

Lessons Learned from the Process towards CSBMs and Disarmament in Europe in the 1980s

Lars-Erik Lundin

Introduction

"Tomorrow, the United States will join the Soviet Union and 33 other nations at a European disarmament conference in Stockholm. The Conference will search for practical and meaningful ways to increase European security and preserve peace. I believe that 1984 finds the United States in the strongest position in years to establish a constructive and realistic working relationship with the Soviet Union."

(Address by President Ronald Reagan on January 16, 1984¹)

This is a policy brief about CSBMs and Arms Control in the 1980s. The focus is mainly on Europe and builds on experiences² from the *process* just before, during and after the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe which took place between January 1984 and September 1986. This process formed part of a wider chain of events, the full importance of which was not widely understood until 1989, or perhaps even much later.

The added value of this Brief may be to highlight the potential importance of what many would refer to as *associated measures* when dealing with the current dangers of

- nuclear weapons,
- a renewed arms race with ever more devastating weapons,

and the risk of war, including nuclear war.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/01/17/world/transcript-of-reagan-s-speech-on-soviet-american-relations.html>

² The author was as a junior diplomat attached to the Swedish Foreign Ministry and its disarmament department during the periods 1976-1978 and then again from early 1982 to October 1986. He continued to follow the issues discussed in this paper from the Swedish Embassy in Bonn until mid-1989 whereafter he again was attached to the Ministry and its disarmament and later European security departments from 1989.

Summary

The main lesson, as drawn by the author, is that governments and civil society would do well not to underestimate the potential importance of step-by-step approaches to CSBMs and arms control. These may, as a rule, not be able to prevent war, including surprise attacks. But they have other benefits as outlined below. The paper focusses on three sets of lessons learned, namely the importance of

- a comprehensive approach,
- step by step processes,
- and elite perceptions

when pursuing progress towards arms control and disarmament on all levels, including the nuclear. Without applying these three perspectives, armament proposals may remain ineffective and not even help to reduce the risk of war. In particular, history shows the importance of an active and positive role of key world leaders.

Arguably, agreed CSBMs at the end of the Cold War helped to pave the way not only for conventional but also nuclear disarmament.

“In accordance with the provisions contained in this document each participating State has the right to conduct inspections on the territory of any other participating State within the zone of application for CSBMs.”

(Document of the Stockholm conference art. 65)³

A significant added value of the Stockholm conference was the enhanced recognition of the importance of definitions and verifiability. Indeed, the acceptance of the principle of on-site inspection in the Stockholm Conference was perceived as a breakthrough. It was strongly resisted by the military establishment in several countries, not only in Moscow. Given the fact that the number of inspections was very limited, the importance was not in the first place related to the need to prevent surprise attacks. Rather the measure can be seen as a breakthrough in principle conducive to creating confidence in the intention of participating states to comply with the provisions of the document as a politically binding agreement.

There is much more to say about the role of civil society. But specifically, as regards CSBMs, interest from civil society was extremely limited. What this paper can do, therefore, is to primarily make a case for upgrading the attention, on the part of civil society, to step-by-

³ <https://www.osce.org/fsc/41238>

step approaches. This is a topical issue in 2019 not least ahead of the NPT Review Conference in 2020.

What is most important at this point in late 2019? Is it to focus on what may be perceived as technical steps? Or should more far-reaching normative political agreements be the main ambition? Or is it to change the political discourse on these issues in different countries? Dealing with those questions requires another paper.

Scene Setter: Similarities with the Current Situation

The current situation as regards arms control and disarmament in 2019 is a reminder in several ways of the period just preceding the end of the Cold War from 1983 to 1989.

This, in itself, brings hope. The question is if and how the development can be repeated without committing mistakes that led to the current situation.

