

Pact to achieve greater stability and security in Europe at lower levels of conventional forces. These latter talks may replace the MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks).

The greater flexibility of the USSR under Gorbachev may break the deadlock and produce some results. This would be highly desirable, since talk is already heard about increasing conventional strength in Europe in view of the INF treaty. Balance must be kept between East and West, but it would be much preferable to do so at lower rather than higher levels; this would not only reduce tensions and thus dangers, but also save much-needed resources.

Regarding the conventional arms trade, which feeds the many local wars and troubled areas, bolsters local dictators and further impoverishes already poor countries, old proposals for an arms trade register have been repeated, in the UN and elsewhere. No progress has been made on acceptance. Even if accepted, such proposals would clearly be insufficient; real control of the arms trade would have to follow the disclosure of information. But it seems that, in the present world climate of tension, even the modest preliminaries are unacceptable. Perhaps efforts at conflict resolution in troubled areas will have to precede arms control efforts, as far as the willingness of the arms buyers is concerned. But the arms suppliers have responsibilities too--concerted action by suppliers (a "conventional arms suppliers club") might still be able to control the arms trade, before too many countries start manufacturing their own weapons ("conventional proliferation"). Many are already doing so, and becoming less dependent on outside suppliers. In any case, hopes for supplier cooperation are also unfulfilled, as the major powers prefer to compete for client-state allegiance, as well as for commercial gains.