

# Back to the Future? Revisiting Military Confidence-Building in Europe\*

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**Abstract:** The last few years have seen a paradigm shift in European security. NATO and Russia are once again stepping up their military activities and building their military arsenals, as deep mistrust and the fear of unintended military escalation seem to have returned. Over the last few decades, such concerns could be mitigated by an interlocking web of arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBM). Now, these regimes are significantly outdated and no longer reflect the political, military and technological developments of today. Concentrating on the Vienna Document, this article discusses three possible scenarios and presents concrete ideas for the future of CSBM in Europe.

**Keywords:** Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, Vienna Document, conflict prevention, NATO-Russia relations, OSCE  
**Schlagwörter:** Vertrauens- und Sicherheitsbildende Maßnahmen, Wiener Dokument, Konfliktprevention, NATO-Russland Beziehungen, OSZE

## 1. Introduction

In 1945, at the end of the most devastating war in world history, there was hope for a more stable and peaceful Europe. Instead, the decades that followed were characterized by mistrust, and a dangerous escalation spiral emerged. Although fear of nuclear annihilation dominated much of the Cold War security landscape, Europe also saw a conventional arms race of an unimaginable extent. At the height of the confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, more than nine million soldiers, 60,000 battle tanks, 130,000 armoured vehicles and approximately 2,000 attack helicopters were facing off against each other (NATO, 1984).

Negotiations aimed at reducing the risks emanating from this political and military confrontation had already started during the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in the early 1970s. These negotiations led to the first sets of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBM) contained in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and in the Stockholm Document of 1986, both being direct predecessors of the Vienna Document that is still in place today (Goldblat, 2002: 257–265). When the Cold War finally came to an end and the CSCE became the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), both sides had not only been able to overcome the block-to-block confrontation that had divided the continent for more than four decades, but had also created “a web of interlocking and mutually reinforcing arms control obligations and commitments” (OSCE Lisbon Summit, 1996: 17).<sup>1</sup> Today, about twenty years later, more and more cracks in this interlocking web are becoming evident. Due to the lack of political will on the part of key stakeholders, first by NATO countries, today by Russia, the CSBM regimes currently in place are increasingly outdated and seem no longer able to provide sufficient levels of military transparency and predictability given the political, military and technological developments of

today. Not least since the Ukrainian crisis, more and more voices can be heard arguing that the existing arms control and CSBM architecture may even be at risk of fully collapsing.

Against this background, this article raises the question of whether it is possible to go *back to the future*<sup>2</sup> and to refurbish the European arms control and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBM) architecture. To this end, I will look specifically at the OSCE Vienna Document 2011 on CSBM and begin by identifying some of the biggest challenges to the document, before concluding with a critical reflection on three possible strategies for approaching the future of military confidence-building in Europe: *maintenance measures*, *substantial modernization* or a *complete redesign*. While this article cannot solve the issue of recurring political deadlocks regarding the modernization of arms control and CSBM in Europe, we should still not shy away from developing new and innovative ideas for their future. Therefore, this article will not only reflect on the most likely modernization scenario to unfold, but also include several concrete ideas of how to make CSBM fit for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 2. Smaller. Faster. More Hybrid. – The Main Challenges to Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in Europe Today

Mistrust and hard security concerns, such as the fear of surprise attacks disguised as regular military exercises, dominated much of the immediate post-Cold War European security landscape. For many years, CSBM like the Vienna Document or the Treaty on Open Skies (OS) were able to address these concerns (e.g. through the prior announcement and observation of larger military exercises) and served as an important complement to more substantial disarmament and arms control steps such as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

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1 A more thorough historical overview of the developments of arms control and CSBM in Europe can for example be found in Goldblat J (2002) *Arms control: The new guide to negotiations and agreements*. London, Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, or Rittberger V, Efinger M and Mendler M (1990) Toward an East-West Security Regime: The Case of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures. *Journal of Peace Research* 27(1): 55–74.

