

The modernization of Soviet conventional forces in the 1970s aggravated the geostrategic asymmetry.⁴⁸ The increased firepower and mobility made NATO forces more dependent on reinforcements in time of crisis. Because of the geographical factor NATO statements have identified the capability for the initiation of large-scale offensive action as the major threat to stability.⁴⁹ Thus, at the NATO Summit in March 1988, the geographical factor had a strong impact on Western objectives:

"We shall propose provisions dealing with stationed forces, taking account of the weight of forward deployed Soviet conventional forces; we shall also take into consideration capabilities for force generation and reinforcement."⁵⁰

It seems therefore that an important element in a new treaty should be stabilizing measures designed to control and constrain mobilization.

It also follows that a treaty should address the question of regional balances. While the focus is likely to be on Central Europe where the concentration of forces is greatest, provisions are required to redress disparities in the North and South. Limitations throughout the area of application are equally necessary in order to preclude the circumvention of these provisions by simply shifting forces from the centre to the flanks.

For Canada, the geographical factor has always been important. The Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence on Security and Disarmament in 1982 noted that geographic and strategic asymmetries affect the types of forces deployed and the armaments which have to be taken into account in arms control and disarmament negotiations. It continued: "the two halves of the Atlantic Alliance are linked by an ocean and therefore heavily dependent on maritime forces, whereas the Warsaw Pact comprises a unified group of states in a single land mass. This affects the MBFR negotiations, for example, because of differences in reinforcement capabilities to

⁴⁸ Lothar Ruehl, MBFR: Lessons and Problems, Adelphi Papers 176, London: IISS, 1982, p. 3.

⁴⁹ "Conventional Arms Control: The Way Ahead," 2 March 1988 paragraphs 1 and 15; Statement issued at the NATO Ministerial Meeting 8 December 1988, paragraph 4.

⁵⁰ "Conventional Arms Control: The Way Ahead," 2 March 1988, paragraph 15.