

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Confidence Building in the Arms Control Process: A Transformation View is a predominately conceptual exploration of the confidence building approach to security management. Although it begins with a critical review of traditional confidence building ideas (including some developed by the author twelve years ago), its primary aim is the articulation of a general contemporary account of the confidence building approach. The critical review highlights some problems that continue to undermine conventional treatments of confidence building. The transformation view presented in this report is intended to address these problems, yielding a more accurate and useful account of the confidence building approach.

Confidence building, according to the argument developed in the pages that follow, is a distinctive type of security management activity entailing the comprehensive process of exploring, negotiating, and then implementing information, interaction, and constraint measures according to predominantly cooperative practices and principles. However, it also can involve more than developing agreements featuring well-known confidence building measures (CBMs). When conditions are supportive, engaging in the confidence building process can *facilitate, focus, and amplify the potential for a positive transformation in the security relations of participating states no longer satisfied with status quo security policies*. This transformation, which can affect a narrow range of security concerns or a much broader range of security issues, involves a restructuring of ideas about at least some aspects of security policies and the basic nature of security relations. According to the transformation view, the confidence building process is particularly well-suited to structuring and helping to institutionalize this potential for

change according to generally cooperative principles.

Because of its basic nature, confidence building is a potentially powerful security management approach that, when pursued thoughtfully and under the right conditions, can help foster significant positive changes in the way suspicious states view each other. Indeed, because of its characteristics, confidence building may be unique amongst security management approaches in its capacity to facilitate constructive changes in security thinking.

Significant positive change, however, is neither automatic nor inevitable. Unless the key *supporting conditions* have developed, suspicions will endure and confidence building efforts will accomplish little beyond the symbolic or rhetorical. Thus, simply adopting confidence building measures is *not* alone enough to make a positive difference. As well, the process cannot long survive indifference or the lack of meaningful leadership. Further, if basic changes in security thinking are not institutionalized to at least some extent, there is a risk that the process will deteriorate. In this sense, there may be a finite window of opportunity during which confidence building can help transform difficult security relations.

Great hopes increasingly are attached to the possibilities of confidence building, particularly in light of the success enjoyed in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe or CSCE (now termed the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe or OSCE) confidence building negotiations during the late 1980s and early 1990s. After all, confidence building — understood as the broad process of developing, negotiating, and implementing a confidence building agreement — appears to have played an important role in the remarkable transformation of European security relations during this period.