2 Like the title of this article, this is an ironic reference to John Mearsheimer's controversial article “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War” from 1990, in which he predicted Europe's backlash into large-scale military confrontation as soon as the threat of nuclear annihilation and the bipolar world order would disappear (Mearsheimer, 1990), a scenario that fortunately did not evolve.

(CFE-Treaty) that led to the destruction of more than 60,000 heavy weapons systems in Europe (German Federal Foreign Office). Besides the regulations for larger military exercises, this politically-binding document also contains annual exchanges of military information (e.g. about the numbers and peacetime locations of land and air forces, certain types of their heavy military equipment, as well as defence budgets, military doctrines and the acquisition and commissioning of new weapon systems), various means of verification,<sup>3</sup> several risk reduction mechanisms (e.g. a consultation mechanism in case of unusual military activities) and various forms of direct military-to-military contacts (e.g. regular seminars on changes in military doctrines). In short, other than traditional forms of arms control, CSBM do not usually limit military forces and their activities in size, but rather serve as an important tool that facilitates the de-escalation of a crisis before it turns into an open military confrontation (Borawski, 1986: 113).

Unfortunately, as soon as the imminent threat of arms races and surprise attacks disappeared from the day-to-day thinking of security practitioners, the importance of arms control and CSBM was seemingly forgotten. Apart from a few exceptions (e.g. Germany or the United States), many arms control agencies faced wide-ranging budget cuts, and numerous opportunities for long overdue modernization steps were missed as they faced opposing political interests of key stakeholders (in particular of Russia and the West). In a new climate of heightened suspicion, the consequences of this lack of political will for progress on arms control and the loss of expertise in the national verification centres are enormous. As will be discussed next, many of the mechanisms, once set out to prevent dangerous escalation dynamics and to provide transparency over military forces and their activities, are now outdated (e.g. Tiilikainen, 2015: 25; Koivula, 2017: 119).

The increasing disconnect between existing provisions and current security needs is most evident in the shift from classical confrontations between large conventional armies to an increasing number of intrastate and hybrid conflict scenarios. This shift has not only substantially altered the threat and security perceptions of states, but also led to significant changes in command structures, military doctrines and the composition of modern military forces. Critically, since the end of the Cold War, deployment scenarios have changed significantly, and large tank armies made way for increasingly smaller, more readily deployable units. Their mobility and effectiveness are not only ensured by technological advancements, e.g. the increased operational capabilities of military drones or conventional missile systems, but also by the strengthened role of naval, support and logistical forces (Koivula, 2017: 123-125). With mobility playing an increasingly important role, the ability to control and to deny access to certain geographical areas (known as A2/AD<sup>4</sup>) has also increased in importance and, as the discussions about the defence of the Baltic States (the so-called

Suwalki gap<sup>5</sup>) highlight, has likewise become a considerable security concern (Koivula, 2017: 125-126; Williams, 2017). These different developments have also affected the size, character and composition of military exercises. Furthermore, even though their size and frequency has been even further reduced by increasing amounts of computer-simulated exercise components,<sup>6</sup> the tense debates about the size and intentions behind large military exercise like Russia's Zapad 2017 (e.g. Schultz, 2017; Sutyagin, 2017) underline that the fear of surprise attacks disguised as regular military exercises is still a major security concern of OSCE participating States.

However, while the political, military and technological realities substantially changed over the last decades, the mechanisms of the Vienna Document initially designed to dispel concerns about military forces and their activities have not been sufficiently adapted. For example, while support and logistical troops as well as A2/AD capabilities are only to a certain extent covered by the provisions of the Vienna Document, drones and naval forces are still completely excluded. In addition, the thresholds for the prior announcement and observation of military exercises still reflect the size and composition of military exercises as they were common during the early 1990s, which are hardly reached anymore. Furthermore, existing provisions make it possible to avoid the prior announcement or observation of larger military exercises in Europe by:

- splitting an exercise into several smaller components, each below the defined thresholds,
- the increased use of so-called *snap-exercises*, exercises that are carried out without prior announcement to the troops involved,
- the inclusion of troop formations that are not covered by existing regulations (e.g. land components of naval forces or paramilitary forces), and
- placing the exercise exactly on the border of the document's zone of application – the geographical area covered by the Vienna Document.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the current state-centric focus of existing agreements also challenges their proper implementation in intrastate conflicts (Kapanadze et al., 2017). The inability to properly handle non-state actors, a lack of sufficient security guarantees for verification personnel and the exclusion of paramilitary forces from existing CSBM regimes make an impartial assessment of the security situation on the ground basically impossible.

