

In contrast, in his 1981 speech to the Party Congress, he specifically declared that the Soviet Union was committed to maintaining the existing "military-strategic equilibrium," and he pointedly rejected the idea that the Soviet Union believed in the possibility of victory through nuclear war.⁷³ Traditionally, Soviet analysts have not been comfortable with notions of equilibrium. The official doctrine is predicated on the idea of movement and change. It proclaims that history's onward march cannot be stopped, that the "correlation of forces" is tipping in favor of the socialist camp, and that socialism will eventually prove victorious over capitalism on a worldwide scale. Thus, the new emphasis on "equilibrium" represented, at least potentially, a significant shift in tone and emphasis. However, Brezhnev did not spell out the implications of this concept, and he did not relate it to established doctrine. He simply declared:

The military-strategic equilibrium that exists between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. and between the Warsaw Treaty and NATO objectively serves to preserve peace on our planet. We have not sought, and do not now seek, military superiority over the other side. This is not our policy.⁷⁴

For good measure, he added: "To try to prevail over the other side in the arms race or to count on victory in a nuclear war is dangerous madness."⁷⁵

These statements represented a noticeable shift in the Soviet Union's verbal posture and anticipated some of Gorbachev's later formulations. But it was a case of too little, too late. Western observers were disinclined to take these changes seriously.⁷⁶ The verbal adjustments were still relatively minor, and Brezhnev had let too many years pass without any significant alteration in basic Soviet doctrine pertaining to East-West relations.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, XXXIII, No. 8, 1981, p. 11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ See the arguments advanced in Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Has Soviet Nuclear Strategy Changed?," Rand Paper P-7181, The Rand Corporation, December 1985.