

# East–West Confidence-Building: Defusing the Cold War in Europe

*Richard E. Darilek*

**I**n a real sense, every state's security problems are unique, just as its borders, population, language, resources, and potential opponents may be unique. Equally real and important, however, are the features and problems that even very different states share in common. Many countries around the globe, for example, face problems of border security and perceived military threats from neighboring states. Although the causes and roots of such insecurity may vary from case to case, the fact of insecurity does not necessarily vary.

For most countries in regions of the world where international crisis and conflict loom as distinct possibilities, the range of security problems, like those faced in Europe during the Cold War, stretch from preserving peace, at one extreme, to terminating a war that might break out, at the opposite end of the spectrum. In between lie a variety of other objectives, such as inhibiting the threatened use of military force for political intimidation and controlling escalation so that flare-ups do not lead to unwanted wars.

Successful crisis management is another important security objective for states, no matter where they are located. At a minimum, such management would imply an ability to control the escalation of a crisis so as to preclude any unintended effects. A further objective might be to avoid the outbreak of war by creating firebreaks that attempt to guarantee at least a pause before hostilities begin.

Confidence-building measures (CBMs) were negotiated and implemented in Europe with these objectives in mind. This essay reviews the record of CBMs in Europe during the Cold War as a way of understanding both established practice and evolving theory in one concrete, highly prominent, and successful case.

What we now call confidence-building measures probably owe their origins, at least in part, to the European military practice of inviting observers from various states to military exercises, which dates back to the years prior to World War I, if not much earlier. Similar measures emerged later in the context of the Versailles treaty's attempt to control a defeated Germany.<sup>1</sup> Among other things, that treaty provided for demilitarization of the Rhineland and on-site inspections announced six days in advance.

---

<sup>1</sup> Volker Kunzendorff, "Verification in Conventional Arms Control," Adelphi Paper no. 245 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1989), 14–15.

### **Precursor CBMs**

Following World War II, military liaison missions between the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France were established, ostensibly to improve relationships between the victorious allied powers that were occupying Germany. With the onset of the Cold War, these missions soon turned into military intelligence-gathering devices for all parties involved. In the 1950s and 1960s, forerunners of modern-day CBMs were proposed at the 1958 Surprise Attack Conference held in Geneva and to the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee in 1962.<sup>2</sup> Two US proposals during this period were actually instituted in the form of the hotline's direct communication links between national command authorities in Washington and Moscow and the agreement to ban nuclear testing in the atmosphere, both of which were signed in 1963.

The timing of these two agreements is particularly interesting. They were proposed and consummated in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis. Although the Cold War was far from over, that crisis had brought it to a head both militarily and politically. By forcing the opposing sides to confront the reality of how close they had actually come to nuclear war, the crisis gave rise to a political climate in which new approaches to superpower and East–West relationships were encouraged.

The first half of the 1970s witnessed a period of considerable, if short-lived, progress in both strategic nuclear and conventional arms control efforts. The 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) accords were followed by the Vladivostok Agreement in 1975, which raised expectations that yet another strategic arms treaty (SALT II) would be concluded before the end of the decade. Fueling further expectations of progress in arms control, the United States and the Soviet Union signed, in steady succession, the Agreement on Measures to Reduce the Risk of Outbreak of Nuclear War in 1971, which provides for immediate notification of an accidental, unauthorized, or unexplained nuclear detonation; the Incidents at Sea Agreement of 1972, which established operating procedures that attempt to decrease the potential for ship-to-ship harassment, such as simulated attacks, during peacetime; and, in 1973, the declaratory Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, which provides for immediate and urgent consultations in times of crisis.

