

INTRODUCTION

The working group first met in the autumn of 1988 to discuss possible ways of analyzing the remarkable changes in Soviet domestic and foreign policies initiated by President Gorbachev, and their impact on East-West relations over the next five to ten years.

The group concurred in the view, widely held at the time, that the Soviet policies, if successfully implemented, would transform profoundly the character and substance of the East-West relationship. At the same time, the group concluded that the obstacles to be overcome by President Gorbachev's policies were of such a magnitude, and their success so uncertain, that any single or unilateral forecast of the course of events would be misleading and quite possibly wrong. For this reason, the group chose to put forward several plausible scenarios of future developments in the USSR, and to consider their implications for future East-West relations and for Western policies. The intention originally had been to complete this examination in the autumn of 1989. By that time, however, the group's activities were overtaken by the unexpectedly rapid pace of political change in Eastern Europe. The members of the group decided, in consequence, to delay the completion of its work in order to take into account the significance of these changes. The group's work was based solely on material publicly available, and covers events up to 15 April 1990.

The report deals with relations between an "East" comprising the Soviet Union and the other six countries of the Warsaw Pact, and a "West" comprising the United States of America, Canada and the fourteen European members of NATO. This is not intended to discount the part which other countries play in East-West relations. It does, however, reflect the view that the key East-West issues arose from, and ultimately can only be settled with reference to, the division of Europe.

Relations between East and West, although they have been in some important respects distinct, must be considered in a broader context. Especially in the more recent past, East-West relations have both influenced and in turn been influenced by political,