

influence those asymmetries have on efforts to produce meaningful and realistic conventional arms reductions in Central Europe.

The basic realities of geography (and the consequences that flow from those realities) have been a major underlying factor influencing the MBFR negotiations. So too have been the basic realities of (predominantly) Soviet, American and German foreign policy. These three major players, at different times, have pursued quite dissimilar policy goals. The Soviets have wanted more than anything to constrain German military strength while the Americans have wanted to constrain Soviet military power opposing Germany and the NATO forces. Germany's interests have shifted from wishing to reduce their own forces to wishing to constrain the Soviet conventional threat. This has resulted in cross-purpose negotiating.

Without doubt, the fundamental visible problem plaguing the negotiations proper has been the disagreement over a common data base. NATO estimates now place the number of Warsaw Treaty Organization ground force personnel in the reduction zone at 956,000 while WTO figures claim only 805,000 men. Air force personnel numbers differ by at least 36,000 men. This difference in estimates is undeniably a major problem, one that can't help but obstruct further agreement. The differences are not trivial – as many as 60,000 front-line Soviet troops are involved along with additional support forces. If NATO figures are correct, the Soviets would have to remove approximately 130,000 of their troops from East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland to achieve a 700,000 ceiling. The removal of this many front-line Soviet troops may not be a tolerable course of action *under any conceivable circumstances* – even if it did lead to significant permanent reductions in the West German Army. Although such a reduction has been a

major Soviet foreign policy aim for decades, it might not constitute an adequate inducement if Soviet forces were also significantly reduced, especially given the decidedly dual-purpose nature of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. Soviet planners must allow for "policing functions" that consume thousands of soldiers who, practically speaking, are not really available for combat. The extent to which this is a real constraint on Soviet manpower is difficult to estimate. Independent of this peculiar sensitivity, it is not completely obvious that the Soviets haven't some legitimate complaints of their own with respect to "counting rules". They have pointed out correctly, for instance, that the reduction zone excludes approximately 250,000 French soldiers not in Germany but nevertheless very close to the reduction zone. From the Warsaw Treaty Organization's perspective, these forces cannot be ignored. (The 51,000 French personnel stationed in Germany are counted in the NATO total.) They have also argued that NATO has applied its counting rules incorrectly to the Warsaw Treaty Organization forces, failing to take into account the fact that Western armies use many civilians to perform non-combat administrative and service tasks that soldiers perform in the East. This, the Soviets claim, distorts the true balance of forces, making eastern forces look more combatable than they really are. Another potential counting error according to WTO officials is the inclusion of some reservists temporarily stationed in the reduction zone. The Soviets point out, as well, that the very effective FRG Territorial Army is composed of approximately 400,000 quickly mobilizable reservists who do not count in the force totals. If these claims were accepted, the force imbalance would clearly shift to NATO's favour. This Eastern response obviously discounts the massive number of Soviet forces just beyond the reduction zone to the East which would also seriously upset balance calculations. The problem, of course, is determining whose claims are correct and to what degree such differences really matter.¹⁶

Amongst the collection of lesser negotiating obstacles, the issue of residual limitations or national sub-ceilings is probably the most important. The WTO has been consistent in its effort to introduce limitations on the number of

¹⁶ It should not be assumed automatically that Western intelligence estimates are necessarily correct. There have been many significant and surprisingly foolish intelligence estimating errors on the part of Western intelligence agencies, particularly those of the United States. See, for example, John Prados, *The Soviet Estimate: U.S. Intelligence Analysis and Russian Military Strength* (New York: The Dial Press, 1983). The truth is probably a murky combination of deliberate deceit, a genuine Soviet desire to "discount" some of its forces because of their "policing" functions, incompatibilities in the counting rules, and Western intelligence counting errors.

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