In sum, insufficient political attention and regular political deadlocks<sup>8</sup> have prevented the adaptation of the existing CSBM and arms control architecture to an ever-changing European

3 The Vienna Document includes two main kinds of verification measures: so-called evaluation visits – meant to verify the annually exchanged military information under Chapter I (VDoc 2011: para. 107), as well as so-called inspections – investigating a specified geographical area to verify the presence of any notifiable military activities (VDoc 2011: para. 80).

4 A2/AD stands for 'Anti-Access Area Denial', defined as those military capabilities "that contribute to denying an adversary's forces access to a particular region or otherwise hinder freedom of maneuver. [They] typically include air defenses, counter-maritime forces, and theater offensive strike weapons, such as short- or medium-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and other precision guided munitions" (Williams, 2017).

5 The 'Suwalki gap' refers to the border area between Poland and Lithuania that also separates Belarus and the Russian enclave Kaliningrad. Since the narrow corridor is the only land connection of the Baltic NATO member states Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to NATO allies in Central Europe the Suwalki gap has become of particular strategic importance to the alliance.

6 For an overview over different types of military exercises see for example Çayirci and Marinčić (2009).

7 Under the Vienna Document 2011 "the zone of application for CSBM is defined as [...] the whole of Europe as well as the adjoining sea area and air space (VDoc 2011: Annex I).

8 An overview of some of these deadlocks might for example be found in Schmidt H-J (2004) *Der Wandel in der konventionellen Rüstungskontrolle 1989-1996*. Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus or in Grand C (2009) *European Security and Conventional Arms Control: An Agenda for the 21st Century*. In: Zellner W, Schmidt H-J and Neuneck G (eds) *Die Zukunft konventioneller Rüstungskontrolle in Europa: The future of conventional arms control in Europe*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 144-151.

security environment. Smaller, more readily deployable units have replaced the large tank armies of the past. Hybrid operations, aimed at a maximum of plausible deniability, and new tensions between Russia and the West have deeply reshaped threat and security perceptions in Europe (Koivula, 2017: 127), and the bypassing of existing regulations severely hampers the building of trust between military forces in Europe. If existing regimes cannot be adapted to address these new challenges and the current process of deterioration cannot be reversed, CSBM run the risk of becoming increasingly obsolete in the contemporary and future European security environment.

### 3. The Future of CSBM in Europe – Ideas and Strategies to Make CSBM Fit for the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The major challenges presented above underline the urgent need to take substantial steps to prevent the complete disintegration of the existing arms control and CSBM architecture in Europe. At least theoretically, three different strategies might be applied: *maintenance measures*, *substantial modernization* or a *complete redesign* of military confidence-building in Europe. However, these strategies not only differ in scope, content and political ambition, but also in how realistic they are under current political conditions.

#### 3.1 Strategy One: Maintenance Measures

The first and, given the currently difficult political climate (unfortunately), also most likely scenario is that of occasional maintenance measures. Instead of major adaptations to the structure and fundamental mechanics of the Vienna Document, this strategy focuses on smaller technical changes that aim to maintain or slightly improve existing provisions. Such changes could include the increasing of verification team sizes as well as improved procedures for verification measures.

*Increasing the size of verification teams* – which are so far limited to a maximum of four (inspection) or three (evaluation visit) inspectors – would make it possible to split an inspection team into two sub-teams and to invite additional observers from other OSCE participating States to the verification team. While this is often already common practice, it is practically limited due to the maximum team size imposed by the document.

