

By agreement the 35 countries participating in the CSCE process do so as individual sovereign states. In practice, however, there is a tendency for all states to group themselves around parent organizations representing NATO, the WTO and the NNA. Some, like the Holy See do not readily fit into any category and tend to act by themselves.

The CSCE was negotiated during the heyday of détente and marked the beginning of a new phase in East-West relations. It culminated in the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. The document represented an East-West compromise on a number of core political issues governing international relations: principles guiding relations between states and security (Basket I); provisions on commerce, industrial cooperation, science and technology (Basket II); humanitarian cooperation (Basket III) and questions relating to security and cooperation in the Mediterranean. Not surprisingly, the document contains its share of ambiguities and circumspect language.¹² The Helsinki agreement also provided for periodic follow-up meetings. Meetings have been held at Belgrade, Madrid and presently (mid 1987) are in session in Vienna. In an attempt to improve the modest CBMs agreed in Basket I at Helsinki, the Madrid follow-up meeting mandated a conference on CSBMs to be held in Stockholm.

The only obligatory Helsinki CBM was to notify manoeuvres exceeding 25,000 troops, 21 days in advance. All other CBMs such as the invitation of observers and other notification requirements were voluntary. Moreover, participant states whose territory extended beyond Europe (the USSR and Turkey) were exempt from all CBMs 250 kilometres beyond their frontiers.¹³

As all parts of the Helsinki document are interrelated, none is deemed more important than another. The Stockholm Document has no political life of its own but remains part of the overall CSCE process. Necessarily, the best measure of the usefulness of the CSCE process will remain the willingness of participant sovereign states, which have accepted the CSCE obligations on a politically binding (not legal) basis, to implement what they have agreed to do.

THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN

Unlike the propitious timing of the Helsinki meeting, the Stockholm Conference opened in January 1984, a time when tensions had greatly increased in East-West political relations. A number of factors contributed to this situation: Soviet SS-20 ballistic missile deployments in Europe (1977); the signing and the US non-ratification of the Salt II Treaty (1979); the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan (1979); the "Dual-track Decision" by NATO on long-range theatre nuclear forces, partly to counter SS-20

deployments (1979); the unnotified Soviet exercises around Poland (1980-81), seen by many as contrary to Helsinki obligations; martial law in Poland (1981); President Reagan's announcement on the strategic defence initiative (1983); the downing of a Korean airliner by a Soviet MiG (1983); the Soviet walk-out from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) talks and suspension of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) following NATO deployment of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles (1983); and failure to agree to a date for the next session of MBFR talks. By the end of 1983 almost all formal arms control contacts between East and West had been severed. Only one contact survived: the consensus of 35 CSCE states reached at Madrid in 1983 to open the CCSBMDE on 17 January 1984 in Stockholm.

As the only game in town at the time, Stockholm initially became a venue for a much wider range of East-West political issues than the negotiation of CSBMs. This was both an advantage and a disadvantage for the Stockholm negotiations because progress became linked to events, external to the conference, which could either lead to a substantive success or doom it to failure. In the event, the multilateral nature of the CSCE process provided both a helpful forum and a venue for informal contacts on security issues other than CSBMs. Clearly progress in Stockholm depended on a wider measure of political confidence-building such as the return to the negotiating table of bilateral and 'bloc-to-bloc' discussions. As the bilateral contacts and encouragement from all participant states were in the end crowned with success, it may be said that Stockholm provided a useful starting point for other negotiations as well.

THE POLITICAL INCENTIVES FOR AGREEMENT

The conference opened at the Foreign Ministers' level and by doing so underlined the importance of high-level political dialogue. It also provided the means for bilateral, ministerial level contacts which resulted in the resumption of MBFR in March 1984 and the Geneva nuclear and space talks a year later. Moreover, the Soviet Union was interested in participating at Stockholm in a conference which essentially posed no security risk, and allowed them to pursue a long held political desire to create "a system of collective security" to encompass the whole of Europe.¹⁴

The relationship between Stockholm and other arms control fora ensured that progress at the conference would be influenced by the political climate of super-power relations. Examination of the conference progress seems to confirm this assessment and it is possible to discern in the conference a rhythm ranging from the "dialogue of the deaf" (1984), through the