

does succeed in bringing about a second period of fundamental doctrinal change, this will be a development of major importance for the conduct of Soviet foreign policy and the future of East-West relations.

All this encourages a degree of optimism. However, this needs to be counter-balanced by two further observations. First, as the previous chapter indicates, the innovations that have been introduced thus far by Gorbachev are relatively limited in their scope and significance. Although they suggest that a genuine process of rethinking the direction of Soviet foreign policy may be underway in the Kremlin, it is not yet certain that Gorbachev will succeed in having a fundamental and lasting impact on Soviet perspectives on East-West relations. Much remains to be done, and he may not stay the course. At some point in the future, Gorbachev may find himself under pressure from more conservative members of the Politburo to abandon his reformist policies, or he might even suffer the same fate as Khrushchev and be ousted from office.

Second, the Khrushchev period — which was characterized by recurring international crises and a schizophrenic desire to achieve simultaneously improved relations with the West and victory over it — demonstrates that even major doctrinal change does not provide a guarantee of improved relations. The discarding of key tenets of the Stalinist perspective removed one of the most formidable barriers to the easing of international tension. As such, it was a necessary condition for better relations with the West. But it did not, in and of itself, constitute a sufficient condition to ensure this. Many other factors also shaped the conduct of Soviet foreign policy during the post-Stalin period, not the least of which was Khrushchev's overestimation of Soviet power and his determination to tip the "correlation of forces" in the Soviet Union's favour. Similarly, in the years ahead, much will depend not just on how Gorbachev perceives and conceptualizes East-West relations, but on whether the insights of the "new thinking" are translated into more moderate policies. It remains to be seen whether the Soviet leadership will succeed in summoning up the will to resist seductive opportunities for short-