Overcoming the Second Cold War: The Conference on Disarmament in Europe and the Relaxation of East-West Tensions, 1983-1986

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This article focuses on the Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE), held under the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in the mid-1980s. By drawing on archival materials from the UK, France and the US, the article shows that the CDE, designed to discuss Confidence-Building Measures ranging from the Atlantic to the Urals, played an important role in overcoming the Second Cold War. Specifically, the article demonstrates that the CDE contributed in three ways. First, by becoming a sole-functioning arms control forum at its overture in January 1984, it de-escalated international tensions through dialogue. Second, by providing a first step in superpower arms talks in 1985, it underpinned US-Soviet cooperation. Third, by becoming the very first arms control agreement since the 1970s, it paved the way for subsequent arms control agreements, both nuclear and conventional. The article pays particular attention to the Western European countries, which played a vital role from its preparations in 1983 to the agreement in 1986. The findings make us reconsider the function of the oft-overlooked arms control framework in the process leading up to the end of the Cold War.

Keywords: Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE); CSCE; Cold War; Second Cold War

Introduction

Towards the end of 1983 and the beginning of 1984, the tension of the 'Second Cold War' or the 'New Cold War' reached its highest peak. In January 1984, the 'Doomsday Clock' was now just 'three minutes to midnight', the shortest since the 1950s.[1] Several weeks before, the foreign secretary of the UK, Geoffrey Howe, wrote to the prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, that the country at large was sensing that 'East-West relations are now worse than at any time since the Cuban crisis of 1962'.[2] There were good reasons. In September, the Soviet shootdown of the Korean Airlines KAL 007 shocked the world. The US-Soviet Ministerial Meeting held a week later was so fierce that a seasoned

interpreter had never seen a tenser one over the past twenty years.[3] In October, the US invasion of Grenada made the Europeans question the US's 'fitness to control the awesome nuclear arsenal on which Europe relies for its security'.[4] At the beginning of November, NATO's military exercise Able Archer 83 put the Soviet military on high alert partially, although many of the recent historiography shows that the escalation to nuclear war was unlikely.[5] Finally, at the end of November, the Soviets walked out from arms control negotiations in protest of the deployment of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) by NATO. To sum up, East-West relations were in a dismal state at the very least. However, it was in this context that the first steps towards easing East-West tensions were taken in Stockholm. The Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, often shortened as 'Conference on Disarmament in Europe' or 'CDE', opened on 17 January 1984 as the sole East-West arms talks.

The CDE was an arms control forum under the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), attended by thirty-five countries. Its convocation was agreed upon in September 1983 at the Madrid CSCE Review Meeting. It was designated to negotiate Confidence-Building Measures for the whole of Europe, ranging from the Atlantic to the Urals, which is military significant, politically binding, and verifiable. What made the CDE stand out is that it was the only East-West arms control negotiation that survived the Soviet boycott in late 1983, making it an invaluable tool for communication. Also, the CDE was unique in that it became the forerunner in a series of arms control and disarmament initiatives - the accord at the CDE in September 1986 became the very first arms control agreement concluded at the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, the introduction of on-site inspection provided a breakthrough in verification procedures, setting a standard for the subsequent agreements. Lastly, the CDE was an important step in the process leading up to the Vienna CSCE Review Meeting[6]

starting in November 1986. All these reasons make the CDE a worthwhile topic for detailed investigations.

The CDE had been studied mainly from a military-technical point of view, focusing on the evolution of Confidence-Building Measures.[7] Many of these were written by participants of the conference themselves, providing excellent insight into the subject. However, due to the lack of access to classified information, the process of decision-making at the political level had been largely omitted. In recent years, the problem has been partially addressed. Studies focusing on the diplomacy of participating countries such as FRG and the Soviet Union are produced based on newly available archival materials.[8] Furthermore, a memoir co-authored by the US and Soviet Ambassadors offers interesting stories, especially inside the Kremlin.[9] Yet, the dynamism of multilateral diplomacy still needs full-scale investigation based on multi-archival sources.

By drawing on the archival materials mainly from the UK, France and the US, this article analyses the negotiation of the CDE and its role in East-West relations. It shows that the CDE played an important part in the stabilisation of East-West relations by providing dialogue during the crisis, which eventually helped the overcoming of the Second Cold War. The article contributes to the recent academic works, which increasingly focus on the first half of the 1980s to understand the process leading to the Cold War's ending,[10] rather than focusing on the period after Gorbachev's rise to power in 1985. It also sheds light on the East-West relations during the transitionary phase in mid-1980, when the international atmosphere changed from confrontation to cooperation. Furthermore, it turns its eyes on the oft-overlooked security dimension of the Helsinki Process, where the focus is centred on the human dimension.[11]

The article demonstrates that the Europeans, particularly France, UK and FRG,

played a major role in the process. France, the inventor of the conference, steered the discussion from its nascence to the convening in 1984. UK and FRG, on the other hand, facilitated compromise at the final phase in 1986. Several reasons could be pointed out for the Europeans' proactive function. First and foremost, CDE was regarded as an important forum for maintaining East-West dialogue. Hence, the Europeans, who were pursuing European Détente,[12] committed themselves to the CDE. Second, Europe's history of contribution to the CSCE Process,[13] combined with the policy consultation at the European Political Cooperation (EPC), reinforced its negotiating position. Third, the Europeans' activeness in the sphere of security in the mid-1980s, as indicated by the reactivation of the Western European Union in 1984 and the formalising of EPC by the Single European Act in 1986,[14] gave a backing. Yet, the Europeans were constrained under the bipolar structure – they were unable to fully influence the negotiation, especially when the bilateral talks between the superpowers were progressing smoothly.

