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**Soviet Views on a  
Post-Madrid European  
Security Conference**

**An Intelligence Memorandum**

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### **Soviet Views on a Post-Madrid European Security Conference**

#### **Summary**

President Brezhnev's offer to extend the geographic range for military confidence-building measures (CBMs) eastward to include the entire European USSR, conditioned on a "corresponding" extension in the West, has changed the complexion of the Madrid review session of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). East-West differences over defining the mandate of a prospective European security conference created the current impasse; hopes for a possible compromise have now been raised.

Brezhnev's offer may portend that the Soviets will support a third-party proposal in order to gain agreement to convene a conference. A Yugoslav proposal put forward in December is probably the most attractive to the Soviets because it gives the conference itself more control over the agenda than do other third-party proposals. It also favors discussion of nuclear weapons, which the Soviets wish to see included in the agenda and which the US-backed French plan would exclude.

If a compromise proves elusive, Moscow could seek agreement at Madrid on CBMs to supplement those prescribed in the Helsinki Final Act. The Kremlin may, however, link negotiation of additional CBMs to a commitment by CSCE participants to hold a future security conference.

*This memorandum was written by [redacted] Office of Political Analysis. It has been coordinated with the National Intelligence Officer for the USSR and Eastern Europe and the Office of Strategic Research. This paper contains information available as of 9 March 1981. Comments and queries are [redacted]*

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### **Soviet Views on a Post-Madrid European Security Conference**

#### **Franco-Soviet Differences**

The French first called for a Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE) in 1978 and presented their plan at the UN Special Session on Disarmament that year. The French were motivated by several considerations:

- A dislike of what they consider the narrow, Central European focus of the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks in Vienna in which France does not participate.
- A wish to prevent the monopolization of disarmament initiatives by Moscow and Washington.
- President Giscard d'Estaing's desire to upstage an initiative made in December 1977 by Socialist leader Francois Mitterand

The French plan envisages a two-stage conference. The first stage would be devoted to militarily significant, verifiable CBMs applicable to all of Europe, including all Soviet territory west of the Ural mountains. The second stage would discuss reductions of troops and conventional armaments

From the outset, the Soviet attitude toward the proposal was negative. Moscow objects to some of its major elements and does not wish Western countries to seize the initiative on disarmament issues. Rather than criticize the plan and possibly jeopardize relations with France, however, the Soviets countered in May 1979 with a Warsaw Pact proposal for a Conference on Military Detente and Disarmament (CMDD). The Soviet plan differs from the French proposal in several respects, although it also envisages two similar stages.

#### **Area**

Until Brezhnev's offer, Moscow had rejected the French proposal to extend the geographic area of applicability for CBMs to all of the European USSR. The Soviets aver that the parameters for CBMs agreed upon in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, including the application of one such measure to a 250-kilometer-wide border zone in the western USSR, resulted from "agonizing" compromises and afford equal security to all CSCE participants. The Kremlin has insisted frequently that CBMs extending to the Urals would be possible only if US and Canadian territory were also included in the area of application. Brezhnev's current offer, which is conditioned on a "corresponding extension" in the West, presumably presages Soviet arguments for including portions or all of the North Atlantic area and, quite probably, portions or all of the United States and Canada.

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### *CBMs*

During discussions at CSCE meetings in 1973-75, the USSR displayed little interest in CBMs. Since the Helsinki Final Act was signed, however, Moscow has apparently recognized the utility of some notification and verification measures in projecting the image of a Soviet commitment to relaxing tensions in Europe and in complicating US and NATO military activities. NATO holds far more exercises than does the Warsaw Pact that would be banned by the 50,000 to 60,000 manpower ceiling proposed by the USSR.

The first Soviet CBM proposals were offered by Brezhnev in a speech in October 1977. He envisaged a separate forum for CBMs that would parallel the MBFR talks and also proposed the following measures:

- The nonfirst use of nuclear weapons.
- The nonexpansion of alliances.
- A limit of 50,000 to 60,000 participants in military exercises.
- An extension of CBMs to the Mediterranean Sea areas.