In 1973, moreover, negotiations aimed at reducing both North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Warsaw Pact conventional forces in Central Europe commenced in Vienna, while preparations were well under way for a new Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), with participation by all European states (except Albania) plus

---

<sup>2</sup> John Borawski, *From the Atlantic to the Urals: Negotiating Arms Control at the Stockholm Conference* (New York: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988), 4–5.

the United States and Canada. This period marked a new high point for détente in East–West and American–Soviet relations. Political breakthroughs were also being accomplished through the policy of West Germany towards Eastern Europe. Tangible results soon followed: the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin in 1971; rapprochement between East and West Germany; and the treaties signed by the latter with various Warsaw Pact countries, which served to acknowledge postwar borders that had been in existence at that point for more than twenty-five years.

### **First-Generation CBMs**

The CSCE, whose first set of meetings culminated in the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, presided over the birth of the first generation of CBMs, which were designed primarily for conventional armed forces in Europe. These CBMs were not genuinely welcomed by the superpowers. Instead, they were championed by neutral and nonaligned European states, which resented their exclusion from the alliance-oriented Vienna negotiations and insisted on inserting something more than declarations of principles in the “security” dialogue at the CSCE.

The result of these and other international interests and negotiating pressures was the Document on Confidence-building Measures in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. That document contained a variety of CBMs, including notification in advance (twenty-one days) of major military maneuvers (beyond 25,000 troops), other maneuvers (below 25,000 troops), major military movements (undefined); and the invitation of observers to major military maneuvers. The provision for the invitation of observers was entirely discretionary on the part of the state conducting the maneuvers. Otherwise, given the predominance of notification provisions in the document, this package of CBMs was heavily weighted toward producing various exchanges of information in advance of planned military activities.

The theory behind these measures was quite different from that for arms control efforts. The purpose of CBMs was not to limit the capabilities or otherwise control the military forces that states had in being, much less reduce their numbers. Nor were there any verification provisions attached to these measures. Instead, as indicated in the Helsinki act and elsewhere, CBMs were aimed at increasing ‘openness,’ reducing the secrecy with which military matters were traditionally surrounded (particularly in Eastern Europe), and improving the predictability of military activities in general.

In a word that was to become emblematic of this rationale in years to come, promoting greater ‘transparency’ with regard to military affairs in Europe was to be the main purpose of CBMs. Greater transparency, in turn, was expected to reduce the mutual suspicion that secrecy tends to breed as well as reflect. In theory, this would lessen the chances that war might come about as a result of misunderstanding or miscalculation.

---

***CBMs were aimed at increasing ‘openness,’ reducing the secrecy with which military matters were traditionally surrounded (particularly in Eastern Europe), and improving the predictability of military activities in general.***

---

According to this theory, increasing the transparency or openness of military activities in Europe might even lessen fears that a surprise attack could occur or that military exercises could be used successfully for political intimidation. When explained in terms of an hierarchy of arms control objectives, therefore, CBMs could be said to promote the immediate objective of increasing transparency. This increase in

transparency would then promote higher level arms control objectives, such as reducing miscalculation and misunderstanding, which in turn would support even higher level objectives, such as preventing war and preserving peace.<sup>3</sup>

There were few illusions, however, about the ability of CBMs to promote these higher level arms control objectives any time soon, especially among the superpowers and their allies. The absence of any specific verification provisions for the Helsinki measures, their nonbinding character as voluntary political—as opposed to mandatory legal—measures, and even their lack of agreed definitions effectively undercut any hope that the Helsinki CBMs might actually go beyond the goal of simply promoting greater military transparency by reducing secrecy.

According to the theory of increasing transparency, the mere fact that the side conducting a potentially threatening activity notifies the other side about the maneuvers tends to reduce anxiety levels. Is this a good thing, or could such measures be used to promote a false sense of confidence? In certain situations, greater apprehension might be warranted. What if the notification of an exercise, for example, even the invitation of observers to it, was a clever prelude to a surprise attack? Critics of early CBMs were quick to raise such questions and to diminish the potential utility of CBMs. The dual effect of CBMs in promoting transparency—they can reduce apprehensiveness but, in the process, can conceivably build false confidence—was a theoretical problem that the first generation of CBMs could not solve.

