

3. CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE

BACKGROUND

On 19 November 1990 in Paris, twenty European states along with Canada and the US signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). The Treaty places limits on five categories of conventional weapons in Europe. It is a treaty of historic importance as it provides the first ever limits on the large numbers of weapons deployed by NATO and the Warsaw Pact along the East-West dividing line between the two alliances in Europe. It is also symbolic of the end to a long period of fear and mistrust between the two alliances.

Negotiations on the Treaty began on 9 March 1989 and culminated just prior to the signing of the Treaty in November. This remarkably short negotiation time reflects the degree of political change that occurred in Europe during that same period. Changes in Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev led to new independence and new governments in most member states of the Warsaw Pact and, on 3 October 1990, East and West Germany united. With these changes came announcements of ongoing and planned withdrawals of Soviet forces and equipment from Eastern European countries. Negotiations on the CFE Treaty, therefore, worked to codify changes already in progress, as well as to establish new limits.

However, the negotiations also drew on the experience of the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks which began in 1973 and continued without success until February 1989. The MBFR talks also sought to place limits on conventional forces but in a more limited geographical zone comprising East and West Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia and Poland. The talks were plagued by a lack of political will and problems created by a fundamental difference in the approach of the two sides (see *The Guide 1986, 1987, 1988*).

The CFE Treaty consists of twenty-three articles along with eight protocols. The Treaty seeks not just to establish limits on certain categories of equipment and arms, but by doing so to reduce the capability for surprise attacks or offensive military action.

Under Article IV of the Treaty, each side is bound to an upper limit of armaments as follows:

Tanks	20,000
Artillery.	20,000
Armoured combat vehicles	30,000
Aircraft	6,800
Helicopters	2,000