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# Introduction

*Deborah Nutter Miner*

The chapters in this book were written over the period of an extraordinary twelve months from March of 1990 to March of 1991, a year which saw the last events of Gorbachev's reforms – the creation of the post of President of the USSR (eventually to be elected by popular vote) and of Presidential and Federation Councils, the end of the Communist Party's legal monopoly of power; and, in foreign policy the acceptance of the reunification of Germany, and the decision by the leadership to support the US-sponsored resolution in the United Nations permitting the use of force in the Persian Gulf by a US-led coalition against a former Soviet ally. The year also witnessed the beginning of what can only be called reaction caused by the unexpected consequences of Gorbachev's ambitious changes. This reaction took the form of an embargo against Lithuania, a long wait for resolution of the debate over economic reform, capped by the defeat in September 1990 of Shatalin's 500-day plan, Gorbachev's assumption of emergency powers in September, outbursts in the Supreme Soviet by conservative officers, the resignation speech by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze warning of impending dictatorship and his actual resignation, the appointment of conservatives to the posts of Minister of the Interior and Vice-President coupled with the abandonment of Gorbachev by important reformers, the placing of units of the armed forces to patrol the streets in the cities, and the death of fifteen people in Vilnius at the hands of the Soviet army in the course of storming the TV tower. And finally, these last months have witnessed the meteoric rise of Boris Yeltsin as the leader of the opposition to Gorbachev, as the leader of whatever might remain of reform in the Soviet Union. This was the period in which the long-prophesied occurred, although in a somewhat unexpected form: Gorbachev was not pushed out by the right; he chose to move to the right himself.

This dramatic, Janus-like year followed a truly remarkable year of foreign policy reform during which Eastern Europe sprung free of the Soviet Union, of the country that had held it in its grip for over forty years, a country that now stood still and watched, perhaps even lent



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support, as communist government after communist government fell in what is now called East-Central Europe.

Both the reform and the reaction, of course, are the result of the leadership's decision to deal head-on with the inheritance of the so-called era of stagnation under Brezhnev and actually to begin to dismantle the Stalinist system that had continued in place, albeit without the terror of Stalin, under both Khrushchev and Brezhnev. During these years, Stalin's hard-won battle to industrialize and become a global power, even a superpower, had been slowly reversed by a collective decision not to challenge the comfortable positions of either the party as a whole, the nomenklatura or the important institutional groups into which they had formed. In short, the choice by the leadership of stability for themselves as a group and, hence, policy stagnation during a period of rapid technological, economic, and political change in the rest of the world, seriously weakened the position of the Soviet Union in the international pecking order.

As the Soviet Union has struggled to deal with its decline or crisis of superpowerhood, as it has also been called, Gorbachev and others in the Soviet elite have set out to fashion and implement a foreign policy suitable, not for a superpower in decline, but perhaps for an injured superpower in the process of retraining for future competitions, still with its eye on the gold. It would appear that, although there has been an official, albeit flexible, policy, there have been alternative views within the Soviet elite both of the nature of the Soviet problem and of its solution.

It is not difficult to imagine the confusion and angst generated among the elite by the realization during the last years of the Brezhnev era and the first years under Gorbachev that the Soviet Union had not kept pace with, and had actually fallen far behind, the other industrialized states. The level of surprise, anger, and despair must have fallen along a broad spectrum. The energetic and optimistic Gorbachev of the early years, with his enthusiasm for a reformed socialism and his now discredited belief, expressed in perestroika, that most people in most countries would opt for socialism if given the choice, must have provided the discouraged Soviet elite with a vision and a plan under which they could go forward with some degree of unity and confidence. Now, of course, the internal parts of this plan lie in shambles; and the question is whether the external portion of Gorbachev's reforms will survive and in what form.

New thinking is a carefully thought out construction that integrates domestic and foreign policy and carefully links policy in all regions of the globe. In this sense it shares similarities with old thinking; but the

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changes in foreign policy growing out of the new thinking have been diverse and dramatic. Each region of the globe has been affected. The chapters in this volume analyze the new thinking, and assess its impact, as well as its likely longevity. They focus on the Nordic countries, Eastern Europe, the European neutrals, Central America, Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and South Korea. In short, they deal mainly with what might be called the regions rather than with the "great powers" – the United States, Japan, Germany, and China. The relationships among the great powers in the emerging multi-polar world, or what Joseph Nye has called the polycentric world, constitute the framework within which these states and regions will have to maneuver.

