

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, the first conclusion is that Canadian politico-military objectives in negotiations on conventional forces have not changed over the past twenty years. Like those of other western allies they are: to reduce military confrontation; and to maintain and enhance stability at lower levels of forces.¹¹¹ Whereas in MBFR, the attempt was made to realize these objectives primarily through reductions in manpower, today it is through reductions focusing mainly on armaments. The asymmetries involved are greater. Though the geographic area of application is larger today, Central Europe remains the key region, particularly for an initial agreement.

A major difference between 1973 and 1989 is that within these general objectives there is a more precise formulation for the Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe than there was for MBFR. Both in the mandate and in NATO statements, the focus of negotiations is spelled out: to eliminate the capability for launching surprise attack and for initiating large-scale offensive action.

A second conclusion is that an initial treaty should be just that: a first step to be followed by the negotiation of further agreements which would include not only further reduction of the military confrontation, but the means of transition to a regime replacing the existing confrontation. The objective is to ensure that treaties on conventional forces in Europe contribute to the achievement of long-term security.

It will, therefore, remain important to assist, through the talks on conventional forces, in the management of East-West relations, but not in the sense in which the term has sometimes been perceived in the past, of retention of military confrontation. "Managing" in the period ahead should involve the more challenging tasks of designing an institutional framework for the implementation of agreements and of devising complex transitional arrangements including restructuring of forces. These could permit a safe evolution to, in the words of the Harmel Report, "a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe accompanied by appropriate security guarantees."

¹¹¹ Throughout this chapter objectives are underlined for ease of reference.