

ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

For some time arms control has been both the focus and the barometer of East-West relations. The superpower agreement on INF is particularly significant, both as an achievement in itself and as a precedent of great symbolic value. Although marginal in strategic terms (5 per cent of total warheads), it is notable in three important respects. It is the first arms control agreement which actually reduces the weapons inventory and, in the process, gets rid of an entire class of weapons (land-based ballistic and cruise missiles in the 500-5500 km-range band). It provides for a remarkably intrusive verification system which may well be a precedent for future agreements. And it deals with the problem of asymmetry for the first time.

The INF Treaty does not modify NATO's deterrent strategy. As mentioned above in the section on NATO, however, it could sow fears in the Alliance of a gradual denuclearization of Europe and with it of "decoupling" Western Europe from the United States. Thus, while there is the prospect of negotiating more constructively with the East on a wider range of security issues than before, there are at the same time concerns that the level of risk for the European allies may have increased. There is ready acknowledgement that reductions in nuclear weapons could serve the security interests of all nations if the threat of non-nuclear aggression is also reduced, in part by conventional arms reductions. But there are few signs that the latter requirement will be easily met.

The INF Treaty demonstrated that the way to mutually advantageous, negotiated solutions to security problems lies through resolve to maintain strong defences. It remains to be