The authors of the following chapters answer a group of questions different from those generally asked from 1985 to 1989, which encompass the first two periods of perestroika and new thinking delineated by Roger Kanet and Garth Katner of the University of Illinois in chapter 6. The questions have gone from "Is Gorbachev sincere?" and "How long will he last?" to include "How far to the right will he go?" and "How much of new thinking will survive the conservative reaction?" The authors here have the advantage in their analysis of having been able to view more than five years of new thinking, as well as the advantage of the existence of a fairly open debate within the Soviet Union over its success and validity. These authors chronicle in sufficient detail and with insight these debates among the Soviet political and academic elite. These debates provide the clearest indication of the policy alternatives supported by various groups within the elite and hence the changes that we might see in Soviet foreign policy. Chapter 1 by Deborah Miner of Simmons College outlines the international imperatives for reform that will most likely continue to circumscribe the choices available to the Soviet leadership.

The contributors to this volume provide varying perspectives on Soviet foreign policy, in part because they are a truly international group, with different concerns and insights. Most are from the areas about which they write. Only four substantive contributions were written by Americans – those by Deborah Miner, Roger Kanet and Garth Katner, Jan Adams, and Carol Saivetz. Mette Skak and Ole Nørgaard are from the Danish University of Aarhus. Skak writes about the issues of cohesion and viability in the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe and looks at future Soviet relations with East-Central Europe, and Nørgaard focuses on changes in Soviet–Nordic relations. Lena Jonson from the Swedish Institute of International Affairs analyzes the role of signaling in Soviet–Nordic relations during the Lithuania crisis of 1990; and Stephen Kux, from the University of Zurich in Switzerland, looks at the

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Soviet approach to neutrality and the role it could play in Soviet thinking about Europe and the Republics. Anuradha Chenoy of Jawaharlal Nehru University in India focuses on national liberation movements and the dramatic changes in the Soviet interpretation of these movements; and Pierre du Toit Botha of the Africa Institute of South Africa traces the Soviet reassessment of socialist orientation in Africa. Zafar Imam, also of Jawaharlal Nehru University, makes a striking case for the negative impact of new thinking on the position of the Third World; Carlyle Thayer of Australia's Defense Force Academy offers insight into the changing Soviet relationship with Indochina; Bilveer Singh of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs chronicles the evolving ASEAN policy of the current Soviet leadership; and Ho-Won Jeong, a South Korean Ph.D. candidate at the Ohio State University, analyzes the economic, political, and military dimensions of the emerging relationship between South Korea and the Soviet Union. Jan Adams of the Ohio State University examines the shifts in Soviet policy in Central America, and Carol Saivetz of Harvard University's Russian Research Center analyzes recent developments in Soviet policy in the Middle East. Finally, Tamara Resler of the University of Illinois pulls together the major strands of argumentation presented in the individual chapters.

In short, these are refreshing perspectives, approaches and insights that attest to the benefits of the growing global interdependence in social science research. Our epistemology holds that objectivity is our primary goal, but clearly the richness of varying experience and training continue to impress upon us the truth that our field encompasses the subjective as well as the objective, and that it is not sufficient to study our field from a single perspective. The contributors to this volume blend rigorous scholarship and objective standards with the special perspective of being close to the issues at hand.

All but one of the authors share the view that new thinking has represented a significant improvement over the former, Marxist–Leninist-based policy of the Soviet Union. Each, for one reason or another, views the changes in the region about which they write as a positive move toward normalization. In this, the authors represent the views of many peoples and states in the world. On the other hand, new thinking has complicated and made more difficult the situations of those who have seen the Soviet Union as an alternative to the power of the United States and to a Western model of development, one which emphasizes market economies and trade dominated by multinational corporations. Zafar Imam articulates this view clearly in chapter 11. The other contributors – including the editors – ascribe to a Western, non-class-based

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view of international relations; and they watch with concern the move to the right in Soviet politics. At the same time, as their chapters make clear, their analysis leads to the conclusion that it is not possible for old thinking as we knew it to replace new thinking and that many of the foreign policy changes that have taken place in the past few years will perforce survive into the post-glasnost era.

