



M-113 armoured personnel carriers of the Royal 22nd Regiment take part in NATO manoeuvres in southern Germany. This type of equipment is limited under the terms of the CFE Treaty.

Canadian Forces photo by Sgt. Rick Sanschagrin

this new arrangement might take has been, and remains, the subject of considerable debate. Throughout the past year, however, it became clear that before new frameworks could be fully defined, the old order based on military confrontation between two opposing blocks had to be buried. When fully implemented, the CFE Treaty will achieve that goal.

Anyone who ventures to read the Treaty text will rapidly be immersed in a

framework for the negotiation — the CFE mandate — had lasted 23 months, from February 1987 to January 1989. In addition, the experience of 16 years of Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks had bred scepticism about Soviet motives and intentions, as well as doubts that Moscow was capable of taking decisions regarding force parity and verification that were required to secure agreement. Even the most sanguine among western negotiators expected that it would be two or three years before minimum results were forthcoming.

The negotiation was scarcely under way, however, before that assessment demanded revision. The comprehensive proposal tabled by Canada on behalf of NATO members on March 9, 1989 introduced, besides overall and regional limits, two measures aimed primarily at the USSR: a so-called "sufficiency rule" designed to limit the size of the armed forces that any one state could maintain within the area of application; and a ceiling on

forces stationed outside of a state's territory. The goal was to lower the level of confrontation in central Europe by forcing some redeployment of forces to the rear, and by constraining the USSR's ability to mobilize massive quantities of additional forces on its own territory for an attack on the West.

While essential to Western security, these two proposals were viewed as show-stoppers: measures which, on past experience, the Soviet leadership could not easily accept. When these were in fact accepted by the USSR just two months later, the West was provided with the most striking evidence available that CFE was to be a serious negotiation with realistic prospects of an early agreement. Despite this evidence, the call by NATO Heads of Government at the Brussels Summit in May 1989 for the conclusion of a treaty in 1990 appeared overly optimistic.

Events in late 1989 led to a virtual collapse of the WTO and essentially removed the threat of surprise attack from the East. As far as the West was concerned, this fulfilled one key objective of the CFE mandate. At the same time, these developments seriously complicated the negotiation. NATO's opening proposal had been based on the concept of a collective responsibility for collective ceilings and thresholds and, by implication, on the continued existence of two military alliances. It was feared that the effective dissolution of one of the alliances could potentially upset the entire framework of the negotiation. Fortunately, the new governments of Eastern Europe saw their long-term security interests served by continued cooperation with one another and the Soviet Union, at least for the purpose of implementing a treaty.

The CFE Treaty is composed of four elements: limitations and the means of achieving them; an exchange of information; verification; and follow-up. The following is a brief assessment of each element.

Limitations

The Treaty establishes ceilings, both Europe-wide and regional, for five categories of armaments. Overall ceilings per side are: battle tanks — 20,000;

Treaty fulfils objectives of the CFE mandate.

highly complex and detailed document, employing arcane language and a plethora of cross-references. Despite this appearance of impenetrability, the Treaty fulfils the objectives of the CFE mandate.

That the CFE negotiation could be concluded so rapidly was not apparent when it began in March 1989, nor believed possible even in early 1990. After all, negotiations to establish a