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**Confidence Building Measures in Europe during
the Cold War; Possible Relevance for Asia today,**

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Confidence Building Measures in Europe during the Cold War; Possible Relevance for Asia today

1) The history of “classical” CBM:s

Beginning with a barter trade

CBM:s (Confidence Building Measures) is a term that is usually used for measures of a military nature. The reason is that it was first widely used in connection with the European Security Process. The first stage of that process was completed with the signing of the Final Document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki 1975 (the CSCE Conference).

Already in 1972, during the Multilateral Preparatory Talks, an informal group of smaller Neutral and Non-Aligned (NNA) countries, among them Sweden, proposed to discuss the military aspects of Détente, especially “So-called CBM:s”. The larger European states, for instance France, opposed the idea, but it was finally accepted.

That was actually part of a larger deal. The members of the East Bloc were all concerned about their military secrets and unwilling to accept any measures that would give the West any information – but they were eager to have mutually accepted and acknowledged borders. The Western states were not very interested in the border issues, but eager to get an insight into military matters on the other side. The West was also interested in Human Rights in Eastern Europe and the final deal became a barter deal between acknowledging the borders (Concession by the West Europeans, Canada and USA) and Human Rights measures and military CBM:s (Concession by the Soviet Union and the East Europeans).

The Final Act of the Helsinki CSCE Conference contained provisions about negotiating further CBM:s during follow-up conferences. A specification of the mandate was agreed upon during the third CSCE Conference in Madrid, which ended in 1983. Conferences on Confidence- and Security- Building Measures were then held in Stockholm and Vienna, resulting in the Stockholm Document 1986 and the Vienna Document 1992, both with provisions about CBM:s. These CBM:s were more comprehensive with provisions involving mandatory on-site verification.

The CBM:s were not at all popular in the Soviet Army. All CBM:s of the Helsinki Act as well as in the Stockholm Document and the Vienna Document were explicitly politically binding only, not legally binding by treaty (which is for instance made clear in paragraph 156 in the Vienna Document).

A Long and Tedious Process

The initiative to the European Security process lay with "the Nine", (that is the nine European nations who were then members of the originally purely economic organisation of the European Economic Community). They were preparing what would eventually evolve into the European Foreign and Security Policy Cooperation that we see today as one important element of the European Union. The aim was to present a more distinct European identity in international politics. USA was initially not enthusiastic, but the Soviet Union was.

After Helsinki, there was a long period of mutual distrust between the West and the Soviet block. These were the years of President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative. It was only after a worsening of the relations because of a (temporary) resumption of the arms race that both camps realised the need for resumed negotiations.

One expression of this insight was the establishing of an Independent Commission for Disarmament and Security questions, the so-called Palme Commission, Sweden's then Prime minister Olof Palme being its chairman, Georgij Arbatov (USSR) and Cyrus Vance (USA) being among the other members. The commission agreed upon certain principles for Common Security, a concept that became hotly debated, but which has been accepted in many countries today. Among them was that "it is impossible to win a nuclear war."

That common understanding was an important precondition for the success of the CSCE process – and for the CBM:s to become accepted as important steps. Without reaching that understanding - after years of fruitless efforts influenced by the doctrines of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) and efforts to plan for winning a nuclear war as well as a slowly emerging awareness of the fact that such efforts would for ever be in vain - there could not have been such a thing as a process of Confidence Building in Europe.

Both sides needed and wished to have some concrete evidence of a lessening of tensions. CBM:s were perhaps not terribly important per se, but they acquired a significant symbolic importance and did a great deal to accelerate an improvement of relations between East and West at the time.

It is today possible to say with some accuracy that Confidence Building was the most important result of the CSCE process. The process took 20 years and led to the confidence that was a most important contributing factor to the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc and the Soviet Union and an end to that division of the world into two competing power blocs that constituted the Cold War.

To avoid any misunderstanding it should be stressed in this context that it was not the new confidence per se that ended the Cold War. What really made it happen was the U.S. policy during presidents Reagan and Bush and the response by the Soviet side to that policy. The confidence was a prerequisite, not an initiator, but as a prerequisite it was a necessary one.

