

CHAPTER TWO

RETROSPECTIVE AND ORIGINS: CONFIDENCE BUILDING THINKING BEFORE THE STOCKHOLM DOCUMENT

The origins of the transformation view of confidence building lie in *Confidence (and Security) Building Measures in the Arms Control Process: A Canadian Perspective*, an overview study undertaken twelve years ago by the author. The transformation view is a direct product of efforts during the last twelve years to refine the initial study's analytic perspective and, more important, to wrestle with the difficult question of how confidence building as a process actually functions to improve security relations. This chapter provides a retrospective assessment of the initial review underlining how little has changed in mainstream confidence building thinking in the intervening twelve years. It also identifies the origins of the transformation view.

The Original Study

Confidence (and Security) Building Measures in the Arms Control Process: A Canadian Perspective was conceived to provide a comprehensive overview and analysis of the then-contemporary professional literature dealing with confidence building. In 1984, when the original study was prepared, the confidence building concept was still quite novel. Few were familiar with it and its possibilities were uncertain if nevertheless vaguely promising. Many analysts, however, (including the author) were sceptical of the whole approach, tending to dismiss it as being a very weak sister to arms control.

The literature of the day, while undeniably rich in practical insights and sound in many respects, lacked conceptual sophistication. It seemed to concentrate too narrowly on policy issues and policy prescription, paying relatively little attention

to explaining how "confidence building," understood as an activity or process, actually might work to improve difficult security relations.¹ Indeed, the literature consistently focused on confidence building *measures* rather than the *activity* of confidence building (i.e., the process of developing, negotiating, and using CBMs). Worse, it often treated "confidence building" (implicitly an activity with clear process character) as being synonymous with what confidence building *measures* do (i.e., notify manoeuvres, oblige the acceptance of observers, require the submission of information, etc.). This generally unappreciated tendency to treat confidence building and CBMs as interchangeable is quite striking once identified.

While this practice may seem like a harmless terminological habit, it is not. In fact, it may go some distance in explaining why the confidence building literature, both then and now, has failed to come to terms with what confidence building is and how it works. The concentration in the literature and in practical discussions has always been on measures, which do not require much in the way of conceptual explanation. Focusing on measures has encouraged analysts to overlook the need for process-oriented, activity-based accounts of confidence building.

Confidence (and Security) Building Measures in the Arms Control Process: A Canadian Perspective, while sensitive to the need to address process issues, nevertheless exhibited this same mistaken concentration on CBMs. Its centre-piece definition was of CBMs, not confidence building. It would be a number of years before the significance of this over-concentration on measures was fully realized by the author.