

promoting interaction, and (perhaps) constraining certain types of military activity, especially those that fall outside the scope of more traditional arms control agreements. By this view, confidence building does not have an elaborate process dimension and does not "cause" in any meaningful way a larger process of improvement or positive change in the security environment. Certainly, no detailed claim should be made that it can.

Instead, this argument would continue, confidence building simply provides enhanced opportunities for sharing information and interaction through the use of CBMs. It is merely a modest artifact of a broader change in security relations and contributes, at best, to the improvement of the political atmosphere during such a transition period. Any change in security relations is primarily the product of processes and events external to confidence building and is likely to be both modest and temporary, given the exigencies of power politics. The real focus of confidence building is and ought to be on the generalized improvement in security relations that flows from more information cooperatively exchanged and the opportunity to interact in constructive settings. The goal is to control misperception. Thus, no elaborate conceptual exploration of process is necessary. Participants get to know more about each other and their intentions and this reduces the effects of misperception in a straightforward and obvious way. This "minimalist" articulation can be inferred in much of the literature and in most policy approaches.

This, in the opinion of this author, is a poor defence of the early literature and its problems. It sidesteps the complaint about conceptual weakness (primarily the absence of an explicit causal account to explain how confidence building works) and takes shelter behind unjustified claims of simplicity. Even granting that confidence building is the straightforward and limited approach represented in the minimalist construction, we are still confronted by the literature's failure to explain how even "simple" confidence building works. This consistent failure undermines efforts to dismiss as

inappropriate complaints about the lack of conceptual sophistication in the traditional literature.

In general, it is fair to say that when the early literature addressed questions of even a vaguely conceptual nature, the result was limited, speculative, and rarely rooted in the larger theoretical literature of international relations.<sup>1</sup> The modest results at Helsinki in 1975 with its extremely limited CBM agreement, the distinctly unpromising political environment of the time (1982-1984), and the ideologically-driven differences in confidence building policy approach between East and West clearly contributed to this limited perspective. Nevertheless, there also was an underlying disinterest in looking with any sophistication at how confidence building could actually improve security relations.<sup>2</sup>

The more contemporary (post-1984) literature continues to reflect this conceptual indifference, but with far less justification given the impressive successes of the CSCE/OSCE process at Stockholm and Vienna and the growing interest in using the approach in new application contexts. This unexplored contemporary record of accomplishment represents a major, additional problem for current confidence building thinking. Whereas the early literature had little to explain in terms of the successful operation of confidence building, this is no longer the case, given that comprehensive confidence building agreements have been negotiated and successfully implemented. Just as important, there has been a process of constructive change in the security relations of most CSCE/OSCE states, change that seems consistent with the cooperative principles associated with confidence building. This practical policy history and the important questions that flow from it have not been the subject of serious analysis in the confidence building literature. This is the contemporary manifestation of the fundamental conceptual weakness of traditional confidence building thinking.

To be sure, we are well-advised to avoid ascribing to confidence building the capacity to do more than it reasonably can accomplish. This is a