

This image is definitely less threatening to the West, at least on a superficial level. The self-perception⁷² of weakness and the genuine fear of an aggressive and implacable West, however, do not necessarily bode well for Confidence-Building. There is no reason to suppose that the Soviets would be particularly anxious to enter into serious Confidence-Building arrangements if they regarded their position as being one of obvious weakness. It is not clear whether or not the Soviet Union would negotiate major CBMs if it felt insecure and threatened *but* also felt that increased *unilateral* Soviet effort might offset existing imbalances. The Soviet Union has generally been very reluctant to negotiate militarily significant agreements from a position of perceived weakness *unless* such a course of action offered the best prospect of redressing the imbalance in the longer term. Certainly, the Soviet perspective and Soviet goals during such negotiations would be closely focused on "correcting" or offsetting perceived imbalances. If both WTO and NATO negotiators believed themselves to be comparatively weak and their alliance adversaries to be militarily powerful, the chances of producing balanced and useful CBMs would probably be very slim.

A third image can be constructed from the range of speculations listed earlier. This image is relatively moderate in its basic features and suggests a situation where Confidence-Building Measures *might* achieve some genuine progress. Here:

1. The Soviet Union and its principal NATO adversaries possess (and are seen by each other to possess) conventional military forces that, while different in many respects, enjoy no significant (i.e. "war-winning") advantages over each other.⁷³

⁷² A phenomenon that can be noted only in passing is that of warranted perceptions. There is an apparently obvious difference between *thinking* that one is militarily superior or inferior and actually *being* superior or inferior. In practical terms, however, the belief is the reality – until external events demonstrate the correctness or folly of that belief. Significantly, both sides can think they are inferior when, in fact, only one is. The ways in which perception and misperception can influence understandings of the military balance and the prospects for CBMs deserve detailed consideration.

2. Decision makers in the Soviet Union have an unnecessarily elevated fear of the West but do not believe (a) that an attack from the West is imminent nor (b) that an attack against the West in Europe would succeed;
3. The Soviet national security policy process is primarily driven by incrementalism and a distinctly "Russian" "strategic culture" which makes it (like virtually all national security policy processes) respond primarily to internal rather than external (international) forces. Nevertheless, the strain and dangers of competing so vigorously, in possible combination with the growing influence of a new, more pragmatic leadership group, make the Soviet Union unusually willing to consider major arms control initiatives – including Eurocentric Confidence-Building Measures.

The slightly future-oriented image of Soviet circumstances and perspectives is superficially similar to the image produced by the assumptions that typify a good deal of Confidence-Building thinking.⁷⁴ However, the "third image's" explicit consideration of domestic Soviet policy processes and its sensitivity to the complexities of evaluating military balances and the role of perception are quite different in detail compared with the implicit assumptions characteristic of most Confidence-Building literature. This third, "moderate" image suggests that some scope for mutually beneficial CBMs might exist if the leadership groups of the two alliances (1) saw themselves as being in rough

⁷³ This view tolerates apparent "advantages" for one side or the other up to a certain point but maintains that neither alliance possesses military capabilities sufficient to ensure a reasonable prospect of victory in a purely conventional European war.

⁷⁴ Some Western Confidence-Building writing exhibits more than this constrained and very modest concern over the apparent strength of Soviet conventional military forces. In these (rare) cases, a CBM regime is seen as providing a way to reduce the need for the "hair-trigger" forward defence that otherwise becomes necessary in the face of significantly superior WTO power. Even these more "concerned" analysts show relatively little interest in assessing or exploring the nature of Soviet conventional military power as a *specific and integrated component of their larger arguments about Confidence-Building.*

