

European Experience of Conflict Resolution and Confidence Building and its Relevance for South Asia

Lecture

Dr. Hans-Georg Wieck

February 2004

I.

The European System of Confidence Building, Conflict Resolution and Democratic State Building

A little more than 15 years ago, the Cold War raged in Europe. The continent at large and Germany in particular were divided. Strong nuclear and conventional forces faced each other in a potentially deadly confrontation on the line of actual control.

For centuries the European continent had been the stage of power rivalries and war. In order to improve their position in Europe nation states established control over other parts of the world. After World War II exhausted Europe, in particular France and Germany realized that it could survive and regain its social, economic, cultural and political viability only through mutual cooperation confidence building policies and in the end integration. The European Union entered the post Cold War phase of development as the most promising choice for the nations that came from behind the Iron Curtain that separated Europe for almost fifty years.

The deadly confrontation of East and West –separating Berlin, Germany and the continent for almost 50 years was overcome peacefully by way of political and arms control treaties agreements that were the product of more than 15 years of dialogue between East and West taking place at the climax of military and ideological confrontation. The perspective of peace and cooperation prevailed over the perspective of war with losers on all sides.

Now Europe appears to be, I would rather say, is a largely peaceful continent. The fundamental changes were brought about by the revision of the Foreign and Security Policy of the Soviet Union, which in the eighties agreed – under the leadership of Gorbachev – to abandon its political, military and economic domination over Central Europe and parts of the Balkan region. The fundamental change in orientation was translated into binding agreements between NATO and Warsaw-Pact countries on controlled and monitored conventional force ceilings in the European theatre between the Urals and the Atlantic Ocean. It was as well translated into commitments of the Warsaw Pact countries, including the Soviet Union, to transform their societies into market economies and democracies of a European standard (Council of Europe; CSCE).

These dramatic changes could not have taken shape without a long period of incubation. Had the ideological and emotional hostility persisted on either side, even under declining economic conditions, it would hardly have been possible to turn the tide in such a short period of time in crucial areas of statehood and national awareness. The essential agreements were concluded (Copenhagen June 1990; Paris November 1990) after the establishment of democratic rule in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and the unification of Germany, but prior to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Economic Union of the socialist camp was to happen anyway after the democratisation of Central Europe, but the agreements were concluded with the assumption that the Soviet Union –without the Baltic Republics, would

continue to exist. That did not happen – in response to a communist coup d'état in Moscow in August 1991, the leaders of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine dissolved the Soviet Union in December 1991 and opened the doors to Europe even to a larger degree than originally anticipated.

Looking now at the whole process of confidence building and conflict resolution in Europe you can distinguish clearly three stages, which are quite different in nature:

1. The Cold War and Confidence Building Measures in Europe

Let me recall that the Wartime Coalition of the USA, Great Britain and the Soviet Union collapsed soon after the end of hostilities on the European continent in 1945. Countries liberated by Soviet forces were turned into Soviet styled communist ruled states. In Greece there was a civil war and communist parties in Italy and France were expanding their influence. The perspective of a European continent under the political control of Moscow was not an entirely unrealistic one. The USA and in particular Great Britain did not want this to become a reality neither in Europe nor at the Persian Gulf (Iran). Central European countries including parts of Germany had to live with Soviet domination for another 45 years in spite of several uprisings, while the Western parts of Germany and the other European countries joined the first peacetime military alliance of the United States – NATO – in 1949. Simultaneously, the war torn countries in Europe that were free to choose their political destiny decided to overcome the tragic power rivalries and wars for domination and entered the promising road of European Integration.

Both – NATO and the EU overcoming with their enlarged memberships the power driven divisions of Europe of the second half of the twentieth century - – constitute today the major foundation for peace among the nations in Europe, the rule of law, pluralistic democracy, social stability and economic prosperity. These countries are linked with the other countries in Europe that - for one reason or another – do not want or cannot yet be member states of these structures – by way of cooperative and partnership agreements, but also by the joint membership in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Indeed, it is the OSCE of today and its predecessor since the seventies - the “Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe” - that played for decades the key role in the tedious and cumbersome process of confidence building across the ideological and military dividing lines in Europe and between East and West.