Additional *improved procedures for verification measures* could increase the quality of evaluation visits and inspections and improve the safety of verification personnel. This could be achieved by extending inspection time, should a helicopter overflight of the inspected area not be possible, or by allowing verification teams to carry modern technical equipment such as digital cameras or satellite positioning devices that would improve the ability of the teams to navigate more safely in sensitive geographical contexts.<sup>9</sup>

Many of these practical changes have already been proposed and are being discussed by OSCE participating States. Still, as valuable as they are, given the scope of the current crisis, it seems

<sup>9</sup> Where national legislation prohibits the import of such devices, the receiving state should provide the inspectors with an adequate national replacement.

unlikely that these changes will suffice to reinvigorate the Vienna Document. Nevertheless, in the current tense political climate, a strategy of maintenance might still be useful for buying time and signalling political will until the security environment has improved again. Given the negative experiences of the past, in which more substantial modernization attempts lacked the necessary political backing even in times of low political and military tensions, this is a risky diplomatic gamble. Instead, it seems more likely that CSBM will continue to lose their positive impact on European security and that even more valuable expertise that would be urgently needed for a possible fresh start in the future will be lost.

#### 3.2 Strategy Two: Substantial Modernization

The second strategy is substantial modernization. It builds upon the already described maintenance measures of the first strategy, but goes beyond to also tackle problems and gaps linked to the structure and mechanics of existing CSBM provisions. Such substantial modernization steps could include the improvement of regulations meant to increase the transparency of military activities in Europe; the inclusion of additional troop formations, weapon and equipment systems; increasing and reforming quotas for verification measures; and the improvement of existing risk reduction mechanisms. However, especially in the current tense political climate, progress on these issues seems – if at all – only possible after a careful assessment and balancing of the extremely diverse security needs of all OSCE participating States.

To improve the transparency of military activities in Europe, several modernization steps could be taken:

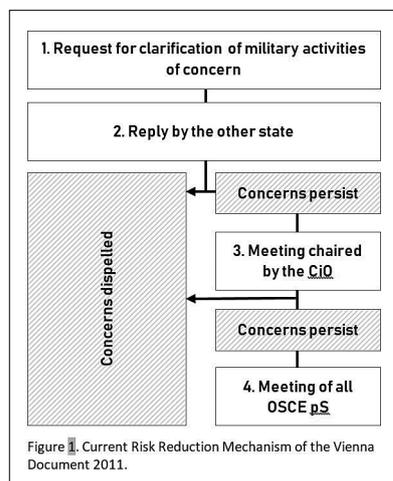
- First, existing thresholds for the prior notification and observation of military activities should be considerably lowered and adapted to the scale and composition of modern military exercises.
- Second, the decreasing size of military exercises has also been facilitated by an increasing role of computer-assisted exercises. Should such exercises also contain a live exercise component, this component should be covered by separate notification and observation thresholds.
- Third, the loophole that makes it possible to conduct several smaller exercises at the same time, without falling under the provisions for prior notification and military observation, should be closed. This could be achieved by simply removing the condition that exercises need to be conducted ‘under a single operational command’ (VDoc 2011: para. 40.1, 44.1 and 47.1).
- Finally, given their increasingly multilateral nature, military exercises that are conducted together or in close coordination with at least two other OSCE participating States and perhaps even on different state territories could also be included into the current provisions of the document.

To reflect the structure and composition of modern armed forces and to strengthen the Vienna Document with regard to modern warfare, substantial modernization efforts also need to address the politically sensitive issue of *updating and extending the list of military units, weapon and equipment systems* regulated by the document. Besides the inclusion of drones, this discussion should also extend to a better inclusion of naval, support,

logistical, special and paramilitary forces as well as transport, rapid deployment and A2/AD capabilities. Again, these issues are extremely sensitive for the very same reasons that they are important to be addressed, as they represent some of the core issues of modern warfare and defence planning. Thus, they will require the careful exploration of possible package deals between the different security interests of OSCE participating States.