## Second-Generation Measures

A new generation of CBMs grew in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and Soviet threats to Poland in the early 1980s. The new measures were both an

---

<sup>3</sup> Johan Jørgen Holst and Karen Melander, “European Security and Confidence Building Measures,” in Christoph Bertram, ed., *Arms Control and Military Force* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1980), 223–31.

outgrowth of and a reaction to the virtual disappearance of détente in East–West relations. It was one thing to worry about false confidence being generated by CBMs in a period of declining tensions and promising arms control negotiations. It was quite another matter to contemplate this problem as tensions were mounting and CBMs were being misused by the Soviet Union against Poland in 1981 for political intimidation. During this period, large-scale Soviet military exercises and force deployments were staged near Polish borders, in an obvious attempt to intimidate reform-minded Poles, who were threatening to topple their pro-Soviet government.<sup>4</sup>

Traditional arms control efforts were stalled in the early 1980s. In this barren landscape, two oases appeared that were later to yield substantial fruit.

One of these was the effort initiated by Senators Sam Nunn, John Warner, and Henry Jackson to ease tensions over interruption of the superpower dialogue. The three senators proposed the negotiation of new crisis management tools with the USSR, including, if feasible, nuclear risk reduction centers manned simultaneously and continuously by both sides. This initiative ultimately resulted in new American–Soviet agreements to add a facsimile transmission capability to the hotline (signed in 1984) and to establish nuclear risk reduction centers in Washington and Moscow (signed in 1987) primarily to exchange the information and notification required under other agreements on arms control or confidence-building measures.<sup>5</sup>

The second effort that grew and developed in the heightened Cold War environment of the early 1980s was the attempt to negotiate a new and improved set of CBMs for conventional forces in Europe. This effort reached fruition in the Stockholm Document on Confidence and Security Building Measures of 1986. The addition of “security” to the title of CBMs in that document, thereby making them confidence and security building measures (CSBMs), signified more ambitious objectives for such measures. In the language of the document, which took more than six years to negotiate, the new measures were to be more “militarily significant, binding, and verifiable” than their predecessors. They were to have more politico-military ‘bite,’ hence a greater security component, as protective compensation for the sharp downturn in East–West relations.

As negotiated in Stockholm, the new CSBMs were no longer subject to a participating state’s discretionary choice as to whether or not, or to what degree, to observe them. The following mandatory measures were concluded:

---

<sup>4</sup> John Borawski, *From the Atlantic to the Urals*, 29, 58–59.

<sup>5</sup> See US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1992), 334–36.

- Notification forty-two (versus twenty-one) days in advance of a major military exercise or “concentration” of forces (whether movements or maneuvers) involving lower thresholds, for example, 13,000 troops or 300 tanks versus 25,000 troops);
- Notification only at the time of the commencement of certain otherwise non-notifiable exercises, such as “alerts;”
- Exchange of annual calendars by November 15 of all military activities, subject to prior notification in the next year;
- Invitation of observers to all exercises or concentrations in excess of 17,000 troops (5,000 for amphibious or airborne troops);
- On-site inspection by challenge, subject to a limit of three on any one country’s territory per year; and
- Constraints on the ability to conduct large-scale exercises (involving more than 40,000-75,000 troops).

The Helsinki CBMs promoted transparency. The Stockholm package of CSBMs not only required greater openness but also relied more heavily on ‘access’ measures, requiring observation and inspection of certain military activities. These access measures aimed to make the information provided as a result of increased transparency more trustworthy. Hence the provisions for mandatory invitation of observers to exercises in excess of 17,000 troops (5,000 in the case of amphibious and airborne troops) and for on-site inspections by challenge, with no right of refusal, sought to ensure that seeing would be tantamount to believing. The Stockholm accord even made a first step in the direction of placing constraints on military exercises by imposing longer lead times—forty-two days for major military exercises and one to two years in the case of larger scale exercises—before activities subject to prior notification could occur.

