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THE STOCKHOLM AGREEMENT: AN EXERCISE IN CONFIDENCE BUILDING

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WHAT WAS ACHIEVED AT STOCKHOLM?

For nearly three years, the countries of East and West and the Neutral and non-aligned states (NNA) of Europe negotiated in Stockholm, Sweden, to find practical ways to reduce the risk of military confrontation in Europe through misunderstanding or misperception. The 35-nation¹ Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (CCSBMDE, sometimes shortened to CDE) successfully concluded its work on September 1986², by adopting a set of Confidence- and Security-Building measures (CSBMs) meant to increase openness and predictability in the conduct of military affairs. The measures, which came into effect on 1 January 1987, meet the basic criteria of the conference mandate agreed at the Madrid Follow-up Meeting to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE): "They will be of military significance and politically binding and will be provided with adequate forms of verification which correspond to their content,"³ and apply to the whole of Europe, from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains in the USSR.

The Stockholm Document is the first multilateral East-West security agreement since 1975. Among its achievements are: the lowering of thresholds for notification of military activities to 13,000 troops or 300 tanks, and the extension of advance notification to 42 days; the exchange of annual forecasts of notifiable military activities for the next calendar year; constraining provisions obliging notification of exercises above 40,000 troops two years in advance; mandatory invitation of observers to observe military activities involving 17,000 or more troops; the right of on-site inspection, without a right of refusal, to verify compliance; and a declaratory statement which strengthened the observation of provisions related to the principle of non-use of force embodied in the Final Act.⁴

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

The consensus reached by the 35 participating states to adopt the Stockholm Document raises a number of important questions which can only be partially answered now.

The Stockholm Conference was a political and regional conference with limited security objectives. By its mandate it was meant to address only the employment of conventional ground forces and their supporting air and naval activities. It neither limited force deployments nor reduced those forces by a single tank or soldier. What it did do, however, was to put in place 'security-building' measures by making military behaviour of participant states more open to scrutiny, and thus, make the "intentions" of states more transparent. Such transparency will help to make the threat of the use of force for political intimidation and "surprise attack" more difficult to achieve in the future.

Because the agreement at the Stockholm Conference is very recent, it is not yet possible to conduct a comprehensive analysis of its relative importance in the overall European arms control matrix. What can be said, however, is that it represents a substantial improvement over the confidence-building measures agreed to at Helsinki in 1975.

Since World War II, arms control issues, both conventional and nuclear, have been central to East-West relations in Europe and have included both multilateral and bilateral fora. A deciding factor, no less applicable in Stockholm, affecting results in these negotiations, has been the superpower presence and the state of relations between them at any given time. In Stockholm the desire by all participants to reduce the risk of war encouraged the evolution of sufficient cooperative arrangements between the superpowers to permit consensus.

Arms control achievements in Europe have been difficult to achieve during the past several decades,

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