

4. an insensitivity to the various factors – domestic and external, unilateral and interactive – that shape military policy, define its historical context, explain its contemporary character and determine its susceptibility to change;
5. a failure to explicitly discuss the actual psychological processes that are assumed to (a) mediate or facilitate the creation of “confidence” and (b) overcome the “misperception” of intentions and ambiguous actions;
6. a general failure to appreciate the ramifications of the fact that Confidence-Building is an intrinsically psychological process (i.e. there is a stunning disregard for the intellectual and emotional distortions that cognitive processes can wreak on perceptions of “trust”, “predictability”, “confidence”, and “certainty” – all vital features of meaningful Confidence-Building);
7. a general interest in somehow rendering intentions “transparent” but no concrete, realistic explanation of just how this can be achieved nor any serious (theoretical) discussion of why it ought to be attempted;
8. a general tendency to assume (again without any real explanation or justification) that increased amounts of accurate information will or can lead to a better grasp of adversary intentions and, as a consequence, relaxed anxieties;

9. a marked indifference to the bureaucratic and organizational realities that necessarily restrict the scope for change in any state’s security policies.⁶⁴

The pervasive influence of these generic flaws in the reasoning of the Confidence-Building literature and, more generally, in Confidence-Building thinking entails consequences beyond nattering, scholastic complaints about faulty assumptions. *These generic flaws are potentially dangerous to the extent that ill-conceived ideas developed in the Confidence-Building literature are adopted uncritically by policy makers or reflect similar shortcomings in the actual reasoning of policy makers and their advisers.* These problems could prove to be particularly relevant, given the increasing importance being accorded the Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe which opened in Stockholm on January 17, 1984. With East-West relations strained and otherwise showing few signs of early improvement, there probably will be considerable pressure to produce tangible results quite quickly at Stockholm. That atmosphere could lead to the generation, negotiation and adoption of defective or meaningless Confidence-Building Measures which, when revealed for what they were, would almost certainly result in grave public disappointment. That, in turn, could soon undermine both public and political support for any further explicit Confidence-Building negotiations. This has long been a problem confounding efforts to produce meaningful arms control accords – the initial unrealistic expectations are followed by modest and/or imperfect agree-

⁶³ There is a corresponding but less pronounced tendency for East European analysts to misunderstand the nuances of NATO policy and doctrine. They often view NATO (or at least the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany) as being more “offensive” than would Western analysts. Nevertheless, both Western and Eastern CBM analysts tend to assume generally benign intentions, even if Eastern analysts may not subscribe so fully to this view. It is also questionable whether East European analysts – by dint of physical proximity and political familiarity – have a noticeably better grasp of Soviet policy and its ambiguities than do Western analysts. Furthermore, to the extent that East European analysts must rely upon Western sources to study WTO policies and capabilities, their work will tend to reproduce (with a slight accent) at least some Western errors of interpretation and fact.

⁶⁴ This list could be extended somewhat by including additional points relating to (a) faulty or unwarranted assumptions about Soviet military doctrine and capabilities, (b) careless assumptions about the dynamics of the WTO-NATO military balance, and (c) gross imprecision in explaining or accounting for the operation and dynamics of Confidence-Building. However, they would merely be refinements of or subtle variations on these three basic themes. Somewhat less global substantive problems could also be included in this list of basic flaws but those sorts of “lesser” problems have relatively little impact on the underlying character of Confidence-Building thinking. In any event, they were dealt with in the previous chapter.