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*Part I*

# The Soviet Union and the international political system

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# 1 Soviet reform in international perspective

*Deborah Nutter Miner*

The extraordinary changes in foreign and domestic policy initiated by the Soviet Union in the past six years under Mikhail Gorbachev have left all but a very few statesmen and scholars in the West perplexed and unsure of the foundation of their assumptions about policy toward that great half-Western/half-Eastern giant. The years since the death of Chernenko have been filled with contradictory trends, as the forces of conservatism and reform have engaged in a competition with one another. The events in the USSR have been both unprecedented and deeply rooted in the Russian and Soviet past – unprecedented because of the depth and abruptness of the turnaround in both domestic and international affairs, and deeply rooted in the recurrent problems with which the Russian and Soviet leaderships have been forced to deal since the advent of Imperial Russia under Peter the Great.

Because the dramatic shifts in the foreign policy of the USSR have had a direct and critical impact on the foreign policy of the United States, as did the hostility between the two countries which preceded these shifts, it has been the job of scholars since 1985 to probe carefully into the origins, goals, and future of the new political thinking about international relations in the Soviet Union and the foreign policy based on it. Three interrelated sets of questions cluster around these issues at this critical juncture in Soviet history, as Mikhail Gorbachev faces diminishing support for his reforms and appears to be moving toward the right in an effort to retain power. (1) What are the features of the international environment that led to new political thinking? Are these features likely to change in the future or remain the same? (2) What have been the goals of new political thinking in the international arena? Is it merely old political thinking – i.e. Russian or communist expansionism – in new ideological garb? Is its purpose merely to gain time for internal reform, as many conservatives fear? Has it, on the other hand, presaged a revolution in foreign policy with its talk of mutual security and the common interests of mankind transcending class interests, as some others in the West hope? Or is it something between these two



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poles, an adjustment to new political realities, constituting a policy of what might be called "enlightened realism" for the Soviet Union? Finally, are its tenets, as has been argued recently, so required by the international environment that new political thinking would survive the end of internal reform in the USSR?[1] (3) How does new political thinking fit in with the Russian and Soviet past? Is it a marked departure? What are the antecedents in Russian/Soviet history that can help us better understand its likely future? What can the results of the past efforts at reform reveal about the ability of the current reforms to survive and perhaps even deal with the recurrent problems of border insecurity, the fear of internal chaos, and the issue of nationalities that have always pulled the Russian and Soviet leadership back toward autocracy and repression whenever it has attempted reform?

The struggle to find even partial answers to these difficult questions may lead to a better sense of the future contours of Soviet foreign policy and perhaps a better sense of how the United States and other Western allies should or are apt to respond to it. The following three sections of this chapter address these three clusters of questions about the origins, goals, and future of new political thinking, followed by a conclusion that radical Soviet economic and political reform is a *sine qua non* of great power status, which has been and remains a culturally important goal for the Soviet leadership. Economic success in today's international economy increasingly demands liberalization, market mechanisms, and free flow of information, unlike the requirements for success in previous economic periods. However, the linking of the nationality problem (and the possible break-up of the union) with political liberalization by important leaders in the reform movement, particularly Boris Yeltsin, President of the RSFSR, and Stanislav Shatalin, a former economic adviser to Gorbachev and author of the Shatalin economic plan, has made reform questionable. It has given the military, until recently uncomfortable with but supportive of reform, reason to doubt the outcome of Gorbachev's reform movement and its stake in it. This has made possible the formation of a conservative coalition of the military high command, the KGB, party loyalists, and governmental bureaucrats opposed to new political thinking. Eventually, however, the decreasing ability of an economically and politically unreformed Soviet Union to hold its internal empire together and to assert its influence in international affairs in a multipolar, economically oriented, and technologically sophisticated world will make reform once again a viable option for major groups in the Soviet leadership and society. Until that time, a conservative coalition will be unable to return to a pre-Gorbachev foreign policy, however much it would like to, but it is likely to pursue a

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less cooperative, more region-oriented foreign policy based on protection of its borders and the securing of aid and investment from countries other than the United States.[2]

### The sources of new political thinking

The pressures for the current period of reform in the Soviet Union did not originate within the Soviet Union itself. Although important changes had occurred in both the sociological and psychological make-up of Soviet society and its political elite previous to the initiation of economic and political reform by Mikhail Gorbachev, the demands of the changed and changing international environment, both economic and political, have been the major determinants of Gorbachev's new foreign and domestic policies as they have evolved since 1985.