The new objective for CSBMs included not only prevention of war by misunderstanding or miscalculation (hence the need for greater transparency), but also a reduction in the possibilities for surprise attack and even, if possible, in the ability to use military forces for the purpose of political intimidation (as the Soviet Union had tried to do in Poland). The key to success for the new measures lay in their provision of independent means for verification of compliance and intent. A potential attacker could still attempt to mask preparations for war and maintain opportunities for surprise by continuing to comply with the CSBM regime to the last possible moment. The hope was, however, that such continuing compliance with the notification requirements would force a degradation

---

***The key to successful implementation of the Stockholm CSBM package hinged largely on the Stockholm document’s provision for mandatory on-site inspection of military activities.***

---

in attack preparations and that, in any event, such preparations would be detected through the measures providing for observation and on-site inspection. If an attacker was to refuse to permit such observations or inspections in hope of preserving secrecy, that refusal itself would send a warning signal to the defender.

The key to successful implementation of the Stockholm CSBM package hinged largely on the Stockholm document's provision for mandatory on-site inspection of military activities. However, the number of inspections permitted on any given state's territory in any given year—three—may have been too low to help prevent misunderstanding or miscalculation, much less a surprise attack, although nothing prevents a state from waiving its rights, upping the quota, and permitting additional inspections on its territory in the interests of clarifying an ambiguous situation and preserving the peace. In a crisis, such action would itself be a kind of confidence-building measure.

Prior to the end of the Cold War, some feared that the Stockholm document's notification thresholds were not low enough to complicate a determined attacker's planning for surprise. Some argued that an attacker could make the necessary preparations within the calendar and notification requirements established, endure several on-site inspections without detection of the hidden intent, and go on to launch a surprise attack successfully. Others believed that while such a scenario was conceivable, it was highly unlikely because the risks of random detection were too great. The Stockholm CSBMs measurably improved on the Helsinki CBMs in this regard.

In the final analysis, Stockholm's CSBMs left room for improvement, particularly in limiting the use of force for political intimidation, since large-scale military exercises conducted as alerts—requiring notification only upon their commencement, not in advance—could still be staged with impunity during a crisis.<sup>6</sup> Such exercises would tend to exacerbate, not dampen, the potential for escalation and intimidation.<sup>7</sup> CSBM negotiations after Stockholm, therefore, were intent on negotiating tougher measures: expanded information exchanges, improved access quotas, lower thresholds for notifications, and the establishment of a risk reduction center for Europe.

---

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of the CSBMs in the Stockholm document, see Richard E. Darilek, "The Future of Conventional Arms Control in Europe—A Tale of Two Cities: Stockholm, Vienna," in *Survival* 29, no. 1 (January/February 1987), 5–19. This analysis also appears in chapter 10 of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1987: World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 339–54.

<sup>7</sup> For further analysis of various CSBM proposals launched at the Stockholm talks, see Y. Ben-Horin et al., *Building Confidence and Security in Europe: The Potential Role of Confidence- and Security-building Measures* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 1986); and J. Kahan et al., *Testing the Effects of Confidence- and Security-building Measures in a Crisis* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 1987).

### **Third-Generation CSBMs**

In the late 1980s, détente had returned and the outlook for arms control negotiations had never been brighter. Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev’s speech to the United Nations in December 1988 clearly placed conventional arms control high on the list of East–West priorities and helped to assuage fears in the West of the Soviet threat. This effect was compounded when the Kremlin allowed the fundamental political changes sweeping through Central and Eastern Europe to run their course.

As East–West relations began to make progress where none had been thought possible, a new generation of CSBMs were developed by the United States and its European allies. These measures promised to set limits, or “constraints,” on conventional military forces that were much tighter and more direct than any previously negotiated. Instead of trying to limit military exercises indirectly, as the Stockholm document did with calendar notification requirements of up to two years in advance, advocates of tougher constraint measures called for the outright prohibition of the specified activities. If exercises above a certain threshold were a problem, then exercises at those levels would be prohibited. If high readiness levels among units were the issue, then constraint measures would define and prohibit unacceptable levels. If the problem involved limiting the deployment of particular forces in certain areas—so-called keep-out zones—then these too could be drawn up, tailored specifically to the forces at issue, and subjected directly to a ban on deployments there.

