

and enabling the West to call the Soviets and the East Europeans to the carpet on human rights issues. But there were two respects in which the pre-1990 CSCE did help prevent conflict. First, the Helsinki Final Act established a very modest set of confidence-building measures involving the obligatory prior notification of major military manoeuvres in border areas and the voluntary invitation of observers to such events. These were improved on in the 1986 Stockholm Document, a major achievement considering that by the time the Stockholm negotiations opened in 1984, all other East-West military negotiations had been suspended. The CSCE CSBMs developed into a network of dialogue and habit of openness that paved the way for the security cooperation that was to follow.

Second, although the Helsinki baskets were the results of bargaining and compromise, they in the end reflected the fact that questions of security, economics and human rights are firmly intertwined. The Helsinki Final Act gave the West a right to enquire into human rights cases in the East and to challenge the failure of states to live up to obligations. Dissidents throughout the Soviet bloc invoked the Final Act's provisions in their campaigns and the West made compliance with those provisions a condition of improved relations. While the crumbling of the East bloc was due ultimately to the social and economic failure of communism and the consequences of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts at reform, it was accelerated by the Helsinki process. Thus the CSCE helped to engender the change from one security situation to another, in which multilateral methods of conflict management could more easily be agreed upon.

From the CSCE's inception, Canada was one of the CSCE's most vocal participants. Canada approached the Helsinki process with hope that it would help to heal Europe's divisions, tempered by realism that hostility was deeply rooted and productive dialogue would take time, patience and commitment. During the CSCE's first fourteen years, Canada, along with the United States, led the West in pressing for Eastern implementation of Basket III commitments and in trying to strengthen those commitments. For Canada, the CSCE provided a seat at the table in East-West discussions, enabled dialogue with East European and neutral and non-aligned (NNA) countries, and offered a means of promoting political, cultural and economic ties with Europe. Though Canada was disappointed by the glacial progress in implementing Final Act undertakings, it continued to believe that the CSCE principles, if adhered to in their entirety, formed a solid basis for the conduct of civilized relationships between governments, and between governments and their own citizens. This Canadian attachment to and habit of activism within the CSCE -- reflected in an institutional voice for the CSCE within the Department of External Affairs -- contributed to making the CSCE a strong candidate for Canadian emphasis when, not long after the conclusion of the Vienna Follow-Up Meeting, the future of Europe seemed up for grabs.