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Leiden
The Netherlands

Adversarial conventional arms control in Europe: the quest for peace

Lippert, W.E.

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Part III: The Impermanence of CAC Agreement Success and Failure

Chapter 8: Conclusion

When analyzing adversarial CAC arms control from the end of the First World War to the present, two insights stand out that are not often emphasized in the arms control literature. First, CAC agreements are more successful than critics imply or openly state. This may be because when agreements are successful, and especially when there is no discord or disputes over their implementation along with no need to enforce them due to full compliance by all state parties, they slip into the shadows of the mundane. Few discuss the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty or the 1922 Åland Islands Convention because, ultimately, there is so little to discuss. They were remilitarized during the Second World War – but the treaties permitted such actions (not the least because most CAC agreements between rivals do not apply when those rivals are at war) – and when the conflict ended, they returned to their demilitarized status. The 1923 Lausanne Treaty and then the 1936 Montreux Convention for the Straits have similarly seen relatively little drama – in part because Türkiye has not been in a major interstate war since its independence, and no state has attempted to militarily force its way through the Straits. During World War Two, both the Allies and Axis attempted to circumvent or bend the treaty’s stipulations, however, the number of outright violations was minimal and they neither affected the war’s outcome nor did they compel Türkiye to take enforcing actions.⁶⁹³ While the Russo-Ukraine War rages, Türkiye has diligently enforced the Convention’s rules for all belligerents and non-Black Sea states and has even “warned” all Black Sea states and non-Black Sea states – thus all the world’s navies – not to permit nor send warships through the Straits.⁶⁹⁴

Even many agreements that failed were not complete failures. The Paris Peace treaties signed after World War One, for example, did not prevent the defeated Central Power states from engaging in wars of aggression just over 15 years after the treaties were signed – but those years were arguably sufficient time for states to have resolved differences and disagreements.

⁶⁹³ Süleyman Seydi and Steven Morewood, “Turkey’s Application of the Montreux Convention in the Second World War,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 1 (2005): 79–101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0026320042000322725>; Süleyman Seydi, *The Turkish Straits and the Great Powers: From the Montreux Convention to the Early Cold War, 1936-1947*, Analecta Isisiana: Ottoman and Turkish Studies (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.31826/9781463225506>.

⁶⁹⁴ Cornell Overfield, “Turkey Must Close the Turkish Straits Only to Russian and Ukrainian Warships,” *Lawfare*, March 5, 2022, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/turkey-must-close-turkish-straits-only-russian-and-ukrainian-warships>. For some explanations of why Türkiye is placing such a broad ban on naval ships, including non-riparian NATO members, see for example Yücel Acer, *Russia’s Attack on Ukraine: The Montreux Convention and Türkiye*, vol. 100 (Newport, Rhode Island: Stockton Center for International Law, 2023); Daria Isachenko, *Turkey in the Black Sea Region: Ankara’s Reactions to the War in Ukraine against the Background of Regional Dynamics and Global Confrontation*, vol. SWP Research Paper 12 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2023), <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2023RP12/>.

The CFE Treaty was only suspended by NATO in November 2023, meaning that it had been implemented for at least 30 years. It had continued to function without Russian participation, which had been suspended in 2007.⁶⁹⁵ Though one might assess the CFE Treaty as a failure because of the Russo-Ukraine War, the surprise attack by NATO or the Warsaw Pact against the other, or some version of both in the following decades that it was meant to prevent still has not occurred.

Second, neither CAC agreement failure nor success are permanent. CAC agreements that have failed had been successful until they were not. Another way to state this is that for most agreements the state parties likely did not anticipate CAC agreement failure at the time of signature, or else it is unlikely an agreement would have been made. Even Weimar Germany had agreed to arms control based on the belief and tacit agreement that the Allies would also reduce their arms to a comparable level to Germany's limitations.⁶⁹⁶ Agreements that are at this time still in effect, whether it has been since the 1920 Spitsbergen Treaty or as recent as the Six Point Peace Agreement ending the conflict between Russia and Georgia can fail at any point in the future. Norway could remilitarize Spitsbergen, especially as competition in the Arctic increases.⁶⁹⁷ The conflict between Russia and Georgia could recur, for any number of reasons.

Yet failures are also temporary; or rather, even if agreements fail and rivals go to war, they may eventually end their rivalry and even become allies. Conflict between the German states and their neighbors stretch back hundreds of years, but after the failure of the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty with the outbreak of World War Two and Germany's subsequent defeat, Germany accepted arms-controlling agreements immediately after World War Two and when it reunited. Since those agreements were made, Germany has not invaded its neighbors.⁶⁹⁸ Finland and Russia signed agreements in 1920, which held until the 1939-1940 Winter War. The Winter War ended with the 1940 Moscow Treaty but this was terminated by the Continuation War less than a year later. That war was officially terminated by the 1947 Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Finland which set limits on Finland's

⁶⁹⁵ William Alberque, "NATO Allies Fully Suspend Implementation of the CFE Treaty," IISS, November 8, 2023, <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2023/10/nato-allies-fully-suspend-implementation-of-the-cfe-treaty/#>.

⁶⁹⁶ Webster, "Piecing Together the Interwar Disarmament Puzzle."

⁶⁹⁷ Pär Gustafsson, "Russia's Ambitions in the Arctic Towards 2035" (Stockholm: FOI, October 2021).