Such measures were proposed in the context of negotiations on the reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe (CFE), not in the follow-on CSBM talks that commenced simultaneously in March 1989 in Vienna. To accompany the force reductions that it was advocating in CFE negotiations, NATO put forward a package of proposals that included measures for information exchange, stabilization, and verification. In the way that they were intended to operate, most of these measures resembled CSBMs. The NATO package included a requirement that call-ups of 40,000 or more reservists within the CFE treaty area should be notified to all parties forty-two days in advance; a system of inspections that aimed to grant all parties to the treaty access to one another’s forces and activities at virtually any time; and a call for each side to disclose the exact location of its military units as well as the quantity and types of its treaty-limited equipment.

---

***Confronted with transparency and access measures simultaneously, an attacker would find itself in a quandary, or double bind: whether to comply with the measures and risk degradation or detection of surreptitious attack preparations, or whether to abrogate the measures and forfeit surprise.***

---

This NATO package included constraint as well as transparency measures, such as placing various types of military equipment (tanks, artillery, armored troop carriers, and bridging equipment) in monitored storage sites and limiting the amount of such equipment that could be removed from storage at any given time. It also barred signatories of the treaty from conducting military exercises in excess of 40,000 troops or 800 main battle tanks more than once every two years. In addition, NATO proposed notification of such exercises a year in advance as well as notification forty-two days in advance, of any movement of equipment that exceeded specified amounts (600 tanks, 400 artillery pieces, and 1,200 armored troop carriers within fourteen days) or that came out of the storage sites.<sup>8</sup>

Such constraint measures were intended to make it extraordinarily difficult for a state to launch a surprise attack successfully. Confronted with transparency and access measures simultaneously, an attacker would find itself in a quandary, or double bind: whether to comply with the measures and risk degradation or detection of surreptitious attack preparations, or whether to abrogate the measures and forfeit surprise. Constraints sharpen that bind by establishing prohibitions on military activities that are significant and relatively easy to verify: the prohibitions involved are clearer and more direct, with fewer loopholes. Any violations of these prohibitions, therefore, are grounds for serious and immediate concern.

These constraint measures were ultimately dropped from the CFE Treaty signed in Vienna on 19 November 1990. The treaty focused almost entirely on the numerical levels and post-treaty locations of military forces defined in terms of their equipment inventories. Negotiators in both the CFE and the CSBM talks in Vienna were working against a deadline to produce agreements by the time of the CSCE summit in November 1990. Work on some issues, such as the constraint on military exercises for CFE, was simply not finished by the deadline.

Lack of time was not the only reason for the limited advance of third generation CSBMs in East–West negotiations. By 1990 the Soviet threat in Europe had abated. The Soviet Union was undergoing a profound political revolution at the time that distracted attention from foreign and military affairs. Constraint measures were becoming less relevant to Europe’s future than other issues and concerns, in particular those having to do with political and economic developments. As military threats to security faded, the need for constraint measures became less compelling.

The 1990 Vienna CSBM talks focused, for the most part, on fleshing out agenda items originally introduced, but not agreed to, in Stockholm. To this end, during the

---

<sup>8</sup> For NATO’s original proposal, see “Text of NATO Proposals for Measures of Information Exchange, Stabilization, Verification, and Non-Circumvention,” in *BASIC Reports from Vienna* (Washington and London: British American Security Information Council, 21 September 1989), 3–7.

course of several years of negotiations, participants in the 1990 talks achieved the following:

