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Confidence Building and the Concept of Spillover in Mediterranean Conflicts

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Overview:

The OSCE (as well as the CSCE) experience during and after the Cold War highlights the centrality of confidence building in the transformation from conflict to peaceful coexistence and the non-violent settlement of disputes. Indeed, the emphasis on the role of CBMs and CSBMs[1] as well as the development of democratic institutions and civil society ("basket three issues"), are among the main legacies of the Helsinki, Stockholm and Vienna agreements. As a result of these processes, confidence building has been widely accepted as a central and vitally necessary dimension in any effort to bring violent political conflicts to peaceful resolutions. In particular, CBMs are also central to the efforts to resolve regional and ethno-national conflicts, in the Mediterranean region and elsewhere, through negotiation and compromise, and without building confidence, such efforts are unlikely to succeed.

As will be demonstrated in the following analysis, where CBMs have received a high priority, as during the negotiations on the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, and with respect to the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli treaty, negotiations and conflict resolution processes have succeeded. In these examples, the individual CBMs that were appropriate for the specific situation produced a vitally important spillover effect, leading to a change in the overall climate and atmosphere of relations. The spillover effect binds a number of CBMs together

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[1] CBM are "Confidence Building Measures", while CSBMs refer to "Confidence and Security Building Measures", with the addition of specific actions that related to increasing the security and stability of the parties to the process. In this paper, the use of the general term CBM is designed to encompass CSBMs as well, except where otherwise noted.

through mutual reinforcement, in order to create a sustained multiplier effect throughout civil society. Networks of people-to-people activities, dialogues and joint projects create the foundation for developing mutual understanding and compromise and constitute the essence of spillover. In contrast, where proposed CBMs are either inappropriate for the conflict environment, or limited and not pursued in a necessary to create spillover, peace processes have ended in failure.

The Basis for Confidence Building in Conflict Prevention and Resolution

In regions characterized by protracted ethno-national and religious strife and violence, including the Southern Mediterranean and greater Middle East, conflict prevention mechanisms that support the transition from zero-sum to cooperative relationships are strongly dependent on confidence building measures. Diplomats, political leaders, and academics that have studied past efforts recognize that the creation and maintenance of confidence between the societies is a necessary condition for conflict transformation.

In the transition from conflict to stability, compromise and the evolution of cooperation based on recognition of shared interests is a long and gradual process, in which CBMs play an essential role. Without a common language and set of symbols, elite movement towards conflict management and resolution is not sustainable. The zero-sum perceptions, as well as the legacies of violence, war, and terrorism leave deep fissures and high levels of distrust, and a network of CBMs (or tolerance building measures) are necessary to overcome the tendency to revert back to the old patterns.

Classical CBMs and CSBMs, developed in the CSCE framework, such as hot-lines between political leaders and military decision makers, crisis communication and early warning networks, measures to increase transparency, cooperative verification activities, and steps to lower the mutual fear of surprise attack, are important in this context, but they are insufficient and do not insure spillover. Such spillover can be understood as the glue that holds

the various CBMs together, so that the sum of the entire effort exceeds the isolated impact of the individual components and technical activities.

In addition to creating spillover, CBMs must be designed carefully to match the specific conflict environment. Not all CBMs and CSBMs appropriate in one case, such as Europe during the CSCE period, are appropriate for others. And it is also important that CBMs, by definition, do not alter capabilities or core interests, but rather establish the confidence necessary to reach compromises through negotiations. For example, in the Middle East environment, demands that Israel agree to relinquish its strategic deterrent option while the threats to national survival continue, extend far beyond the framework of CBMs, and these pressures are counter-productive, and reduce confidence and trust. [2]

Towards this goal, the more technical examples of CBMs must be supplemented and strengthened through dialogues between educators and journalists, joint textbook projects, and similar activities. When societies have been separated for many years by zero-sum perspectives and conflicts of interest, which are magnified by emotions and distrust, and create highly distorted images, such societal CBMs are vital to prevent renewed violence and begin the process of conflict resolution. Such dialogues can take many forms – academic conferences, workshops and joint research projects, meetings between journalists, political exchanges, military-to-military meetings, discussions of threat perceptions or analysis of "White Papers" (an exercise used in the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum). The involvement of decision-makers and political or military leaders, as well as opinion leaders who help formulate public opinion (teachers, journalists, religious leaders, etc.), is necessary in creating an environment of tolerance and ending hatred and incitement, which, in turn, contributes to extremism and terror.