Some of the most pertinent characteristics that need to be taken into account, indicating similarities between the situation then and now, are as follows:

- The tension between major powers and between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact was high just before the start of the Stockholm Conference.
- The level of threat perceptions in general terms was high, as illustrated both by events and military spending which, according to SIPRI data, increased dramatically both in the United States and in Central Europe in the 1980s.
- The perceived risk of nuclear war was high, although perhaps not as high as it later was proven to have been.
- There was a substantial concern in the West that the Soviet conventional strength exposed Europe to the danger of surprise attacks, as demonstrated in Czechoslovakia in 1968.
- The number of ongoing military conflicts was significant. Violent conflicts were going on in the mid-1980s including the devastating war between Iran and Iraq with enormous human suffering and the Soviet war in Afghanistan.
- The focus on conflict prevention and conflict resolution was limited, although efforts were made (for example by Olof Palme on Iraq-Iran).
- There was a strongly declared belief on the Western side that nuclear deterrence remained extremely important and necessitated the first use of nuclear weapons policy.
- The resistance on the Western side to enter into discussions of limitations on the deployment of nuclear weapons on the sub-regional level in Europe was pronounced. A case in point was the proposal on the Nordic nuclear weapon-free zone and the proposal put forward by Olof Palme in 1982 on a zone free from battlefield nuclear weapons in Central Europe.
- No real arms control negotiations were underway.

- The public discourse was very harsh.
- Civil society, in general, put little hope in multilateral negotiations and directed its attention mainly towards what was happening with the nuclear weapons in Europe.
- The global discourse on the need for disarmament was in a deplorable state. Whereas the first special session on disarmament in the United Nations in 1978 had managed to agree by consensus on the need for general and complete disarmament under effective international control, the second special session in 1982 brought no substantive outcome worth mentioning. The global disarmament machinery did not respond to the gravity of the situation, and there was a need to find new ways to move forward.
- Equally, on the regional level, a sense of hopelessness about the new grave situation was evident at the Madrid follow-up meeting of the CSCE as it approached its end in the early autumn of 1983. There was little hope in the prospects for new negotiations and most experts were extremely pessimistic about the proposed Stockholm Conference.
- Multilateral negotiations were not at the centre of attention during the years from 1983 to the end of the decade.

The Process towards the End of the Cold War

In retrospect, it seems as if the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev from 1985 gradually concluded that the isolation of the Soviet Union in the face of globalisation was misguided. The integration of the Soviet Union into the international community through modernisation brought more prospects for progress than isolation and a unique focus on nuclear and conventional deterrence. A nuclear war should never be fought.

On the Western side, trust seemed to be developing under President Reagan that it was possible to reach viable agreements with the Soviet Union from a position of strength. The US effort to underpin the emerging Soviet perceptions about the need for a change was supported by key political actors in Europe, including Helmut Schmidt who defended the need to develop a military response to the SS 20 intermediate-range missile through the deployment of Pershing IIs and ground-launched cruise missiles in Germany. This was strongly contested by civil society and led to protests on a level not seen since the Vietnam War.

There was a need to take control of the military-industrial establishment with its built-in interest to increase threat perceptions and to overestimate the power of the other side. In the late 1980s, the author reported from Germany about think tanks acting as lobbyists projecting an ever more powerful Soviet Union, while others raised serious question marks.

On the Soviet side, in 1986 the new Soviet leadership issued harsh instructions to the military leadership, in succession represented by Marshals Ogarkov and Acromeyev, to accept CSBMs and in particular on-site inspections.

Extreme caution is, however, advised when attempting to draw conclusions about *causality* when it comes to explaining the end of the Cold War. Very few analysts can document an awareness about the way ahead pre-1989. Other analysts working on the basis of open archives note many coincidences that catalysed further developments.

And relatively few observers seem to have given or to give significant importance to the negotiated processes towards CSBMS and disarmament from the mid-80s.

- After all several of the key agreements are no longer in force.
- A large percentage of the actual disarmament which took place after the Cold War was unilateral, not dependent upon agreements between parties.
- In civil society, organisations focusing on weapons of mass destruction, in particular, nuclear disarmament, showed little interest in conventional CSBMs and conventional disarmament. Where there were public manifestations and campaigns they rarely, if at all, dealt with the need for cooperative processes on the conventional level.
- Even if CSBMs with the introduction of the S for security were intended to be militarily significant and verifiable, it was challenging to imagine agreements which would severely impact on the possibilities for offensive operations.

