

THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (CSCE)

History and Evolution

In July 1966, the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact Treat Organization issued the Declaration of Bucharest. This extensive declaration proposed a number of measures for the strengthening of peace and security in Europe, including the convening of a European conference on security and cooperation. This was the starting signal for a protracted dialogue between NATO and the Warsaw Pact in which East and West gradually grew towards each other.

Each bloc sought different aims from the conference. The East was seeking a formal recognition of the post-war territorial status quo and further development of economic relations between East and West in an attempt to bolster its declining economies.

The West was mainly interested in achieving progress in the field of military security and humanitarian issues (including the free flow of individuals, information and ideas between East and West which met with strenuous protests from the East).

A compromise was gradually achieved, but only after watershed events brought about an era of detente in East West relations. In 1969 West-Germany began a new policy of Ostpolitik, which led to the normalization of relations between West Germany and East Germany, the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Then the first SALT agreement between the US and the USSR was concluded in May of 1972.

In light of these favourable developments, both sides agreed to enter into multilateral discussions concerning the preparation of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. At the invitation of the Finnish government, Multilateral Preparatory Talks (MPT) started at Dipoli (near Helsinki) on November 22, 1972. This conference was attended by 32 of the heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Helsinki, including those from Canada, the US and all European states, both East and West, except for Albania.

The MPT established the organizational and procedural aspects of the CSCE as well as the main lines of the substantive issues which were to be discussed at the conference. Despite disagreements on many issues, the Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations were adopted on June 8, 1973. A major part of this document was dedicated to setting the agenda for the Conference, including a detailed enumeration of all the problems which had to be discussed. Hence, this task gave birth to the three main baskets of the CSCE: