

FACING BOTH WAYS:  
AN ANALYSIS OF SOVIET AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE  
UNITED STATES 1985-1997

BY  
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An Analysis of Soviet and Russian Foreign Policy Toward the United States  
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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

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## ABSTRACT

For decades, the field of international relations has been occupied with, among other things, the political dynamic between the superpowers. During the Cold War, the understanding of international conflict centered around relations between Washington and Moscow. Both have been the most significant variables in the determination of crisis or stability in the international system and both have been included in efforts to intervene in conflicts of lower intensity throughout the world.

The post-Cold War era, though still in its infancy, has been characterized by both continuity and change. While the nuclear threat has been virtually eliminated, the foreign affairs of both Russia and the United States continue to remain of the utmost importance.

Russia is re-building itself from the wreckage of the Soviet Union and in time, hopes to be the dynamic international player it once was. For the time being, it still remains in possession of the ability to affect the new found stability of the post-Cold War world. For this reason, it is important to understand the events surrounding the fall of the Soviet Union and the reconstruction taking place in Moscow as its leaders attempt to rebuild a world power. It is through such a study that continuities between the old and the new systems present themselves. It is with an understanding of and respect for these continuities that the West must forge its new relationship with Russia.

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## INTRODUCTION

The collapse nine years ago of the Soviet bloc and the subsequent end of the Cold War represented the most significant geopolitical event since the end of World War Two. The past five years for Russia have been a period of constant flux with respect to its domestic and international affairs. The glue that held the Soviet Empire together is gone and Moscow has turned its attention inward in order to focus on the domestic nightmare that more than seventy years of communism created.

The post-Cold War era, though still in its infancy, has been a crucial period for Russia and both its past and present partners. George Bush's promise of a new world order set in motion ideas about a new international dynamic that would see East and West in cooperation to secure international peace. This is an exciting time. Cold War alliances have been altered and the world, as many once understood it to be, is unrecognizable. Naturally, the end of the Cold War left fertile ground for new beginnings and new partnerships which were previously unimaginable.

Much of the post-Cold War literature with respect to Russian foreign policy and the East-West relationship, stresses the *discontinuities* between the former Soviet regime and the new Russian Federation. The "newness" of the post-Cold War era is reflected in the recent writings of many academics and scholars, such as Richard Sakwa,<sup>1</sup> Jonathan

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<sup>1</sup> See Sakwa, Richard, Gorbachev and His Reforms. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Steele,<sup>2</sup> Leszek Buszynski,<sup>3</sup> and Saikal and Maley.<sup>4</sup> Each, with a tone of caution, undertakes a study of the discontinuities between the former Soviet Union and post-communist Russia, and each does so with an air of new departure. The above authors and many others in their field, make important contributions to the study of Russian foreign policy during the period 1985-1997. However this literature leaves room for more examination of the themes of continuity between the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. This thesis makes a modest contribution which should not be overlooked in an examination of Russian foreign policy.

Between 1989 and 1991 there was some tendency to overstress the idea of discontinuity in the communist world. The difficulties of instituting democratic reform were somewhat underemphasized. Since this period, there have been challenges to democratic government in the former Soviet Republics, such as Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Links to the past were deeper than most had imagined and while it is legitimate to be optimistic about the changes taking place, one must still remain cautious and never forget the past. In the beginning of the post- Cold War era, few predicted the continuing influence of communism in the world. And so, when it comes to an examination of the particulars of Russian foreign policy toward the U.S., the tensions become apparent between the idea of fresh beginnings and the continuance of old attitudes, old assumptions and old problems.

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<sup>2</sup> See Jonathan Steele, Eternal Russia: Yeltsin, Gorbachev and the Mirage of Democracy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> See Buszynski, Leszek, Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War. Connecticut: Praeger, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> See Saikal, Amin and Maley, William, eds., Russia in Search of Its Future. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.



The thesis reflects a comprehensive review of recent literature with respect to Soviet and Russian foreign policy and it seeks to address important understandings about the East-West relationship. It will test the proposition that there are several continuities that characterize Russia's behaviour today that will likely continue to challenge Russia and its neighbors and partners. It is through an analysis of both Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's foreign policies that these continuities will be identified. The thesis will proceed by reviewing the history of Soviet relations with the United States under Gorbachev from 1985-1991 and Russian relations with Washington under Yeltsin from 1991-1997.<sup>5</sup>

When Gorbachev took power in 1985, he did so at a time when East and West were experiencing somewhat of a cooling of relations. The Soviet economy was in distress and détente had failed to relax Reagan's drive toward a more aggressive military programme. Brezhnev left Gorbachev with a legacy of expensive military competition with the United States and a domestic economy that was weakening rapidly with little technological innovation. Gorbachev knew that the reform of Soviet society was inextricably tied to relations with the West. He knew that if he was going to address economic priorities, he would require a reprieve from the expensive military competition with the West. He understood that the key to solving the Soviet Union's problems was to

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<sup>5</sup> While many aspects of Soviet foreign policy were radically altered with respect to the international communist movement and Russia's relationship with the European Union and the Asia Pacific, and while these are important, this study will focus primarily on the changing dynamic between Washington and Moscow.

secure a cooperative and significantly more positive international environment, one in which Washington and Moscow could work together to promote peace.

Gorbachev was not advocating an East-West alliance, but he did seek a stronger détente with the West that would allow him time to focus on domestic problems. He announced democratic-style reforms in the hope of both addressing economic ills and of wiping out any future of armed conflict between the superpowers. This break in superpower conflict was intended to allow him time to get his domestic house in order and was never intended to transform the Soviet system into a fully democratic state.

It will be revealed in the thesis that Gorbachev's reforms gained so much momentum that they grew too large for him to control. To redirect the words of Franz Kafka, "he [Gorbachev] found the Archimedean point, but he used it against himself." While he was successful with respect to relations with the West, this may have been a Pyrrhic victory for Gorbachev. Perhaps his fatal flaw was that he introduced democratic-style reforms into a society that was not properly organized to deal with democracy. It seems what Gorbachev missed was that by removing the source of tension between the Soviet Union and its neighbors, he also removed the foundation of his regime's right to rule.<sup>6</sup> This loss of legitimacy led to his replacement by a man who promised democracy at a much faster pace, yet who, like Gorbachev, did not possess the necessary formula. Some

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<sup>6</sup> Smart, Christopher. The Imagery of Soviet Foreign Policy and the Collapse of the Russian Empire. Connecticut: Praeger, 1995. p. 146.

of the old pillars of communism remained and Yeltsin's narrow window of opportunity to institute democracy in Russia was closing fast.

Yeltsin has faced challenges Gorbachev never knew. The reaction of Russian public opinion to a new international role was the main new problem which, at the end of the Gorbachev years, was only just beginning to make itself felt. A large section of public opinion has been slow to accept Russia's new status. Gorbachev's reforms, with respect to both domestic and international relations, reflected many of the characteristics of the old regime and some of these characteristics have persisted even throughout the Yeltsin period.

Yeltsin, in many cases, still looks West for threats to Russia's security. Continuities can be seen in Russia's opposition to and later grudging acceptance of NATO expansion, and in Russia's recent position on how best to deal with Iraq. Many communist values and attitudes still remain in Moscow and there is a growing anti-Western sentiment among much of the population. The fact that the Communist Party failed to dissolve after the 1991 coup is significant. There are still many challenges to democracy that raise important questions about its future in Russia. While the current Russian government appears to have kept much of the anti-Western sentiment under control, there is no guarantee that Yeltsin will remain in power for much longer. It appears that Russia is unable to reconcile its past and its future and arguably it has some tough choices ahead.

As Yeltsin struggles with the legacy of the past, Russia's future, both internally and externally, hangs in the balance. This thesis will examine the nature and significance of the continuities between past and present Russian foreign policy from 1985-1997 in an attempt to shed some light on Russia's uncertain, unpredictable attitudes. The legacy Brezhnev left for Gorbachev in many ways remains today as Russia struggles to define a new identity for itself at home and abroad.

