

Others contend that Gorbachev's pronouncements represent nothing more than the latest in a long line of Soviet public relations campaigns, and that once again the Soviet leadership is attempting to promote an image of moderation and flexibility even though core Soviet perceptions and long-standing Soviet goals have not really been modified. Thus, we need to have an understanding of the nature and development of Soviet thinking about East-West relations in order to have a sound basis for evaluating Gorbachev's initiatives.

We in the West have often found it difficult to understand Soviet perspectives on international politics. A major reason for this is the pervasive secrecy that surrounds the formulation of Soviet foreign policy, something that Gorbachev's call for *glasnost*' (greater publicity or openness) has not yet changed. Most of the direct evidence and source material that we take for granted in the study of the foreign policy of other countries is almost totally unavailable for the Soviet Union. Soviet archives remain unopened, leading officials generally do not write memoirs, press conferences are rare, there is no opposition party to demand an accounting, disgruntled officials do not leak confidential documents, nor does the press reveal how decisions are arrived at. All Soviet statements pertaining to foreign affairs, whether made by political leaders, designated spokesmen or scholars, are carefully controlled and coordinated.

Yet, paradoxically, this situation can also be of some assistance in the study of Soviet politics. The Soviet regime adheres to a rigorously codified ideology, and there is thus a body of official doctrine which authoritatively defines the Party's perspectives on international politics. By studying this doctrine, we can gain a valuable insight into the perceptions of the Soviet leadership. Even though there is not an exact one-to-one correspondence between the actual private views of the leadership and the overt public doctrine, a study of the official doctrine and the degree to which it does or does not change at particular points in time can serve as an important indicator of parallel shifts in elite perspectives. In the words of one scholar: "To outside observers, doctrine . . . can act as a weather vane; once officials have decided upon policy they publicly justify it with