For decades more or less far-reaching disarmament proposals from both sides of the dividing line in Europe including proposals for the termination of the division of Germany had brought no positive result. Simultaneously the danger of war by miscalculation, by accident or by determination had continued to overshadow all other processes in Europe– with nuclear war around the corner. Everybody was reminded of it on the occasion of the building of the wall through Berlin in 1961 and on the occasion of the nuclear confrontation caused by the deployment of medium range nuclear Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962. This confrontation and the barely prevented nuclear war in 1962 gave birth to both: the concept of arms control in the nuclear field (nuclear test ban treaty; nuclear non-proliferation treaty) and to conflict management on the political stage in Europe.

The Soviet Union wanted to achieve détente by achieving international recognition for the existing boundaries in Europe, including the divided Germany. The North Atlantic Alliance developed a concept of defence and détente, aiming at a European conference for political and

economic cooperation and for the enlargement of human contacts beyond and across the existing dividing lines. Also, negotiations about balanced conventional force reductions in the central European area of confrontation (MbFR) were initiated. This initiative led in the end to the Treaty of NATO and of Warsaw Pact Countries signed in Paris in November 1990 on “Conventional Forces in Europe” that – together with follow-up agreements - determined the size of conventional forces and their mobility in all participating countries. A similar agreement was signed in connection with the Dayton-Agreement on Bosnia by the successor states of Yugoslavia. Only the so-called neutral countries are not included – as of now (Sweden, Finland, Austria, Switzerland).

In other words: **dialogue** was put into place in various fields in spite of the existing ideological and military confrontation.

What was achieved with the Helsinki Final Act of 1975?

The Final Helsinki Act of 1975 – signed by all countries in Europe including the USA and Canada (the two countries had and have security commitments towards Europe, and deploy forces on the continent) - established follow-up conferences for the review of the situation, fulfilment of obligations and for the development of new cross border measures of confidence building.

The Final Act committed countries to observe the existing borders, which should not be altered by force if at all, and to observe human rights, including the right of free expression and assembly, thus providing legitimacy to opposition groups behind the Iron Curtain in Europe; economic exchanges were encouraged (however excluding COCOM protected strategic goods).

The Helsinki Final Act initiated the concept of confidence building measures also in the military field – with the commitment for the exchanges of delegations, also in the military arena and with the commitment of signatory country to notify on a voluntary basis in advance (21 days) major manoeuvres (21.000 to 25.000 troops), of “other manoeuvres” and “military movements”. Also observers could be sent to attend military manoeuvres.

In 1986, that means after the coming to power of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, the “Stockholm Conference on Confidence-and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament Conference in Europe (CDE 1984 –1986)” adopted another set of confidence building measures.

The initiation of DIALOGUE as a means of communication beyond the dividing lines took place during the darkest period of East-West confrontation in Europe, including the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, suppression of the Solidarnosc-Trade Union in Poland and a threatening deployment of Soviet Forces on the Polish-Soviet border, as well as the deployment of the SS 20 Medium range missiles in the Soviet Union targeted against Europe and Japan, as well as the NATO decision for a countermeasure by way of deploying Pershing Medium Range missiles and cruise missiles in Europe.

What was achieved in the end in the interest of the nations in Europe?

Under the impact of an extremely dangerous confrontation of nuclear and conventional forces along the dividing lines and deep into the territories of both sides, including the USA, both

sides – East and West - engaged – for different reasons and with different objectives – in dialogue in order

- to secure their areas of control
- to reduce war by accident and miscalculation
- to maintain contact across the dividing lines and to achieve agreements in nuclear arms control
- to offer to their own public a credible strategy of defence and détente
- to advance their respective political and ideological objectives in the opposing countries
- to reduce the concentration of military forces on the dividing lines in Central Europe (MbfR)

In the end the dialogue at various levels and in various fields brought about and facilitated the readiness of both sides to discuss and settle the issues of the Cold War – on the basis of respective national interests, including the Soviet Union seeking full acceptance in the circle of big countries on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation.

A sufficient degree of reliable knowledge was available on both sides in order to achieve a proper assessment of intentions, potentials and perspectives. The freedom of the press situation after 1985 in the Soviet Union contributed to these developments immensely. As mentioned earlier, it was the change of direction within the Soviet leadership that was the essential event in the unfolding of the events since 1985. But this astonishing message was received rather well in the West, which was more informed about the Soviet Union and Central Europe than before - as a result of the CSCE based and fostered East-West dialogue.

2. The second phase of Conflict Management and confidence building 1990 -2000

It is obvious that the post Cold War Europe was and continues to be confronted with a number of issues the solution of which required and continues to require the involvement of over arching structures.