By utilising archival materials largely from London and Paris, the article inevitably highlights the role of Western Europe over other actors. Hence, the word 'European' in the article's context refers to Western European countries. The Eastern European countries, who were increasingly becoming active in this phase,[15] shall be the subject of another research.

The first section briefly overviews the CDE's background, from its proposal in 1978 to the agreement of the mandate — terms and conditions of the meeting — in September 1983. The second section explains the European effort to have the CDE's opening ceremony at the ministerial level so as to promote dialogue. The third section focuses on the opening ceremony of the CDE and its role in de-escalating international tensions. The fourth to sixth sections elaborate on the state of negotiation and its

international role in the first, second and third years, respectively.

Negotiating the CDE's Mandate

The idea of the CDE dates back to 1978 when it was first proposed by France.[16] On 25 January, the French Government issued a statement on disarmament,[17] with the CDE being one of the signature proposals. Its intention was to set up a conference to discuss the reduction of conventional forces from the Atlantic to the Urals, attended by thirty-five signatories of the Helsinki Final Act. The statement marked a departure from the *'chaise vide'* (empty chair) policy since the Gaullist era, which prevented France from participating in arms control negotiations. The idea was elaborated further, and at UN General Assembly's Special Session on Disarmament in May, the president of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, announced that the CDE would be composed of two phases – first for the discussion of Confidence-Building Measures, second for the discussion of conventional arms reduction.[18] The primary motivation for the initiative was to tackle the conventional imbalance in Europe, which Paris viewed as a main source of instability.[19]

The CDE was a distinctively European project since its inception. France regarded the CDE as a means to develop 'la personnalité européenne' and thus preferred to consult within the framework of the Nine countries of the European Communities rather than Fifteen countries of NATO.[20] The European countries responded, and the matter was consulted at the EPC.[21] The idea received interest in the background of declining East-West relations shown by the non-accord of Belgrade CSCE Review Meeting (October 1977 to March 1978) and anxiety about the future course of Détente. As a result, the Europeans gave the green light to the first phase, whilst the transition to the second phase was to be decided later. In other words, the CDE was to become a forum for negotiating Confidence-Building Measures for the time being. On 20 November 1979, the Foreign Ministers of the Nine jointly issued a statement supporting the CDE.[22] A few weeks later,

the Ministerial Meeting of NATO followed suit.[23] Thus, the Europeans, led by France, took the initiative in placing the CDE on the international agenda.

The CDE remained on the table even after the Second Cold War began between the superpowers, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979. The negotiation of its mandate became the main topic at the Madrid CSCE Review Meeting between 1980 and 1983.[24] For the Europeans, the CDE was an important tool in keeping Détente alive in the Second Cold War – foreign ministers mentioned the usefulness of the CDE in constructing East-West relations at the informal meeting of the EPC.[25] Also, the widespread protest to NATO's deployment of INF, decided by the Double-Track Decision in December 1979, gave the CDE an added value. With hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets in London or Bonn to hamper the deployment, the CDE was regarded as a tool for public diplomacy to show their efforts in arms control.[26] Therefore, the Europeans steered the discussion towards agreement on the convocation of the CDE in their terms, i.e., the discussion of Confidence-Building Measures covering the whole of Europe that is military significant, politically binding, and verifiable. The Soviets and East Europeans also favoured the CDE for different purposes. They intended to utilise the CDE to hamper NATO's INF deployment.[27] Hence, they called for the CDE with less precise terms, so as not to get entangled into strict verification.

In September 1983, after three years of negotiations in Madrid, the final document, including the CDE mandate, was agreed upon.[28] The result owed much to the Europeans' effort, and the CDE mandate mostly reflected the French draft. Six years after the first initiative by Paris, the inauguration date of the CDE is now finally set on 17 January 1984.

Pathway to the Opening of the CDE

Just as the convocation of the CDE was agreed upon, US-Soviet Relations rapidly began to deteriorate in the autumn of 1983. The Soviet shootdown of the South Korean Boeing

747 on 1 September marked a gunshot in fierce interactions. Margins for quiet diplomacy narrowed, as the scheduled visit of the foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Andrei Gromyko, to the US in late September was cancelled. At the end of the month, General Secretary of the Soviet Union, Yuri Andropov, published a farewell message to the US-Soviet Relations on *Pravda*.[29]

In November, the situation went from bad to worse. Arms talks, one of the strongest ties between the blocs that survived the tenser moments of the Second Cold War (e.g. Martial Law in Poland), were now over. In response to the Bundestag's decision to accept INF on 22 November, the Soviet delegation walked out from the INF negotiation.[30] Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) and Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) Talks suffered the same fate.[31] Superpower relations came to a state of 'deep freeze'. The only arms control to survive was the CDE, which was to open in January 1984.

It was under such circumstances that the Europeans stepped up their efforts to keep the East-West dialogue alive. One of the initiators was France. As early as 9 September, the president of France, François Mitterrand, received Gromyko on his way home from the Madrid CSCE Review Meeting. On that occasion, Mitterrand asked Gromyko to convey his message to Andropov that he was seeking to improve relations. Mitterrand even showed his willingness to hold a Franco-Soviet summit.[32] The reason why the French wanted to engage deeper with Moscow was that they now recognized the Soviet's growing fear of encirclement.[33]

Around the same time, the UK also made a similar decision to deepen its engagement with the Soviets. The turning point was the Chequers seminar on East-West relations on 8-9 September.[34] The seminar, intended for a fundamental re-examination of British policy towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, led Thatcher to accept the

view of the Foreign Office and the academics that the UK should deepen relations with the East. The UK was for a dialogue with Moscow, in the view that they 'would have to live with the Soviet Union for a longer time'.[35]

As the Europeans embarked on strengthening the East-West dialogue, the CDE became the central focus. It was natural because the CDE was the only semi-permanent East-West forum in which the Europeans fully participated. The Europeans sought to hold the opening ceremony of the CDE, scheduled in January 1984, at the ministerial level. Their aim was to create a high-level political dialogue under the background of rising international tensions.