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2. For a critique of efforts to extend the CBMs concept to other activities, including strategic weapons and territorial issues, see Marie France Desjardins, *Rethinking Confidence-Building Measures: Obstacles to agreement and the risks of overselling the process*, Adelphi Paper 307, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 4.

At the same time, to insure spillover, it is important to create a wider base for confidence building through broad involvement of civil society in dialogue and people-to-people activities. Public opinion, even in non-democratic countries, plays a major role in both maintaining conflict and also creating support for peace. If dialogue is limited to a small elite, it is possible, and in many cases, likely that the hostility that continues among the masses ("the street") will continue unabated, fed by myths, negative stereotypes and ignorance. Thus, extensive interaction and cooperative exchanges involving neighborhood groups, religious communities, students, professional guilds (doctors, lawyers, teachers, or even taxi-drivers) are vital in creating a spillover effect. Interlocking networks of mutually reinforcing and sustained people-to-people dialogues and joint projects that change negative stereotypes and provide for mutual understanding and compromise constitute important vehicles for spillover.

CBMs that contribute to spillover also take the form of functionalist cooperation in politically less sensitive areas, such as economic and environment projects, as well as planning for joint responses to natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, and even prolonged drought. Cooperation in these activities can create a basis for mutual tolerance and, eventually, shared perceptions and recognition of common interests. Such activities are central for the process of conflict amelioration and eventual resolution, in ethno-national as well as other conflicts.

All of these factors are central to understanding the role that CBMs and spillover played in the transition that took place in Europe between 1974 and 1990. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe began in Helsinki in the early 1970s, and was followed by the Stockholm and Vienna agreements. These agreements created a network of CBMs and CSBMs encompassing security dimensions as well as civil society, which provided the foundation for the OSCE and the framework of stability and peace in a greatly expanded zone following the end of the Cold War. "Basket three" issues, such as the principles of openness, freedom of movement, democracy and the rule of law, human rights or freedom of ideas, etc.

encompass societal dimensions, including the respect for different religions and traditions, that are key factors in creating and maintaining stability.

In other regions, such as the Middle East, South Asia, and the Asia-Pacific, conflict prevention and amelioration also depend on development of civil society, extensive implementation of CBMs, and spillover. Indeed, reference to the need for a network of CBMs are included in all of the treaties and agreements related to the Middle East peace process. The 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Treaty emphasizes the role of such measures, as does the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles, and the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty. In all the agreements and joint declarations that followed the 1993 DOP (the "Oslo Agreement"), the importance of CBMs was reiterated.

In addition, a number of frameworks were created to provide venues and mechanisms, particularly for regional activities to build confidence. These include the five multilateral working groups established at the Madrid conference in 1991, European Union's Euro-Med Partnership program (also known as the Barcelona project), the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation, and a similar program initiated by NATO.

Confidence Building Mechanisms

From a realist (or neo-realist) perspective of international relations, in which national policies are based on interests, trust and confidence-building would seem to be irrelevant. Indeed, while CBMs do not generally alter vital national interests, and therefore, in themselves, will not prevent conflict when these interests clash, they can help to facilitate agreement when the parties recognize the benefits of ending the hostility and reaching an agreement. Thus, even in realist approaches, CBMs are important in correcting misperceptions, breaking down barriers to communication, and facilitating the realization of shared interests. In international relations, these processes are central in preventing unwanted and accidental conflict, and helping to lead participants to a satisfactory resolution.

Conflict prevention and the transition from unmitigated conflict to some form of accommodation can be triggered by war weariness,[3] outside pressures, fundamental societal changes, internal political dynamics,[4] and other factors. However, even following a major and costly military confrontation, there is usually strong opposition to a basic change in direction (unless the outcome is catastrophic and leads to total surrender and military occupation, as in the case of Germany and Japan in 1945).

As Henry Kissinger has shown, in the environment of a long and protracted struggle, peace efforts based on rapid and radical transitions are unlikely to succeed. The first phase of negotiations is often tentative, and faces opposition from a variety of forces with ideological or other interests in maintaining the status quo. The general proclivity for a "tit for tat" strategy must be broken, and the first steps in this process are often the most difficult. Questions regarding the sincerity of the other side, as well as the ability of leaders to sustain a peace process in the face of domestic opposition, are central.

Pre-negotiation activities (getting to the table or "negotiations about negotiations") as well as preventive diplomacy are designed to mitigate the hostility and smooth the way towards direct negotiations and formal agreements. Techniques include efforts to define and narrow the sources of conflict and the national interests, discussions focusing on new approaches to achieve those interests, measures designed to de-escalate the violence and the rhetoric used to justify it, development of communication channels, and steps towards mutual commitments to replace confrontation with negotiation.