When Gorbachev took over the reins of leadership from Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko, he was presented with an international environment in which the Soviet Union was faced with increasing difficulty in maintaining its superpower status. Perceptive analysts both within and without the Soviet Union were already making these arguments and had been doing so for some time,[3] and any well-connected and politically knowledgeable traveller, as they all were, from the Soviet Union to the West had to question the previously prevailing view that the Soviets were making gains on the West. Leonid Brezhnev served as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in a period with a decreasing rate of economic growth. In fact, the rate of growth of industrial output declined steadily throughout his tenure in office. Although it is difficult to trust any figures on Soviet economic growth, it is instructive that both Soviet and American official sources reported this decline. Soviet statistics reported average rates of growth of 10 percent in the 1950s, 7 percent in the 1960s, less than 5 percent in the 1970s, and about 3 percent in the early 1980s; and the CIA estimated percentage growths in Soviet GNP of 5.5 percent in the period 1951–55; 5.9 percent in 1956–60; 5 percent in 1961–65; 5.3 percent in 1966–70; 3.7 percent in 1971–75; and 2.7 percent in 1976–80.[4]

Yet, in spite of this downward trend in the growth of GNP during the Brezhnev period, guns prevailed over both butter and investment in national spending priorities. Throughout this entire period, the Soviets, with a markedly lower per capita GNP than that of the United States – at least one-half if not one-third – put approximately twice the percentage of GNP into the military sector as did their rival. This over-investment in the military sector allowed the Soviets to struggle for and then reach strategic parity with the United States in the late 1960s,

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recognized and symbolized by the SALT I accords; but it also contributed to the corrosion of the economic strength of the country, already weighed down by the problems of over-centralization and the lack of the market mechanism and individual incentive.[5]

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Soviet leadership assumed, as Marxist–Leninist doctrine indicates, that as the correlation of forces – a broader, more encompassing term, which includes socio-political forces, which the Soviets use in place of the balance of power – changed in favor of the Soviet Union, the United States would become more accommodating of Soviet power.[6] They had what they could consider evidence of this in the willingness of the United States to negotiate the SALT I agreement and ABM Treaty. Hence, the Soviet leadership, underestimating American political and military resolve, went forward with the deployment of two new heavy, MIRVed intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) systems, the SS-18s and SS-19s, that theoretically had the capability to wipe out the US ground-based ICBMs. Although the United States still retained a deterrent force in its submarines and bombers, conservative strategic thinkers in the United States feared a Soviet move toward superiority and posited a Soviet capability for nuclear blackmail.[7] These concerns multiplied and led to the formation in November 1976 of an organized American voice, the Committee on the Present Danger, arguing for a military build-up. President Carter did initiate such a build-up at the end of his term following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and President Reagan expanded it. The MX and Midgetman missiles, the Trident submarine with the D-5 warhead, cruise missiles, the B-2 and Stealth bombers, and improved command and control as a group promised to turn the tables on the Soviets and to lead them to another, more difficult, round in the arms race.[8]

The Strategic Defense Initiative, announced unexpectedly by Reagan in March of 1983, compounded the military problems confronting the Soviets and signaled that they had lost the technology race. As ill-conceived and technologically impossible as SDI was, it made clear to the Soviets the technological and economic gap between them and the Western world. Although they accurately pointed out that they could successfully negate a US strategic defense with inexpensive and technologically crude countermeasures, and produced a scientifically impressive report demonstrating this fact,[9] such a response was not befitting a superpower any more than minimum deterrence would have been a legitimate superpower response to the strong offensive nuclear threat of the 1960s and 1970s. Prestige and credibility demanded the construction of an equally capable strategic defense. The Soviet leadership knew that its current capabilities for strategic defense were inferior,

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