Irrespective of the enlargement process that is pursued by the European Union and by the North Atlantic Alliance, the CSCE – and now the OSCE – which is recognized as a Regional Security Body by the United Nations according to Chapter VIII of the UN Charter but which is still lacking the status of an international organization based on an international treaty – fulfils a great number of tasks

- in conflict stricken areas of Europe, such as the successor states of Yugoslavia, in Chechnya (a mission was closed down by Russia, but the issue continues to be on the agenda),
- in countries, from which Russian troops still need to be withdrawn (Georgia, Moldova) and
- in countries lacking democratic institutions (Central Asia) or returning to non-democratic structures such as Belarus. The democratic transformation is on hold in many countries, and the official reports of OSCE supported international election observer missions dispatched to the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are filled with reports on violations are not encouraging.

The OSCE is engaged in the adaptation and widening of the Europe-wide regime on the size of conventional forces and on the accompanying verification system:

- **The Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC)**, which is composed of representatives of all 55 OSCE participating states deals with the implementation of the existing agreements and with their further development (CFE – Conventional Forces Europe and its further development; Treaty on Open Skies, CFE for the successor states of Yugoslavia)
- **The Charter for European Security**, Istanbul 1999; (Cooperation of Security oriented Structures – NATO, EU, OSCE, UN).
- **Security Forum on Europe** This institution does not exist yet, however is considered indispensable by many countries, among others the USA and Russia in order to ensure Political High level involvement on issues related to the security in and of Europe)

It is obvious that - in the end - the OSCE agreements on the size and mobility of military forces in the OSCE zone, which extends to the Pacific and the Chinese border will need a permanent political super-structure, which, however, is out of sight at present. Therefore, the results achieved cannot be considered stable and permanent for the future to come.

In the nineties the OSCE is foremost engaged politically in the management of the crises in connection with the dissolution of the Yugoslav Federation and in a number of successor states. Next to the Permanent Council for Political Affairs and the Forum for Security Cooperation the OSCE maintains organs for

- **Conflict Prevention**, Crisis Management, Post Conflict Rehabilitation
- A High Commissioner on **National Minorities**
- An Office for **Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**
- A Representative on **Freedom of the Media and**
- **OSCE Missions in participating States** (20 missions with 4.000 staff members)

20 field missions fulfil these functions on the basis of instructions received from the Permanent Council – taking decisions by consensus minus one (the conflict country) – and acting after consultation with the host government, but not necessarily with their agreement.

3. The Future Roles – a Perception

Under the impact of September 11, 2001, also the OSCE has shifted - at least temporarily - the emphasize of its work from democratisation processes to the cooperation in combating “**International Terrorism**”. It also upgraded its work on combating “**Human Trafficking**” **sidestepping the emergence of an ever more burning issues namely the marginalizing of democratic institutions and pluralistic civil societies, including the freedom of media, the systematic domestic observation of elections.** Russia and other successor states consider that the OSCE looks only to the shortcomings of Eastern Europe and not also at deficiencies in Western Europe (Northern Ireland; Spain, France regarding minorities).

In a way, membership in NATO and in the EU opens other vistas to countries in transition, while commitments towards OSCE demands are not “rewarded”.

Since Istanbul (1999) no Summit has taken place due to continued disagreement on essential issues (democratisation processes, Chechnya, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus)). Russia has blocked a number of decisions.

Membership in NATO and in the European Union on the other hand is tied to the establishment of genuine democracy, pluralistic civil society, the rule of law, independence of

the judiciary and in the case of the European Union also to the establishment of market economy.

II.

Confidence Building and Conflict Management in South Asia

A few weeks ago, the leaders of India and Pakistan meet in Istanbul –in the context of the regular SAARC-Summit Conferences. It is the first visit of the Prime Minister to Islamabad since five years. The Boston Globe Columnist H.D. S. Greenway welcomed recent initiatives of the Indian Prime Minister for new talks and positive reactions from Islamabad and gave the following heading “The hopeful dance of India and Pakistan.”

Professor Raja Mohan recalled in his very remarkable book “Crossing the Rubicon”, which presents to the public the cumbersome process that eventually led to the weaponizing of the nuclear power in India and consequently in Pakistan, the fact that the two countries had embarked on confidence building a few years ago already, although in general both countries reject the idea that CBMs constitute a way out of the dangerously conflictual situation in Kashmir and the relations at large. I took this quotation from Raja Mohan’s book (pages 19/20):

“During the 1990s, India moved towards a recognition of the importance of establishing military confidence-building measures (CBMs) with Pakistan to promote nuclear stability between the two nations. This transition in India’s nuclear policy was confirmed by the draft nuclear doctrine that India issued in August 1999. The last sentence of the draft state:

‘Nuclear arms control measures shall be sought as part of national security policy to reduce potential threats and to protect our own capability and its effectiveness. In view of the very high destructive potential of nuclear weapons, appropriate nuclear risk reduction and confidence building measures shall be sought, negotiated and instituted.’

