

sensitivity that must accompany any conceptually-oriented exploration of confidence building. It *does* seem implausible, for instance, that the CSCE CSBM negotiations single-handedly caused the transformation in European security relations during the late 1980s and early 1990s. On the other hand, it is very difficult to accept that there was *no* positive change in CSCE/OSCE security relations. Such a conclusion seems inconsistent with the historical record. Granting that there was a positive change, it is difficult to argue that the confidence building process played *no* role in facilitating that change.

The minimum claim in this critical assessment of traditional thinking is simply that the negotiation and implementation of CBMs in this singularly successful example (the CSCE/OSCE) had a positive impact on security thinking in Europe, helping to alter at least some aspects of its basic character, and can do so in other contexts. The real question is: "How much of an impact and what type of impact?" Once we characterize the issue of causality in these terms, it is clear that the conventional literature has not been adequately attentive to conceptual issues of this type. And this failure weakens efforts to use the confidence building approach in new contexts because its causal nature and fundamental requirements are under-explored and ill-defined.³

The Continuing Problem With Causality

The most striking aspect of conceptual weakness in contemporary treatments is the continuing absence in the literature of any sort of convincing causal account of the confidence building process, whether broadly or narrowly defined. Regardless of how comprehensive a conception of confidence building we wish to employ, there is little in the way of analysis to help us understand how it works.

A "narrow" understanding of confidence building, for instance, simply focuses on the most basic function of CBMs and CBM agreements — the provision of enhanced information about military capabilities and activities. Even here, however,

there is a need to explain *how* implementing information-oriented CBMs accomplishes something positive. The tendency is to "black-box" the process implicitly — for instance, the information produced by information measures "goes in" one side (as an "input") and somehow the result is confidence and improved security relations. This is hardly an adequate explanation of confidence building, even when the process is treated as a very simple one.

On the other hand, a "broad" understanding of confidence building, such as the transformation view, holds that confidence building is a more comprehensive process. When it is successful, it must by its nature entail a process of positive change in the security relations of states, probably as a result of changes in basic security thinking and perhaps also as a result of the institutionalization of restructured security relations.

It is not necessary, however, even from the broad view perspective to assume that confidence building is solely responsible for change. Indeed, this seems unlikely. Nevertheless, from either a narrow or broad perspective, accounts must grapple explicitly with the issue of how and why change in security relations occurs as a result of confidence building. They must also acknowledge that states usually will deliberately pursue confidence building solutions because they wish to develop more positive, cooperative security relations in at least a limited range of security policy interaction areas.

Relying on the current literature, we continue to have only a fuzzy idea of what actually happens when CBMs or a confidence building agreement are negotiated and then implemented successfully. Most discussions of confidence building continue to limit themselves to seemingly commonsense observations about the virtues of military "transparency" that flow from the adoption of confidence building measures. In short, more openness through the implementation of well-recognized CBMs is assumed to yield less suspicion and improved security relations. But this is generally