Still, what you have, you often don't see. And what you don't have, you look for.

The author's own recollections from brainstorming sessions, before the Stockholm conference started, indicated, however, great pessimism about the way ahead. Many negotiators who had been engaged in the Madrid CSCE follow-up meeting were adamant that the Stockholm Conference would not lead to significant results. The situation at large with Poland, the shootdown of the South Korea airliner (KAL 007) and the so-called Malta problem were too complex to handle. The confrontation between Foreign Ministers Gromyko and Shultz at the September 1983 CSCE Follow up Meeting seemed too harsh.

The risk of nuclear war was not at the time perceived as clearly as it was. But one could feel the tension in the air just before the start of the Stockholm Conference.

Still, some saw value in a cooperative process which did not exist in the arms-control domain. The MBFR talks had stalled since 1979. There were documented expressions of worry, even on the part of hardliners such as Andrei Gromyko, that one could not afford to destroy even seemingly unimportant processes such as the Stockholm conference.

The Initial Period of Progress towards Agreed CSBMs

For this analysis, it will suffice to note three steps forward:

- The procedural agreement arrived at in 1985, after more than one year of harsh confrontations, which focused negotiations on parameters which were deemed to be militarily significant and verifiable, thus excluding the declaratory proposals, including in the nuclear domain, such as nuclear-weapon-free zones and no first use of nuclear weapons.
- The final agreement from the Stockholm Conference which included notification, observation and constraints on military activities as well as verification measures including provisions for on-site inspection.
- Implementation of the agreement through the invitation of observers to large-scale military exercises, including the largest exercises taking place on West German territory from 1987 onwards⁴.

These steps included perceived painful concessions on the part of the military on both sides. They also meant the successive formation of a cooperative culture. It should be recalled that constraints on dialogue between delegations from East, West and the neutral non-aligned countries during the initial period of the Conference were severe. And observers arriving in West Germany from the Soviet Union and GDR had in some cases never visited a Western country or met Western military personnel. They could, for the first time since the early 1960s, observe life in the West as it looked in normal German villages which did indeed have many parked Mercedes and BMW vehicles outside their mostly well-kept houses.

The author will never forget the silence following a question from an East German colonel to a West German soldier mounted on a Leopard II: from where do you come? Answer: from “drüben” (from over there).

Lessons Learned: Three Clusters

The importance of a comprehensive perspective which includes the nuclear level

When analysing the importance of CSBMs and arms control by looking at the past to draw lessons for the future, it is, of course, vital to look at the big picture. This is something which very seldom has been done adequately, particularly as regards CSBMs.

Political constraints have prevented an open discussion of the actual importance of CSBMs as regards not only military activities on the conventional level but also the nuclear. In military planning and scenario building, in particular in non-nuclear weapon states, there is a strong tendency to exclude the consideration of the use of nuclear weapons in the

⁴ Several of them observed by the author.

battlefield from scenarios and exercises. And there was never an agreement in the CSCE process to explicitly refer to nuclear weapons in the CSBM context.

We now know that some 85 percent of all nuclear weapons disappeared after the end of the Cold War. Also, a large number of countries gradually moved into a process of extensive unilateral disarmament on almost all levels.

Could this development have taken place without the painfully drawn-out procedural and technical negotiations that took place from 1984 onwards?

It seems, in retrospect, as if many negotiators approached the task of negotiations in the mid-1980s from the perspective of *damage limitation*. Pursuing these negotiations were seen as politically necessary, but it was vital that agreements were not made which undercut the freedom of action and the capabilities of your side. More than once, statements were made to the effect that one could not be put under time pressure.

Coincidences then helped things to move forward. These included the fact that several Soviet leaders of the old school passed away in quick succession to be replaced by a much younger leader. It has even been argued that the fact that Ronald Reagan was the victim of an assassination attempt early in his Presidency led to reflections on his part on the great dangers of nuclear weapons and war.