When formal negotiations begin, the intensity of the contacts between the parties increases. At this stage, factors such as good faith, mutuality, and commitment to

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3. A strong case for war weariness as the key in explaining the beginning of the Israeli-Egyptian transition following the 1973 is made by Michael N. Barnett, *Confronting the Costs of War: Military Power, State, and Society in Egypt and Israel* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1993).

4. Changes in Israeli society and politics, as evidenced in the 1992 elections, which brought Yitzchak Rabin and the Labor Party to power, contributed to the 1993 Oslo Agreement. See David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accord* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

implementing agreements are critical to success, while failure in any of these dimensions can halt the process and spark violence and confrontation. At the same time, however, the negotiators also need to demonstrate resoluteness to their own constituencies, to insure that they will obtain the best agreement possible, in terms of national interests. This contradiction that is the essence of bargaining processes makes successful negotiations particularly difficult.

After agreements are reached, they must be implemented. This process was relatively successful in the cases of the regime change in South Africa and the transition in Eastern Europe following the end of the Cold War, but in other situations, where the nature and causes of violence are entirely different, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, this phase is far more complex. Disagreements over definitions, interpretations, and sequences can trigger crises, which, unless defused, will re-ignite the cycle of violence.

In each of these phases, confidence-building measures are essential in developing the foundations for the transition from conflict to cooperation. Nations, ethnic groups, and members of different religions with a history of hostility and violence between them cannot resolve or manage the conflict without some form of mutual understanding and communication. Before any party will agree to take risks in the hope that this will lead to a quid pro quo from the other parties, a basis for reciprocal risk-taking must be established.

In the pre-negotiation phase, when the level of mutual suspicion is highest, the actors often have no direct or reliable channels of communication. In order to deescalate, they must signal their intentions in a clear and non-threatening manner. Friendly sports matches ("ping-pong diplomacy" in the case of U.S.-China relations, and wrestling teams in the case of Iran and the US) and cultural exchanges can help to alter the atmosphere, allowing initial contacts to begin, and raising the prospect of a "non-zero-sum" relationship. In such a framework, the mutual benefits of cooperation can be realized, despite the existence of conflicting interests. In

contrast, in a strictly zero-sum framework, one party's concessions are seen as a benefit for the other side, and the reverse.

The use of CBMs can also help to alter deeply ingrained hostile images that make changes in perceptions very difficult. Cognitive dissonance reinforces these images, even when efforts are made to alter the negative impressions. However, in the extraordinary cases when conciliatory actions by leaders of the opposing side are unexpected and inconsistent with negative images and perceptions, they can lead to fundamental changes in public opinion.

Similarly, CBMs can contribute to conflict prevention and dialogue in ethno-national conflict relationships characterized by zero-sum perceptions regarding "historical justice." When the parties have mutually exclusive views of the past and of responsibility for events, unilateral CBMs can broaden understanding of the perceptions of the other. This process can lead to the realization that insistence on particularistic definitions of historical justice will lead to continued conflict. Such a realization, in turn, promotes a change in emphasis from the settling of old scores to the development of pragmatic and forward-looking relationships.

During the formal negotiation phase, mutual CBMs can help the parties in making difficult concessions involving significant risks. (Although, by definition, activities that involve significant security or political risks go beyond the concept of confidence building measures. However, the definition of what constitutes a significant risk is subject to debate.) While intensive and substantive negotiations are taking place, gestures and words that do not directly impinge upon the substance of the talks, but indicate a sense of common fate and shared humanity, are important in creating an atmosphere of cooperation and transition from war to peace. In this phase, structural CBMs, such as crisis communications systems ("hot lines") and exchanges of journalists, academics, and other public figures are important. In 1963, during the talks between the U.S. and the USSR following the Cuban Missile Crisis, such measures contributed to the agreement on the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the evolution of detente. Similarly, during the period between 1969 and 1972, when the U.S. and

Soviet governments were negotiating the SALT I and ABM treaties, a series of cultural and other exchange agreements helped to ease the transition and reduce internal opposition. CBMs also provide a safety-net which keeps negotiations going during crises, when the wisdom of continued discussions is questioned on one of both sides to a dispute.

In successful examples of preventive diplomacy and post-conflict negotiations, after agreements are reached, confidence-building measures are still important in providing assurances with respect to implementation. Visible preparations for implementation, prior to deadlines, are important examples of the type of CBMs that can be undertaken in this context. In addition, cooperative verification and monitoring of agreements are also important CBMs. In the CFE/OSCE context, the Open Skies Treaty provides an important example. The informal US-Soviet agreement in 1991 to withdraw thousands of tactical nuclear weapons from forward deployments, based on parallel unilateral statements (in contrast to formal negotiated treaties with detailed verification provisions), is also considered by some to be an example of a prominent CBM.

