

the CSO, there was a good deal of cross-fertilization between the arms control and conflict prevention processes. The patterns of interaction and openness established in the arms control negotiations were usefully exploited in the development of conflict management mechanisms.

A Strong Voice

*although not initially
universally accepted*

Canada was not the first or only state to put forward many of these ideas. For example, by spring 1990, there was little doubt that the CSCE would be institutionalized, that it would have a conflict prevention centre, and that regular high-level political meetings would provide the guiding hand in conflict management. The withering of Cold War structures and proliferation of conflicts post-Paris made the CSCE a more palatable choice for response. Germany, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Austria, the Netherlands, Norway, Italy -- all worked to advance the CSCE's conflict prevention and management capability; even the US and Russia helped to keep the human dimension alive. Canada's contribution often consisted of lending support to others' initiatives or of working within informal coalitions of states, such as the CPC "maximalists" and the "Friends of Peacekeeping." However, in such debates and coalitions, Canada frequently exercised an influence disproportionate to its size. The Canadian ability to get its ideas across was due to the priority placed on the CSCE in Canada's European policy, which led to the development of a series of CSCE "strategy and action" documents by an energetic CSCE division in the Department of External Affairs, documents that were in turn condensed into working papers and fed into the CSCE at key junctures by a highly competent Canadian delegation in Vienna. Canada's skill lay in having thought enough about the CSCE and how Canada wanted it to develop such that when others were ready to move in a certain direction, Canada could insert a well-developed proposal for doing so. In an important sense, Canada was in the right place at the right time with the right ideas -- and was prepared to follow through.

Just as the structures created by the Paris Charter have been substantially amended since then, so have Canadian ideas been pragmatically flexible. About the time of the Helsinki FUM, Canada dropped the idea of crisis panels -- a staple of earlier Canadian papers -- after recognizing that compulsory mechanisms would continue to be non-starters. The original proposal had to some extent been a device for ensuring the CSCE would be quickly engaged in a crisis situation, an idea Canada continued to pursue by supporting the post of High Commissioner on National Minorities and advocating the establishment of the Vienna Group. However, even as Canadian ideas have evolved with a view to making the CSCE more effective, Canada has retained its bottom line of comprehensive mandate, transatlantic dimension, central role in conflict prevention and management, limited bureaucracy, and implementation of commitments. If one compares Canada's 1990 proposals with what the CSCE is today, there is a considerable degree of overlap. Canada deserves credit for achieving, by no means single-handedly, many of its objectives. Were these objectives worth achieving?