This, in turn, led to the agreed notion that *a nuclear war should never be fought and could never be won* following on from a statement by Reagan from 1984.

Some of the negotiations that took place on actual disarmament notably, in the INF context, were clearly based on the perceived need to negotiate from a position of strength. On the Eastern side, this meant using the already existing SS-20 intermediate-range missile as a bargaining chip. On the Western side, it meant seeking to deploy Pershing 2 and cruise missiles in West Germany, the timetable for which was very significant for the Stockholm conference.⁵

But a comprehensive view of the way CSBM negotiations were being conducted had other characteristics. They required putting pressure on the military establishment, also in smaller countries, to accept concessions which did not give immediate benefits from the perspective of the military. This was visible also on the Western side when the first observations of manoeuvres were conducted in Germany. The author experienced clear indications of worry on the part of Western military leaders about the potential implications of the presence of observers in significant reinforcement exercises and deployment of Western formations on German soil. No doubt for many military officers, not having been involved in the negotiation of agreements on CSBMs, it was difficult to understand the overall rationale for these measures.

⁵ Grinevsky-Hansen (2009)

For this paper, it may suffice to recall the following general considerations leading up to the agreement on CSBMs:

- In the Western discourse, particularly in the United States, the focus for several years, both before the Helsinki final act in 1975 and after that, was on human rights, the so-called third basket of the CSCE. With few exceptions, a security dimension in the CSCE was perceived to be a Soviet interest related to securing the borders after the Second World War. The French initiative to propose a conference on disarmament in Europe, CDE, from the early 1980s, was therefore met with considerable scepticism. On the Eastern side, this led to the focus on political or what the West labelled declaratory measures, including no first use of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon-free zones. These types of measures were not intended to fulfil the emerging requirements for CSBMs, including being militarily significant and verifiable. The Soviet head of delegation at the Stockholm conference was in this regard instructed to muddle through and keep the Conference going.
- On the military level - both in the West and East - there was strong resistance to embarking on a process which could impact on military planning and, in the neutral and non-aligned countries, limit defensive preparations,
- In between, however, a third and intermediate level of civilian analysts emerged, including in the civilian side of the Pentagon, which saw an interest in increased transparency, also in the military sector, in opening up the Soviet Union. It was deemed essential that measures agreed were not cosmetic but did give real insight and did not cover up for potential aggression,
- In general, the Western governments remained lukewarm on the security basket of the CSCE which, at that time and yet for another decade, remained a conference conducting ad hoc meetings without a permanent Secretariat. For many, the risk that the security basket would help to legitimise the Soviet control over Eastern Europe was predominant,
- Also, in the non-aligned part of Europe, there were worries about what the new negotiation could lead to. Yugoslavia had established itself as a significant player in the CSCE and the global non-aligned movement. But it was a very reticent participant in the Stockholm conference with little interest in both CSBMs and an openness generally, in hindsight an early warning signal, perhaps. What at the time constituted the group of non-aligned countries into Stockholm therefore, in effect, meant the active and mediating role of four countries: Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. They took the main burden of helping to facilitate contacts between NATO countries and the Warsaw Pact countries, including through bilateral contacts between the Soviet and American delegations,
- Still, the United States and the Soviet Union and others deployed some of their most experienced negotiators to Stockholm. It was clear that every single move on the part of the Soviet negotiators was monitored in Moscow on the highest political and military levels. This was not the case in Washington.⁶

⁶ Ibid.

The addition of the S, to the CBM acronym, gradually came to mean something significant in terms of process. This was probably not picked up by many civil society organisations at the time. One reason for this was, of course, the absence of the objective of disarmament in the CSBM concept as such. The Stockholm Conference included the term disarmament in its title. But several delegations made sure that this topic would be dealt with only in a very uncertain future second stage of the Conference.

A further observation of importance is that the Stockholm process resulted in agreed CSBMs, which included parameters focusing on conventional forces. So, what was the relevance of this process to nuclear weapons and the issues that now are at centre stage in the arms control discourse worldwide?