Spillover: The Essential Factor

The development and implementation of CBMs at any or all of the phases in the context of preventive diplomacy does not automatically lead to successful and long-lasting conflict resolution. In order to be successful, CBMs must spill over into other areas, and create a climate of mutuality in which a security community can be formed and maintained. The proof of success of dialogues, conferences, people-to-people activities, joint economic and environmental cooperation and projects is the substantive reduction in tensions and conflict, and the transition to non-zero sum relations. A multiplicity of such channels does not automatically guarantee spillover to conflict resolution, and there are many cases of apparent cooperative relations, which reverted to intense conflict. The disintegration of Yugoslavia is a particularly tragic example, and India-Pakistan CBMs also had no wider impact.

When conflict is compounded by misperceptions and ignorance, either on the part of all the parties, or when one party and population harbors myths about and demonizes the other, spillover from CBMs results in changing images and perceptions of interests. In this process, as the parties learn more about each other's history, customs and values, and strip away the misconceptions and negative stereotypes, they are able to reduce the level of antagonism between them. However, when spillover from CBMs is minimal or does not take place, the myths and sources of conflict remain intact, and even if interests change, the conflicts are likely to continue.

CBMs and Spillover in the Israeli-Egyptian and Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaties

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the most intense and protracted ethno-national disputes in the world. The conflict has a multiplicity of causes, including a deep-seated territorial dispute, different cultural and religious perspectives, economic disparities, and the added impact of colonialism and superpower intervention. For many years, there were no direct channels of communication, as the Arab states refused to recognize or hold direct talks with representatives of the State of Israel. In this environment, the role of CBMs and spillover in conflict transformation is vital and on-going.

The first steps towards peace took place following the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in the form of direct talks between Egyptian and Israeli officers in the Sinai desert. These negotiations created the foundations for the first of two formal disengagement agreements reached in 1974 and 1975. This limited interaction between Israel and Egypt, in the context of mutual exhaustion following the most devastating war between these two states, started a process of redefining national interests, in terms of the transition from zero-sum to non-zero sum perspectives, and led to a de-escalation of violence.

The next major step in the process took place in 1977, following the election of a new government headed by Prime Minister Menachem Begin. After secret exploratory contacts, created enough confidence at the elite level to proceed further with the negotiation process,

which led to President Sadat's breakthrough decision to visit Jerusalem in November 1977, and Prime Minister Begin's immediate, positive and unconditional response.

These events remain the quintessential example of confidence building, and illustrate the importance of CBMs in the transition from war to peace. After three decades of warfare, which exhausted both Egypt and Israel, Begin and Sadat recognized the need to break the deadlock and transform myths and misconceptions. These decisions led directly to a fundamental change in Israeli public opinion and perceptions. Every moment of Sadat's visit was covered by the Israeli media, and the streets along route of the motorcade were lined with thousands of people with Egyptian flags. At this stage, Israelis suspended their previous conceptions, and realized that Egypt was prepared to end the state of war and establish diplomatic relations. Normalization, in the form of direct state-to-state relations at the highest level, was already taking place.

In this atmosphere, as the negotiations proceeded through often difficult phases, the change in atmosphere resulting from the CBMs helped to promote mutual concessions and avoid failure. The mutual emphasis on non-violent resolution of conflicts and the change in tone were important aspects of confidence building, and were central to the Camp David agreement of 1978, in which the framework for peace was negotiated, and in the completion of the 1979 Peace Treaty itself.

CBMs are also important in the post-agreement phase, particularly in terms of the cooperative monitoring activities of the Multinational Force and Observers[5] (MFO). In addition, borders were opened, regular air and bus service began, and hundreds of thousands of Israelis visited Egypt, contributing significantly to this branch of the economy. Israeli tourism increased, despite the terrorist attacks in Egypt, and in contrast to the overall reduction in tourism to Egypt from other countries.

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5. The MFO itself is a compromise between Israel's preference for a military force and the Egyptian desire for observers.

