

Soviet Conventional Military Power

While recognizing that Confidence-Building has applications beyond Europe and analytic perspectives beyond those of the West European's and the North American's, the practical focus of most Confidence-Building literature is *how to reduce concerns about either a genuine or misperceived surprise Soviet conventional military attack*. Whether or not those concerns are addressed directly (through constraint and information measures) or indirectly (through broader political understandings), the major focus of Western analysts and policy advisors is and must be Soviet conventional military power in Europe. Soviet and East European analysts may or may not have roughly parallel concerns about NATO conventional military power in Europe. One suspects that at least some do. In any event, because the conventional military power of the Soviet Union is the dominant consideration in most Western perspectives – and because it has been argued here that the Confidence-Building literature mishandles this most important subject – we must now turn to a more detailed discussion of the Type One Generic Flaw.

Addressing Soviet military power, whether or not the specific medium is Confidence-Building Measures or some other type of policy response, means *conceptualizing that power in the context of the dynamic relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States or the Warsaw Treaty Organization and NATO*. No policy response to nor theory of Soviet national security policy behaviour developed *without* careful, integrated reference to the inner workings of the Soviet Union, the United States and other important national actors such as the Federal Republic of Germany *and* the way in which they interact with each other – in other words, the sources or causes of policy behaviour within and between each state – is likely to be very useful. The Type One Generic Flaw noted earlier addresses this very point.

The Type One flaw involves what were called "inadequate" assessments of Soviet and Warsaw Pact military forces and the nature of the threat that they actually pose to other European countries and the United States and Canada. With few exceptions, the character of that Soviet "threat" is not explored in much detail nor with much sophistication in the

course of developing arguments about CBMs. To be fair, many analysts may feel that the discussion of Eurocentric Confidence-Building Measures does not require an elaborate familiarity with nor reference to Soviet military doctrine and capabilities, merely the recognition that – although neither the WTO and NATO have any serious current intention of attacking the other – both possess "unnecessarily threatening" offensive forces which make everyone nervous and prone to miscalculation and over-reaction. Given this starting point, the task for Confidence-Building is apparently straightforward – devise arrangements that will reduce or control the threatening character of those forces, including the ways in which they are employed and deployed during peacetime. Most often, this translates into proposals for exchanging information on forces and deployments, constraining certain types of threatening exercises and manoeuvres, or (in the more radical proposals) constraining deployments of certain types of forces and/or equipment. This is all quite straightforward and non-controversial. Detailed assessments of Soviet military power are hardly necessary (or so it is thought) to arrive at these sorts of considerations.

Why does it matter if we don't look carefully at the military doctrine and capabilities of the Soviet Union? What conceivable difference could such a detailed examination make to the pursuit of effective Confidence-Building Measures? Unless a reasonable case can be made for supporting the inclusion in CBM studies of detailed analyses of Soviet and WTO military forces, the so-called Type One flaw will appear groundless. It is not sufficient simply to say that all national security issues should be analysed in the greatest feasible detail and that failing to do so limits the quality of analysis. In an abstract sense, this is almost certainly true but it is completely impractical to make this a requirement of all analytic work. Perhaps the most effective method of demonstrating why the integration of thorough studies of Soviet military capabilities *does* make an important difference in the analysis of Confidence-Building is to pose some questions concerning those capabilities. These questions illustrate how the