By increasing the passive quotas<sup>10</sup> for verification measures – both for evaluation visits and inspections – the Vienna Document can increase the transparency of military forces and their activities beyond what it is today. However, given limited budgets, any increase of those quotas will always raise the issue of who should cover the additional costs, the inspected or the inspecting state. This problem might at least partially be addressed by increased collaborations between different arms control agencies or the establishment of OSCE-based multilateral inspection teams. Another option could be to provide an additional incentive by allowing the inspected state to conduct an additional inspection or evaluation visit of its own.<sup>11</sup> As some states have in the meantime adopted a practice that often no longer distinguishes between inspections and evaluation visits, the merging of the two quotas into a single transparency quota could be considered.

Finally, the *current risk reduction mechanism* for preventing military tensions deriving from unusual military activities or hazardous military incidents *needs to be considerably strengthened*. So far, the mechanism (see Figure 1), which can be activated in case a state has concerns about the military activities of another OSCE participating States, is too sensitive to political tensions between the two sides involved in the crisis and the success of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CiO) as a mediator will vary considerably, depending on whether he is viewed as an impartial third party or not.



For example, had the Ukrainian crisis occurred just one year earlier, Ukraine would have been the CiO itself. In addition, the CiO lacks access to any information about the situation other than the information provided by the two parties and if fortunate, by other participating States or compiled by the OSCE Secretariat. However, a more impartial assessment of the situation is not possible. To overcome these problems, the role of the CiO could be

10 The number of inspections and evaluation visits on the territory of a participating States allowed per year.

11 Such a quota system would be comparable to that of the Treaty on Open Skies (OS).

replaced by a high-ranking OSCE official, for example, a specifically appointed Special Representative for Risk Reduction. He or she could be situated at the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and in addition of being a mediator also have the possibility to recommend the deployment of an OSCE fact-finding mission to the area in question to collect additional information about the security situation on the ground. To increase the legitimacy and security of the inspection team, this mission should ideally be unanimously agreed upon and consist of verification personnel from multiple OSCE participating States. To this end, the Special Representative could compile his or her team from a list of available national inspectors that would be regularly reported to the CPC. The final report should summarize the mission's findings in a way that adequately reflect all different opinions and perspectives voiced by individual inspectors. Based on the findings of the report, the Special Representative might then propose additional confidence-building measures as proposed under Chapter X. 'Regional Measures' of the Vienna Document, such as the further reduction of thresholds for prior notification and observation of military exercises or additional inspection quotas, in particular in border areas. In addition, such a redesigned mechanism could also be used to address the increasingly prevalent issue of military incidents (in particular in the air and at sea). OSCE participating States could consider adapting the existing Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security by adding a section on the appropriate behaviour of military forces at land, air and sea. Such a section should maintain the political nature of both documents and be as little technical as possible. Should the crisis situation involve non-state actors or other types of irregular forces that do not allow for the direct implementation of Vienna Document provisions (e.g. because of potential status-implications), measures as stipulated by the OSCE document on Stabilizing Measures for Localized Crisis Situations might be employed.

Again, some of these ideas have already been proposed by OSCE participating States (e.g. the lowering of thresholds or the strengthening of the document's risk reduction mechanisms). Others are probably (at least for now) too sensitive (e.g. the inclusion of additional weapon categories and troop formations). Unfortunately, as crucial as all of these modernization efforts would be for making the Vienna Document fit for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the current prospects for their actual realization are extremely bleak. In fact, progress might only be achieved after a careful assessment and balancing of the different security interests and needs of OSCE participating States, if it is achieved at all. In particular, as some of the suggested changes (e.g. the lowering of thresholds) will affect some states considerably more than others, it remains questionable if such a balance can be achieved solely within the mandate and provisions of the Vienna Document. This problem is further intensified by the fact that the current rifts in European security also affect the nuclear security dimension, e.g. the dispute around NATO's missile defence plans (Neuneck, 2017: 46–47) or mutual allegations regarding the violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) (Vuorio, 2017: 107–108).

