

gressing still, one rarely sees any acknowledgement of this interpretational variety in analyses of Soviet military policies.

The point in sketching out these "alternative images" – simplified models of Soviet perspectives – is fairly straightforward. Confidence-Building as a process and, more specifically, Confidence-Building Measures, have differential possibilities for success depending upon the "true" nature of Soviet military doctrine, capabilities and a host of other elements having to do with Soviet foreign and domestic policies. Only one of the four alternative images discussed above appears to be favourable for the production of useful Confidence-Building Measures. If we looked at the full range of plausible images in greater detail, we would almost certainly discover a similarly uneven picture. Some images would support modest or ambitious Confidence-Building Measures but many would not. It is important to remember that not all plausible interpretations of the dynamic NATO-WTO relationship bode well for the successful application of CBMs.

The nature of these different "images" of Soviet "realities" is influenced in important, even crucial ways by the Soviet perception (correct or not) of NATO capabilities, doctrines and intentions; by NATO perceptions (correct or not) of Soviet capabilities, doctrines and intentions; and by WTO and NATO perceptions of their own and each other's relative strength. This complex dynamic feature is too often absent from analyses of Soviet policy and Confidence-Building Measures. Although we cannot explore this relatively elaborate perspective fully in an introductory study, we can demonstrate the importance of enhanced sensitivity to multiple (frequently conflicting) interpretations of Soviet behaviour. The most effective way of doing this is to take several selective looks at the conventional military power of the Soviet Union. Each selective "picture" suggests a substantially different Soviet "reality" and supports a different "image". A more elaborate demonstration would clearly show that there is ample evidence available to support any of a wide range of conflicting interpretations of the "Soviet military reality". While this does not mean that there is no single "truth" about Soviet conventional military power, it does mean that such a "truth" is extraordinarily elusive. It also means that the divination of that truth must overcome substantive uncertainties and methodological problems.

Soviet Military Strength – Contrasting Perspectives

There is a tendency in the Confidence-Building literature to treat Soviet conventional military power as if it represented no real threat, even while acknowledging, in a *pro forma* fashion, its apparent potency. There is an associated and generally implicit tendency to treat Soviet intentions as if they were relatively benign. Otherwise, in a sense, what would be the point of discussing CBMs? A significant conventional military superiority and the intent to use it would constitute a situation in which Confidence-Building would be next to meaningless. The reluctance to consider the awful possibility of a malign adversary is understandable, particularly in a context that supports Confidence-Building Measures. *One of the basic analytic points of this study is that these types of unpleasant consideration aren't addressed seriously in the Confidence-Building literature – and that they ought to be. This tendency to ignore the malign is unjustified, particularly given the rich variety of complex and ambiguous evidence about Soviet conventional military capabilities and, to a lesser extent, intentions.* Without necessarily subscribing to the view that the Soviet Union and its WTO allies possess overwhelming and exceedingly offensive conventional forces (as well as an undeniable urge to use them), one can nevertheless point to a number of disturbing developments in and characteristics of the Soviet conventional military force structure. These "facts" – particularly if viewed in isolation and cast in their starkest terms – suggest a distinctly inhospitable environment in which to cultivate meaningful Confidence-Building Measures.

What evidence is there to suggest an aggressive and dangerous Soviet Union? Typically, analysts who see the Soviets as extremely dangerous, capable and aggressive adversaries point to: (1) high absolute and relative (compared to the United States) Soviet conventional weapon system production rates; (2) absolute and relative (compared to the United States) qualitative improvements in Soviet weapon systems; (3) "improving" trends in Soviet military research and development (i.e. a closing of the East-West "military technological gap"); (4) overall quantitative advantages in critical weapons stocks; (5) changes in the structure of Soviet military units, stressing greater combat weight, speed and combined-arms flexibility; (6) manpower and mobilization advantages;

