transparency, predictability, and familiarity. Policy makers, of course, are free to use policy approaches in any way they see fit, tailoring these approaches to their understanding of their particular problems. And they will do so unless they are provided with a convincing contrary rationale. This is both appropriate and sensible. However, this preference, often supported by policy-oriented analysts, tends to overlook the importance of the existing "embedded meaning" residing in the confidence building concept.

Embedded meaning refers to the claim that a policy-relevant concept (confidence building in this case) is understandable and fully useable only if it is associated with a clear conceptual understanding that can explain how it works and under what circumstances. And that understanding must be derived from practical experience, appropriately interpreted and generalized. Stripped of its embedded meaning, the policy concept risks becoming a rhetorical device that can mean everything – and nothing – and it risks becoming divorced from practical advice about how to make it work effectively.

Genuine confidence building, according to the argument underlying this report, should not be seen as a *tabula rasa* with no intrinsic meaning. A comprehensive confidence building approach works *because it facilitates certain changes in security relationships under certain conditions*. If policy makers wish to use the confidence building approach with any hope of real change in security relations, they must be familiar with the essentials of the approach – or rely upon those who are for advice. In this respect, confidence building ought to be seen as being as demanding as many other types of national policy approach. Although it would be an exaggeration to suggest that we know as much about confidence building as we do about various types of economic development policy, for instance, the basic point is still valid. Responsible and effective policy makers apply economic policies with due regard to what those policies are expected to achieve, how they must be

implemented, and with a sensitivity for the basic conditions that must be in place for them to work or they risk dramatic failure. The same should apply when it comes to the use of approaches such as confidence building. This view also should provide a further incentive to explore the conceptual underpinnings of confidence building and how it works.

Finally, policy makers and analysts should appreciate that the attention devoted in this report to understanding what confidence building means should not be mistaken for a desire to ensure the definitional purity of confidence building on the author's own terms. Nor should it be seen as an unwillingness to accept the use of alternative terms for this approach. This is looking at the wrong side of the equation. It is not the term that is all-important, it is the understanding of the processes represented by the term that warrants attention. Although it may be harmless to substitute another term or expression for "confidence building," this does tend to encourage an even greater disconnect between the name for a policy approach and a functionally-oriented account of how it works and what it requires for success. This is likely to exacerbate an already unwelcome tendency toward imprecision and causal indifference with unfortunate consequences for effective policy. Adopting an overly flexible understanding of what can count as "confidence building" may also be unhelpful because it can encourage the use of traditional confidence building arrangements patterned superficially on the successful European experience to attain unilateral advantages in a way that subverts the broader intent of confidence building.

Having outlined a case for why it is important to ensure that confidence building efforts be informed by a sound conceptual foundation, it is necessary to stress again that confidence building appears to be a dynamic security management approach. As we come to understand it better in a variety of application contexts, we may wish to revise our understanding of what it entails and how it works. Each new application of confidence