⁶⁹⁸ Trachtenburg expressed fears about Germany's reunification and suggested that arms control measures should focus on preventing a German military revival. Trachtenburg, "The Past and Future of Arms Control," 215.

military. Finland and Russia have not gone to war since that agreement was signed – suggesting that in this relationship, “the third time’s a charm.”⁶⁹⁹

Peacetime CAC agreements, whether focused on balancing or geographic demilitarization, face substantial obstacles all along their life-cycle despite their advantages in potentially mitigating the security dilemma and resolving the prisoner’s dilemma. States may not even consider peacetime CAC if they do not see a reasonable way in which the security dilemma can be addressed while retaining deterrence. This could be due to many causes, including a lack of faith in a rival’s willingness to either negotiate or implement an agreement in good faith; or a recognition that, especially in a multipolar system, it is difficult to address one rivalry without impacting another. For example, the US’s perceived need for land-based medium-range missiles in the Pacific complicates any agreements with Russia to replace the INF Treaty or a conventional version of it.⁷⁰⁰

Once rivals accept the notion of a CAC agreement, the difficulty of negotiations comes to the fore. Areas of potential dispute are legion: weapon systems to include and exclude, the geographic areas covered or not, verification and monitoring measures, and dispute adjudication are just a few. Fearon, for example, emphasizes challenges related to hard bargaining and the “shadow of the future,” which he defines as states caring “sufficiently about future payoffs and expect that future interactions are likely enough for the threat of retaliation to deter cheating.”⁷⁰¹ Even if adversaries have sufficient trust in their rivals’ commitments, they still have other issues to confront in getting domestic constituencies to accept the agreement. This includes bureaucratic objections to an agreement, for example from uniformed military leaders or economic costs of implementation, such as dealing with equipment destruction or finding housing and jobs for demobilized soldiers.⁷⁰² And the US – which is central to many arms treaties – has the additional challenge of requiring treaties’ ratification by the US Senate; which is far from a given in the US political system.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁹ Finland renounced the treaty in September 1990, declaring them null and void. *The Effects Of Finland’s Possible NATO Membership: An Assessment* (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2016).

⁷⁰⁰ Ankit Panda, *Indo-Pacific Missile Arsenals: Avoiding Spirals and Mitigating Escalation Risks* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2023).

⁷⁰¹ Fearon, “Bargaining, Enforcement, and International Cooperation,” 270.

⁷⁰² Evangelista, “Cooperation Theory and Disarmament Negotiations in the 1950s”; Schlickmaier, *Playing the Generals’ Game: Superpowers, Self-Limiting, and Strategic Emerging Technologies*.

⁷⁰³ See, for example, Ulrich Kühn, “The End of Conventional Arms Control and the Role of US Congress,” *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 2, no. 1 (2019): 253–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2019.1607993>.

Lastly, implementation issues can arise even when states have good compliance intentions.⁷⁰⁴

For post-conflict agreements, especially when there is a clear victor and vanquished, CAC agreements may be easier to arrive at because the vanquished likely has limited bargaining power. As Thucydides wrote in quoting the Athenians towards the Melians, “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.”⁷⁰⁵ However, the challenge then becomes the extent to which the defeated state is satisfied with the agreement at the time of signature and how long they stay satisfied, especially if they can increase their relative power *vis-a-vis* the victor in the following years. Victors also need to decide what kind of victory they want to impose, especially if they hope the defeated state will neither strive to seek revenge, overturn the victory, and/or turn the rivalry into a costly, long-term competition in other ways. CAC agreement conditions are an expression of how punitive victorious states aim to be and shape relations afterward.

This thesis has offered a theoretical framework to understand CAC agreements in three distinct but interconnected stages. The first stage, baseline, is the period in which states conceive of their need for a CAC agreement with an adversary. They consider what the status quo is in terms of the military balance and rivalry, how a CAC agreement might address their own need for deterrence, mitigate the security dilemma, and how the ODB might apply. In a peacetime agreement or during a conflict in which neither side has a mutually recognized decisive advantage, they are likely to consider an adversary’s perspective on these issues even if the stronger state has a stronger bargaining position, while in a post-conflict agreement with a clear victor, the victor’s assessment of these take precedence. During the negotiation stage, states bargain, disagree, and then (ideally) agree on a written text that contains details on issues such as (as applicable): military system limits, reductions, prohibitions, geographic demilitarization, treaty implementation bodies, and monitoring and verification procedures. In the third stage, implementation, the necessary changes to military forces and capabilities are made to comply with the agreements, with the execution ranging from being executed solely by state party national agencies to the full and deep involvement of a third-party treaty executor such as an IO.

⁷⁰⁴ Woolf, *Monitoring and Verification in Arms Control*.

⁷⁰⁵ Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (Salt Lake City, UT: Project Gutenberg, 431AD).

Thesis Summary and Key Findings

Chapter 4 defined and assessed how stronger states assess the status quo just prior to an agreement, and if the agreement retains the status quo. The chapter conducted a typological analysis by considering three conditions as combinational determinants of states' decisions concerning how CAC agreements will affect the relative military balance with adversaries: the broad and regional geopolitical situation; whether the existing military balance is unstable and may lead to or continue arms racing or a surprise attack; and if the state faces substantial resource constraints that would make arms racing difficult to afford, or even compel states to reduce defense expenditures. The findings largely upheld the study's predictive model, and in 22 out of 29 cases, the status quo was retained. The study's hypothesis that resource considerations are a necessary but insufficient condition that determines whether CAC agreements retain or alter the military balance status quo was upheld.

Chapter 5 applies a sum-score methodology to rate the level of delegation to CAC treaty executors, using a dataset of 19 agreements. The delegation scores are then assessed for their correlation with CAC agreement success in three distinct ratings of unsuccessful, partially successful, and successful. Agreement success was determined by assessing agreement outcome during the CAC treaty executor's existence. This study suggested a weak correlation between delegation and agreement success, that third-party involvement by states is the most significant variable in success, and that delegation has on average increased over time.

Chapter 6 aims to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions as well as any conjunctural causes of conventional arms control success in Europe from the end of World War One to the present based on a dataset of 19 cases. It undertakes a deductive approach, applying arms control theory with hypotheses on the delegation of authority to treaty executors and great power rivalries which are tested with a QCA. It also seeks to abductively assess relationships between the presence or absence of national limits on military capabilities and geographic demilitarization and agreement success. This study's results suggest that delegation is sufficient but not necessary for success, and that its absence is sufficient for the absence of success. The absence of national limits is only slightly sufficient for success while geographic demilitarization has no causal relationship with success. Lastly, great power rivalries are not consistently sufficient for agreement failure, despite theoretical implications to the contrary. These findings emphasize the importance of delegation of authority to a treaty executor in any future NATO-Russia agreements. However, a continental-wide agreement's success would face

substantial headwinds especially if the goal is to establish a peacetime, CAC agreement similar to the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty.