It was France who came up with the idea.[36] On 28 September, at the meeting of EPC's CSCE Working Group in Athens, the French delegation told the then-Ten members of the European Communities that the foreign minister of France, Claude Cheysson, would almost certainly attend.[37] FRG was also favourable to the initiative and mentioned that the foreign minister of FRG, Hans-Dieterich Genscher would go if he were not alone. Gradually, the initiative was supported by other European partners, including the UK.[38] Ministerial attendance to the CDE became the Ten's position.

France also attempted to persuade Washington. On 29 September, during his visit to the UN General Assembly, President Mitterrand told the secretary of state of the US, George Shultz, about the plan of ministerial attendance to the CDE.[39] The lunch meeting was also attended by foreign ministers from both FRG and Belgium, implying their support. However, the reply of Shultz was still negative at this point.

The effort started to pay off in December, as the US began to bolster its efforts to engage with the Soviet Union.[40] At the NATO Ministerial Council on 8-9 December, the US agreed to send Shultz to Stockholm[41]. The 'Brussels Declarations' adopted at the Council expressed their determination 'to use the forthcoming Stockholm Conference as

a new opportunity to broaden the dialogue with the East, to negotiate confidence building measures and enhance stability and security in the whole of Europe'.[42] Put differently, the West did not see the CDE as merely a forum for negotiating Confidence-Building Measures, but rather as a forum for easing tensions through dialogue.

Around the same time, Neutral and Non-Aligned European States (NNA), traditional go-betweens at the CSCE,[43] succeeded in persuading the Soviet Union to send Gromyko to Stockholm. Moscow had been in contact with NNA to review their attitude towards the forthcoming CDE after walking out from INF negotiations.[44] During the process, Sweden stressed the importance of Gromyko's attendance, mentioning the Western inclination to send their ministers.[45] In the end, during the visit of the foreign minister of Finland, Paavo Väyrynen to Moscow in mid-December, Gromyko himself mentioned the possibility of his attendance.[46] Thanks to the effort both by Western Europe and NNA, the stage is set for the CDE's overture with the presence of ministers from both blocs. In particular, the French initiative was crucial, as it set the CDE's ministerial meeting on international agenda in the first place. The CDE now became the heart of East-West diplomacy.

The CDE's Opening and the Revival of East-West Dialogue

On 17 January 1984, the CDE started with the welcome speech by the Prime Minister of Sweden, Olof Palme, in the frosty Swedish capital. The presence of over 1,300 press members[47] was a testimony to the high level of interest by the international community.

In the General Debate, Western countries showed their intention to revitalise dialogue with the East. The most notable speech was made by the US. Shultz appealed for a positive attitude towards East-West dialogue,[48] by reiterating President Reagan's speech on 16 January, in which the President conveyed his genuine intention for a

'working relationship' with Moscow. Specifically, the Secretary mentioned three goals of the US: (1) to reduce, eventually eliminate, the threat and use of force in solving international disputes; (2) to reduce the vast stockpile of armaments in the world; (3) to establish a better working relationship between the US and USSR. Then, he said that the US would pursue these aims at the CDE and any other fora. The European Allies sent a similar message. Howe, Cheysson and Genscher all stressed the importance of dialogue and voiced their commitment to the CDE.[49] For the first time since the 'deep freeze' back in November, the West had explicitly signalled for an easing of tensions.

The Soviet Union responded, albeit more discreetly. Superficially, Gromyko hit hard on the West at the General Debate.[50] However, he showed a different attitude at the meeting behind-the-scenes. Indeed, the presence of 'Mr Nyet' implied Moscow's willingness to talk to the West. During the bilateral meeting, Gromyko agreed with Shultz on increasing US-Soviet contacts as well as the resumption of MBFR.[51] Furthermore, Gromyko agreed to strengthen their relations with his European counterparts: he agreed on a ministerial meeting with the British,[52] discussed the details of the Franco-Soviet Summit in June with the French,[53] and invited the Italians to Moscow.[54] In a nutshell, the ministerial attendance at the CDE's opening ceremony, under the initiative of the Europeans, became the very first step in melting the ice. Without it, the severe tension between the superpowers may have prolonged for months. The deputy director of the Institute for USA and Canada in the Soviet Union said that 'the Soviets would not have been agreed to resume the talks had they been bilateral',[55] implying that the CDE's multilateral structure and the Europeans' mediation may have affected the outcome.

The CDE's First Year (1984): Providing Dialogue

The inauguration of the CDE at the ministerial level ensured the conference's prominet role in East-West relations. Throughout 1984, when East-West relations were still

suffering from the aftereffects of the ‘deep freeze’ while gradually recovering, the CDE provided a valuable channel for communication despite the differences in negotiating positions.

Certainly, there were significant gaps between the East and the West. The West was seeking to discuss Confidence-Building Measures at the CDE, according to the mandate agreed upon in Madrid, i.e., measures that are military significant, politically binding, verifiable, and applicable to the whole of Europe. Specifically, NATO proposed the following six measures: (1) exchange of military information; (2) exchange of forecasts of activities notifiable in advance; (3) notification of military activities; (4) observation of certain military activities (invitation of observers); (5) compliance and verification (through National Technical Means and inspections); (6) development of means of communication.[56] These measures were aimed at reducing the likelihood of surprise attacks and accidental wars by increasing transparency.

