

THE PERIOD OF RETRENCHMENT 1980-1982

The period of retrenchment from the reformist ideals of the UNSSOD I period coincided with, and was in large measure instigated by, the new cold war in Soviet-American relations. The rather bleak atmosphere in the CD at this time was itself indicative of the fact that the multilateral environment could not escape the vicissitudes of superpower bilateral relations, much less become a part of a grand alternative to the existing global military order. The reformation of the CD and the demise of the co-chairmanship, heavy-handed though it had been at times in its treatment of the Geneva forum, did not confer upon the CD an autonomy from superpower arms control bilateralism.

The immediate and apparent cause of the new Cold War was the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Aside from the impetus given to Soviet and American military programmes, the principal effect of the post-Afghanistan chill in the East-West relationship was to be felt in the superpower arms control dialogues. The important Soviet-American discussions over an ASAT convention and a CTB accord were eventually adjourned, and the Carter administration in the United States removed from Senate consideration the ratification of the 1979 SALT II agreement. These developments clearly seemed to signify that the United States and the Soviet Union had no more interest in real progress in arms control than they had had during the intense Cold War years of the 1950s.

Yet, from the standpoint of both the bilateral and multilateral approaches to arms control, there were important differences between the two cold wars. First, not all of the dilemmas of arms control during the early 1980s could be attributed to Soviet-American political antagonisms. Cold war politics certainly exacerbated those dilemmas, but it must be remembered that the arms control agenda of the new cold war period comprised, in significant measure, the more intractable issues left unresolved by the arms controllers of the 1970s. The list included, inter alia, counterforce and theatre nuclear technologies, a CTB and CW convention, an ASAT accord, verifiable confidence-building measures (CBMs), an MBFR accord for central Europe, and a truly stable nuclear