Chapter 7 is a case study of Russia's CAC agreement perception and policies from the Cold War's end to the 2022 Ukraine invasion. This chapter uses a pattern tracing methodology complemented by a counterfactual analysis to demonstrate that Russia sought to address what they viewed as relatively increasing and threatening NATO military capability, in part due to membership expansion, through CAC. Russia attempted to adjust and update the CFE Treaty, as well as create new agreements. When it became apparent that the US and NATO would concede to the CAC controls or agreements demanded by Moscow, President Putin decided to invade Ukraine. This case suggests that the goal of obtaining a CAC agreement is in part the product of a dissatisfaction with the status quo, or a desire to lock in the status quo. Failure to reach an agreement can permit one party to begin to accrue potentially significant relative gains and advantages. As a result, the other side may see that a CAC agreement having failed, or not concluded, conflict is the best way to alter or forestall this change in relative power.

Research Questions Answered

This thesis posed an overarching research question and several sub-questions which were subsequently answered after careful study and analysis. The overarching research question was:

What explains the form that adversarial conventional arms control agreements assume and what determines their success?

Adversarial CAC agreements are established under a variety of conditions, but they almost always fall under the categories of peacetime or post-conflict agreements. They are created when states view cooperation as offering more benefits than competition or conflict but are bounded by perceptions of the status quo, deterrence, the security dilemma, and the ODB. Their success, which is generally defined as whether the state parties engage in conflict after the agreement enters into force, is determined in part by the extent to which the agreements delegate authority to agreement executors and the involvement of third-party states.

This led to four sub-questions:

Under what conditions do the more powerful states in an adversarial conventional arms control (CAC) agreement accept a reduction in their relative military power?

States considering CAC agreements determine the status quo as defined by some combination of the military balance, operational military situation especially in the case of conflicts in progress, strategic disposition of forces, deterrence, and the likely trajectory of the current military situation. Usually, the strongest states will seek to retain the status quo. The stronger state in any negotiation will seek to retain their superiority except in certain circumstances; while weaker states will accept their weaker position except in certain circumstances. Even if states accept a reduction in the difference in military capability, they will at most accept parity. Agreements, as measured by the quantitative conditions that they set, do not invert the military balance.

How is adversarial CAC agreement success and failure defined?

Adversarial CAC agreement and success and failure are generally defined by whether the primary state party rivals engage in conflict following the agreement's entry into force over the issues that the agreement was intended to address. For example, many of the 1936 Montreux Convention of the Straits state parties were at war with one another during World War Two – but Türkiye and its Straits were not linked to World War Two's causes (and the treaty remained in force during the war). If approximately fifteen years pass between the entry into force and conflict, the agreements can be considered a partial success. Additionally, agreements are only a partial success if state parties withdraw, but otherwise do not go to war with one another, during a period of tension and due to disputes about the agreement. The INF and CFE Treaties are examples of this.

What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for adversarial CAC agreement success or failure?

The QCA analysis suggests that while there are no necessary conditions, delegation is a sufficient condition for success, and that its absence is sufficient for the absence of success. The absence of national limits is a somewhat sufficient condition for success while geographic

demilitarization has no causal relationship with success. Lastly, great power rivalries are not sufficient for agreement failure despite theoretical implications to the contrary.

How is delegation to an agreement execution body defined and measured?

Delegation is composed of nine unidimensional variables based on the existence of an agreement executor and the duties, tasks, and responsibilities afforded it:

- Mandate modification;
- Governance independence;
- Staff independence;
- Assessment independence;
- Enforcement authority;
- Agent resources;
- Monitoring;
- Inspection;
- Third-party state involvement.

This thesis measured delegation by adding up the score or rating for each variable, coming to a total, real number with the maximum being nine for each agreement.

Scholarship and Practitioner Contribution

This thesis has attempted to contribute to CAC scholarship and offer insights for CAC practitioners and policy makers. On the one hand, as Burns and Urquidi noted about the interwar CAC agreements,⁷⁰⁶ formulating conclusions for the approximately three dozen adversarial CAC agreements assessed for this thesis as varied as these is an intellectual challenge. At the same time, the variety of agreements may offer a broader set of insights from different perspectives. As the QCA methodology emphasizes, cases need to have condition variability to obtain multicausal insights. Assessing and comparing different types of past agreements can also offer more examples to draw from in the future. Where previous

⁷⁰⁶ Burns and Urquidi, *Disarmament in Perspective: Volume 4: Conclusions*, 4:1.

scholarship has mostly taken a non-representative sample of CAC agreements from which to draw broad conclusions about CAC, this dissertation has analyzed all relevant CAC agreements together.

This thesis has attempted to contribute to scholarship and practice by posing and answering several research questions on CAC with the creation of an original CAC agreement dataset. It has offered measures of success to better understand CAC agreement performance and has emphasized the importance of the status quo, deterrence, the security dilemma, and ODB to CAC agreements. It has also demonstrated how a sum-score methodology and a QCA can be used to provide new insights into CAC based on historical cases.

The analysis here may offer practitioners insights in how to craft, negotiate, and implement future CAC agreements. In particular, this thesis has continuously raised two interconnected questions: how did CAC agreement failure contribute to Russia's decision to invade Ukraine in 2022, and what are the CAC considerations for a post-Russo-Ukraine War? A post-war CAC settlement might consider how to approach the force ratios, what military limits to incorporate and where, delegation to the agreement executor, and involvement of neutral states, especially from outside of Europe. At the same time, practitioners need to bear in mind that any agreement will reflect the military balance and geopolitical situation at the time of the agreement's signature – which itself is going to be determined by battlefield events.

