

reasons for their caution and wariness in assessing Gorbachev's attempt to create a new look for Soviet foreign policy.

First, the skeptics argue that there is not much that is really new in the verbal formulations adopted by Gorbachev. He has added a few new phrases in his discussion of the interrelation of Soviet and American security, but all of his other pronouncements can be viewed as just a restatement of past themes. As noted in the previous chapter, Brezhnev made a significant effort to reassure the West about Soviet military plans during the late 1970s and early 1980s. He denied that the Soviet Union sought military superiority and dismissed the notion that nuclear war was winnable. Similarly, Brezhnev and other Soviet commentators spoke of the world's growing interdependence due to the impact of the worldwide "scientific-technological revolution," and they also called for international co-operation to deal with emerging global problems.¹⁰³

Second, the skeptics maintain that the reason there is so little that is new in Gorbachev's pronouncements is that his goal is not to alter the way in which East-West relations are conceptualized in the Soviet Union but rather to create the illusion of change so as to advance Soviet objectives abroad. According to this view, Gorbachev is trying to capitalize upon the West's short historical memory, its overestimation of the role of the General Secretary's personality in Soviet politics, and its desire to believe that the new, "young," "modern" leader in the Kremlin will be able to transform the troubled battleground of East-West relations. The skeptics believe that in attempting to achieve a "quick fix" for the Soviet Union's battered image, Gorbachev has an immediate tactical goal in his sights. He is trying to stop the Strategic Defense Initiative (S.D.I.) and weaken the West's determination to continue with the high level of spending that is necessary to counter Soviet military might. The pretended embrace of "new thinking" is simply a shrewdly conceived means to this end.

¹⁰³ For an analysis of Soviet discussions of interdependence and global problems, see Erik P. Hoffmann and Robbin F. Laird, *The Scientific-Technological Revolution and Soviet Foreign Policy*, New York: Pergamon, 1982.