A lasting decline or a dead end in European arms control?

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Introduction
Arms control establishments often tend to ignore the fact that arms control is not Ding an sich. It is an instrument that has certain functions. Most importantly it should contribute to the security of the participants in the arms control process internationally and through its contribution to their national security. This should be achieved by simultaneously reducing the expenses of providing for security. These factors taken together make arms control a positive sum game. That is why it is worthwhile to pursuing it.

Beyond such generalities there were certain specific expectations attached to arms control in the Cold War era, the period when it actually emerged. Measures adopted should have reduced ‘the likelihood of war, its scope and violence if it occurs, and the political and economic costs of being prepared for it’. There were certain objectives that complemented the former substantive ones. Namely, arms control and the forums established by it were essential channels of professional communication on security matters and for quite some time, during the 1960s and 1970s, demonstrated a certain status in the system. Arms control did not address the causes of conflict understandably. It emerged as a pragmatic response to the nuclear danger and the overkill capacity developed during the Cold War. These factors demonstrate that the idea of arms control was — realistically — limited and addressed the means applied in the conflict rather than its causes.

When the Cold War suddenly came to an end the arms control community was taken by surprise just as political analysts and establishments generally. It was particularly interesting to observe that the major strategic rearrangement occurred when European arms control was at its peak, both as far as confidence- and security-building measures and arms limitation were concerned. Hence history ‘interfered’ with the ongoing processes made possible by lowered threat levels and co-operative attitudes. The relative success of arms control was conditional on these two factors. Namely, that there was some threat perceived by European countries although it was not antagonistic as that would have made negotiating the means impossible. Arms control was regarded as being both possible and necessary. The co-operative attitude of the parties involved made the rapid achievement of results possible.

This article analyses the post-Cold War evolution of European arms control and its prospects. It does so in the light of the achievements of the last decade and

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the reaction to the changed environment. The most important question is to conclude whether the reactions were adequate and hence whether they are suitable to contribute to shaping international relations in the future.

Arms control in the post-Cold War European environment
When the Cold War ended it left in place a number of arrangements, a body of European arms control and establishments dealing with such matters. The former was a legacy one had to address, to decide on its continuation and eventual adaptation. The latter was a large group of people who had a vested interest in the process.

If one takes a closer look at the arguments put forward after the end of the East-West conflict they can be grouped as follows: 1) It was emphasised that the process of arms control has not come to an end with the conclusion of agreements, it includes their implementation, verification and operating those forums which were established in relation to them (e.g. review conferences, various discussion and decision-making forums). 2) Negotiations that aimed to address some pending arrangements continued irrespective of the fundamental change in underlying strategic relations. The Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, the forthcoming agreement on confidence- and security-building measures and the Open Skies Treaty were all negotiated but have not yet been concluded. 3) Not much later the idea emerged to expand some commitments to countries which were not members of the two alliances and hence were not parties to two important negotiations, the CFE and the Open Skies talks. After the conclusion of the two treaties the 1992 Helsinki Document of the CSCE formulated this as the ‘harmonization of obligations concerning arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building’ and focused upon ‘obligations of participating States under existing international instruments applicable to conventional armed forces in Europe, in particular those concerning the exchange of information, verification and force levels’. 4) In the mid-1990s adopting arms control measures as part of broad settlements to conclude major conflicts was considered. Such a regulation was adopted on the basis of the 1995 Dayton Agreement extending to both confidence-building and arms limitations. 5) Measures were considered that would have a direct bearing upon the security perception of people rather than that of governments. The anti-personnel landmine ban was adopted universally whereas the regulation of small arms and light weapons is simultaneously being considered in different continents, including Europe. This development is an offspring of the increasing dominance of human security as a concept. It is necessary to take a close look at each of the five in order to obtain a balance sheet before drawing conclusions for the future.

Arms control as a process which includes implementation and verification
It is correct to state that arms control is a broader process than negotiations and the

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