Beyond the focused arms control and security literature addressed in chapter 3, including war causation and interstate bargaining literature, this dissertation offers additional insights into existing war and peace studies and works, whether they complement or contradict scholarly beliefs and proposals. As stated throughout, this dissertation's main contribution is through its medium-*n* empirical approach.

Although war and peace studies are substantial in volume and depth, making a comprehensive assessment of how this dissertation contributes to the existing scholarship impossible, a few observations can be made vis-à-vis some major works and schools of thought. First, this dissertation upholds notions that power is prime in international relations. CAC agreements are largely driven by and determined by power relationships; and when there was a great power imbalance in the adversarial relationship, it was clear that the stronger power set the scope of the terms even if some bargaining occurred. As previously mentioned, this is in line with the ancient Thucydidean adage that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must".⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁷ Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*.

As old as this work is, this central tenet has been upheld and elaborated on by numerous scholars, but has also seen some revision and caveat (if not rejection) by other scholars. This dissertation suggests that CAC both upholds the axiom and offers provisos. Morgenthau emphasizes that states act in the pursuit of power.⁷⁰⁸ This dissertation's datasets uphold this proposition only to an extent, because states clearly sacrificed some version of power – whether in the form of military capability as defined by quantitative holdings or based on military forces' geographic positions – for the benefit of peace and stability. One might argue that by avoiding a conflict, states retained a certain measure of power in peace that they might have otherwise lost in a conflict, but how such longer-term trade-offs figure into Morgenthau's notions of power pursuit is beyond this dissertation's scope. Another area in which this dissertation casts doubt upon the notion that states are purely power-seeking is in the repeated instances of state delegation to agreement executors. As discussed in chapter 5, states sacrifice authority, which is a form of power, to CAC agreement executors for various reasons – but mainly to improve an agreement's chances for success. Here again, states may in the longer term be gaining more power by sacrificing it in the shorter term, but it is not clear that this is in line with Morgenthau's theories.

Morgenthau and realism in general understate, if not altogether sideline, notions of morality and ideology. CAC agreements largely support this, even if the origins of conflicts the adversarial relationships upon which CAC agreements are based are ideological, the agreements themselves (at least within the narrow aspects of CAC, rather than issues of language, human rights, governance, etc. that may be in agreements that include CAC) are stripped of ideology. The reason is simple: a tank, combat aircraft, artillery system, naval combat vessel, and any other type of weapon systems are themselves free of ideology. Moreover, this dissertation's CAC agreement dataset shows that any combination of regime types can make CAC agreements: democratic and authoritarian governments; democratic and democratic; and authoritarian and authoritarian governments.

This dissertation also upholds Morgenthau and others' notion that – even today – the international system is inherently anarchic. CAC agreements are founded upon the notion that states are predominant in the international system; and that (adversarial) CAC agreements are between states, for states, and governed by states even if indirectly. Even if an agreement is significantly delegated to an agreement executor, the agreement executor themselves is dependent on states (although they may be other or more than those to whom the agreement

⁷⁰⁸ Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations : The Struggle for Power and Peace*.

applies). Although CAC agreement enforcement is beyond this dissertation's scope, a cursory assessment of the dataset and insights derived from CAC agreement failure again suggest the primacy of states and lack of a true, central authority.

Lastly, Morgenthau places an emphasis on power balancing in the international system. This dissertation's CAC dataset largely contradicts this. CAC agreements have generally sought to maintain the status quo, not change it to deal with a rising power. CAC agreements have largely locked in alliances – whether it was the Allies immediately after the two world wars (in terms of how the Allies together made agreements with the defeated Central Powers/Axis states) – or NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Power balancing suggests that states shift alliances to ensure that no one state is overly powerful. No CAC agreement seems to have this goal.

This dissertation's CAC agreement studies are in line with Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*⁷⁰⁹ systemic or international level of analysis. While not excluding individual or state levels of analysis, this dissertation emphasizes – as previously stated in line with Morgenthau's realism, the primacy of states in CAC agreements almost to the detriment of the other two levels of analysis. While case studies demonstrate that both domestic constituencies and leaders have important roles in all three stages of CAC, ultimately it is states that negotiate, sign, and implement agreements. And, supporting Waltz's premise, CAC agreements reflect structural realities of the international system – particularly the distribution of power and military capabilities.

Analysis of each CAC agreement's formation suggested rational decision-making and cost-benefit analysis supporting Waltz's belief that states are rational. Waltz's notion that states are motivated by defensive realism is somewhat upheld by this dissertation's CAC agreement dataset. Throughout the modern history of CAC, states have sought to stabilize adversarial relationships by limiting in some way military capability, in many cases to establish a situation in which states could defend themselves without threatening an adversary (thus mitigating the security dilemma). Even in instances where a CAC agreement was one-way, such as after a decisive military defeat, the victorious states often decreased their offensive capabilities through downsizing, demobilization, and redeployment. Thus, while their retention of offensive capabilities counters the notion of offensive realism, victorious states nonetheless often moved towards a defensive posture rather than retaining a heightened offensive posture.

⁷⁰⁹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

Mearsheimer's concept of offensive realism⁷¹⁰ is at odds with defensive realism, and this dissertation's dataset and analysis give more strength to the latter. CAC agreements are about stabilizing relationships, not enabling states to grow stronger and maximize their power. These agreements show, as Jervis amongst others emphasize, the value of cooperative security and how states can avoid competition and mitigate the security dilemma.

CAC is an important and relevant aspect of war and peace studies, and this dissertation's empirical findings can contribute to some of the major international relations schools of thought as well as offer deeper insights into interstate peace and conflict in Europe. Its contribution is specifically in offering an empirical approach to assessing when states go to war, how wars end, and how peace can be maintained. As the role of CAC in all of these may be underappreciated by many scholars, this dissertation seeks to increase scholarly awareness of CAC through its empirical analysis.