Initially the Soviet head of delegation to the Stockholm conference, Ambassador Oleg Grinevsky, was certainly not alone in not fully realising the importance of CSBMs for the nuclear planning of his country. When seeking to convince the head of the Soviet military staff, Marshal Ogarkov, of the benefits for the Soviet Union of measures of notification, exchange of information and transparency, thus exposing the aggressive policies of NATO, he was rebuffed spectacularly:

"In my view Oleg you just do not know many things. (Ogarkov) unfolded a huge map of the Central Europe before me on the table. Five black arrows pierced territorial West Germany from the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Hungary and the German land along the frontier was coloured with brown hashmarks. — Do you know what that is? The Marshal asked me. — It is a map of the recent joint manoeuvres —. Do not forget that we are not going to wait until we are attacked as it was in 1941. We shall open the offence ourselves. That is why at our military manoeuvres we train for offensive, but not defensive operations. Do you see these hatched districts along the West German frontier? — they are the areas where we shall make tens and if necessary even hundreds of nuclear strikes.— now you understand why we are not ready for either obligatory notification of military exercises, or for the exchange of information on military activities or any transparency or control. Neither from the political nor from the military point of view must we reveal our plans to the enemy.—"⁷

The American resistance to the notification of naval movements, proposed in particular by the Warsaw Pact member Romania, was equally strong. Total freedom of action of American fleets both in the Mediterranean and in the North Sea was a vital Western interest.

It was not surprising, therefore, that many military commanders both in the East and in the West were quite content with keeping confidence-building measures on a low level of ambition, giving rise to the alternative interpretation of CBMs, "calorie building meals". This meant even in the mid-1980s that observers to exercises conducted under the previous voluntary regime in the CSCE would be well fed but hardly given any relevant information.

⁷ https://books.google.se/books/about/Making_Peace.html?id=-FHDPwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y

In summary, as regards relevance to the nuclear level:

- Some of the participating states to the Stockholm conference did indeed propose significant measures which implicitly could affect nuclear weapon systems. Many military formations were equipped with nuclear weapons on the tactical level, and restrictions on movements of different forces could potentially mean restrictions affecting nuclear weapons.
- A large part of the efforts deployed during the Stockholm conference, and the decisions leading up to it in the CSCE, was procedural. Inherent in these procedural discussions were important substantial issues which allowed specific issues to go forward for negotiation and put other aspects to the side. In this sense, there may be lessons learned for the current situation where experts are bewildered about what to do next to reduce the risks of war and promote arms control and disarmament.
- Some proposals put forward by the Warsaw Pact states were explicitly nuclear including no first use and nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Stockholm agenda thus, in the view of Warsaw Pact countries, also included nuclear issues including no first use, nuclear-weapon-free zones etcetera. On this point, the NATO countries were adamant and were supported by several neutral and non-aligned countries, including Sweden. There would be no negotiations on anything which was declaratory and in the end no agreement was reached on measures on the nuclear level. The Conference also did not reach procedural agreement to negotiate disarmament measures. It was constrained by the requirement that all necessary measures be uniformly applied to all participating states in the CSCE area of application.
- But measures that were proposed and implemented on the conventional level could have an indirect effect on the way ahead for the nuclear negotiations.

This leads to the second cluster of lessons learned.

The importance of process and step-by-step approaches

Establishing a climate and a culture conducive to progress in negotiations is a problem subject to many decades of scientific research. A case in point was the Harvard negotiating school. The critical understanding picked up by negotiators from that work was arguably that coercive or transactional approaches to negotiations would not be enough. The very start of negotiations requires procedural agreements which are challenging to arrive at without identifying common ground.

A first important observation is that one has to recognise the parallel existence of completely different discourses for the process towards agreements to move forward. What the general public will observe is the public discourse, which often for all kinds of reasons needs to include confrontational elements at the beginning of the process. For the Stockholm Conference, each side put forward proposals which would be challenging to implement on their side if they had been agreed. There needed to be room for concessions at the end to finally meet in the middle - which was more or less what happened when it

came to the agreed parameters at the Stockholm conference. In parallel, however, small meetings were held seeking to build trust.