The East, in contrast, sought to negotiate declaratory measures. In particular, they proposed the following measures: (1) a pledge or an agreement on no first use of nuclear weapons; (2) the conclusion of a treaty on the non-use of military force and the maintenance of peaceful relations; (3) freezing and reduction of military spending; (4) a ban on chemical weapons in Europe; (5) creation of nuclear-free zones in various parts of Europe; (6) elaboration of Confidence-Building Measures specified in the Helsinki Final Act.[57] These proposals predominantly targeted NATO’s INF deployment. Hence, the positions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact were far apart.

Nonetheless, dialogue at the CDE was important. Participating countries from all sides agreed that the negotiations had been meaningful.[58] This was because the CDE provided a stable forum for inter-bloc security talks when the outlook of East-West relations was unclear. On the one hand, international tensions have passed the most

critical point and have been gradually heading towards relaxation. MBFR Talks were resumed in March, while the discussions were slow-moving. High-level exchanges were reinstated, and European politicians, including Mitterrand, Howe and Genscher, visited Moscow before summer. On the other hand, the East-West relations were still frosty and unpredictable. The attitude of the new Soviet administration led by the General Secretary, Konstantin Chernenko, following the death of Andropov, hardened towards the West.[59] Starting in the spring, the Soviets began to openly criticise the European countries, which it had refrained from after the INF deployment.[60] Worse, the attempt by the superpowers to resume nuclear arms talks in July went nowhere.[61] In such a fluid situation, the CDE's contribution was substantial. According to US ambassador to the CDE, James Goodby, delegations were committed to establishing Stockholm as a place for negotiation, being it as 'the only game in town'.[62] Also, the visit of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar,[63] was a testimony of the CDE's significance.

One episode shows how the West, once again led by the Europeans, tried to use the CDE to engage with the East. Not long after the CDE commenced, the Europeans sought to enhance dialogue by signalling their intention to discuss the non-use of force, in exchange for the concrete Confidence-Building Measures. Although the originating country is unclear, the idea attracted support in the EPC's Ministerial Meeting on 9 April,[64] and it was conveyed to the Soviets by the foreign minister of Italy, Giulio Andreotti, who visited Moscow on 23 April.[65] The idea was also notified to the US by the German Ambassador,[66] which then made a similar move. Reagan issued a letter to Chernenko on 16 April, stating their willingness to discuss the non-use of force in exchange for the Confidence-Building Measures.[67] He even went on to display the idea publicly in his speech at the Irish National Parliament in June.[68] The logic was to get Chernenko's attention and reassure the Soviets that they were not a threat.[69]

The proposal was eventually agreed upon as the negotiation formula; hence, the European initiative succeeded, although it took some time to come to fruition. In mid-June, following the Western idea, Sweden and Finland took the initiative to set up 'Working Groups' at the CDE to discuss both Confidence-Building Measures and the non-use of force, without success due to the Soviet's rigidity.[70] In autumn, the Finns once again made an effort, and the launching of two Working Groups — one for measures not included in the Helsinki Final Act (e.g. non-use of force, inspections), the other for measures included in the Helsinki Final Act (e.g. Notification and Observation) [71]— was finally agreed upon in December.[72] The agreement, also welcomed by the communique of the European Council,[73] became the framework for discussion for months to come. Once again, the Europeans shaped the process of the CDE. Yet, their original intention to facilitate dialogue in the early months of 1984 was not fully accomplished - this was the limit of their influence.

By late 1984, the process of relaxation that began from the CDE's opening in January was now confirmed. The Second Cold War between the superpowers was on its way out. After Reagan's re-election in November, foreign ministers of the US and the Soviet Union announced that they would hold a meeting in January 1985 to discuss the resumption of bilateral arms talks. The relationship also improved between Moscow and the Europeans, as shown by Mikhail Gorbachev, then the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet, visiting London in December.

Now that East-West communications normalised, the CDE's role in international politics declined relatively. Yet, as the resumption of US-Soviet bilateral arms talks was still not promised at this point, it was important that Working Groups had been set up in Stockholm, underpinning dialogue. And as we shall discuss in the next section, the CDE was to assume another important role.

The CDE's Second Year (1985): The First Step in Arms Control

Cold War marked a turning point in 1985. With the appointment of Gorbachev as the General Secretary of the Communist Party, East-West contacts began to flourish. The increased communications between the blocs meant the negotiation of the CDE progressed, while its prominent position in arms control negotiation ended. However, the CDE acquired a new role under the auspices of the superpowers, namely, the first step in the East-West arms control process. Throughout the whole year, the influence of the Europeans was limited compared to the year before.

Improvements in East-West relations began in earnest at the dawn of 1985. In January, Shultz and Gromyko agreed on the resumption of nuclear arms control negotiations.[74] As the name 'Nuclear and Space Talks' suggests, it had an umbrella structure in which START, INF and Space Defence Issues (including the SDI) were negotiated separately. The trend was enhanced by Gorbachev's rise to power in March following the death of Chernenko. Gorbachev, aware that a change in foreign policy was needed to pursue domestic reforms,[75] began to change its diplomatic stance towards the West. In an exchange of letters with Reagan, Gorbachev responded positively to the offer for a superpower summit right after his inauguration.[76] The summit was formally agreed upon at the Shultz-Gromyko meeting in Vienna in mid-May, while it was kept secret for the time being.[77]

The reopening of East-West contacts had an immediate effect on the CDE. As discussions resumed in January 1985, delegations from both blocs submitted detailed draft documents intended for inclusion in the final agreement. The West worked on their proposals from the previous year and submitted a draft concluding document.[78] The East also presented parameters of concrete Confidence-Building Measures (e.g., thirty-day notice for exercises of 20,000 or more ground troops)[79] for the first time, alongside the

draft text of the Convention on the Non-Use of Force.[80] Concrete negotiation has now begun.