- Produced a sweeping information exchange provision, which rivals the CFE treaty's requirements for data;
  - Supplemented Stockholm's on-site inspection regime by providing for the on-site presence of personnel from other states to evaluate information exchanged about military forces;
  - Set up direct communication links among participants via a multilateral computer network for rapid exchange of data and notifications;
  - Encouraged contacts among military forces by providing for periodic visits to air bases and promoting military personnel exchanges;
  - Established an obligation for consultation and cooperation regarding "unusual and unscheduled" military activities, without defining specific thresholds for such activities; and
- 
- Created a mechanism for implementing this obligation, a Conflict Prevention Center in Vienna, serving all CSCE participants.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, the 1990 negotiations in Vienna advanced even further beyond the Stockholm measures. By producing several constraints on military activities, these constraints prohibited participants from carrying out the following:

- More than one military activity, subject to prior notification, involving more than 40,000 troops or 900 battle tanks, per activity, within two calendar years;
- More than six military activities subject to prior notification, involving more than 13,000 troops or 300 battle tanks but not more than 40,000 troops or 900 battle tanks, per activity, within a calendar year;
- More than three military activities, subject to prior notification, each involving more than 25,000 troops or 400 battle tanks, within a calendar year; and
- More than three simultaneous military activities, subject to prior notification, each involving more than 13,000 troops or 300 battle tanks.

---

<sup>9</sup> See the 1990 Vienna Document of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-building Measures Convened in Accordance with the Relevant Provisions of the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was approved at the CSCE summit in Paris on 21 November 1990.

CSBM negotiators also strengthened the prior notification and observation provisions of the Stockholm Document. They applied, for example, the forty-two day, advanced written notification requirement to military activities involving at least 9,000 troops and 250 battle tanks (versus 13,000 and 300, respectively, from Stockholm), and they lowered the threshold for mandatory invitation of observers to such activities from 17,000 to 13,000 troops (and from 5,000 to 3,500 troops for amphibious or airborne exercises). Moreover, they encouraged voluntary hosting of visits to dispel concerns about military activities, and they provided for demonstrations to other participants of new types of major weapon and equipment systems deployed by a participant. The CSBM negotiations, however, did not eliminate the Stockholm provision that exempts “notifiable military activities carried out without advance notice to the troops involved”—alerts—from either the prior notification or the constraining provisions of the Vienna documents.<sup>10</sup>

### Reflections on the European Experience

In the historical sketch presented above, a variety of different types of confidence-building measures have been identified:

- *Information measures*, which include information exchange requirements about the size of military forces, their equipment holdings, and their locations;
- *Communication measures*, which are represented by the American–Soviet hotline and its various offshoots and upgrades, as well as by consultative arrangements of the kind embodied in the Center for the Prevention of Conflict;
- *Access measures*, which have included provisions, progressively improved since the 1975 Helsinki accords, for observers at notified military activities and on-site inspection measures of the kind first agreed upon in Stockholm;
- *Notification measures*, which permit military activities to occur but attach conditions to them, such as enjoining participants to refrain from undertaking activities that have not been notified in advance; and
- *Constraint measures*, which seek to discourage certain activities, if not ban them outright—in contrast to notification measures, which are essentially permissive, provided the specified activities are notified properly.

---

<sup>10</sup> See the 1992 Vienna Document of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-building Measures Convened in Accordance with the Relevant Provisions of the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, adopted in Vienna, Austria, on 4 March 1992.

Several lessons might be learned from the European experience in negotiating these CBMs and CSBMs. The first is that while the spectrum of CBM possibilities is quite broad, Europe's experience suggests that the subset of measures likely to prove useful or negotiable between adversaries is rather limited, at least at the outset of the negotiating process.

A full menu of CBMs and CSBMs was available in East–West negotiations, but relatively few items were chosen. Although transparency and access measures were adopted, constraint measures were particularly difficult to negotiate. If the European experience is any guide, therefore, its teaching may be that the development of arms control and CBM initiatives is inevitably a highly selective, evolutionary process.

