

specialist knowledge that may be helpful to policy makers confronting a difficult security problem.

Official interest in these ideas will be enhanced, of course, if policy makers feel uncertain about the adequacy of current policies for dealing with security relations in the potential application area. Indeed, this is the most likely circumstance defining when policy makers will turn to ideas like confidence building.

The Institutional Dimension of Confidence Building

A particularly important dimension of the transformation view is the proposition that the changes in security thinking facilitated by confidence building (which, according to the transformation view, must occur for confidence building to have any meaning) can become institutionalized in a security regime. The notion of institutionalization is simple yet profound. An institution (or regime) is "a set of rules that stipulate the ways in which states should cooperate and compete with each other."¹

Because it argues that the most consequential product of a successful confidence building process is a new rule-based security institution, the transformation view makes the most sense when placed in an institutionalist framework. Without at least a modest transformation of basic security expectations flowing from its application, it is difficult to see how confidence building can improve basic security relations beyond superficial levels related to moderately enhanced transparency. Thus, the transformation of at least some basic security assumptions appears essential in order for confidence building to be able to accomplish anything of real consequence. If the changes in security thinking facilitated by the confidence building process are supported by experience, then the changes become increasingly institutionalized in a restructured international security relationship. This restructured relationship redefines expectations of normal behaviour among participating states, marking the end of security relations that

are defined primarily by assumptions of basic hostility (at least within this particular realm).

This aspect of the transformation view highlights what the broader product of the confidence building process can be and explains why the various elements of the confidence building process are so important. The new practices and principles (both formal and informal) associated with the confidence building process as well as the changes in ideas about security relations comprise the basis of a security regime. This is what structures the revised regime.

Although there are competing understandings of institutions and the role that they can play, the strong institutionalist view is more helpful in explaining how confidence building can work. The mere fact of honest participation in confidence building that revolves around the development of cooperative principles and practices can change the way participants think about security relations *if* they are ready. The new institution entails a new set of rules that outline the ways in which participating states should cooperate and compete with each other, with a strong emphasis on cooperation. Thus, *confidence building is an agent of change and the resulting regime is an artifact of change that can then continue to operate as an agent of change.*

The transformation view does not constitute a grand theory of international relations, although some effort has been made to place it in the context of broader accounts of international institutions. It is a much more modest and limited conceptual creation. *It focuses on a particular type of activity that can be of value when states that have been locked in a conflictual or suspicious relationship for some time begin to recognize that their security relationships are based on principles and practices that no longer seem adequate.* The transformation view does not hold that confidence building is a panacea for all security problems, only that it can help to change security relationships in constructive ways under some circumstances.