

of thought on this question. For want of better labels, they might be termed the "skeptics" and the "optimists."<sup>77</sup> The summary judgment of the skeptics is that no genuine, fundamental changes have occurred in either the conceptualization or the execution of Soviet foreign policy.<sup>78</sup> They see the more dovish statements emanating from Moscow as being little more than a skilled public relations exercise. In their view, Gorbachev and his close advisers (such as Aleksandr Yakovlev, Anatoli Dobrynin, and Evgeni Primakov) are more sophisticated and more worldly than their predecessors, and hence are more cognizant of the damage that the Soviet Union has inflicted upon itself through needlessly harsh rhetoric. They want to undo this damage and capitalize upon the West's deep yearning for a more peaceful world by packaging Soviet policies in more alluring garb. They have learned from Madison Avenue that there is a ready market for the same old product so long as it is periodically touted as "new" and "improved." For the skeptics, the changes thus far are purely matters of style not substance.

The "optimists," on the other hand, see the beginnings of a more significant trend.<sup>79</sup> They believe that the Soviet leadership is serious in calling for "new thinking" about international politics, and they are hopeful that a genuine process of re-examining and questioning past Soviet assumptions has begun. New foreign policy personnel have been put in place, some new policies have been launched, and

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<sup>77</sup> The varying interpretations that emerged at a scholarly conference on the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress are summarized in Abraham Becker, *et al.*, *The 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: A Report from the Airlie House Conference*, Santa Monica: Rand, 1986. A more popular examination of the divisions among Western Sovietologists is contained in "Will the Cold War Fade Away?," *Time*, 27 July 1987, pp. 28-34.

<sup>78</sup> For skeptical discussions of Gorbachev's foreign policy, see Harry Gelman, "Gorbachev's Dilemmas and His Conflicting Foreign-Policy Goals," *Orbis*, XXX, No. 2, 1986, pp. 231-247; Thane Gustafson, "Will Soviet Foreign Policy Change Under Gorbachev?," *The Washington Quarterly*, IX, No. 4, 1986, pp. 153-157; Walter Laqueur, "The World as Seen by Gorbachev," *ibid.*, pp. 147-151; Dimitri K. Simes, "Gorbachev: A New Foreign Policy?," *Foreign Affairs*, LXV, No. 3, 1987, pp. 477-500; Philip D. Stewart, "Gorbachev and Obstacles Toward Detente," *Political Science Quarterly*, CI, No. 1, 1986, pp. 1-22; Viktor Yasmann, "'The New Political Thinking' and the 'Civilized' Class Struggle," *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin*, RL 292/87, 29 July 1987, pp. 1-6.