The decade of détente was crucial to creating the kind of international environment that would be susceptible to the changes Gorbachev sought. Gorbachev was confident that if he could secure American trust, then both East and West would be able to work together to foster an environment of cooperation rather than competition. While Gorbachev did inherit an expensive military programme, he also inherited an environment that was ripe for reform. What he did with his inheritance continues to affect the East-West dynamic today, as Yeltsin struggles to reconcile the end of Communist Party dominance with lingering values and attitudes from the Soviet period.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Gorbachev's Inheritance

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in March 1985, he was the youngest man to hold supreme power in the Soviet Union since Joseph Stalin. Gorbachev arrived on the Soviet political scene when it had reached, what he termed, a “pre-crisis situation.” Gorbachev, trained as a lawyer at Moscow State University, joined the Communist Party in 1952 and rose steadily in the regional party hierarchy until he was summoned to Moscow in 1978. He became the protégé of Yuri Andropov, and a strong candidate to become General Secretary. Gorbachev soon fulfilled this mandate in April 1985, upon Chernenko's death.

Little had changed in Moscow between the death of Brezhnev and the rise of Gorbachev. Gorbachev assumed the role of General Secretary amidst a strong expectation for change and began talk of serious reform from the moment he delivered Chernenko's eulogy. Gorbachev's “pre-crisis situation” was characterized by shortages and imbalances in the economy and unmanageably low levels of labor productivity; years of stagnation had left people uninterested in their jobs and apathetic.<sup>7</sup> Citizens were distrustful of what the politicians were telling them. On the international front, trouble was accumulating. The Soviets had failed to put a stop to American deployment of missiles to Europe, Reagan was focused on rapid arms build-up, and the Soviets had reached a stalemate in

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<sup>7</sup> Nove, Alec, Stalinism and After. London: Unwin Hyman, Ltd., 1975. p.178.

Afghanistan. These problems were seen all throughout Europe, especially in Poland where the Polish Communist Party had virtually collapsed.

Gorbachev inherited a social, economic and political nightmare caused by years of high level corruption and exploitation. For many years, the bulk of government investment was allocated to defence and this led to distortions in the rest of the economy. The economy was in such a state that centralized planning could no longer provide the solutions required to turn the economy around. What was needed was a more flexible and more sophisticated economy, and in order to achieve this, more initiative and enterprise from below would have to be allowed and encouraged. Innovation was the key to resolving stagnation.<sup>8</sup>

The tensions in Soviet society exacerbated Moscow's relations with the West in general and with the Americans in particular. The resolution of these problems pointed toward radical shifts in Soviet foreign policy. This chapter will now take up these problems and examine underlying reasons for these changes in foreign policy in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

In order to achieve a broader understanding of the relations between East and West prior to Gorbachev's reign, it is necessary to examine the foreign policies of the Brezhnev era. It was during the Brezhnev era that the Soviet Union and the United States launched the period of détente in the 1970's. Brezhnev occupied the position of General

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Secretary for eighteen years and his reign as *primus inter pares* of the Soviet leadership lasted longer than that of his predecessor, Nikita Khrushchev. His style of leadership was undramatic and he conducted state business in an orderly, methodical, gradual manner, always with deep caution.<sup>9</sup>

Brezhnev's attitude toward Soviet history and Stalinism changed from Khrushchev's. Brezhnev sought to rehabilitate Stalin and disallowed any discussion or debate of Stalin's failures. He erected a statue of Stalin along the Kremlin wall depicting him as a modest, secondary, historical figure.<sup>10</sup> This marked an effort to remind people of Soviet power and greatness but was not meant to promote a return to the ways of Stalin. Brezhnev acknowledged the ultimate need to move ahead in a positive way with socialism, however Khrushchev had gone too far with his criticisms and Brezhnev set out to reverse that trend. The Brezhnev regime had been "more consistent, less flexible, and less tolerant than Khrushchev."<sup>11</sup> One quarter of Soviet history took place under Brezhnev and this left Gorbachev with a lot to address.

Before and throughout much of Brezhnev's rule, the Soviet Union enjoyed a powerful role militarily, economically and politically in the international system. Moscow challenged the United States for preeminence. The Soviet Union was adroit in its ability to move into areas that were "quite unstable and quite proximate to areas considered vital to

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<sup>9</sup> Bialer, Seweryn, Stalin's Successors. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.163.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. P. 164.

other powers.”<sup>12</sup> Russia had caused the United States to be fearful of the erosion of its dominant position in the international system.