Just let us take a look into the CBM:s that were decided, in order to understand the large scope that they carried and the efforts that were required to reach them.

CBM:s according to the Vienna Document 1992

- The participating states agreed to exchange information on military forces not later than 15 December each year according to a list 4 pages long.
- The same applied to major weapon and equipment systems according to specifications in a list 5 pages long.
- The same applied to information on plans for the development of major weapon and equipment systems.
- They should report as well 12 December each year about their military budgets.
- In a chapter about Risk Reduction, they agreed upon a mechanism for Consultation and co-operation as regards unusual military activities.
- The applied to hazardous incidents of a military nature and was complemented by provisions about hosting of visits to dispel concerns about military activities.
- Each state should arrange visits to air bases, other military contacts and demonstrations of major weapon and equipment systems.
- They promised to give prior notification of certain military activities according to specifications in a list 5 pages long, arrange observation of military activities according to a list 6 pages long and provide annual calendars of their military activities,
- Constraining provisions and rules about compliance and verification and inspection and evaluation should be made according to lists altogether 11 pages long.
- The participating states agreed to establish a special network of communication as well as a system of annual meetings for implementation assessment.

These were far-reaching measures indeed.

2) Rethinking CBM:s in a global context

After the agreements in Helsinki, Stockholm and Vienna, there was a great deal of rethinking about CBM:s in Europe and the experiences from them. CBM:s were looked upon with interest by the international community. Already in a 1979 report by governmental experts to the UN, it was suggested that CBM:s could be a model because

- A major cause of insecurity was a lack of information about the military activities of other states
- CBM:s could facilitate the process of arms control and disarmament.

However, some Third World countries (especially in Asia) had objections to the European model of CBM:s because

- Threat perceptions outside Europe were different and seldom emanated from outright military conflicts or surprise attacks but non-traditional issues like ethnic, religious and economic disputes.
- Creating confidence was more important in the broader sense and could not emanate from one sector or be created by military confidence alone.
- CBM:s needed to be developed for each region and take into account the unique situation in each case.

A caveat was also made: States which do not trust one another need comprehensive agreements with strict implementation. But if the purpose of CBM:s is seen as more political than military, the requirements can be allowed to be less strict in order to establish working relations. At a time when friends and foes are not clearly defined CBM:s provide a useful framework for cautious action, a low-cost tactic to bring adversaries together.

On the other hand, even critics of the European CBM model acknowledge that debating, negotiating and implementing CBM:s enable participants to become more aware of each others' perceptions and interpretations. The European model has the clear advantage that the risk for war can be decreased by reducing misunderstandings and misinterpretations. It can also establish principles, rules, norms or standards of conduct for behaviour of states. Mutual restraint on certain military activities on their operations can reduce risk of conflict and promote better relations.

3) Conclusions about Preconditions for CBM:s

We have seen that CBM:s in the classical (European-American) sense were basically military in nature and multilateral in implementation. We have also seen that preventive responses tend to shift from ad hoc measures to full-range-programmes that are also (and seen from a "classical" CBM point of view wrongly so) called

CBM:s.

All CBM:s in Europe have been made in declarations, not in binding treaties.- They are only politically binding, but that has appeared to function. It also functioned during the process leading to this mutual trust, but only because the parties wanted it to happen. It was in their interest to make it happen.

There has also been some discussion about which was the hen and which was the egg, the mutual confidence or the CBM:s? That is not very relevant. There was a political will to make it happen. That political will was codified by both sides at the same time. There has also been a discussion about whether the process itself might have been more important than the CBM:s. Confidence was maybe created by the negotiations about CBM:s and not by CBM:s themselves. That is also not so relevant. There was definitely an interaction between the will to create confidence and CBM:s during the 20 years between the initiation of the Helsinki process in 1972 and the acceptance of the final Vienna Document in 1992. The CBM:s and the process supported each other and were mutual preconditions for each others' existence, not mutually exclusive.

This is probably also the case in bilateral negotiating processes about CBM:s. To a certain extent they can be modelled upon experiences gained in Europe during the Cold War, but they must of course also begin with the painful process of sounding out the other party, establishing the common ground and will to eliminate the condition of conflict potential and to establish a proper forum for the negotiations.