Research and Thesis Limitations

This thesis has attempted to be sufficiently comprehensive and thorough to answer the research questions presented in chapter 1, but there are several notable areas where time and resources induced some limitations.

In attempting to analyze 37 different CAC agreements, it was not possible to delve into all of them equally, primarily due to information availability. A more detailed research effort of some of the agreements might offer new insights, and may even compel a revision of the assessments, scores and calibration assigned in chapters 4, 5 and 6, respectively. The 37 CAC agreements included in the dataset are the result of study and research, but are also the result of subjective analytical decisions. The findings might be somewhat or even substantially altered if more agreements are included, even if they remain limited to CAC in Europe. The dataset might be broadened to include earlier centuries, perhaps going back to the foundation of the modern European sovereign nation-state following the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. Similarly, a study could broaden the geographic scope to include areas outside of Europe but between European great power rivals, especially related to colonial wars.

This dissertation has focused on CAC agreements relative to Europe, excluding agreements focused on other global regions. From a dataset perspective, it is unclear if

⁷¹⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Updated edition, 1 online resource. vols., Norton Series in World Politics (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

including the rest of the world within the period of 1919-2015 would add a large number of agreements. Yet, the addition of even a handful might impact various quantitative calculations, such as those done for QCA. In more general terms, the inclusion of even a few additional cases may offer new insights if the cases' actual outcomes differ from expected outcomes – whether it is correlational (such as delegation extent) or more binary (such as status quo retention).

The quantitative and statistical approaches in this study necessarily incorporated subjective judgments and methodological choices such as the application of the scores between zero and one, inclusive, for each variable to measure delegation. Two approaches could have changed the delegation study's outcome. First, instead of zero to one, the scores could have been zero to ten, or even 100. A relatively narrow range of zero to one was selected, with most in-between scores being 0.25 or, more frequently, 0.5, because it was unclear that additional scores along this continuum had a firm basis based on the available information. Second, for the variables are all considered as equal in overall weight; they each have a maximum of 1.0. Weighting each variable differently could make some theoretical sense, but it then poses the question of how to comparatively weight them. A substantial theoretical and empirical study might have to made to establish a convincing weight to the variables.

QCA, as a set theory methodology, with a heavy emphasis on percentage of set inclusion or exclusion, is sensitive to the number of conditions and the number of cases. If, for example, each of the world war sets of agreements were considered separately – resulting in 10 agreements instead of two, this would probably impact how the software calculates coverage, necessity, and consistency for each condition and pathway solution. QCA methodology is also limited by the conditions that the study includes, in part due to the need to strive for condition independence, a restriction that does not apply as strictly to correlational studies.

As noted in the literature review, another limitation of this thesis is the reliance on English language sources. While some of the sources themselves consulted Russian (and other) language sources, the extent to which this thesis did not directly consult them may have underrepresented important information or perspectives. In particular, additional Russian perspectives on CAC in Europe might be identified with a better survey of Russian-language literature – although the core documents and statements were translated into English by the Russian government or other, professional organizations. Chapter 4 has attempted to discern the strongest state's perceptions of the geopolitical situation in Europe and within the states' immediate vicinity, their perception of the military balance stability, and perceptions of their

resource constraints (or lack therein). Chapter 7 focuses on Russia's perspectives on the military balance in Europe, Russian-NATO relations, and CAC perceptions. Again, important Russian statements, declarations, and documents were translated into English by the Russian government, news outlets, or other authoritative sources (that is, the author did not use translation software). Nonetheless, reliance on English-language sources of Russian primary material likely misses important information sources. These might include interviews of Russian officials in Russian (for example, on Russian television), reports and op-eds by Russian officials and experts, and Russian government reports that were not translated into English. It is very possible that additional information sources would strengthen rather than undercut Chapter 7's findings.

While English language literature covers these to some extent, there are noticeable gaps and further research in Bulgarian, Finnish, Greek, Swedish, and Turkish to name some of the languages in which there was minimal CAC agreement and historical background information might offer new insights and alter some of the truth table assessments.

Areas of Future Research

This thesis indicates a number of additional, inter-related areas of research to better understand CAC in Europe in the past, present, and future. CAC agreements are intended to deal with the military balance, either freezing it in time, or stabilizing it. A study could assess the comparative military balances between rivals who enter into a CAC agreement, measuring and assessing the relative balance from several years before the agreement's signature, at the time of signature, and for several years after the signature.⁷¹¹ This might answer three questions: 1) how representative of the previous military balance are CAC agreements? 2) How much do the military balances change over time, and what is the outcome of these shifts? And 3) Are there other relative and comparative factors that affect the success or failure of CAC agreements, such as population size, territorial expansion, or economic strength? This is an important question as some evidence suggests that major changes in the military balance both creates dissatisfaction with agreements, with states on the losing side of changing military balances viewing the agreements as anachronistic. If the agreement does not incorporate adaptability, at some point the changes in the military balance differences may become so great that the

⁷¹¹ An approach for continuously, quantitatively assessing the military balance for CAC purposes is discussed in: Lippert, "Military Balancing for Future Conventional Arms Control Agreements in Europe."

agreement is renounced and/or conflict results. At the same time CAC agreements' rigidity reduce opportunities for states to bend the rules, seek exceptions, or circumvent the agreement's goals.