Although the CDE's dominant position in East-West security talks had ended, it quickly assumed a new role, backed by the superpowers: the first step in East-West arms talks. This became apparent in Reagan's speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 8 May.[81] In his speech, he urged that the US and the Soviet Union take four practical steps in reducing tensions: (1) regular practice of exchanging military observers; (2) frequent contact of military leaders; (3) the CDE to agree on concrete Confidence-Building Measures proposed by NATO, whilst agreeing on the discussion of the Soviet proposal on non-use of force; (4) introduction of a permanent military-to-military communications link. This indicated that the US saw the CDE as the first practical step in improving East-West relations, in parallel to the political dialogue towards the superpower summit.

The CDE's position as the forerunner in arms control was further confirmed when the preparation for the US-Soviet Summit got in full swing after the announcement on 3 July. On the very same day, Shultz proposed to the Soviets to 'start to develop the language of an agreement' of the CDE– that is, to start the drafting of the final document, during his meeting with the ambassador of the Soviet Union to the US, Anatoly Dobrynin.[82] The aim was to use the deadline of the summit to advance negotiation, and announce its progress at the summit. In other words, to produce some results for the summit, the US turned its attention to the CDE. The Soviets responded favourably. The foreign minister of the Soviet Union had just changed from Andrei Gromyko to reform-minded Eduard Shevardnadze, enabling a more constructive attitude. On 31 July, Shevardnadze, meeting Schulz for the first time at the CSCE's 10th anniversary ceremony in Helsinki, mentioned that the CDE participants could put together an outline of a

concluding agreement, which would be an asset for the summit.[83] The idea was also echoed in a letter from Gorbachev to Reagan in September.[84] Shevardnadze judged that some progress could be made at the CDE, in contrast to the stalled Nuclear and Space Talks and MBFR.[85] Hence, the Soviets accepted the US initiative. Like the US, the Soviet Union now appreciated the CDE as the first step in arms control.

As superpowers decided to utilise the CDE for their summit, they began their work during the summer recess. Ambassador Goodby visited Moscow at the beginning of September for bilateral talks. The discussion resulted in an agreement on the content of the final document. Specifically, both sides agreed to include the following items: (1) non-use of force; (2) notification routine, including information and verification concerning it; (3) observations of certain types of military activity; and (4) constraints, including exchange of annual plans of military activities.[86] The outline of the CDE's final document had thus emerged, ahead of the superpower summit as intended.

Furthermore, both countries proceeded to adjust the working structure of the CDE. On 10 September, the US and the Soviet Ambassadors drafted a new arrangement of Working Groups.[87] Although it followed the current structure comprised of two groups, only the themes that had been included in the outline of the final document were allocated to each Working Group.[88] This excluded items from the list of negotiation that had no prospect for agreement (e.g. the declaration on no-first-use of nuclear weapons) and focused the discussion on themes that both sides could converge on. The new working structure led by the superpowers was then adopted by all thirty-five states on 14 October as a 'gentlemen's agreement'.[89] It was a remarkable achievement which increased the odds of an agreement. It was so much that Reagan met Ambassador Goodby and congratulated him.[90]

Efforts at the CDE were reflected in the Reagan-Gorbachev summit at Geneva in November, which became the first superpower summit in six years. Although the CDE was not included in the agenda, it was mentioned in the Joint Statement.[91] In fact, among all the arms control negotiations mentioned, the CDE was the only negotiation in which progress was noted. It was proof that the CDE was functioning as the first step in East-West arms control. Yet, there was a certain limit to CDE's role – the progress at the CDE was not followed by other arms control fora.

The aforementioned initiative to advance the CDE negotiation was led predominantly by the US and the Soviet Union. In contrast, the Europeans were increasingly marginalised and unable to influence the discussion. The UK contemplated the future role of existing Working Groups to progress the negotiation,[92] but it was the superpowers who invented the new working structure. France considered more informal discussions alongside the Working Groups,[93] but the idea did not take shape. Meanwhile, Washington and Moscow dealt bilaterally without much consultation with their allies.[94] It was a paradoxical situation: when the US-USSR relationship worked well, the European presence as an intermediary between the blocs was inevitably reduced. This was also the case with the NNA, whose compromise proposals failed to provide a basis for further discussion.[95] However, the situation was soon to change.

The CDE's Third Year (1986): The European Initiative Revived

In 1986, the atmosphere of East-West relations changed once again. Compared to the previous year, improvement in superpower relations slowed down markedly. The climate also negatively affected the negotiation in Stockholm. In such circumstances, the Europeans once again took the driving seat of the CDE – their aim was not only to conclude the conference successfully but also to regain influence in East-West relations

more broadly. Thanks to the European effort, the negotiation concluded in September, in time for the Vienna CSCE Review Meeting from November.