4) Preventing Violent conflicts: Recent conceptual discussion

CBM is today a terminology usually used on a level that has less to do with Grand Strategy. Since the end of the Cold War conflicts have been primarily intra-state in nature, they have been costly and frequent, leading to the widely supported thesis that conflict prevention is a cost-effective activity. Most conflicts occurred in low-income countries with high poverty. The 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York led to much talk about "failed states" and to UN concern about factors contributing to intra-state (and inter-state) conflicts, like

- Terrorism, Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Gross socio-economic disparities within and between nations
- Rapid population growth, etcetera

Preventive responses today tend to shift from ad hoc measures to full-range-programmes, often multilaterally financed development aid programmes and yet they are often called CBM:s. This has very little to do with the "classical" CBM:s in the military field that we used to think of when we mention the term CBM:s. The

changing use of this term comes from the shift in attention from the inter-state conflict or potential conflict that was the essential content of the Cold War to the many intra-state conflict, which are in focus in today's efforts in international fora and international debates about how to deal with conflicts.

Terminology complications

Much of what is said today about CBM:s is valid also for military CBM:s, but certainly not everything. It is important to keep this difference in meaning in mind, when we talk about CBM:s. Let us take a look at some areas, where CBM:s is a term used out of its original European context. CBM is for instance used to cover most measures, which can promote Conflict Prevention, Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution.

Conflict Prevention focuses on peaceful prevention of disputes. *Preventive Diplomacy* and *Preventive Measures* are often used as synonyms, but do not always mean the same thing. However, *Conflict Prevention* is becoming more and more inclusive. Kofi Annan in his *Agenda for Peace* uses it for all aspects of human insecurity.

Conflict Management often signifies containment of a conflict, but mostly changing mode of interactions from destructive to constructive confidence-building measures.

Conflict Resolution has been defined as meaning resolution of the underlying incompatibilities and mutual acceptance of each party's existence (necessary in the case of China and Taiwan).

Against the background of European experiences it is interesting that CBM:s are part of the tool box in all these activities and that CBM:s are today becoming more and more economic in nature.

The concept of security has become widened continuously and keeps expanding. In 2000 the UN new Millenium Declaration was made by a meeting of heads of state and it set many goals to be achieved. Among them was that a review conference was decided to take place in September 2005 to follow up the implementation of the strategy. The Secretary General has consequently made a report on progress in March this year. In his report called *in Larger Freedom* he states that new circumstances demand a new consensus on key challenges and priorities and he proposes an agenda for the heads of state to act in order to ensure:

freedom from want
freedom from fear and
freedom to live in dignity

He states that in an increasingly interconnected world progress on security, development and human rights must go hand in hand. In short we see increased stress on common responses to challenges in the area of security. The concept of security is becoming widened even more. There is much talk of the necessity to have an integrated approach.

In today's terminology, CBM:s are close to all measures that are used as instruments in Conflict prevention, Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution. That is a concept very far from the original concept of CBM:s in Europe during the Cold War, which was military in nature and applied in a multilateral context. However, the basic idea is the same; to create confidence by all means that work to prevent conflicts. Since today's conflicts are mostly intra-state, only rarely inter-state and never multilateral between power-blocks, entirely different instruments are needed in Confidence Building.

Still, there are remaining bilateral conflicts or potential conflicts. They need military CBM:s and the appropriate negotiating process that can be applied is also not so different from the negotiating process in Europe during the Cold War.

In the discussions about the International Agenda today we have seen that preventive responses today tend to shift from ad hoc measures to full-range programs, often called CBM:s (from direct to structural CBM:s)

5) A comparison between preconditions in Asia and Europe

Coming back to the fact that CBM:s do not always affect states in the same manner, I wish to repeat the conclusion that disparity in size, resources, population or military capacity can create insecurity and become an obstacle for developing CBM:s. A NATO proposal during the CSCE process that states should give notification of mobilisation activities was opposed by the NNA group because of their heavy reliance on mobilisation in case of an imminent military threat. In 1995 the ASEAN South-East Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty was criticised by China and USA. China had territorial disputes in the area and USA said the treaty would restrain its naval operations.