---

***If the European experience is any guide, its teaching may be that the development of arms control and CBM initiatives is inevitably a highly selective, evolutionary process.***

---

Because of the underlying conflict of interests between rivals, successful CBM negotiations can be a protracted process. Confidence takes a long time to build; security, even longer. Tangible results do not come readily or in great number. And dramatic results may require political breakthroughs rather than evolutionary steps in CBM negotiations. Nevertheless, useful results are possible, even early in the process. In an East–West context, the Helsinki and Stockholm agreements came early and helped to pave the way for later conventional force reductions among NATO and Warsaw Pact members. In the case of the United States and the Soviet Union, the hotline agreement (a communications CBM) and the Atmospheric Test Ban Treaty (a type of constraint) came quickly in the wake of the political thaw resulting from the Cuban missile crisis and preceded by many years the first concrete steps toward nuclear arms reduction in SALT.

The second lesson is that the East–West CBM experience followed a step-by-step progression, suggesting a clear linkage between political developments and successful negotiations. Positive political developments can create conditions for the successful pursuit of CBMs or arms control. Such was the case in 1963, after the Cuban missile crisis; in the early 1970s, with détente; and in the 1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev presided over the Kremlin.

Once political conditions make it possible to begin CBM negotiations, it is hoped that the negotiations themselves and any agreements they produce can in turn positively influence and help improve political conditions. CBM negotiations in Europe did not,

---

***Because of the underlying conflict of interests between rivals, successful CBM negotiations can be a protracted process. Confidence takes a long time to build; security, even longer.***

---

however, produce fundamental political changes. Moreover, once fundamental political changes occur, CBM negotiations may seem less and less relevant to the changed circumstances. Such efforts, therefore, seem to stand their best chance of success and to promise most at earlier stages of political rapprochement among states. In other words, CBM negotiations appear to require only a modicum of political will on the part of participants, both in order to launch negotiations and in order to keep them going.

The pattern suggested by arms control negotiations in Europe was that of a graduated, building-block approach which involved relatively simple steps initially and more complicated arrangements later on. In Europe, a long process of CBM negotiations preceded force reductions. CBM agreements may not, however, inevitably lead to force reductions. While force reductions followed in the European case after two CBM agreements had already been implemented, there is no clear, direct connection between those agreements and the CFE treaty. Force reductions in Europe were far more directly tied to political revolutions in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The Helsinki and Stockholm accords had little to do with these revolutions.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine how force reductions could have somehow preceded CBM agreements in the East–West context. In the European case, fifteen years of CBM negotiations were able to produce positive results in the midst of adversarial conditions, even as force reduction negotiations were stalled. Hence, modest CBMs seem almost bound to precede force reductions, presuming any such agreements can be negotiated.

Significant CSBM constraint measures, however, such as the attempt in Europe to require notification of reserve call-ups forty-two days in advance, may be more difficult to negotiate than arms reduction agreements. Such appears to have been the case in Europe, as

officials opted to reduce military forces rather than accept restrictions on what they could do with them. In addition, significant constraint measures might seem unnecessary or not worth the additional negotiating effort following mutually agreed-upon reductions in opposing armed forces.

---

***Once political conditions make it possible to begin CBM negotiations, it is hoped that the negotiations themselves and any agreements they produce can in turn positively influence and help improve political conditions.***

---

A third lesson, in the European context, is that breaching the wall of secrecy that adversaries tend to erect around their military establishments and

activities was the single most important contribution made by initial CBM agreements. European CSBMs had the objectives of reducing misunderstanding, inhibiting the use of force

for political intimidation, and lessening the chances of a surprise attack.<sup>11</sup> The first order of business of East–West CBMs, however, was reducing military secrecy.<sup>12</sup> Although not always stated as an objective, this fundamental objective was, in effect, a *sine qua non* for further progress in the field of CBMs.

In a real sense, reducing the secrecy with which adversaries traditionally surround their military forces and activities lies at the heart of what it takes to start building confidence. Such secrecy breeds suspicion and mistrust, which in turn can generate lack of confidence and give rise to tensions over the nature, purpose, status, and disposition of a potential opponent's military forces. The first and foremost task of CBMs, therefore, is to promote transparency and assail the rationales that promote secrecy.