### 3.3 Strategy Three: Complete Redesign

The final and most-difficult-to-achieve strategy is a complete redesign of CSBM in the OSCE area. Such a process would need

to take place outside the structural and conceptual constraints of existing provisions and take a completely fresh look at how current threat and security perceptions can be addressed by entirely new, but also by substantially adapted mechanisms of existing CSBM regimes. The goal is to create an entirely new CSBM regime, a 'Vienna Document 2.0'. The prospects for such an ambitious goal are of course bleak and a new regime could take many different shapes. Nevertheless, I would still like to present two ideas as food-for-thought: an entirely new quota system, based on the actual military activities of OSCE participating States, as well as stronger linkages to other arms control and CSBM regimes.

As the tense debates about the size and intentions behind Russia's military exercise *Zapad 2017* highlight (e.g. Schultz, 2017; Sutyagin, 2017), the fear of surprise attacks disguised as regular military exercises is still a major security concern of OSCE participating States. A redesigned CSBM regime in Europe should therefore look into innovative new ways for addressing the issue of the transparency of military activities and could consider an *entirely new quota system* in addition to the already discussed changes to thresholds and the risk reduction mechanism. A major problem under the current provisions is that each participating State is only required to accept three inspections per year, regardless of the size of its armed forces, of its territory or – most importantly – the intensity of its military activities throughout the year. Thus, an entirely new, more adaptive and flexible system containing the following components should be considered:

First, the quotas for inspections should be set in relation to the size of a state's territory and merged with those for evaluation visits (currently one for every sixty units reported in the annual information exchange) into a single 'CSBM quota' (see *Table 1*). Other participating States would be free to decide whether they want to use the quota to conduct inspections or evaluation visits, which also solves the issue of how to treat participating States that do have troops and equipment, but not national territory in the zone of application. As a general rule, the larger a country's territory and/or armed forces in the zone of application, the more passive quotas this state has to provide.

**Table 1. Simplified model for calculating the new passive CSBM verification quotas.**

	Small State	Medium State	Large State
<b>Passive Quota</b>			
from size of armed forces	1	3	5
from size of territory	3	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>

Second, participating States would in addition receive an 'annual budget for military activities per year'. This budget would be calculated on the basis of the numbers of troops, weapon and equipment systems as reported in the annual exchange of military information. Again, depending on the size of a state's territory, these numbers would either be multiplied by the factor one, two or three (see *Table 2*). After every military activity of a state throughout the year, the number of participating troops and military equipment will be deducted from the state's activity budget. If the budget is used up, additional passive quotas will be required (e.g. one extra for the first excess, a second for more than 50% etc.). To put it more simply, while a

state with large armed forces has to provide more initial passive quotas, he is also granted the right to more military training activities throughout the year, before additional quotas for transparency are required.

**Table 2. Example for the annual military activity budget.**

	Small State	Medium State	Large State
<b>Information Exchange</b>			
military personnel	30,000	150,000	500,000
battle tanks	100	300	800
armoured vehicles	300	800	1,500
etc.			
<b>Activity Budget</b>			
military personnel	30,000	300,000	1,500,000
battle tanks	100	600	2,400
armoured vehicles	300	1,600	4,500
etc.			

Third, this system could be further strengthened by a set of additional multipliers that increase or decrease the actual numbers deducted from the annual activity budgets, depending on the level of transparency under which the activity was conducted. For example, if an exercise of 4,000 soldiers has been announced in advance or if military observers were invited despite being under the agreed thresholds for notification and observation, the activity might only count as 3,000 soldiers ( $0,75 \times 4,000$ ). Were the exercise conducted as a snap-exercise, in close proximity to a national border or conflict area, in parallel with several other exercises, or if it involved troops from outside the zone of application the exercise could instead be charged with 5,000 soldiers ( $1,25 \times 4,000$ ).<sup>12</sup> A combination of different multipliers for the same exercise is of course also conceivable.<sup>13</sup> In short, the main logic is that activities that could potentially decrease confidence and stability are covered by additional transparency requirements and vice versa.

