

THE CONFIDENCE BUILDING APPROACH

Summary

This introduction to the promising concept of confidence building outlines a variety of important considerations to keep in mind as we consider the possible application of the confidence building approach in new regions with unique security environments and political cultures. It presents several distinct ways of understanding the confidence building approach, including (1) a general definition; (2) a catalogue of CBM categories; and (3) an example of a comprehensive CBM agreement. Collectively, they provide a rich understanding of what confidence building means. The paper also stresses the broader role that confidence building appears to play in helping to transform the security perceptions that states have of threatening neighbours. The paper warns of the need to apply the confidence building approach with care and insight in new application regions, taking full account of special or unique circumstances.

Introduction

Confidence building increasingly is recognized as an important approach to improving security relations amongst states suspicious about and uncertain of each other's intentions. Confidence building typically is understood to involve the use of formal, cooperative measures designed to improve information and reduce uncertainty about neighbours' military forces and activities. Great hopes are attached to its possibilities, particularly in light of the impressive success enjoyed in Europe during the last six years. There, confidence building has proven to be an effective, formal security management approach, almost certainly playing an important role in the positive transformation of security relations associated with the end of the Cold War.

The prospects for developing effective confidence building regimes in new regions outside Europe are very promising but great care must be taken to ensure that:

- We understand correctly the *lessons* of the European case from which many of our present ideas come; and