With slight alterations, these ideas still form the basis of the Eastern CBM proposals and reflect a fundamentally different approach from that of the French and the other Western Allies:

- The West insists upon mandatory or binding CBMs; the USSR supports voluntary measures.
- The West favors detailed exchanges of information and inspections to verify any CBM accord; the USSR opposes them. The West seeks information about the routine organization, activity, and financial costs of maintaining military forces to prevent surprise attacks. The Soviets equate this desire for "transparency" with espionage.
- The West wants militarily significant CBMs; the USSR prefers declaratory measures concerning intentions that seem designed for political purposes.
- The West believes that comprehensive CBMs have military value in their own right, and that agreement on them separately can provide the foundation for future reductions; the USSR insists upon strict linkage between CBMs and the size of troop and armament reductions.

### *Types of Forces and Weapons*

The French seek to exclude naval forces and nuclear weapons from the agenda of a European security conference. The USSR insists that these topics should be considered. The Soviets probably believe that their inclusion would justify discussion of the deployment of US weapons in Europe.

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including new theater nuclear forces, and thus provide another forum for charging the US and NATO with increasing tensions in Europe.

*Linkage to CSCE*

France, the other Allies, and many of the neutral and nonaligned (NNA) participants want any European security conference to be intimately linked with the CSCE process. They envisage a conference that would submit its decisions to the next CSCE review session for ratification and review. Moscow, however, would like to attenuate this link and, if possible, divorce a security conference from discussions of Soviet and East European compliance with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act.

Over the last three years—most recently in January in Moscow—the Soviets and French have debated their rival proposals but have never come close to achieving a compromise

**Current State of Play**

At the current CSCE review session, Eastern and Western tactics for overcoming the impasse have differed. In December, the French advanced their CDE plan essentially unchanged (although the defining of the second stage would now await the successful outcome of the first), and the Allies are firmly committed to it. The East, on the other hand, presented a Polish-sponsored version of the earlier Warsaw Pact CMDD proposal that stresses the need for an open agenda to consider all security proposals.

The USSR and its allies have thus sought to portray the French proposal as setting preconditions for a conference and the Eastern proposal as more open to options regarding its scope, including some aspects of the French formula. This approach seems contrived to influence European public opinion and to convince the neutral and nonaligned states that they should press the Western participants to accept a compromise formula. Several NNA participants already have offered compromise proposals and, with modifications, some of these may be acceptable to Moscow

**Moscow's Options**

Moscow has frequently insisted that the CSCE review session would be unsuccessful unless a decision is reached to convene a European security conference. In the wake of their invasion of Afghanistan and the military activity related to events in Poland, the Soviet leaders want a "peace" forum to focus world attention on other issues. Such a forum, they believe, would also provide a platform for exploiting differences within NATO over modernization of theater nuclear forces, the possible deployment of enhanced radiation weapons in Europe, and East-West arms control negotiations

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For the Soviets such a meeting would represent a military complement to the political detente symbolized by the Helsinki Final Act and West Germany's bilateral treaties with East European states. They are concerned about the growing military and political weight of West Germany on the continent and within NATO. A conference would bring discussions of, and potentially agreements about, limits on the activities of the West German armed forces; a second phase would broach the topic of troop and armament levels. The proposal thus reflects Moscow's historical preoccupation with its "German problem" and attempts to ensure that no new threats arise to jeopardize the postwar European political or military status quo.

For these reasons Moscow would be reluctant to drop its call for such a conference, and, indeed, Brezhnev's proposal indicates that Moscow still hopes to gain agreement on a compromise formula for the gathering. If NATO support for the French CDE proposal holds, Moscow might shift its support to a third-party proposal or settle for an agreement at Madrid on additional CBMs (or "improved" versions of existing measures), possibly linked to a Western commitment to some kind of eventual security meeting. The first possibility—support for a third-party proposal—may be the preferred Soviet solution; the other may be a fallback position in the event that differences over defining the mandate of a security conference persist.

#### *Third-Party Proposals*

Brezhnev's offer to extend the geographic range of CBMs injects a new element of expectancy into conference discussions. The USSR has projected at least temporarily an image of flexibility and enhanced its position for pressing the West to accept a compromise proposal.

A vague Yugoslav proposal, introduced at the Madrid meeting in December, is a likely candidate to receive Soviet support. The head of the Soviet delegation in Madrid has alluded favorably to the Yugoslav proposal in his public remarks. This scheme leaves open the specifics of a European security conference, although Belgrade is on record as favoring discussion of nuclear weapons during the second phase of the conference. Belgrade also suggests holding a preparatory meeting intended to resolve differences over the conference mandate.

