

The key to understanding confidence building and how it works is not the role played by increased information or enhanced transparency, *per se*. This is only part of the story. Instead, it seems that *successful* confidence building must somehow be associated with and facilitate a basic shift in security thinking in influential circles in key states that makes at least some genuinely cooperative arrangements first possible and then acceptable, even attractive, when earlier they simply would not have been feasible. Then, agreements to share increasingly detailed and sensitive military information can occur and *reinforce* changes in threat perception.

In addition to lacking a sound conceptual foundation capable of explaining how using CBMs can change security relations, the minimalist perspective almost certainly is too limited. It is the product of an earlier time when analysts and policy makers did not yet see the greater potential of confidence building nor anticipate the need to account for its successful operation. This was likely the case because the political environment was very negative in the early- to mid-1980s and the impressive achievements of Stockholm and Vienna lay in the future. This limitation can only be offset by looking at what successful confidence building has achieved since these earlier days.

The Notion of Reconstruction

The transformation view does not simply reject the basic minimalist appreciation of confidence building. It is not seen to be wrong so much as incomplete, a poor reflection of what we now know about confidence building. In this sense, the transformation view amounts to a *reconstructed* understanding of confidence building.

“Confidence building” as a reconstructed concept has acquired a more comprehensive content than the early authors of the idea and its policy proponents originally seem to have intended. Negotiators and scholars in 1955, 1968, or 1973 may not have appreciated the broader impact that implementing a collection of CBMs could have on a security relationship. We have increasingly come

to understand the transforming impact of CBM agreements, especially their negotiating processes, and can now legitimately characterize the “confidence building process” in more comprehensive, process-oriented terms than were understood ten or twenty years ago. This view, however, may be criticized because of the way it changes the conceptual content of the confidence building idea.

It is an entirely legitimate question to ask, for instance, whether experienced analysts today are wrong for employing a “minimalist” reconstruction of confidence building that grows directly out of their own recollections of what may have been intended when confidence building negotiations were undertaken in an earlier time. It would certainly be both unfair and inaccurate to say that negotiators at that time were trying to accomplish significantly more than they understood themselves to be doing or to impute to them more elaborate motivations about (for instance) security regime construction and perceptual transformation when they had no such motivations.

However, this is *not* the intention of the current review’s main argument. Instead, the idea is to grapple with what we see *from today’s perspective* to have happened in the course of negotiating and implementing confidence building accords in the CSCE/OSCE context and then distil that understanding in a generalized fashion. The nature of this reconstruction of confidence building is different compared with the sparser understanding of the past. The minimalist account is historically accurate in a narrow sense but no longer accommodates what we now should understand confidence building to entail. It is important that we keep the time-bound historical, policy-rooted understanding separate from the current, conceptually-oriented reconstruction. Many analysts may still be prone to rely upon the minimalist account because they remember quite well what was originally intended, a recollection rooted in a different context and time. This duality of meaning also obliges a certain caution and understanding in criticizing analysts for employing the minimalist construction.