A second observation is that verification at a very early stage became a fundamental issue for many delegations, including the American. This issue consequently went hand-in-hand with the issue of definitions. Definitions had to be adapted to what could be verified. This represented the start of a new perspective on arms control requirements after several decades of more general arms-control agreements without careful definitions, including on the nuclear level the NPT. The combined need for definitions and verification systems was, in essence, a political, not just a military concern: *Trust but verify*, a Russian proverb often used by President Reagan.

A third observation is that agreement on general principles could not replace the need for carefully crafted measures. Whenever efforts were made to pronounce general principles such as *predictability* it turned out that not only the East but also the West had severe difficulties. The strong resistance from the American side to include naval measures into the CSBM package is a case in point. In that domain, the US required unpredictability. Likewise, when the nonalignment countries discussed a bonus system for early notification of military activities, it soon became apparent that the West could not accept such a system without exceptions⁸.

A fourth observation is that choosing the principles applied in the CSCE as a basis for negotiations initially dramatically limited the possibilities for progress while at the same time promoting the necessary culture of cooperation. The application of a step-by-step approach in this regard meant that not least the West adopted a careful wait-and-see approach before moving into more applied negotiating settings

- as happened in the alliance to alliance negotiations on conventional forces in Europe leading to the CFE treaty
- or later to the regional CSBM regime built up after the Dayton agreement.

For some of the neutral non-aligned states, including the Swedish government, it was disappointing that an all-European disarmament conference did not succeed the Stockholm conference. Much later it turned out that there were costs to the chosen approach. Yugoslavia remained outside the disarmament negotiations. And this in a period when that region became engulfed in severe conflict with large-scale conventional military operations.

⁸ For alert exercises. The notion of a bonus system for allowing for the organisation of larger military activities given that they were announced far in advance was suggested in the form of a matrix by the author during an extensive tour of consultations with participating States early during the Stockholm Conference. This operationalisation of the principle of predictability quickly turned out to be unacceptable in the West, given the perceived need for large scale alert exercises.

All of this, as a fifth observation, illustrates the usefulness of the proverb *the devil is in the detail* or as the German head of delegation often stressed "*Der Teufel steckt im Detail*".

A sixth observation is that the measurement of success applied at the early stage of the Stockholm conference was difficult to understand from the outside, even on the part of serious journalists engaged in security policy issues. It was, therefore, even less easy for civil society to engage in this process and to support it. This also meant that one measurement of success was sometimes not fully realised, namely the fundamental need to avoid war through communication and cooperation.

The importance of elite perceptions

Very many models are used in the literature to explain changed behaviour in international relations. Some are based on cognitive analyses of leaders. Others discuss capabilities and the sustainability of current policies concerning long-term trends. Both these types of explanatory models do not tend to lead to quick adaptations. Instead, cognitive frames are often described as static, not allowing for continuous adjustment. Capability development is also a long-term process. When elite perceptions do seem to have changed dramatically, as happened towards the end of the Cold War on the part of the American president and the Soviet leader, this led to very sophisticated analysis.⁹

But the perceptions of the two leaders were of fundamental importance for the way ahead - just as the perceptions of President Bush senior later were crucial for the road ahead for several historic agreements.

At the same time, there seem to be differences in terms of the explanatory power of this statement when it came to progress achieved just before and during the Stockholm conference. President Reagan did, as quoted above, address the importance of the new Conference and at the CSCE follow-up meeting in Madrid his Secretary of State George Shultz was instrumental in making it possible to have the Conference agreed. But the book from 2009 "*Making Peace: Confidence and Security in a New Europe*" coauthored by the American deputy head of delegation to the Conference, Ambassador Lynn Hansen with Ambassador Grinevsky,¹⁰ documents limited contacts between the work of the delegation and the White House. In this regard, the situation was very different in Moscow where the Soviet head of delegation recounts keen attention to the Conference at the highest level.