This raises another area of research: adaptation in CAC agreements. While scholars have addressed the question treaty adaptability in general, little of the literature covers CAC agreement adaptation. How have, or can, CAC agreements incorporate adaptability? This might incorporate a combination of IO and CAC scholarship such as decision processes, treaty text, historical case studies, and principle-agent relationships. One approach might be to establish a dedicated, independent organization that assesses the military balance continuously and recommends force and agreement modifications as necessary.⁷¹²

As Coe and Vaynman ask, why are arms control agreements so rare?⁷¹³ Even while this dissertation suggests that other scholars of adversarial CAC agreements have undercounted their number, at under 40 they are still likely far less frequent than most other kinds of interstate agreements. This thesis has offered a few insights that might assist in exploring this question further. First, an assessment of rivalries and perceptions of deterrence, the security dilemma, and ODB at the time CAC negotiations begin might provide an answer.⁷¹⁴ For example, historical relationships might suggest that for many rivalries the security dilemma could not be mitigated so there was no CAC agreement. Instead, CAC agreements were only signed when it could be mitigated. This would support this thesis' proposal of the security dilemma being states' major consideration for CAC agreements.

Chapter 7 is a case study which assesses that one of the major reasons Putin decided to invade Ukraine was the breakdown of CAC. As a within-case study, its implications for other conflicts in Europe or elsewhere is uncertain but from this chapter a theory that CAC failure is a cause of conflict in Europe or elsewhere, from the 1919 to the present may be worth exploring. Such a study might be typological and predictive, as in chapter 4; or a QCA analysis as in chapter 6. It is almost certain at a very superficial and unrealistic level that many wars might have been prevented through CAC because if agreements drive armed forces so low, even to non-existence (i.e. states with no military capability), it would be very difficult to launch a war, especially over long distances. However, two more reasonable historical counterfactuals serve as examples where CAC might have prevented war. First, had the

⁷¹² Lippert, "A European Military Balance Organization and Dynamic Conventional Arms Control."

⁷¹³ Coe and Vaynman, "Why Arms Control Is So Rare."

⁷¹⁴ A similar question is posed by Vasquez; Vasquez, "Distinguishing Rivals That Go to War from Those That Do Not."

victorious World War 1 allies enforced CAC on Germany, even at the cost of invasion (not inconceivable as France and Belgium occupied the Ruhr (Germany) due to default reparation payments), Germany would unlikely have been able to engage in its wars of expansion that led to World War 2. Less conceivable but not impossible is the counterfactual that had Japan not had any aircraft carriers in its fleet, it would have been incapable of attacking Pearl Harbor, thus potentially keeping the war restricted to Japan and mainland Asia.⁷¹⁵

This thesis has proposed several theories of CAC such as retention of the status quo being the norm of a CAC agreement and causes of agreement success and failure, such as delegation to an agreement executor. However, this dissertation has focused on Europe. A comprehensive identification of CAC agreements in other parts of the world, whether in the same time period or further back, might allow an assessment to determine to what extent this dissertation's theories and findings apply outside of Europe and are applicable to current security rivalries outside of Europe.

Another area that this thesis suggests may require additional research is the phenomenon of cheating; how often intentional violations occur in CAC agreements, how significant are violations, and what the consequences are for agreement success, if it is possible to measure, for future agreements. It is clear that states intentionally violate CAC agreements; the defeated Central Powers following the First World War serve as an example. Some scholars argue that a cause of the Second World War was the failure of the victorious powers to enforce the CAC agreements imposed on the defeated states.⁷¹⁶ What may be worth understanding is for which kinds of CAC agreements is cheating most likely to occur and under what conditions.

This dissertation has not mentioned or discussed hybrid warfare,⁷¹⁷ but this is not to say that the topic is irrelevant. Rather, it offers complexities that could easily be a dissertation in its own right, even if they do not seem on their face interlinked because CAC is primarily concerned with conventional armies and their weapon systems in part. After all, these are, probably correctly, viewed as having the greatest capability to seize territory, inflict damage, and otherwise wage prolonged conflicts – at least in Europe. However, World War Two, for example, showed the value of at least guerrilla and partisan warfare – although few would

⁷¹⁵ In brief, a CAC agreement which has prohibited aircraft carriers in the Pacific by any power would have made it difficult for Japan to attack Pearl Harbor because US land-based aircraft in Hawaii would have likely deterred Japanese surface warfare ships such as battleships, due to surface ship's vulnerability to aircraft.

⁷¹⁶ Johnson, "How an International Order Died"; Webster, "From Versailles to Geneva."

⁷¹⁷ Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, eds., *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139199254>.

suggest that partisans alone would have succeeded without the actions of the massive, conventional forces.

Some CAC agreements in this dissertation have attempted to address some version of hybrid warfare. For example, the failed 2015 Minsk agreements called for the withdrawal of “foreign armed formations” and “mercenaries”⁷¹⁸ and the 1998 Belfast Agreement called for the disarming of paramilitary groups.⁷¹⁹ Nonetheless, most CAC agreements are concerned with uniformed soldiers and TLE such as capital ships, tanks, aircraft, and artillery. The 2022 outbreak of war in Ukraine (a CFE Treaty signatory) has largely upheld the primacy and importance of conventional forces. Nonetheless, not only was the crisis initiated in 2014 by hybrid warfare, but the threat of hybrid warfare might exist amidst any ceasefire or long-term peace agreement, and may continue to pose a threat to NATO states⁷²⁰ - especially those bordering Russia.⁷²¹

Hybrid warfare threats might be included in future CAC agreements, and a future study could assess to what extent CAC agreements have included hybrid warfare threats. This might be especially applicable to CAC agreements outside of Europe, where civil or combined civil and interstate conflicts have been more frequent since at least 1945 compared to Europe. A study of CAC agreements, whether in Europe or more broadly, might assess to what extent rival states that made a CAC agreement then employed hybrid warfare to undermine their rivals while remaining compliant with the CAC agreement. In certain situations with reduced or no military forces, hybrid warfare might be more effective and have a greater impact. For example, in a demilitarized area (whether an island or a buffer zone), hybrid warfare might be more difficult to counter in the absence of military forces.

CAC agreements often attempt to retain or improve deterrence (whether it is mutual or one-way). But how effective are they in deterring hybrid warfare? Interestingly, a cursory assessment of Russian hybrid warfare activities in Europe⁷²² seems to correspond with the

⁷¹⁸ “Minsk Agreements” (Minsk, February 12, 2015).

