

## The Helsinki Summit

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## The Helsinki Summit

On 1 August 1975, the Final Act of the Helsinki Summit closed the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which had opened on 3 July 1973. The CSCE was a standing forum for negotiation that, without being institutionalised, sought to enhance cooperation between long-standing foes and, indirectly, to overcome the division of Europe into two major blocs by the Iron Curtain. Based on a Euro-Atlantic approach, all States whose territory, in whole or in part, was located in the continent of Europe, the United States or Canada were automatically entitled to participate. In fact, only Albania declined to attend the CSCE.

The 35 participants, including members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact, as well as non-aligned States, recognised the *de facto* borders established in Europe following the Second World War. The Helsinki Agreement covered non-interference in internal affairs, military issues, economic, technical and scientific cooperation, democratic principles and even environmental protection. In particular, it introduced a system of military confidence-building measures, under which all the participating States undertook to notify their counterparts in advance of certain types of military manoeuvre. The Final Act of the Helsinki Summit also constituted a code governing East-West relations and a set of precepts for measures relating to the principle of self-determination of peoples and changes to frontiers brought about by peaceful agreement and in accordance with international law. In economic terms, the CSCE did not overtly advocate the market economy. Nevertheless, it did call for greater transparency in macroeconomic management and for the planned economies to be opened up to foreign investors.

The mutual recognition and economic cooperation were relatively well accepted by the USSR and its satellite States. However, Article 7 of the Helsinki Agreement, in which the USSR and its allies undertook to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, caused greater difficulty. Dissidents, such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in the USSR and Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia, ran the risk of repression, deportation and prison in their struggle to have those commitments honoured by their countries. The real results of the Helsinki Summit fell far short of the hopes that it raised.