strategy](#). [online], 2015, Russia Matters (Accessed 08 10 2023); OSCE Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project, *Back to Diplomacy: Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project*. OSCE, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> CHARAP – PRIEBE: Avoiding a Long War.

<sup>40</sup> Richard A. FALKENRATH: [The CFE Flank Dispute: Waiting in the Wings](#). *International Security*, Vol. 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 118-144.

<sup>41</sup> The CFE Treaty flank issues are discussed in detail in: Walter B. SLOCOMBE: [CFE Flank Agreement: Enhancing U.S. and European Security](#). *USIA Electronic Journal*, Vol. 2, no. 3 (August 1997). The issue of either side concentrating TLE on the flanks in the absence of flank limitations, if zonal restrictions are established, still exists.

<sup>42</sup> Concluding Act of the Negotiation on Personnel Strength of Conventional Armed Forces In Europe. (Helsinki, 10 07 1992).



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agreement may be limited to a narrow geographic area, such as along the common Russian–Ukrainian border; or an agreement might have a larger AoA, but still be narrowly focused on the common NATO–Russia borders. On the one hand, these agreements will not address disputes about the military balance and indivisible security, but if a halt in the conflict could open the door for improved relations and, not the least, the absence of conflict even without resolving the conflict’s underlying causes.

However, several points offer some optimism. First, arms control agreements adopted during the Cold War overcame the deep rivalries when a mutual benefit was recognized. Second, the conflict may reveal important information about relative power so that if both sides agree on this information, their bargaining positions should converge.<sup>43</sup> Third, conflicts usually end with an agreement, albeit not necessarily a broad, sweeping one that this article focuses on. Lastly, broad, post-conflict agreements are much more likely to be made in the event of regime change by one or several sides; a realistic possibility if Putin is replaced by new leadership with a new approach to European security.<sup>44</sup>

Errors and miscalculations with any disagreement could result in the agreement’s failure, which is not likely to be in Hungary’s interests. Negotiating state parties will be confronted with difficult choices, and the challenge of finding a set of specific CAC measures that will mutually satisfy NATO and Russia cannot be overstated – as CAC discussions since 1992 have demonstrated.<sup>45</sup> Specifically, finding a formula in which both sides feel secure and neither feels threatened may be threading a small needle with a thick rope. This might be complicated both by the lack of a clear winner and loser, and that an agreement might be negotiated following an indirect conflict in Europe, thus neither fitting in with the historical precedents of peacetime or post-conflict CAC agreements. The tragedy that is the entirety of the Russo–Ukraine War suggests that peace is in everyone’s interest, and a CAC agreement that all parties accept on the basis of fairness is a cornerstone of future peace in Europe.

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<sup>43</sup> Bahar LEVENTOĞLU – Branislav L. SLANTCHEV: [The Armed Peace: A Punctuated Equilibrium Theory of War](#). *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 51, no. 4 (2007), pp. 755–771; REITER: *How Wars End*.

<sup>44</sup> CHARAP – PRIEBE: *Avoiding a Long War*.

<sup>45</sup> LEVENTOĞLU – SLANTCHEV: [The Armed Peace: A Punctuated Equilibrium Theory of War](#); REITER: *How Wars End*.



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