

tary superiority; (2) the Soviets have no clear intention of using their military power against Western Europe; and (3) the national security policies and thinking of the Soviet Union can be altered or influenced to some extent through negotiation (and, perhaps, by "arms race coercion" as well).⁷¹ Without belabouring the point, it should be obvious that these are not the only possible interpretations of Soviet circumstances. *In fact, it is possible to generate a number of competitive interpretations of Soviet capabilities, perceptions and intentions, many of which represent plausible – if less sanguine – images of the Soviet reality.* For instance, the prospects for Confidence-Building would be radically impaired if the assessments of very conservative defence analysts were correct – that is, if:

1. the Soviet Union enjoyed a clear and massive conventional military superiority over NATO in Europe and both the Soviet Union and NATO knew it;
2. the Soviet Union did not particularly fear NATO's military policies and intended, at the first suitable opportunity, to employ its massive conventional superiority (in combination, perhaps, with nuclear superiority) to demonstrate its dominance over Europe, either through coercive blackmail or outright attack;
3. Soviet national security policy, the structure of its military forces and the content of its doctrines were the unique product of unilateral (i.e., internal to the Soviet Union's national security community) causes and immune to significant influence (either internally or externally directed) or sudden change.

This is (obviously) the "worst case" interpretation. If these three simplified elements reliably represented genuine Soviet perceptions and intentions, the possibility of Confidence-Building Measures achieving anything positive in Europe likely would be nil. Indeed, there would be a good chance that Confidence-Building Measures might actually be used to conceal aggressive plans and preparations. As a consequence, perhaps, this malign possibility is not a case that occupies much (if any) attention in the Confidence-Building literature. One complaint of the present analysis concerns this omission. The failure to explicitly address a very pessimistic yet defensible interpretation of Soviet capabilities and intentions is both theoretically and empirically unjustified.

A malign interpretation of Soviet perceptions and intentions is not, however, the only image that can be constructed from the range of questions and answers posed earlier. In fact, we can generate a completely different image. Instead of an implacable, powerful and aggressive foe, we can speculate that:

1. the Soviet Union and the WTO possess very uneven conventional military capabilities which, in their view, are less impressive than those of NATO. To the alarm of Soviet political and military decision makers, however, NATO leaders publicly state and appear to believe that the WTO enjoys major advantages, advantages that need to be countered with increased Western effort;
2. Soviet decision makers have no aggressive intentions towards Europe but genuinely believe that the West (especially the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States) is an implacable, unpredictable, and dangerous foe with aggressive designs of its own;
3. The Soviet Union is fast approaching a unique point in its history where many policies – domestic and international – will come under critical review by new leadership groups, thus making Soviet foreign and defence policy unusually susceptible to constructive external influence through new negotiating positions.

⁷¹ This last point is often associated with arms control theory and shares with it a common assumption about the susceptibility to external influence of Soviet national security policy. This view holds that demonstrations of a willingness to match or exceed an adversary in an arms race will "persuade" that adversary that a "moderated" course of action – i.e. within a negotiated arms control regime – is preferable. The crucial assumption in this thinking is that the "arms race behaviour" of the opponent is "caused" by external and interactive forces. This may simply be incorrect – with serious ramifications for a good deal of arms control theorizing and policy-making.

