

Chapter Two

Examples of Pre-Helsinki Confidence-Building Measures

Confidence-Building Measures – as a term and as a concept – came into common usage during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. A number of specific measures were formalized in the resultant Helsinki Final Act in 1975. *They constitute the basis for many discussions of CBMs and second-generation CSBMs.* There are, however, instances of international arrangements predating the Helsinki Final Act that appear to conform to the basic idea of a Confidence-Building Measure. This historical record is worth examining because it may suggest useful CBM and CSBM proposals for future use. Indeed, as we will soon see, several contemporary proposals are based on ideas developed in earlier documents. This historical examination will also illustrate the difficulties encountered in trying to decide what should count as a legitimate example of a Confidence-Building Measure. The list of potential candidates is longer than generally supposed, suggesting that frequently drawn distinctions *between* arms control and Confidence-Building Measures may be forced or even unwarranted. At the least, it suggests that such distinctions are made with difficulty. Many of the candidate agreements appear to be *primarily* Confidence-Building Measures while others contain features that resemble CBMs.

Before examining this list of candidate measures, it would make sense to establish a preliminary understanding of what a Confidence-Building Measure is. Although we will return to the problem of definition a number of times in the course of this study, we can start with several widely accepted views. Holst and Melander wrote one of the most important early articles on the concept. They suggest that:

“confidence building involves the communication of credible evidence of the absence of feared threats ... by reducing uncertainties and by constraining opportunities for exerting pressure through military activity. Ideally, they would shorten the shadows of

military force, and confidence would be enhanced to the extent that the option of surprise military action receded into the background.”³

Adam Rotfeld provides several good descriptions of Confidence-Building Measures. For instance, he maintains that:

“One of the basic objectives of CBMs is to eliminate the possibility of surprise attack. CBMs are designed to ensure the correct interpretation of an adversary’s intentions in order to reduce the danger arising from unfounded suspicions and misperceptions which are often the result of prejudice or misjudgement.”⁴

Dr. Rotfeld also suggests that:

“the object of CBMs is to alter perspectives and ensure the perception of partner’s aims in a more or less correct rather than imaginary light. They are primarily, therefore, measures of a political and psychological nature, although they relate to military activity.”⁵

These definitions fairly represent the range of views amongst professional analysts. They generally focus on CBMs as instruments fostering the clarification of adversary intentions, the reduction of uncertainty with respect to the nature of those intentions (and associated military capabilities), and the amelioration of surprise attack concerns. Their focus is *not* generally on force or capability reductions, *per se*. We will return to the problem of definitions and categories in Chapter Five.

With this preliminary appreciation of the general nature of Confidence-Building Measures, let us turn to a brief examination of pre-Helsinki international agreements. The following is a list of potential CBM candidates. Some are frequently recognized as CBMs (for

³ Johan Jorgen Holst and Karen Alette Melander, “European Security and Confidence-Building Measures,” *Survival*, vol. XIX, no. 4, pp. 147-148.

⁴ Adam Rotfeld, “CBMs Between Helsinki and Madrid: Theory and Experience,” in Stephen Larrabee and Dietrich Stobbe (eds.) *Confidence-Building Measures in Europe* (New York: Institute for East-West Security Studies, 1983), p. 93.

⁵ Adam Rotfeld, “European Security and Confidence Building: Basic Aims,” in Karl Birnbaum (ed.) *Confidence-Building in East-West Relations* (Laxenburg, Austria: Austrian Institute for International Affairs, 1982), p. 107.