Using CBM:s to promote co-operation or dialogue does not necessarily by itself improve security. Successful CBM:s require implementation to be straightforward and reassuring for all parties. Only the most cooperative behaviour can achieve such results. Asian international structures like ASEAN are not much governed by rules, while in Europe the main outcome of institution-building has been self-binding, both on an individual and a collective basis. Asia's approach to multilateralism is still in its genesis. So far China and other countries in Asia have not seemed to view emerging East Asian multilateralism as an exercise in self-binding.

Or is there a real desire to place prescriptive limits on the autonomy enjoyed by states? In my opinion that is an aspect that needs a great deal of reflection if anything like a concept of common security is to be established in North East Asia. Are the opinions we sometimes hear today about the need for an East Asian consultative organisation a beginning of a march towards a stable, predictable and rule-bound regional system?

Institutions

In Europe, there is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), common with USA and Canada. The transatlantic link, being an expression of many shared ideals and values, also incorporates such non-aligned countries as Sweden Switzerland and Austria through the Partnership for Peace cooperation (PfP). There is a number of purely European organisations like the West European Union (WEU), which was a defence organisation nowadays merged with the EU, the European Union (EU) itself, with its Common Security and Foreign Policy, the Council for Europe, which is a value-oriented organisation aiming at promoting common legislation about human rights, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and many more, covering a vast area of human activity.

In Asia there is the ASEAN plus three for economic affairs and for security the Asian Regional Forum, which, however, is very loose and does not have formal rules for decision-making.

In the way of commonalities Europe has linguistic, religious and cultural commonalities of importance. In Asia there are languages of different families, religions of different kinds and widely different spheres of culture. This means that in Asia compatible identities have to be built from the beginning and that preconditions for a multilateral approach and creation of CBM:s will have to be a more laborious process than it was in Europe. As a consequence it appears that so far there exists no multilateral context for the elaboration of multilaterally accepted military or other CBM:s in Asia. In order to make possible the creation of multilaterally accepted military CBM:s, it is necessary to start with institution-building first.

Other forms of CBM:s may be easier to start with (as was once the case in Europe).

6) Confidence Building in Asia in the light of European experiences

One precondition for the relations between China and Taiwan is that China does not acknowledge Taiwan as a country and consequently CBM:s will have to be bilateral in nature in the relations between the two. This is so because China will not accept that Taiwan be given a seat at the table of any multilateral forum.

This leads to the conclusion that CBM:s between Taiwan and China will have to start with elements of conflict resolution, which was defined as *resolution of the underlying incompatibilities and mutual acceptance of each party's existence*. In a way, this has already been done, since Taiwan is unofficially communicating with China and China is unofficially communicating with Taiwan, a very important step.

We have also seen how North Korea and South Korea have overcome the total mutual mistrust that usually characterises a relation between two parts of a divided country, each claiming for themselves to be the one and only true representative of that country. Today North Korea and South Korea both communicate and in certain respects they even support each other in international relations.

The first stepping-stones have been laid in the two sets of relations, and there are prospects that possibly CBM:s may be the next stepping-stones on the way to a wider conflict resolution, and meanwhile they may help in conflict prevention.

But what kind of CBM:s are we talking about? When it comes to Asia, the Taiwan Straits and the two Koreas, USA and Japan are also part of the problem:

- USA explicitly wants to maintain military dominance in the Western Pacific, Taiwan and South Korea having key positions.
- Japan wants America to stay and does not want Taiwan to be assimilated by China (for geostrategic reasons) or a possibly united Korea becoming an ally of China.

Now let us come back to the nature of possible Cbm:s. Economic cooperation is basically seen as a complement to efforts toward military CBM:s. In Europe the EU created the Common Security and Foreign Policy. Remember that CBM:s were part of a much larger context, covering most fields of human activity. Let us take a look at the first operative paragraph of the Document from the 1986 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Vienna:

- *The participating states express their determination*
 - *To build on the current positive developments...*
 - *To assume their responsibility...*
 - *To intensify their efforts to seek solutions to problems burdening their relations and to strengthen safeguards for international peace and security*

- *To promote co-operation and dialogue among them, to ensure the effective exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to facilitate contacts and communication between people*
- *To exert new efforts to make further progress to strengthen confidence and security and to promote disarmament*

That is a wide field of human activity and an ambitious agenda.