With Gorbachev, what was becoming clear was that the Soviet Union was no longer invincible on the battlefield and, as Valerie Bunce argues, there was a growing awareness that the expansion of Russia’s presence in the international system did not necessarily serve to enhance Russia’s *power*.<sup>13</sup>

Brezhnev seemed to give early signals of being open to a liberalization of the system but acted conservatively when confronted with domestic unrest in the Czechoslovak Spring of 1968. He was in power for eighteen long years, a tenure which interacted with the authoritarian nature of the Russian states, elite fears of domestic unrest, and with a growing appreciation for stability in cadres, public policy and the Soviet structure.<sup>14</sup> There was declining control of the military and bureaucracy and growing corruption among public officials. This provided a breeding ground for liberal, reform-minded thought.

Brezhnev presided over a mounting crisis in the Russian economy and by the end of his era, the Soviet Union was facing an economic and foreign policy crisis of monumental proportions. Valerie Bunce lists Brezhnev’s burdens:

...the burdens on Soviet foreign policy imposed

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<sup>12</sup> Bunce, Valerie *Domestic Reform and International Change: The Gorbachev Reforms in Historical Perspective*. International Organization, Winter 1993. p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 112.



by an increasingly vigorous West. a prolonged and unsuccessful war in Afghanistan, an empire in Eastern Europe which was increasingly unstable, indebted to the West, and a serious drain on the Soviet economy, and at the same time, an unwillingness and increasing inability to share the regional defence burden; stresses imposed by the Sino-Soviet dispute and the proximity of China; the economic drain of Cuba, Vietnam, and the acquisition of what could only be termed "Fourth World" client states; the threat that the Americans might succeed in developing the SDI; and the growing problems with the Soviet economy as a consequence of (1) the size of its military and imperial burdens, (2) exhaustion of new sources of labor and capital and, finally, (3) the inefficient utilization of the factors of production in state-owned, centrally planned and highly protected economies.<sup>15</sup>

Brezhnev had conflicting economic priorities which included not only the most extensive defence procurement programme since the first Five Year Plan, but also one of the most ambitious housing programs in Europe. He also placed great emphasis on agriculture and between 1974 and 1984, agriculture grew as a priority area because despite growing investment, there were still large shortfalls in food production. Large imports of grain from the West were brought in, but were always in short supply. These goods were sold at such low prices that demand and supply rarely balanced.<sup>16</sup> Dating from Nicholas I, Russia had managed to miss out on all the changes in social structure, fiscal institutions, bureaucracy and technology that had proved crucial in promoting agricultural efficiency, industrial revolution and military success in the West.<sup>17</sup> Further to this, as Alec Nove describes,

Growth rates declined, living standards ceased to rise, shortages and imbalances became worse, giving increased opportunities for corruption at all levels. Alcoholism, crime, and drug use

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.p. 113.

<sup>16</sup> Nove, op cit., p. 166.

<sup>17</sup> Bunce, op cit., p. 115.

increased in scope and were seen by Soviet critics as directly related to a sort of creeping demoralization.<sup>18</sup>

The major cause of economic strain under Brezhnev, however, was directly related to his expensive foreign policy. The arms programme was given top priority and Soviet naval and missile expansion was rapid in order to answer American superiority in this area. In order to catch up to the U.S., the Soviets' production of armaments had to far exceed that of American production. This imposed an enormous strain on the already overburdened Soviet economy.<sup>19</sup>

This need for competition with the Americans was characteristic of the Brezhnev years in spite of a clear understanding in Moscow that the Politburo had a definite interest in expanding bilateral relations with the United States. Moscow was convinced that it faced an ever stronger NATO and a cultural revolution in China in the early 1970's. There were also nationalist sentiments emanating from within the societies of the Soviet Union's East European allies. Complicating this was the understood need for improved relations with the West in order to facilitate the importation of Western goods and technology. The emergence of Westpolitik encapsulated Soviet desires for a European security conference that would recognize Soviet gains in World War Two, and, finally, the Soviet desire to constrain American deployment of weapons in areas that would put the Soviets at a technological disadvantage.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Nove, *op cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> Gelman, Harry, The Rise and Fall of Détente . Rand Corporation Occasional Paper # OPS-002, 1985. p. 4.