The stagnation of the US-Soviet relations started in early 1986. The trigger was Gorbachev's disarmament proposal of 15 January.[96] In his proposal, Gorbachev presented the elimination of all nuclear weapons in the world by the year 2000. The Soviet leader also made a concession on the CDE by excluding naval exercise, which was not explicitly stated in the mandate. The proposal was led by the military[97] — they made the content '"revolutionary" enough to satisfy the ambitions of the new young Party leader while unrealistic enough to be rejected by the West'.[98] In other words, the military attempted to use it for propaganda purposes, while Gorbachev himself was taking it more seriously.[99]

Understandably, the US became suspicious. In the meeting of the National Security Planning Group on 3 February, Reagan argued that 'we need to make the Soviets expose the fact that they are not really serious about reductions negotiations', whilst agreeing on the overall aim of nuclear reduction. He then proceeded to say that 'what the US seeks now is a practical way forward'. Reagan shared the vision of nuclear abolition with Gorbachev, but he wanted to pursue it differently. This position became the basis of US policy toward the Soviet Union, set in the National Security Decision Directives.[100] With the superpowers unable to agree on a concrete way forward, progress in nuclear talks became increasingly difficult.

The stalling of US-Soviet relations was obvious in the spring. At a meeting on 15 March between Schulz and the Premier of the Soviet Union, Nikolai Ryzhkov, both sides voiced 'disappointment' over the development since the Geneva summit.[101] The same message was repeated in Gorbachev's letter to Reagan weeks later.[102] The American airstrike on Libya on 15 April, in retaliation to the bombing of a Disco in West Berlin,

complicated matters further. Moscow, a long-time friend of Tripoli, responded by cancelling a US-Soviet ministerial meeting scheduled in May. Although the action was restrained in the hope of the summitry meeting before the end of the year,[103] it nevertheless deprived the precious opportunity for high-level contact.

The lack of US-Soviet cooperation naturally had a negative impact on the CDE, the forerunner in East-West arm talks. At the end of two sessions in spring (one from January to March, the other from April to May), British Ambassador to the CDE, Michael Edes, reported to London that most of the diplomats now believed that the chance of agreement was 50:50 or less.[104] The euphoria of 1985 is now long gone. However, this created room for manoeuvre by the Europeans, who were preparing to take the initiative.

The groundwork by the Europeans to regain the lead in the CDE negotiations dates back to the beginning of 1986. The first CDE meeting in 1986 was attended by French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas and his German counterpart Genscher, showcasing the European's political presence. In the speech, both ministers highlighted the roles played by the Twelve members of the European Communities at the CDE,[105] implying the Europeans' common will for contribution. In the background, there was a growing fear among the Europeans that the superpower duo would cooperate at the expense of Europe's interest,[106] which was also apparent in Mitterrand's letter to Reagan.[107] In addition, the ongoing discussion to consolidate the EPC in the Single European Act for a more proactive European foreign policy may also have had an influence. Hence, the Europeans once again turned their eyes to the CDE.

The resolve by the Europeans to steer the CDE into a successful conclusion was confirmed at the EPC's Ministerial Meeting in the Hague on 25 February.[108] During the meeting, Genscher made the following point: Firstly, CSCE Review Meeting in Vienna offered a chance for Europe to take the political offensive in East-West relations. In such

a situation, the successful outcome of the CDE is important for the preparation. Secondly, the tendency of US-Soviet arms control towards denuclearisation of Europe would emphasise Soviet superiority in conventional forces. This may require the second phase of the CDE, i.e., disarmament of conventional forces. He concluded by saying that the Europeans need to influence the course of East-West discussions, especially at the CSCE, where they have played an active role. Genscher's statement attracted wide support among his colleagues, including Dumas. Finally, Howe summed up the discussion by saying that the Twelve countries should maintain their profile in Washington and Moscow on East-West issues and use their best endeavours to reach positive results in Stockholm.

The discussion showed that the European countries attempted to use the CDE not only for its own sake — introduction of Confidence-Building Measures — but also to regain their active role in East-West relations. Furthermore, they sought to use CDE to preserve their interests vis-à-vis superpowers. Yet, apart from a visit by the French and German foreign ministers in January, European countries had still not taken concrete steps at this stage. However, as the closing date of the conference fast approached, the Europeans decided to take action.

One of the key players was the British. The UK was in a unique position, not only because Thatcher had direct contact with Gorbachev but also because Howe was pursuing an engagement strategy with the East, which some called 'Howe's Ostpolitik'.[109] In addition, the UK was to assume the presidency of the EPC in the latter half of 1986, giving them added authority. In early April, Howe instructed the Foreign Office to consider the role the UK could play in East-West relations.[110] Then, on 22 April, during the meeting between the high-ranking officials, including Howe, the Minister of State, Permanent Under-Secretary of State and the Planning Staff, participants recognised the need to 'mobilise Europeans to present solid front to the US' in East-West relations.[111] It

was also pointed out that the UK could take the initiative in 'CDE/MBFR/conventional imbalance area'. In other words, the UK was willing to partner with the Europeans to push the CDE negotiation forward to exert influence in East-West relations.

The UK began their preparations in earnest ahead of the CDE's penultimate session between 10 June and 18 July. On 12 May, the Director of Defence advised the Minister of State and the Permanent Under-Secretary to draw up a compromise package.[112] Then, on 17 June, a tentative compromise package comprising the following points had been worked out: (1) include a provision that explicitly states that air activities are partially notifiable (to concede to the East who were asking to notify all independent air activities), (2) raise the notification threshold to 10,000 men (the Western position was to notify military activities over 6,000 men), (3) to make concessions on on-site inspection (the West was insisting on on-site inspection, while the East was strongly opposed to it).[113] Although modest, the British idea was ground-breaking in that it marked a departure from the traditional Western position.