For a Western audience reared on deterrence and arms control, the above statement might sound self-evident, but in the context of the Indian debate that was centred around normative considerations, acknowledging that arms control is part of security policy and recognizing the need to institute nuclear confidence –building measures was a substantial move forward

The new support for arms control and nuclear confidence building was built in the incremental evolution of attitudes during the 1990s amidst an intense exposure of the Indian strategic community to the unending two track initiatives that brought former diplomats, retired generals and other intellectuals from both countries to discuss bilateral relations. These contacts were funded by non-governmental foundations in the USA and encouraged by the American administration with a view to promote nuclear dialogue and CBMs in the subcontinent. By June 1997, when India and Pakistan had agreed on a structured dialogue, they had put peace and security, including CBMs, at the top of their bilateral agenda. After the two governments agreed, in September 1998 to initiate talks after a period of tension following the nuclear tests, the first formal discussion of nuclear and conventional CBMs followed in October 1998. This was further consolidated in the memorandum of understanding (MoU) on CBMs that the Indian and Pakistani Foreign Secretaries signed during Vajpayee’s visit to Lahore. At the inconclusive conversation at Agra in July 2001, it is believed that the resumption of the negotiations on nuclear and other CBMs was among them many understandings arrived at between the leaders of India and Pakistan.

India's readiness to negotiate CBMs to stabilize its relationship with Pakistan has also involved another important intellectual leap. Throughout the 1990s, many in India were concerned that the CBMs were part of some American plot to rollback Indian nuclear and missile capabilities. These measures were seen as the first steps on a slippery slope of de-nuclearization. The Indian strategic community vigorously objected to the United States' constant refrains on the potential for nuclear war in the subcontinent and Kashmir as the most dangerous nuclear flashpoint in the world. The typical Indian argument then was that India and Pakistan were capable of managing their own affairs and that they did not need American intervention to promote stability in the subcontinent."

Let me add, however, that already in the early nineties, both sides agreed on the level of Foreign Secretaries on a number of CBMs, such as exchange of lists of nuclear (non-weapon) sites, which should be spared of any actions in war. Also some CBMs were established for communications between the commanding officers on the line of actual control in Kashmir.

Certainly, Indian and Pakistani participants of International Security Conference will have been exposed time and again to appeals and suggestions regarding the usefulness of CBMs in the situation they find themselves in Kashmir and in the relationship between the two states. I understand their reluctance to transplant experience, may be good experience from Europe to the Indian subcontinent. However, I suggest to our friends here and on the other side of the border to study thoroughly the history of arms control, confidence building measures and regional conferences on Security and Cooperation as it unfolds as a major contributing element to the peaceful solution of the cold war and the importance of dialogue in a situation which is dominated by mutual distrust, suspicion, hostile moods and animosity. The essence of the approach chosen within the Western alliance in confrontation with the military and ideological potential of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union in particular was the doctrine of "Defence and Détente". While defence is a static element, indispensable in uncertain circumstances, détente stands for dialogue, talks, for arms control, for exchanges of views at all levels, and for alternative thinking. It will sound out ideas, it will affect the intellectual understanding of the situation and broaden the scope of ideas how to cope with a tense situation that brought about war several times, that affects the image of your country abroad.

I do compare the India-Pakistan-Situation with the first period of Détente efforts in the sixties and seventies. The idea at the time was not to achieve a change of regime in the Soviet Union or vice versa. The idea was to control the nuclear situation, to control the tense political and conventional weapon situation on the ground in Europe and on the high sea and to create nongovernmental and governmental "chat rooms". In the seventies some mild military confidence building measures were initiated. Also delegations from all walks of life exchanged visits with official programs. Also the fact that every two years a governmental review conference took place was of importance to influence the state of mind of people on both sides. Looking at India and at Pakistan I could think of an endless number of exchange visits that could take place and shape the thinking of each other. Today the official mutual perception is rather hostile in character and tone. Let hundreds of delegations from both sides meet in both countries. In the end a more fruitful and substantive talk can be held – on the basis of mutual trust.

February ,2004

Hans-Georg Wieck