The Americans, too, had similar desires for improved relations between the superpowers. However, each side soon realized that to promote their own agenda, considerable concessions were required from the other side. None of these contradictions were resolved.

The Soviets learned that the U.S. would be unwilling to side with them in the event of a clash with China and were disappointed that the United States refused to support Soviet vital interests with respect to their relations with Eastern Europe. Also on the Soviet agenda was to reverse the many geopolitical advantages made by the Americans in recent years as well as to supplant American influence, wherever possible, in different parts of the world.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, throughout the latter half of the 1970's, the Soviets were attempting to expand their geopolitical position around the world, most specifically by widening the scope of their naval and air operations to more distant areas and also by providing arms assistance to radical movements or states formerly in the Western sphere of influence. It has been said, and certainly believed by the Americans, that these Soviet efforts throughout the decade of détente and after, were a result of an internally driven,

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It is interesting to note the persistence of some of these questions. Russia continues to promote a conference on European security in which Russia plays an important role. Their advocacy of such an arrangement can be seen in their previous opposition to NATO expansion and their reluctant acquiescence to it in March 1997. Russia has continued to seek renewed status in Europe and with the West and an acknowledgment from the West of their continued great power status. The issue of Russia's role in the new European security framework will be discussed later in this thesis.

<sup>21</sup> Gelman, op cit., p. 7.

perpetual contest with the West to which all other purposes and relationships were subordinated.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the 1970's, the Soviets attempted to keep their relationship with the U.S. separate from their activities abroad. A good bilateral relationship with the U.S. was important to Brezhnev, yet he was still set on expanding Soviet influence, usually at American expense. Harry Gelman likens this separation to a wall that the Soviets built to separate Soviet-U.S. relations from the underlying Soviet value of supplanting American influence.<sup>23</sup> In response to this Soviet "wall," the American consensus about détente began to crumble and this seemed to confirm suspicions about hostile Soviet intentions. The political balance had shifted again. This situation did not improve with President Carter's successor.

With Reagan's inauguration came growing Soviet pessimism about the nature of a bilateral relationship with the United States. The Reagan years saw the return of old rhetoric regarding the "nature of the enemy" and the Soviets saw this as an effort to undermine Soviet advancements. Moscow returned with accusations and some anti-American rhetoric of its own, surpassing that of the 1950's.<sup>24</sup> The anti-Reagan rhetoric suggested that Reagan should be regarded as another Hitler.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

As the Cold War deepened, so, too, did the Soviet Union's internal turmoil. Actions taken by the Soviet leadership were those understandably taken by a government that viewed itself as beset on all sides.<sup>26</sup> In the early 1980's, Moscow was dealing with a succession crisis, an economy in grave crisis and Reagan's military programme. Soviet oligarchs were also dealing with the ongoing problem of the war in Afghanistan, an unstable Poland and setbacks to their desire to block INF deployment and draw China away from its changing orientation toward the U.S.<sup>27</sup>

The Politburo was also undergoing a deep crisis at this time. It was viewed, both internally and externally, that the "semi-paralysis" that had set in during the last few years of Brezhnev's reign would continue under the next two ailing general secretaries, Andropov and Chernenko.<sup>28</sup> The lack of a strong, decisive leader had a dulling effect on the Soviet people. Growing dissatisfaction with their leaders and the perceived physical and political weaknesses of the above two men lead to a "growing malaise associated with a general sense of exceptional weakness and division at the center."<sup>29</sup> Gorbachev was set to inherit a recasting of Soviet defense and security priorities, largely caused by détente, which had proven to be somewhat disruptive in the communist ranks. Its process had further deepened the divisions already present in the 1960's and it accelerated the process of other communist states' reabsorption into the mainstream of international politics.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> The aging, ailing Soviet elite was a real problem in Moscow. Between the 24th and 25th Party Congresses the leadership remained relatively the same with little turnover in the Central Committee and in the Politburo. As a result, there was little impetus for much needed reform.