However, the absence of Egyptian reciprocity has had a negative impact on Israeli perceptions, and contributed to the continued tension in the relationship. Contrary to Israeli expectations, and the explicit language of the Peace Treaty, this agreement did not trigger a fundamental change in attitudes and in relations via CBMs. The relationship between Israel and Egypt has been characterized by a "Cold Peace," and in some instances, a "Cold War." Although President Mubarak took office in 1981, following the assassination of President Sadat, he has avoided visiting Israel (with the singular exception of the funeral of Yitzchak Rabin in 1995, after intense American pressure), and despite the frequent visits of Israeli leaders to Egypt. In addition, Egyptian professional groups, including many journalists, academics, and lawyers, maintain a boycott of Israel, ostracizing and penalizing people who visit and work on cooperative projects. In addition, during the short-lived ACRS process, the intense Egyptian pressure to force Israel to relinquish its strategic deterrent and "weapon of last resort" as a pre-condition for implementing confidence building measures, rather than as a logical outcome of such a process, was entirely counter-productive. This campaign led many Israelis to conclude that the Egyptian goal was to make Israel vulnerable to destruction, rather to work towards peaceful cooperation.[6]

The absence of CBMs and dialogues with Egyptians influenced the Israeli perception of negotiations and relations with other partners, including the Palestinians and Syria. The "Cold Peace" which prevails with respect to Egypt is seen as a negative precedent for future agreements, while an increase in CBMs and cooperation would enhance Egypt's influence and would also spillover to other peace efforts.

CBMs in the Jordanian-Israeli Case

CBMs also played a central role in the negotiations leading to the formal signing of the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty in 1994, as well as during the period of implementation that

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[6] Gerald M. Steinberg, "The 1995 NPT Extension and Review Conference and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process," *NonProliferation Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Fall 1996)

followed. During this period, CBMs that were visible to the general public helped to demonstrate the changes in the relationship beyond the elite level. Examples included mutual visits across the border by top political leaders, including the late King Hussein, Crown Prince Hassan, and the late Prime Minister Rabin. At first these were formally secret, but the fact that they were taking place was publicized and helped to convince the Israeli public of the commitment of Jordan to the process, and the reverse. Such visits gradually became more public and routine. Dramatic flyovers of King Hussein's plane, and public exchanges between the King in the cockpit and Israeli officials (Prime Minister Rabin and President Weizmann) were also symbols that penetrated to all levels of society.

In the implementation phase that followed the signing of the Treaty, CBMs continued to play an important role. The open borders and frequent interaction between Israelis and Jordanians at various levels helps to provide a basis for dialogue and a cooperative approach to joint problem solving. Jordanian workers cross into Israel daily, and Israeli textile firms have moved some operations into Jordan, providing employment. When differences arise, the extensive network of ties between the two societies, at both the elite and people-to-people levels, provide mechanisms for peaceful exchanges and resolution of the differences.   Most importantly, King Hussein's condolence visit in March 1997, after the murder of 7 Israeli girls was a very important CBM from an Israeli perspective. This gesture of sympathy and common humanity helped to cement the transition in relations with Jordan.

Spillover – The Necessary Ingredient

Both examples of successful Arab-Israeli peace negotiations illustrate the close links between CBMs that penetrated to different levels of society and successful peace negotiations. In these and other examples of conflict management and resolution, spillover, through the involvement of civil society and people-to-people interactions was essential in overcoming obstacles to peace. Public opinion plays a major role in both maintaining conflict and also

creating support for negotiation and compromise. If dialogue is limited to a small elite, the hostility among the masses ("the street") will continue, fed by myths, negative stereotypes and ignorance, and encouraged by domestic political processes. In contrast, extensive interaction and exchanges among different groups is vital. Such activities create "spillover" which influence the political process, creating or strengthening the domestic support for developing cooperation between conflicting groups.

Capacity building through training programs can create the foundations for CBM activities in each of these areas, as well as increasing the sensitivity of officials, educators and journalists with respect to issues that increase perceptions of hostility in conflict situations. In this context, declaratory and symbolic CBMs in official speeches, the media, and textbooks continue to be important. Statements that contribute to mutual fears, and increase the level of suspicion, are counterproductive. Potential additional CBMs include coordination of regional responses to natural disasters, including earthquakes, cooperation in water desalination and conservation, and in environmental issues.

Finally, it is also important to recognize the limits of CBMs. As some analysts have noted, such measures are not cost-free, and can be counterproductive in the absence of political will to pursue an end to confrontation and promote conflict prevention. "CBMs are only as strong as the fundamental political will for compromise…"[7] and can only succeed when they are understood as the means to the broader objective of conflict prevention and management, rather than objectives in themselves.

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7. Marie-France Desjardins, *Rethinking Confidence-Building Measures: Obstacles to agreement and the risks of overselling the process*, Adelphi Paper 307, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.

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