Most CBM transparency measures are simply aimed at changing the secretive habits of military organizations. Through CBMs the countries of Europe grew accustomed to telling each other in advance, on a routine basis, about periodic military activities, which neighboring states would find out about anyway through their intelligence sources. The process of informing others is as important for the party that is doing the telling as it is for the side that is receiving the information (and checking it against what its own sources have provided). When it comes to building confidence, the fact that information is being passed by mutual agreement may even be more important than specific details of the information.

---

***In a real sense, reducing the secrecy with which adversaries traditionally surround their military forces and activities lies at the heart of what it takes to start building confidence.***

---

There are downside risks to openness, of course. False information could be passed, and the net effect of transparency measures could be to serve as instruments of deception rather than openness. Greater openness concerning military activities could also magnify attempts at political coercion through the use of armed forces. Despite such pitfalls, the European experience suggests that transparency measures were, on balance, reasonably successful in chipping away at the edifice of military secrecy, thus introducing a measure of predictability into political-military relationships among adversaries.

---

<sup>11</sup> For further discussion of these objectives, see Y. Ben-Horin et al., *Building Confidence and Security in Europe*, 4–13.

<sup>12</sup> The former US ambassador to the Stockholm CSBMs negotiations, James E. Goodby, makes a similar argument in “Operational Arms Control in Europe: Implication for Security Negotiations in Korea, in William J. Taylor, Jr., Cha Young-Koo, and John Q. Boldgett, eds., *The Korean Peninsula: Prospects for Arms Reduction under Global Détente* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), 209.

A fourth lesson to be drawn is that CBMs in East–West negotiations resulted in the institutionalized establishment of the right of adversaries to ask questions of and expect answers from one another. Direct communication links, such as the hotline between Washington and Moscow, served both the United States and the Soviet Union well as a vehicle for mutual give-and-take. The two countries valued the ability to conduct these exchanges sufficiently enough to upgrade the hotline’s capability, adding facsimile transmission to what was originally a teletype operation. The creation of direct communication links underscores the right to ask questions and expect a response.

The right to ask questions of and expect responses from potential adversaries is represented even more broadly in the 1990 Vienna CSBM agreement. That agreement provides for the establishment of a Center for the Prevention of Conflict, to serve all signatories, who have the responsibility to raise and address questions relating to the preservation of peace, security, and stability in Europe whenever they might arise. In addition, to bolster the chances of such questions being raised, the Vienna document includes a provision that requires participating states to consult and cooperate about any unusual and unscheduled military activities. Clearly, establishment of the right to raise and expect answers to questions related to security has been elevated to a new level in Europe.

Finally, a fifth lesson to be learned from the European–American experience with arms control is that CBM agreements have been relatively resilient to controversies and to downturns in East–West relations. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the NATO decision to deploy intermediate-range missiles in Europe, and the Soviet-prompted crackdown of the

---

***CBM negotiations and agreements, therefore, did not bend and break like weak reeds during times of trouble in Europe.***

---

Solidarity movement in Poland, détente became a fleeting memory, and arms control efforts sputtered in the early 1980s. Despite the political turbulence of this period, CBM talks continued. Indeed, they provided a model for how negotiations can be used to help keep lines of communication open and active during a political crisis.

CBM negotiations and agreements, therefore, did not bend and break like weak reeds during times of trouble in Europe. Indeed, they proved remarkably resilient under extremely challenging political conditions. Whatever intrinsic reasons there were for keeping CBM negotiations going, the talks provided a political safety valve for adversaries in a crisis. By continuing to maintain commitments made prior to the crisis, the adversaries demonstrated at least a modicum of interest in keeping the crisis from getting worse, if not in improving relations.

More significantly, perhaps, the maintenance of previously established CBMs during the Euro–American crisis of the early 1980s preserved existing channels of communication. In the end, these helped make it possible to move beyond the crisis and into new political-military relationships, which characterized the second half of the 1980s in Europe. It was this post-crisis era that enabled useful arms control initiatives to be launched and new beginnings cultivated.

