

prospects for and scope of Confidence-Building do change – substantially – depending upon the answers to these questions. For instance:

1. What if Soviet and other WTO forces really don't constitute a credible conventional military threat (i.e. official Western assessments are completely inaccurate, massively over-estimating the absolute and relative power of the WTO)?
2. What if those forces are only a slight threat in relative terms (i.e. the WTO is militarily less effective than most estimates suggest, roughly equal in overall terms to NATO)?
3. Worse, what if Soviet military capabilities and doctrine represent a genuine and serious threat of increasingly dangerous magnitude (i.e. the Soviets could easily crush any and all conventional military opposition in Western Europe in a matter of several days)?
4. What if we cannot estimate reliably how big or small a threat those forces pose (i.e. we lack the analytic and intelligence resources to make any kind of accurate assessment of Soviet equipment and manpower capabilities, either in absolute or comparative terms)?
5. What if Soviet decision makers are seriously concerned about the "threat" from the West (as well as China and, eventually, Japan) and *genuinely believe* that their military forces must be constantly and rapidly improved to meet that growing and evolving threat?
6. What if Soviet decision makers clearly recognize the relative strength of the WTO and consciously intend to employ that strength – either through outright attack or through coercive diplomacy – in order to achieve expansionist security policy aims?
7. What if different elements within the Soviet Union hold fundamentally different and conflicting views about the true nature of the "Western threat" and the need to continue the current pace of military development? ,
8. What if the basic character of Soviet military forces (however great or small a threat it seems to pose) cannot be changed by any *external* pressures or influence – of any sort? (i.e. What if Soviet national security policy is, in all major respects, effectively unilateral in conception and execution – virtually beyond the control or influence of the West?)
9. What if the basic character of Soviet military forces, their doctrines and national security policies in general are largely immune to any *internally* generated pressures for or instructions to change? (i.e. Is it physically, politically, culturally and organizationally impossible for the Soviet military to adopt conventional military doctrines and force structures that are less overtly offensive and aggressive than those currently in place?)
10. What if the influence of the emerging, technocratic Soviet leadership group as well as domestic social and economic pressures, and a growing sense that aggressive, military confrontation with the West is both dangerous and pointless, render the Soviet Union uniquely susceptible to major arms control and foreign policy initiatives, including serious Confidence-Building Measures?

Will affirmative answers to various of these questions change what we *think* we can do with Confidence-Building Measures? Will they *actually* change what we can (and cannot) do with Confidence-Building Measures? Superficially, it seems obvious that they will – or, at least, that they can. This is an important point and one that can have a great impact on both analytic and policy thinking about Confidence-Building Measures. *If certain of the alternative interpretations generated by the questions above prevail, conventional thinking about Confidence-Building would need to be re-evaluated in a major way.* Although there is seldom any overt acknowledgement that a particular collection of assumptions about the Soviet Union structures thinking in the Confidence-Building literature, that literature generally seems to assume that: (1) the Soviets (and their WTO allies) enjoy, overall, only a modest and, because of nuclear deterrence, inconsequential conventional mili-