rebuffed, gains can be quickly lost, and overtures to one side may jeopardize relations with other nations (for example, in the Arab-Israeli conflict or the Iran-Iraq war). Thus, Gorbachev has moved with extreme caution.

Gorbachev has chosen to inch his way along with circumspect half steps (for example, in his policy toward Afghanistan, the Middle East, and China). While the Soviet position in the world is more precarious than he would like, for the short and medium term it is acceptable to him. It would appear that he believes that it is better to move slowly rather than risk serious set-backs which would increase his own political vulnerability and detract from his focus on the radical transformation of the economy.

There is, however, one acute foreign threat to his domestic programme, which cannot be ignored — the possiblity of a marked acceleration of the arms race. The greater the American effort on Star Wars, the more resources the Soviet Union will have to expend on the military to prevent a sharp deterioration in its position. For this reason, arms control is one area where Soviet foreign policy has been unusually active, imaginative, and flexible.

When President Reagan's zero option for intermediate-range missiles was announced in 1981, it was viewed by both supporters and critics as a shrewd public relations ploy. No one expected the Soviets to accept this proposal, since the zero option would require them to eliminate their substantial arsenal of warheads and to accept a balance on intermediate-range missiles that was far less advantageous than the situation that existed in the mid-1970s prior to the introduction of their SS-20s. Yet Gorbachev was willing to accept the zero option. When the West responded that it was now concerned about an imbalance in shorter-range missiles, Gorbachev offered to remove these as well.

Under Gorbachev's leadership, the Soviet Union has accepted on-site verification of unprecedented proportions as part of the INF Treaty signed on 8 December 1987, and it adhered to a unilateral