

PART I THE WORLD BEFORE US

The International Situation

Canadian defence planners face a rapidly changing world. The old Cold War is now over, but there are continuing concerns about the future of the Soviet Union, the security situation in Europe, global peace and order, and regional and local conflicts in the Third World.

The Soviet Union is now in the throes of a major political crisis. Instead of a feared superpower holding sway over most of the Eurasian land mass and engaged in a seemingly endless competition for power and influence with the Western democracies, the USSR has increasingly withdrawn into itself and become preoccupied with domestic problems. Its armies have pulled out of Afghanistan and continue to be withdrawn from Central Europe, and its people and government are beset by internal political, constitutional, economic, ethnic, environmental and other difficulties. Even the continued existence of the Soviet state is no longer certain, as President Gorbachev grapples with secessionist pressures from one end of the country to another. There are fears of break-up, civil war, a return to hardline Communism, or even a military coup d'état.

After half a decade of reformist effort, there was a new hardening in Soviet domestic and foreign policies during 1991. There were crack-downs in the Baltic states, Armenia and elsewhere, and the government put relations with the West at some risk by foot-dragging on conventional arms control. It jeopardized ratification of the treaty on the reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe -- CFE I, signed at the Paris Summit in November 1990 -- by withdrawing thousands of tanks from the reduction zone (rather than preparing them for destruction), by providing inadequate data on equipment holdings, and by attempting to redesignate three army divisions and their equipment as exempt naval divisions rather than countable army ones. At present, the Soviet Union seems to be at a new turning point in its history, poised between retrenchment and the lure of