It is a challenging question whether the enormous energy mobilised at the level of civil society to demand changes to the nuclear policies, particularly as regards deployment of Pershing IIs and cruise missiles, in the end, was necessary to bring about the INF negotiations. Was it enough that President Reagan himself came to similar conclusions that a continued nuclear arms race would not bring more but rather less security? He was seemingly appalled over the fact that all the efforts that had been carried out to increase security

⁹ A case in point is the article written by Barbara Farnham from 2001 "Reagan and the Gorbachev Revolution: Perceiving the End of threat" https://www.jstor.org/stable/798060?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

¹⁰ https://books.google.se/books/about/Making_Peace.html?id=-FHDpWAAcAAJ&redir_esc=y

during the Cold War could not bring more American protection against a Soviet nuclear attack. Once he had developed what he considered to be a position of strength in the negotiations with the Soviet Union, including through the Star Wars initiative, he was ready to agree with President Gorbachev that a nuclear war should not be fought and could not be won.

“A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The only value in our two nations possessing nuclear weapons is to make sure they will never be used. But then would it not be better to do away with them entirely?”

(Ronald Reagan, 1984 State of the Union address)

It was seemingly this emerging conviction on the part of President Reagan, which led him to prevail upon some of his advisers to engage with the Soviet Union. Similarly, on the Russian side, it seems as if Gorbachev brought a new realisation that in the big picture the priorities set by the previous Politburos' were unsustainable in the long run for the Soviet Union - both as a military power and indeed as a civilian economic actor. Could the Soviet system survive globalisation in the long-term as illustrated for instance, by its dependence on fluctuating oil prices?¹¹

Both leaders were in a strong position during these years with Reagan elected to his second term, which gave him a reason to consider his legacy.

Final words

It may be worth reiterating that few analysts were aware of what a large number of parallel chains of events would lead to, towards the end of the 1980s. In that sense history cannot be seen as a sequential series of steps moving from simpler to more complex agreements leading to one single outcome. The place of CSBMs and arms control measures in the overall process from that perspective is not obvious. Also a CSBM, such as an agreement on onsite inspections, can be regarded as an outcome rather than an initial step.

This observation may have wider importance when analysing processes towards disarmament in general. A very large part of agreed and even unilateral measures cannot be described as disarmament measures although they may be essential steps towards disarmament.

A second final observation is that proposed measures were met with often fundamental suspicion from almost all sides based upon strong cognitive limitations. It is only natural perhaps that such suspicions, then and now, are powerful constraints on the process towards arms control and disarmament

¹¹ <http://www.aei.org/feature/the-soviet-collapse/>

The Author

Lars-Erik Lundin is a former Swedish diplomat (1976-1996). Dr. Lundin served in the European Commission (1996-2009) including as deputy Political Director and Head of delegation and as EU Ambassador to the International organisations in Vienna (2009-2011). He is a distinguished Associate Fellow at SIPRI and an elected member of the Swedish Royal Academy of War Sciences. His Handbook on EU and Security in 2015 is used in staff training and other educational material for higher diplomatic training courses. Dr. Lundin has extensive experience in international negotiations in many fields relating to foreign and security policy on behalf of Sweden and the recently concluded official inquiry in Sweden into the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Toda Peace Institute

The **Toda Peace Institute** is an independent, nonpartisan institute committed to advancing a more just and peaceful world through policy-oriented peace research and practice. The Institute commissions evidence-based research, convenes multi-track and multi-disciplinary problem-solving workshops and seminars, and promotes dialogue across ethnic, cultural, religious and political divides. It catalyses practical, policy-oriented conversations between theoretical experts, practitioners, policymakers and civil society leaders in order to discern innovative and creative solutions to the major problems confronting the world in the twenty-first century (see www.toda.org for more information).

Contact Us

Toda Peace Institute
Samon Eleven Bldg. 5th Floor
3-1 Samon-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0017, Japan
Email: contact@toda.org