As the UK contemplated the way forward, another important player, FRG, also began its move. It was the failure of the CSCE Experts Meeting on Human Contacts, held between 16 April and 27 May 1986 in Berne, that triggered FRG's action. Bonn particularly had high expectations towards the meeting to promote family contacts across the inner-German border. Chancellor Kohl even mentioned the meeting in his letter to Gorbachev in January.[114] However, Washington had a different idea – the US Ambassador argued that due to declining compliance with the Helsinki Final Act by the East, it was necessary to raise the standard of agreement.[115] This led to the US's veto of a compromise package by NNA at the last minute, which was not perfect but still included practical solutions for facilitating East-West contacts (e.g., provisions for family reunions in emergencies).[116] The result disappointed the Europeans, especially FRG,[117] who even

complained about the matter to the UK at the top level.[118] Hence, Auswärtiges Amt began its preparations to conclude the CDE successfully.

The German's willingness to push the CDE negotiation forward resulted in the birth of another compromise package, completed by 25 June. It included the following contents: (1) give up information measures (i.e., exchange of military information) included in NATO's proposal, (2) give up constraints measures (measures to introduce limits to military exercises) requested by NNA, (3) raise the notification threshold to 10,000 men, (4) provide more information on air and sea activities, (5) strengthen the provision for observations in substitute for on-site inspection.[119] While the FRG's compromise package was more comprehensive than the British one, the two were similar in orientation.

With similarities in their positions, the UK and FRG naturally chose to collaborate. On 25 June, following an Anglo-German teleconference between the officials, Bonn confidentially handed London the aforementioned compromise package.[120] After bilateral consultations, both countries tentatively agreed on a draft compromise package based on FRG's idea with the amendments by the British.[121]

The Anglo-German package became the basis of the Western position hereafter. It was first shared with the US and France, and agreed in principle at the ambassadorial meeting of the four countries on 7 July.[122] At the same time, the UK and FRG succeeded in convincing the two countries to submit the package by mid-July rather than mid-August, which provided them with sufficient time to negotiate. Following the quadripartite discussion, the package was circulated to all NATO countries and endorsed by mid-July.[123] With the agreement of all Western States, the package was handed to the Soviet Ambassador by the British and German Ambassadors. As the penultimate session

ended in late July, the optimistic mood now prevailed in the Conference[124] in contrast to the gloomy mood just weeks ago.

In parallel to the Anglo-German tandem, France contributed independently to push the negotiation forward. A few days before the Anglo-German package was completed and revealed, France circulated a paper to NATO countries setting out possible concessions.[125] Although the paper lacked concrete parameters (e.g., threshold for notification) included in the Anglo-German package, Paris intended to use it to signal that the West was seeking compromise.[126] The French initiative succeeded. After consideration by the allies, the paper was read out on the floor by the Canadian Ambassador representing NATO.[127] The speech laid the groundwork for subsequent discussion on the Anglo-German package.

As the European effort flourished during the times of US-Soviet discord, changes gradually emerged within the superpowers. In the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' in diplomacy — one of its main points was to assure national security by political means rather than on the preparation for a hypothetical and highly improbable military conflict[128] — started to take shape and manifested itself in the Politburo. Gorbachev invited the CDE Ambassador Oleg Grinevski to a Politburo meeting on 26 June, in a highly unusual move protocol-wise, to discuss the strategy at the CDE.[129] During the meeting, Gorbachev stood by Grinevski and showed a positive attitude to the introduction of on-site inspection — a sine qua non for the Americans — despite the opposition by the Chief of the General Staff, Sergey Akhromeyev. In other words, Gorbachev made clear his willingness to reach an agreement. Ever since, the Soviet Union began to hint that it would accept on-site inspection, and Akhromeyev himself attended the session in Stockholm in late August to announce the acceptance.[130] The inclusion of on-site inspection, so controversial that it had not been envisaged even in the

Anglo-German compromise, is now agreed upon. It was a significant breakthrough, not only in the CDE's context but also in the wider sphere of arms control.

Changes were also apparent inside the US. In mid-June, the US decided to hold a Shultz-Shevardnadze meeting, which had been cancelled in spring.[131] Furthermore, between 25 and 26 July, the US invited the deputy foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Alexander Bessmertnykh, to Washington for high-level talks.[132] One of the items on the agenda was the CDE, during which the Soviet side showed the willingness to move on to the second stage of the CDE. With weeks left until the CDE's closure, the dialogue between the superpowers was finally back on track, creating a favourable environment for the final negotiation. Yet, the European effort during the stalling of US-Soviet relations was crucial in that it prepared the stage for the final negotiation.

After a four-week summer break, the last session began in Stockholm on 19 August. As indicated by the Soviet Ambassador's visit to Whitehall for consultations (London was the only place he visited during the intersession),[133] negotiations proceeded on the basis of the Anglo-German-led Western package. In the final weeks, the Europeans, especially the UK and FRG, continued to play a pivotal role. In fact, it was London and Bonn rather than Washington who took the leading role in resolving three outstanding issues: the yearly quota of on-site inspection, the provider of the aircraft to be used for on-site inspection and the parameters for notification.

As for the yearly quota, the problem lay between 'passive quota', a system setting the maximum number of inspections each country could receive, and 'active quota', a system setting the maximum number of inspections each country could request. The East argued for 'passive quota' — the Warsaw Pact, comprised of seven member states, would receive fewer inspections under this formula. In contrast, the West pursued 'active quota' — NATO, comprised of sixteen member states, could ask for more inspections under this

formula. Eventually, the issue was solved through Anglo-Soviet contacts,[134] and the formula of 'passive quota' was agreed upon, while the upper limit was set at three times a year rather than one or two, to accommodate the West's desire for transparency.