⁷¹⁹ “The Belfast Agreement: An Agreement Reached at the Multi-Party Talks on Northern Ireland” (Belfast, April 10, 1998), 20.

⁷²⁰ Charlie Edwards, “Russia’s Hybrid War in Europe Enters a Dangerous New Phase,” IISS, November 26, 2024, <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2024/11/russias-hybrid-war-in-europe-enters-a-dangerous-new-phase/>.

⁷²¹ Matus Halas, “Proving a Negative: Why Deterrence Does Not Work in the Baltics,” *European Security* 28, no. 4 (2019): 431–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2019.1637855>; Piotr Szymański, “The Baltic States’ Territorial Defence Forces in the Face of Hybrid Threats,” *Commentary* (OSW Centre for Eastern Studies, March 19, 2015).

⁷²² Oscar Jonsson, “The Evolution of Russian Hybrid Warfare: EU/NATO,” CEPA, January 29, 2021, <https://cepa.org/the-evolution-of-russian-hybrid-warfare-eu-nato/>; Alina Polyakova and Mathieu Boulègue, “The Evolution of Hybrid Warfare: Conclusion,” CEPA: The Evolution of Russian Hybrid Warfare: Conclusion, January 29, 2021, <https://cepa.org/the-evolution-of-hybrid-warfare-conclusion/>.

timing and rate at which CAC deteriorated. This interrelationship is worth looking at in greater detail, especially if it has been replicated in other adversarial relationships.

The execution of hybrid warfare likely undermines trust between rivals. Hybrid warfare may function under the umbrella of plausible deniability, but its targets can usually identify the perpetrators with high confidence. Thus, do hybrid warfare campaigns undermine the trusting, cooperative relationships upon which CAC agreements are founded to such an extent that they are either stressed or fail altogether? Hybrid warfare is largely absent in discussions on CAC, but events in Ukraine in the past decade suggest the value of researching the issue further.

The Belfast Agreement was a combined interstate and intrastate agreement – putting it in a category of its own within this dissertation’s CAC agreement dataset. But the “Troubles” are hardly the only ethnicity-motivated intrastate or transnational conflict in Europe since 1918 or more broadly globally. Within Europe, to name a few, there have been conflicts at some level involving Basques (Spain), Corsicans (France), and ethnic Albanians (Yugoslavia). Outside of Europe, there have been many; one of which, the Israel-Palestine conflict, is worth noting because of the close intersection between insurgency and state rivalries. Future studies might attempt to identify when there has been an intersection between state rivalries, intrastate conflict, and interstate arms control agreements.

Lastly, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict – like many major conflicts – offers new insights about and introduces new methods of warfare. From an arms control perspective, there are several areas that require further study. First, TLE limitations in any agreement (such as the CFE Treaty) assume that it is difficult to efficiently restore into operation obsolete weapons, and not worth the effort because of their obsolescence. However, Russia reportedly refit main battle tanks in deep storage, including museum pieces, to fight in Ukraine.⁷²³ On the one hand, states might resist having such inoperable weapon systems counted against treaty limits; but on the other, the conflict demonstrates that such weapon systems count for more than nothing. Russia and Ukraine have converted non-weapon systems such as civilian or unarmed aircraft into uninhabited combat systems.⁷²⁴ The ease of which the conversion from non-weaponized to

⁷²³ Vasco Cotovio, Clare Sebastian, and Martin Bourke, “Russia Is Sending Museum Pieces into War, but Experts Say They May Still Be Effective,” CNN, May 8, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/08/europe/russia-t-55-tanks-ukraine-intl-cmd/index.html>; Mark Trevelyan and Greg Torode, “Russia Refits Old Tanks after Losing 3,000 in Ukraine - Research Centre,” *Reuters*, February 13, 2024, sec. Europe, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-relying-old-stocks-after-losing-3000-tanks-ukraine-leading-military-2024-02-13/>.

⁷²⁴ “Ukraine Converted Light Aircraft Into Bomber Drones With a 600-Km Combat Radius For Attacks on Russia | Defense Express,” *Defense Express*, April 14, 2025, https://en.defence-ua.com/weapon_and_tech/ukraine Converted_light_aircraft_into_bomber_drones_with_a_600_km_combat_radius_for_attacks_on_russia-14176.html.

weaponized (especially as a one-way explosive laden vehicle) can be made, especially as vehicles increasingly assume remote and autonomous capabilities, may establish such vehicles as dual-use systems. However, including and/or counting these in any CAC agreement poses many challenges. Not only might a future study assess how new weapon systems being used in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict might impact future CAC agreements, a study might also analyze how new and emerging weapon systems in conflicts influenced subsequent CAC agreements.

Give Peace a Chance

Adversarial CAC is important as a manifestation of interstate rivalries, a barometer of peace and conflict, an extension of IR theory, and as an expression of military technology, strategies, and theories. CAC offers what many seek – albeit on their own terms: peace in their time. The history of CAC since the end of World War One has been a quest for peace. States have either sought to stabilize their military balances, remove the likelihood of successful surprise attacks, and/or remove areas of potential military dispute through CAC. Their efforts sometimes failed quickly, were sometimes successful for a decade or so, or endured decades and survive to this day. CAC, of course, is not the single cause of war, nor its single solution. CAC is unlikely to resolve rivalries in which one state or several are determined to engage in conflict for ideological or other reasons no matter what the outcome to themselves. Yet CAC can help turn rivals into allies, with one of the best examples predating World War One when the UK and France put aside their colonial differences through the Entente Cordiale, which placed restrictions on fortifying parts of North Africa, setting them up for an alliance that has lasted over 100 years after several hundred years of rivalry and conflict.⁷²⁵

There have been at least three attempts to leash the dogs of war in Europe, if not worldwide, through the establishment of global institutions and governance: the League of Nations,⁷²⁶ the UN, and the OSCE.⁷²⁷ This may suggest that even if conflict fails to cease, the

⁷²⁵ Douglas Johnson, Richard Mayne, and Robert Tombs, *Cross Channel Currents : 100 Years of the Entente Cordiale* (London: Routledge, 2004); Mazarr et al., *Stabilizing Great-Power Rivalries*, 2021, 48.