<sup>29</sup> Gelman, op cit., p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Bromke and Novak, Communist States in the Era of Détente. Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1979. p. 7.

Despite the contradictions and difficulties, Brezhnev's foreign policy was characterized by détente. Détente was premised by a period of improved relations between the superpowers in which both sides tried to make concessions to the other to promote peace through limits on weapons proliferation. Détente has been defined as:

...a form of peaceful coexistence<sup>31</sup> characterized by a network of bilateral and multilateral agreements that facilitate a peaceful settlement of disputes between states, provide certain guarantees against a new worldwide armed conflict, and contribute toward the establishment of international machinery (or more efficient functioning of that already in existence), that is called on to safeguard peace.<sup>32</sup>

From the Soviet perspective, the balance of power was shifting in favour of the West. Weapons technology drastically improved leaving any potential aggressor's hopes of winning a war frustrated. What grew from this situation was essentially a nuclear stalemate because war could no longer be relied upon to achieve one's political goals.<sup>33</sup> Détente happened largely as a result of the realization that "enhanced power does not automatically, especially in the nuclear age, give a state greater security."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Peaceful coexistence refers to the parallel existence of states with differing socioeconomic and political systems, characterized by normal diplomatic and economic relations and a minimum set of bilateral and multilateral agreements. This definition was borrowed from Daniel Frei's Definitions and Measurement of Détente, p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Bromke and Novak, op cit., p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

<sup>34</sup> Ulam, Adam, Dangerous Relations. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. p. 39.

The most obvious aspect of détente was a strategic arms agreement between the two superpowers. This made sense to Washington, which was following a policy of MAD (mutually assured destruction), which saw that beyond a certain point, (in which one had adequate resources to annihilate one's enemy), it was unnecessary and wasteful to produce more weapons. The Soviets compulsively pursued more and more ICBM's, given their past strategic inferiority and growing complex in this regard. (See pp.45-48 for a lengthier discussion of the arms race and Soviet motivations).

The détente idea had been strengthened by other factors. Since World War II, the geopolitical map had changed with the rising tide of anti-colonial revolutions which resulted in the emergence of some ninety new independent states. This new phenomenon added to the course of those who advocated decreased tensions among the superpowers. Another key factor influencing the evolution toward détente was an overall world public opinion against war as a conflict-resolving mechanism.<sup>35</sup> The 1960's and 1970's especially were, in many countries, a time of peace rallies and anti-war movements. As Jurrii Pankov explained, détente's purpose was to "avoid a war that no one could win, a suicidal and senseless war."<sup>36</sup> In spite of this, he also points out that even in the decade of détente, the arms race persisted vigorously, however this has not been without the Soviet effort to link military détente with political détente. They insisted that they wanted to stop nuclear and conventional arms races and to promote disarmament.<sup>37</sup>

For the Soviets, détente extolled the benefits of cooperation, not precluding competition. Détente was said to have been, in many respects, a product of Soviet achievements and was understandably viewed skeptically by the Americans. Brezhnev was seen as the primary instigator of this new form of peaceful coexistence and thus, it had been implemented within a relatively reliable political framework.<sup>38</sup> Bowker and Williams agree that the continuity in the Soviet leadership (and the subsequent demotion of persons

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<sup>35</sup> Ulam, op cit., p. 39.

<sup>36</sup> Pankov, in Frei, Daniel, ed., Definitions and Measurement of Détente. Germany: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain Publishers, Inc. 1981. p.60

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.p. 61.

<sup>38</sup> Bowker and Williams, Superpower Détente: A Reappraisal. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1988. p.187.

not subscribing to its policies), lent stability and legitimacy to Soviet détente policy, which was lacking in the West. Due to American hesitancy to espouse détente fully, the Soviets began to see them as unsatisfactory partners in détente with the detection of a one way street in favor of the adversary.<sup>39</sup> In spite of this, Moscow still pursued détente as the best possible alternative.