As for the aircraft to be used for on-site inspection, the issue was who would provide them. The East insisted that the country receiving inspection should provide the aircraft to avoid espionage, while the West insisted that the country conducting inspection should provide the aircraft. In the end, the following intentionally vague wording offered by FRG solved the problem: 'Aircraft for inspection will be chosen by mutual agreement between the inspecting and receiving States'.[135]

Finally, the notification parameters became the very last item remaining on Stockholm's agenda.[136] To address the issue, a group of five ambassadors from the UK, FRG, Norway, the Soviet Union and Poland was set up.[137] This was an exemplary case showing the Anglo-German leadership at the CDE. The negotiation led to an agreement that the notified military exercises would be of a size of at least 13,000 troops or 300 battle tanks. With that agreement, the conference concluded. The Europeans' contribution was indispensable to the successful outcome, and the US was well aware of their role. The US delegations repeatedly reported the European initiative back to Washington.[138]

The reason why the Europeans did not let go of their proactive role in the negotiations derives from the lessons learned at the CSCE Experts Meeting on Human Contacts. As pointed out by the briefing notes for the EPC Ministerial Meeting in September, the Europeans were concerned that the US might block an agreement at the last minute, as in Berne.[139] Indeed, they were so worried that the UK, then-presidency of the EPC, bilaterally approached the US. During Howe's visit to Washington on 9 September, he persuaded Shultz and Secretary of Defence Casper Weinberger that they could not afford to have another Berne in Stockholm.[140] The same message was echoed

in Howe's letter to Shultz a few days later. The Europeans had a significant stake in the successful outcome.

The European effort paid off with the successful conclusion of the CDE on 22 September, while the clock of the floor was stopped on the original deadline two days earlier. It was the first time an arms control agreement was reached since Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty II in 1979, embodying the overcoming of the Second Cold War. Furthermore, it was also the first time that an agreement was reached at a CSCE framework since the Madrid Review Meeting in 1983, aside from the report of the Venice Seminar on Economic, Scientific and Cultural Co-operation in the Mediterranean in October 1984 .

The agreement at Stockholm had both military and political significance. From the military perspective, the agreement contributed to stabilising Europe's international relations through enhanced Confidence-Building Measures, e.g., the expansion of the geographical scope from the Atlantic to the Urals, the introduction of on-site inspection and the obligation to invite observers. Moreover, it had implications for subsequent arms control negotiations. The agreement opened a path for European Conventional Forces (CFE) negotiations, and discussions on the mandate commenced at the Vienna CSCE Review Meeting shortly afterwards. It also paved the way for on-site inspection in a number of subsequent disarmament agreements, such as the INF Treaty, the CFE Treaty, START I and Chemical Weapons Conventions. From the political perspective, the success of the CDE strengthened the CSCE Process in East-West relations. The CSCE's continued relevance in international politics eventually led to the CSCE summit in Paris in November 1990, which represented the ending of the Cold War in Europe and marked a new beginning in intra-European relations. In other words, the agreement at Stockholm

was the dawn of Europe's proactive role and involvement in constructing a post-Cold War European order.

Conclusion

The CDE played an essential role in the transition from the Second Cold War to the beginning of the end of the Cold War. At the beginning of its negotiation in 1984, the ministerial attendance led by the Europeans launched the process of the de-escalation of international tension, which reached its peak in late 1983. Ever since, the CDE has provided a stable forum for East-West dialogue. Its contribution was especially fundamental in 1984, when the international situation was still unclear and nuclear talks were suspended. Yet, its role was inevitably limited, owing to the very nature of the unstable international environment. As the CDE continued onto the second year in 1985, it turned itself into a first step in US-Soviet arms control negotiations, while its presence in East-West relations declined relatively. In the final year of negotiation in 1986, the CDE became a forum to strengthen East-West relations in Europe, by the Europeans, for the Europeans. As the superpower relations stalled since early 1986, the Europeans once again took the initiative to push the negotiation of the CDE forward, revitalising East-West dialogue. In the end, the Anglo-German solution led the negotiation to a successful conclusion, formalising the overcoming of the Second Cold War and opening the way to subsequent arms control agreements.

It was the process of continued negotiation that was the most important aspect of the CDE. While the CDE did not reduce nuclear arsenals, nor troops or tanks, it nevertheless provided bloc-to-bloc security talks even during the height of international tensions. Furthermore, the CDE enabled the East-West dialogue in Europe to carry on alongside economic interdependence[141] when talks on human rights and human contacts were not yielding immediate results — as evidenced by the dissolution of the Helsinki

Monitor Groups in the East in the early 1980s. Under such a situation, the institutionalisation of multilateral diplomacy in the security arena was indispensable in creating contacts between governments. This, in turn, laid the groundwork for the reduction of nuclear arms by the superpowers, as well as the condition for the transformation in the East through the so-called 'Helsinki Effect'.[142] Yet, the influence of the CDE had certain limits. While the opening of negotiation in January 1984 contributed to lessening tensions, unpredictability in East-West relations remained throughout the year.

The contribution of the Europeans was vital during the whole process. Their contribution was especially crucial in the following three phases: the preparations for the ministerial opening in January 1984, the first year of negotiation in 1984, and the last year of negotiation in 1986. When the superpower dialogue was in a stall, the Europeans were able to decide the direction of the CDE. Conversely, they were unable to influence the discussion when the superpower relations were functioning. The Europeans' contribution was made possible due to their longstanding activeness in the CSCE process, their will for the European Détente, and their hope for a distinct European foreign policy. The added European voice in East-West relations, in parallel to the development of European Political Cooperation, led to the increased presence of the Europeans in the post-Cold War international politics.

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