Alternatively, the Soviets might decide to promote a Swedish proposal, also proffered at Madrid in December, as a means of resolving East-West differences. Like the Yugoslav proposal, the Swedish plan envisages a strong link between the two stages of a conference and would include discussion of nuclear weapons. The proposal takes a strong stand on the verifiability of CBMs, however, and would have them apply only to the "entire European area," a formula that could include seas in or near Europe but apparently would not include US or Canadian territory.

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A possible Finnish initiative would present the Soviets with another third-party option, although one that is less likely to win Western or broad NNA support. During the past year, the Finns informally suggested an alternative to both CDE and CMDD that would have an open agenda and attempt to confirm disarmament principles. The Soviets have shown some interest in the suggestion, presumably because it does not define the geographical applicability of CBMs prior to the conference and permits discussion of declaratory measures and nuclear weapons.

#### *Further CBMs*

If the USSR concluded that agreement cannot be reached at this time on either a security conference mandate or a preparatory meeting, it might support the adoption of additional or improved CBMs at the current Madrid session. In early February the Soviets proposed six specific CBMs, and in introducing them the chief Soviet delegate barely mentioned the Eastern CMDD proposal. The Swedes have suggested negotiating interim CBMs at Madrid to cover the period between Madrid and a future security conference.

The Soviets could offer to accept further CBMs at Madrid to give the European arms control process some momentum. They might even be willing to permit usage of terms such as "militarily significant" and "verifiable," arguing that anything that lowers tension is militarily significant and that verification can be accomplished without inspection by available national technical means. In an attempt to appear flexible, the head of the Soviet delegation intimated in early March that Moscow might eventually agree that CBMs have some political obligation and that verification could be tailored to each specific CBM. Moscow has already said that adopting further CBMs at Madrid could serve as a transition to the first phase of a European security conference. It might in a formal initiative insist upon such linkage. Even a preparatory or an experts' meeting might come to be viewed by Moscow as a useful political forum if a full-scale conference were unachievable.

The CBMs that the USSR has proposed or supported have propagandistic as well as military value:

- They request a lower numerical threshold for, and more advanced warning of, troop movements in order to draw attention to the large-scale exercises that NATO undertakes.
- They seek a reduction of forces in, and the extension of existing CBMs to, the Mediterranean Sea area. They also support adoption of naval and amphibious CBMs. These appeal to the NNA participants and could affect NATO military activities in the Mediterranean and Norwegian Seas.

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The East has proposed additional declaratory moves. In the Soviet view, these could be considered CBMs, although the West regards some as purely political and unacceptable. Calls for improved conditions for military observers, the nonfirst use of nuclear and conventional weapons, the establishment of nuclear weapons-free zones, and assurances to nonnuclear states that they will not be attacked with nuclear weapons may be advanced. A prohibition of the expansion of existing military alliances in Europe, a tactic designed to block Spanish membership in NATO, has also been raised. A ban on new military bases in Europe could be suggested in order to oppose the stocking of US military equipment in Norway and elsewhere.

#### Prospects

Moscow might make Eastern willingness to sign a final document in Madrid conditional on Western agreement to some kind of a follow-on meeting on security issues. The Soviets have threatened not to agree to hold another CSCE review session (periodic review is called for in the Helsinki Final Act) unless there is "substantive progress" on security and other matters, and they are likely to reiterate this threat. Citing the lack of progress on security measures that characterized the previous review session in Belgrade in 1977-78, they will warn that a failure to reach agreement on convening a security conference and on further CBMs will exacerbate East-West tensions.

The Soviets are not likely to carry out their threat. The CSCE process has been a cornerstone of Brezhnev's detente policy, and the Soviets would not want to destroy it or bear the onus for having done so—although a Soviet military intervention in Poland might cause precisely this result. Moscow, however, does want to put pressure on the West to agree to a security meeting. Accordingly, these threats are particularly aimed at getting those most concerned about a stalemate on security matters or the possible end of the CSCE process—that is, the NNA participants—to press France, the United States, and the other Allies to compromise.

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