

time the foreign ministers opened the Stockholm meeting in January 1984, to the time of the Reykjavik meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in October 1986. It responded to a particular rhythm of political events like the death of the Soviet "caretaker" leaders and the re-election of President Reagan for a second term of office. With the takeover by a new leader and with the US elections later that year, not much change could have been expected in formal Eastern positions. Publicly the old Soviet line was signalled by the boycott of the US-hosted Summer Olympics in April. At the conference, however, the dialogue, which continued in plenary sessions, in corridors and in the capitals, served to broaden mutual understanding.

June 1984 witnessed an important political signal by the West when President Reagan stated in Dublin that the US would be ready to discuss the Soviet Union's interest in the principle of non-use of force if the Soviet Union would negotiate practical measures to give concrete effect to that principle. It was not until the end of 1984 that this initiative was crowned with an agreement on a working structure that enabled a more detailed exchange of views. Although agreement on the working structure at first glance seemed to be a merely procedural matter, it had the seeds of substance in it. It divided the proposals into two working groups, one on notification and observation, and the second, on all other proposals that had been tabled. This arrangement made it possible to assess whether or not proposals conformed to the mandate, and to provide a filtering process which would determine what proposals ultimately could achieve consensus. The filtering process lasted throughout most of 1985.

External political events in 1985 again influenced progress at Stockholm; principal among them were the resumption of nuclear talks between the US and the USSR at Geneva and the accession to power of a new-style Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. The shooting of a US Military Mission Liaison officer in the German Democratic Republic, however, reminded the conference of the precarious nature of confidence-building and the problems which would have to be solved on verification. Observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, and importantly, the US-USSR Geneva Summit statement which committed both countries to seek a successful conclusion to Stockholm, were other events which affected the dynamics of the conference.

With the settlement of the leadership succession at the Kremlin and the recommencement of Geneva talks, the main features of the conference began to become clear. Although a considerable gap remained between the details of NATO and WTO proposals, the latter were important not so much for what they said, but for what they omitted to mention. WTO references to most declaratory proposals, particularly nuclear issues,

became muted, and non-use of force took centre stage. The meeting settled down to an exchange of ideas and precise details about the substance of material which would ultimately become a concluding document.

The West's contribution to the filtering process was the introduction of six working papers, one for each of the NATO-proposed measures (exchange of information, annual forecasts, notification of military activities, observation, verification and communication). A compilation of the six papers emphasized that the measures formed part of a coherent whole. The East introduced five working documents: a draft treaty on non-use of force; limitation of military manoeuvres to 40,000 troops, notification of major manoeuvres and transfers of land, naval and air forces respectively (at thresholds of 20,000 troops; 30 combat ships with 100 aircraft; and 200 aircraft independently). The WTO proposals lacked precision on observation and verification. Late in the year, the NNA, after considerable internal discussion, tabled a document elaborating their proposals. These showed that while seven of the NNA proposals addressed areas also considered by the West, the approach to information, calendars, notification, observation and verification differed in detail. For example, two important differences were that information was not considered a separate proposal and verification appeared only to be a function of observation. By mid 1985, however, it was possible to identify six areas for focussed discussion: thresholds and unit of account for notified activities; effective use of observers; verification; information exchange; non-use of force; and constraints.

The differences between East and West on all discussion areas were considerable. The East rejected the West's proposals on structural threshold\*, information exchange, and "out-of-garrison"<sup>18</sup> activity, minimized the observer requirement and limited verification to national technical means (NTMs) and consultation. The West rejected the constraint proposal, that is, the limitation of 40,000 troops, on grounds that it had no effect on the WTO, while it would affect NATO's exercise practice. The NNA maintained their traditional role of evenhandedness, but clearly their ideas of strengthening confidence and security through cooperation were closer to that of the West, particularly on such issues as notification and observation.

Following the midsummer break and bilateral East-West consultations, the conference was ready for the next step of establishing an informal work structure with selected NNA representatives as moderators (co-ordinators). Just before the Geneva Summit, an

\* Unit of notification based on a standard ground force organization such as a division. An organized unit is more significant militarily than an aggregation of troops of the same size. Moreover, verification requirements are simpler and less intrusive.