the limit of "explanation." There is no deeper exploration of why adopting CBMs will produce (or at least help to produce) a positive change — ranging from modest to profound — in the security relations of participating states. This is a serious analytic failing, one that is typical of the minimalist perspective. Little has changed in this respect since the original study was conducted twelve years ago.

Although inferrable accounts in the literature — and in policy circles — may vary as to the overall causal importance of CBMs and their development in the larger process of improving the security environment, it is virtually always the case that *a meaningful positive change in a security relationship is expected to occur, either in part or in whole, as a result of the adoption and implementation of CBMs.* Otherwise, why would anyone pursue confidence building?

It is extremely important to understand that making this assumption about a positive role — even implicitly — amounts to assuming that there *is* a causal relationship. This is true whether the relationship between using CBMs and positive changes in the security environment is assumed to be *strong* (confidence building is largely responsible for change) or *weak* (it is responsible to at least some extent for change).

The failure to develop a comprehensive understanding of the confidence building process and its causal character is both troubling and limiting. It seems as if "confidence building" as a security management approach has worked in the defining CSCE/OSCE case. There certainly has been a significant, positive change in the way most European and North American states[4] have come to regard each other — and each other's basic military intentions. This should have triggered thoughtful assessments of the role played by confidence building.

Despite the generally undisputed positive change in security relations in the CSCE/OSCE case, we don't really know how or why this transformation in perceptions of threat has occurred. Nor do we know what role confidence building

negotiations and agreements may have played in animating or structuring it. This has obvious implications for the use of confidence building ideas in new application areas and also bears importantly on the capacity of policy makers to sustain the progress achieved in existing application contexts such as the CSCE/OSCE.

Even when the contemporary professional literature has turned to what could be loosely considered "conceptual" treatments, moving beyond prescription to speculate about the internal and relational nature of the phenomenon, it usually has been in the very limited context of introducing confidence building by defining it, sometimes in a rigorous, point-by-point form but more often in a descriptive fashion.[5] Even on these occasions, however, the interest in exploring what confidence building means in a general sense has been perfunctory; the defining effort has merely served as a brief starting point for an otherwise operationally-oriented treatment.

Typically, as well, these efforts at definition and discussion have tended to be imprecise, occasionally failing even to distinguish adequately between CBMs (confidence building *measures*) and the *activity or process* of confidence building (i.e., the process of negotiating and implementing CBMs).[6] More recently, the literature has attempted to identify "lessons" from the successful experience of the CSCE/OSCE, but this too has been a strangely muted exercise when viewed from a conceptual perspective.[7] These efforts have not acted as a springboard for the more rigorous analysis of the confidence building phenomenon, as one might have expected.

Despite this general and consistent failure of the literature to look deeply into the nature of the confidence building process, the rare conceptual explorations of the confidence building phenomenon that do venture into this territory, more often than not, are greeted with indifference and even puzzlement.[8] At best, such efforts are treated as though they are making confidence building much more complicated than it really is. At worst, they are regarded as distorted exaggerations of what