

In areas of regional conflict outside of Europe, notably in the Middle East, the great powers will be involved in some form in response to appeals for help from the contesting parties. Such appeals could continue to have serious implications in their divisive impact on relations between the big powers. The problem of how to deal with such differences still has to be resolved and both sides will have to engage in serious efforts to whittle away at these areas of non-confidence. Whether or not new rules of intervention in these conflicts can be negotiated is uncertain. As one possible direction, Soviet interest in a revitalized Security Council is reflected in their proposals for UN observation posts in areas of regional conflict. This may indicate that the USSR would be prepared to envisage a further enlargement of the Security Council's role in such situations. As for the Soviet Union's distant allies, Cuba and Vietnam, they will probably be left to their respective fates unless they are openly attacked. In the light of the USSR's own economic difficulties, they will have to survive on much reduced levels of Soviet assistance.

For the future of East-West relations, overcoming long-standing mistrust will be highly desirable. The elimination or substantial reduction of the present posture of military confrontation in Europe could help greatly to promote this objective, and especially in this crucially strategic area for Soviet national security interests, it would serve to consolidate the favourable external environment that Gorbachev considers so necessary to concentration on reforms and the containment of political instability in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. Thus in his concept of a "common European house," Gorbachev gives the highest priority to arms reductions that will preclude future military confrontation.

As Gorbachev and his advisors have put it, progress towards this "common European house" would be facilitated by the steady development of all forms of cooperation among the European countries, the United States and Canada, conducted, as in the case of arms reductions, in conformity with the principles and practices of the Helsinki process. In advancing his ideas on this theme during his European visits last summer, Gorbachev urged all countries, East and West, in the interests of combining peaceful change with stability, to observe two further principles that he had earlier put