There was an attempt early in Brezhnev's reign to restrict the power of his leadership in favor of the promotion of a collective leadership. However by 1970, he was able to escape from under this directive and assume a greater position as *primus inter pares*. Although his authoritative power never equaled that of his predecessors and he ruled by consensus; there was a visible personalizing of his foreign policy. Brezhnev became increasingly involved in foreign policy and favored military action in Czechoslovakia in 1968, in keeping with what the West termed the *Brezhnev Doctrine*.<sup>40</sup>

This closer, personal identification with Soviet foreign policy had negative aspects as well. Brezhnev faced scrutiny over his policies toward the Federal Republic of Germany, and his more conciliatory approach toward the Americans and toward arms control. Nonetheless, Brezhnev managed to consolidate his power to lead the U.S.S.R through the decade of détente.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. 189.

<sup>40</sup> The Brezhnev Doctrine asserted that communist states could intervene in each other's internal political affairs if there was thought to be a threat to their common political system. Many have cited the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia as the best practical example of the Brezhnev Doctrine. For a more elaborate discussion of the Brezhnev Doctrine, see Walter Lacquer's *The Long Road to Freedom*.



The policy of détente was firmly in place in the early Brezhnev years. By 1973 however, Soviet policy toward the West was facing growing criticism from within the Soviet elite. Much of this began in September 1973 when the Allende government in Chile was overthrown by an American backed military coup. Allende requested economic assistance from Moscow and was given low priority which may have led to his overthrow. Critics in the U.S.S.R attributed Moscow's unwillingness to support Allende as resulting from its greater interest in preserving détente. Brezhnev was accused of placing more importance on Moscow's relationship with the U.S. than on its relations with its Third World allies. Moreover, the Middle East war of 1973 proved yet again that the Americans were capable and willing to compete actively with the Soviets in various parts of the world. Détente was losing popularity in Moscow as a result.<sup>41</sup>

Bowker and Williams assert that if détente was to be a success, Moscow had to appear sensitive to American concerns. They argue that Soviet policy did not change in the latter half of the 1970's, but the international context changed and therefore Soviet actions became more confused, reactive and opportunistic in their response to developments in Washington.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, sometimes the Soviets appeared to be sympathetic and conciliatory to the United States and other times they would act in ways perceived by the Americans to be hostile.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Bowker and Williams, *op cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p. 199.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

In the mid 1970's, détente entered a downward spiral. The superpower relationship became increasingly characterized by mutual distrust and antagonism.<sup>44</sup> This decline can be attributed to many incidents such as Carter's letter to Sakharov which displayed an American willingness to involve itself in Soviet internal affairs; Carter's reversal of the original willingness to include the U.S.S.R in the Middle East peace process created a wide spread view in Moscow that the Carter administration was an enemy of détente; the American positioning of Bzrezinski to a dominant position of power and the way he played the China card was especially communicating a negation of one of the key elements of détente.<sup>45</sup> Washington and Beijing moved much closer together under the Carter administration and this condominium seemed to have a "pronounced anti-Soviet bias."<sup>46</sup> Bowker and Williams noted,

The establishment of full diplomatic relations between China and the United States, the visit of the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping to Washington in January 1979 and the subsequent Chinese invasion of Vietnam all intensified Soviet concerns and cast doubt on the American commitment to superpower détente.<sup>47</sup>

American hesitancy over the signing of the SALT II Treaty in June 1979 further contributed to Soviet insecurities. As Brezhnev's health began to decline, so, too, did his involvement in foreign policy. Specifically, his power appeared to be growing as he surrounded himself with his protégés later to assume the presidency and he showered himself with numerous medals. His concern with leadership left him further removed from

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.p. 203.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

policy and Brezhnev again found himself working within a collective decision making process in which consensus was moving away from concessions simply to maintain détente.<sup>48</sup> The Soviets did not abort their détente policy, however it gradually decreased in importance in relation to domestic concerns. Bowker and Williams claim it is important to note that,

...the fundamental shift away from détente took place in Washington, not Moscow. The Soviet debate led to changes at the margin; the American debate established a new foreign policy consensus in which détente had no part.<sup>49</sup>

The challenge to détente coincided with the transition to a different strategic structure where the bi-polar model was less satisfactory. Gorbachev was positioning himself to assume power in an era that was beginning to see the end of a simple bi-polar world in which only dominant superpowers mattered. Kenneth Waltz argues that in a bi-polar world, one is never in doubt about who the enemy is. This proposition was becoming less helpful. Throughout the 1970's, the superpowers were adjusting to their unique vulnerabilities and concerns which differed from each other. As a result, although they each had some common interests, each had a different definition of détente and each pursued its own ends.<sup>50</sup> Toward the end of the decade of détente the peaceful coexistence that had been enjoyed by both sides for many years was becoming increasingly fragile.