⁷²⁶ Webster, “The League of Nations, Disarmament and Internationalism.”

⁷²⁷ Edwin Bakker, “Editorial: Rethinking European Security, Principles & Practice,” *Security and Human Rights* 21, no. 1 (2010): 1–4, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187502310791306089>; Jelena Cupać, “Why the OSCE’s Forum Function Matters,” in *OSCE Insights 2022*, ed. Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, 2023), 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748933625-07>; Engvall, *OSCE and Military Confidence- Building in Conflicts*; Anastasia Prokhorova, *Reducing Military Risks through OSCE Instruments: Revisiting the OSCE Institutional*

desire to extinguish it through international institutions, multilateral agreements, and cooperative security persists and will likely continue to do so.

Today, a tragic and destructive war rages in Ukraine – the result in part of failed CAC regimes. How CAC history and experiences might apply to the situation in Ukraine is more complicated. The pro-Ukraine coalition is not at war with Russia, and at the time of this writing seems to go to great lengths to avoid a direct confrontation.⁷²⁸ Thus, a post-war CAC agreement template would not entirely apply. At the same time, a peace-time approach to CAC would be inappropriate because there is a conflict in Europe which is not only a contest of military power but may also reveal important insights about what military capabilities should be controlled. Thus, a post-Russo-Ukraine War CAC agreement may need to break new ground fusing the peace and post-conflict approaches, but at the same time be rooted in the history of CAC agreements in Europe. The EU Commission is likely to become an important player in future Europe-wide CAC negotiations and agreements, although it may struggle to deal with its diverse membership's security policies and values.⁷²⁹

Despite uncertainties about how the Russo-Ukraine War might end and what a post-conflict CAC regime(s) might look like due to geopolitical complexities, most conflicts in Europe since 1918 ended with a CAC agreement so it is not unreasonable to expect that a CAC agreement will accompany the end of the Russo-Ukraine War.⁷³⁰ This thesis has attempted to offer insights, an analytical framework, and present CAC agreements as examples of how to craft the CAC aspects of a post-war agreement. Crafting an enduring and successful agreement which will need to take into consideration all sides' interests – above all their perceptions of the status quo, deterrence, the security dilemma, and the ODB – will not be easy. If Russia is decisively defeated, the victors may be tempted to disarm the vanquished by the imposition of rigid and strict CAC limits. This approach, however, may offer short-term gains but see a repeat of Moscow's dissatisfaction with the military balance that began in the early 2000's and was

Process and Capacities, 15 (Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), 2021); Fred Tanner, "The OSCE and Peacekeeping: Track Record and Outlook," in *OSCE Insights 2021*, ed. Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, 2021), 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748911456-04>.

⁷²⁸ Raphael S. Cohen and Gian Gentile, "Biden's Catch-22 in Ukraine," *RAND Commentary* (blog), May 20, 2024, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/05/bidens-catch-22-in-ukraine.html>; Brett Samuels, "Biden: Direct Conflict between NATO and Russia Would Be 'World War III,'" Text, *The Hill* (blog), March 11, 2022, <https://thehill.com/policy/international/597842-biden-direct-conflict-between-nato-and-russia-would-be-world-war-iii/>.

⁷²⁹ Michal Onderco and Clara Portela, "External Drivers of EU Differentiated Cooperation: How Change in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime Affects Member States Alignment," *Contemporary Security Policy* 44, no. 1 (2023): 150–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2146336>.

⁷³⁰ Lippert, "Conventional Arms Control and Ending the Russo-Ukrainian War."

finally manifested in the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Yet again, history suggests that the imposition of discriminatory CAC can be successful, with the post-World War Two agreements standing as a banner example.

The history of CAC agreements can provide valuable insights not just into International Relations theory and diplomatic history, but also for future CAC agreements. How CAC agreements have been conceived, negotiated and concluded, and implemented; and their successes and failures can both provide lessons and insights and offer models and frameworks for future approaches.

CAC agreements in effect today may be helping maintain peace in Europe. The Montreux Convention may be limiting opportunities for escalatory behavior and incidents at sea because Türkiye has prohibited NATO members – and Russia and Ukraine – from moving naval vessels through the Turkish Straits. The Balkans sub-regional arms control agreement – a CFE Treaty for the southeast Balkan states – may be helping retain stability and preventing an arms race between Serbia and its NATO/EU neighbors. It is not possible to know for sure how much CAC agreements in effect contribute to the maintenance of peace because we cannot conduct an experiment to see what would happen if these agreements were to suddenly end (and compare them with their maintenance in the same time period). Pessimistic views of CAC agreements discount those agreements which have been successful likely because success is much more difficult to observe than failure.

This dissertation has attempted to emphasize that CAC agreements serve to stabilize rivalries in times of peace, conflict, or post-conflict. Whenever and wherever states find themselves in a rivalry, there is a place for CAC agreements. This is especially true now in the midst of a combination of a full-scale war conjoined with a full-scale, Europe-wide dyadic, great power rivalry. Yet with great power rivalries may come great power CAC agreements.

There is a saying, inaccurately attributed to Albert Einstein, that insanity is attempting the same thing repeatedly despite failure. But for CAC, a repeated attempt to arrive at a stable military balance between NATO and Russia is not insane for several reasons. First, the circumstances under which the agreements are negotiated or made change with each attempt. This conflict may offer new information about relative power and resolve which may contribute to bringing bargaining positions closer. And second, and perhaps most importantly, the Russo-Ukraine War is a reminder of how costly a large-scale war in Europe can be for all concerned. It is not insane to attempt to establish a new CAC agreement because it is not insane to search for a stable peace.