The new quota system presented here has many advantages. Being linked to the annual exchange of military information, the new system is no longer dependent on a regular readjustment of thresholds for military activities, but instead adapts automatically to any changes in size and composition of armed forces. Furthermore, the system strikes an important balance as larger armed forces and states are subject to more verification measures, but are also allowed to conduct more military activities throughout the year. Finally, rewarding states voluntarily conducting their military activities transparently and at the same time requiring additional transparency from states that lack this transparency seems to be as close to the initial core idea of CSBM as possible.

In addition to this, a new CSBM regime could also build *stronger interlinkages* (or possibly even be completely merged) *with other arms control and CSBM regimes*. This might be done in several ways, but I will concentrate on two examples:

<sup>12</sup> The numbers suggested here have only been chosen for illustrational purposes.

<sup>13</sup> The new quota system would of course also have significant implications for many other areas of a new CSBM regime (e.g. information exchanges, verification measures etc.), but unfortunately, I will not be able to go through all of these necessary changes here.

First, if naval forces would be included in a new regime, this would inevitably raise the difficult issue of their verification (Schmidt, 2013: 25). As naval forces can operate independently for several months at a time, it would only be of limited use to merely conduct evaluation visits at their home ports. At the same time, too precise information about their current location or even a verification on board naval vessels seems for safety and security reasons also for many states out of the question. However, verification could take place through aerial observation flights, e.g. under the Treaty on Open Skies (Spitzer, 2009: 11). Such flights could be cooperatively conducted over defined regional seas in the OSCE area (e.g. Black or Baltic Sea) to verify and report the presence of military vessels of OSCE participating States. To this end, OSCE participating States could even be requested to notify all participating States about the entrance or departure of any naval forces in certain areas.

Second, CSBM could also be integrated into a new European arms control regime, substantially strengthening its adaptability to an ever-evolving European security environment. Instead of once-agreed upon fixed total ceilings, a new treaty could, for example, differentiate between *areas of transparency*, which would fall entirely under the transparency provisions of CSBM, whereas areas of rising political or military tensions or in close proximity to conflict areas could either be declared as *areas of increased transparency*, requiring additional information exchanges or verification quotas, *areas of military constraint* in which regional ceilings for certain forces, weapons and equipment systems or restrictions of certain military activities are required (e.g. larger snap-exercises etc.), or even as *areas of crisis* in which additional transparency and constraining provisions apply. The declaration of such areas could be constantly reviewed by participating States and even take into account the findings from possible OSCE fact-finding missions as well as the recommendations of a potential OSCE Special Representative for Risk Reduction.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

In a time of renewed tensions, the logics of military deterrence and the looming risk of an arms race seem to have returned to the European security landscape. Unfortunately, exactly those measures capable of countering the risks of dangerous misperceptions and unintended military escalation dynamics are currently in rapid decay. Having contributed to military transparency, predictability and stability after the end of the Cold War, the European arms control and CSBM architecture is in urgent need of substantial modernization. Looking at the OSCE Vienna Document 2011, for example, it becomes evident that many regulations no longer reflect the political, military or technological realities of today. Having discussed possible strategies and presented several concrete ideas for tackling the current decay of CSBM in Europe, it is clear that the upcoming years will be absolutely decisive for the future of arms control and CSBM in Europe. Some of the ideas presented in this article are already well developed or are even already being discussed. Others are still at a very early conceptual stage and it remains to be seen if any of them will ever be seriously considered. However, all of them are meant to stimulate debate and to point out new possible directions for the future of CSBM.

The first set of CSBM in 1975 was developed in a climate of heightened suspicion and military tensions, following a careful assessment of the persisting threat and security perceptions in Europe. It is thus particularly noteworthy that OSCE participating States under the German chairmanship in 2016 agreed to engage in a Structured Dialogue “on the current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area” (OSCE – Ministerial Council, 2016). Now, it is important to keep this momentum and to once again create a conducive political climate for far-reaching steps on arms control. Let us go *back to the future!*



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