Let us now again take a look at conditions in Asia: Asean + 3 exists, ARF as well. To what we have already said and which may seem a bit pessimistic, we may add a few observations of a positive nature:

- China and America are becoming increasingly dependent on trade with each other
- China and Japan are becoming increasingly dependent on trade with each other
- China and Taiwan are becoming increasingly dependent on trade with each other
- The two Koreas have started an important exchange of economic relations

Summing up conditions in Asia we may say that in the military and political fields the room for CBM:s seems to be small, but in the economic field there seems to exist as good preconditions as in Europe. In the economic field U.S. objections to CBM:s appear to be less likely.

The entire structure that is today called the European Union started in 1952 with a small co-operation in the field of energy, the European Community for Coal and Steel. Today the secure supply of energy represents a growing problem for all countries in Asia.

An intellectual experiment

Let us make an intellectual experiment. Both America and China depend on good economic performance in Asia. USA and China are actively working for safe access to oil and gas from the Middle East and safe sea-lanes of communication to Asia. So, USA should basically have a positive attitude to CBM:s between China and Taiwan in the field of energy. China and Taiwan could co-operate in a manner that does not require "statehood" for Taiwan, for instance in the form of a joint business venture for oil exploration in the Taiwan Straits.

Such co-operation could be extended to sea transportation of oil. It could include transportation from oilfields in the Middle East or Africa. Such a co-operation could perhaps be extended to include companies from other neighbours, like Japan and the

two Koreas, maybe also in disputed areas. It could lead to military Cbm:s, like incident prevention and preparedness exercises around oil rigs in the sea and safety operations.

Many measures are likely to have asymmetric effects. What is a gain for one side may be a loss for the other side. That must be taken into consideration. Trade between China and Taiwan is for instance often considered to be a greater advantage for China than for Taiwan. Measures have to be used, where both sides have a will to demonstrate them as a symbol of growing confidence and that it is also equally beneficial to both sides.

That is why I have chosen energy co-operation as an example of something worth thinking of as a CBM in the Taiwan Straits under the presently prevailing conditions.

To choose energy as an example of a CBM with the characteristics that make a good CBM between Taiwan and China does not mean that there are not dozens of other suggestions that may have equally good prospects of success. It was only chosen because it is in my mind especially well suited to illustrate what I believe is important, namely

- beginning with economic effects
- having equally beneficial effects to both sides
- having prospects of calling for military follow-on CBM:s as a natural consequence , like patrolling, common safety measures and rescue operations etcetera
- being suitable for a cautious, incremental approach
- providing an opportunity to sound out the intentions of the other party.

China has actually intended to co-operate with Taiwan in a similar manner on one occasion. During a period of comparatively relaxed relations, a daughter company in Panama of the Taiwanese government-owned oil company made an agreement with a mainland government-owned oil company about exploration of oil and gas resources in the South China Sea.¹

7) Observations on CBM:s in Asia

A first step in a confidence-building process in the economic field could have a positive impact on security relations. One basic precondition for success remains: there has to be a positive will on both sides to make the effort complete.

¹ Nordhaug, Kristen (2000) *Taiwans rolle i konflikten i Sør-kina havet*, The Oslo Conference on Human and Regional Security around the South China Sea, 2-4 June 200, www.sum.uio.no/southchinasea/, visited 21 August 2001.

Therefore it seems necessary to reach a basic mutual understanding of several steps in any possible plan. This understanding includes the intended use of these steps as CBM:s as well as carrying a symbolic meaning, and not just being intended as “practical measures.”

Confidence Building is such a delicate and laborious process and failures are so likely to have damaging effects that efforts should be made to avoid them. Confidence Building can only succeed when both sides have a real will to make it succeed, and military CBM:s is a more treacherous field than economic CBM:s. Building confidence in the military field is often not safe enough until the ground has been prepared by CBM:s in the economic field, as shown by the post-war history of Europe.

It should be observed that just one measure is not enough to build confidence, many building blocs are required. At the same time it should be remembered that the process is often as important as the measures themselves. We are after all talking about a mutual exercise in a change of attitudes.

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