The Soviets promoted détente as a means of securing American acknowledgment of Soviet status and of gaining Western assistance for the Soviet economy. The United

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.p. 204.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Bowker and Williams, *op cit.*, p. 257.

States saw détente as valuable to Soviet leaders; valuable enough that Washington hoped to use it as a tool to force concessions from the Soviets and to encourage “liberal” reforms.

Harry Gelman identifies several important developments from the decade of détente that endured well into the 1980’s with which Gorbachev had to deal. The first important development was the emergence of new Soviet-American institutional relations, for example the Joint Standing Consultative Commission which, since SALT I, has dealt with arms control issues. Even though open discussion had come to a halt in this regard with the arrival of a new period, though brief, of mutual distrust, the *structure* itself was still in place, available for future use. In addition, there were other important arms control-related measures taken such as the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) negotiations in Vienna and the meetings on “confidence building measures” in Stockholm. These “empty vessels” remained should they be needed in the future.<sup>51</sup>

Throughout détente there existed a series of informal contacts between the Soviet Union and the United States that were instrumental in forming the new relationship between the two powers, however this relationship was constricted with post-détente Soviet efforts to tighten security controls over Western communication and contact with the Soviet population. On the American side, President Reagan attempted to impose reciprocity on some mutual contracts and this, too, affected the stability of the political

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<sup>51</sup> Gelman, *op cit.*, p. 34.

relationship.<sup>52</sup> American grain shipments to the U.S.S.R managed, miraculously, to endure the downturn in Soviet-American relations. The unavoidable truth was that the Soviets no longer had an ample supply of grain required for feed to increase meat production.

Gelman identifies two major dilemmas facing Gorbachev in the post détente era. First, Soviet rivalry with China continued which led China to try to attain some degree of security association with the United States. The increased cooperation between the U.S. and China served to strengthen Soviet resentment toward the West. The second problem facing Gorbachev after détente was the downward spiraling economy in the Soviet Union which led Moscow to seek closer ties with the West. The Soviet economic burden was such that it was no longer able to support competitive military and strategic competition with the United States. Further, the backward Soviet economy and lack of technological innovation left the U.S.S.R extraordinarily far behind in terms of becoming a major industrial power.<sup>53</sup> The costs of supporting and maintaining the Soviet Empire were becoming prohibitive.

According to Gelman, the Soviets did maintain some important advantages. In spite of a few “problem areas,” the Soviet geopolitical presence in the world was much more far-reaching than it was prior to the 1970’s. The geopolitical engagement of the United States and the Soviet Union was a continuing phenomenon into the mid 1980’s.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.p. 35.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.p. 36.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

The early 1980's marked a period of transition in the Soviet Union. Brezhnev was getting on in years and was growing increasingly ill. As a result, his control over party cadres was beginning to weaken and there was talk of corruption among high ranking members of his party and even among family members. Brezhnev became increasingly concerned with clinging to power and privileges; there was definitely mounting inertia at the top.<sup>55</sup> Such short-sightedness made it virtually impossible for Brezhnev to deal with the growing problems with the Soviet economy. In his decline, Brezhnev became the spokesman of the weakening collective leadership that sought to "prop him up" in order to avoid change. He was seen as their last chance at preserving the status quo and avoiding reform. The social and economic stagnation that the Soviet Union experienced in the late 1970's and early 1980's was not exclusive to the Brezhnev era; such stagnation plagued the administrations of both Andropov and Chernenko.

Adam Bromke recounts that economic growth was down by three percent and there was a declining supply of labor.<sup>56</sup> The technology gap between the U.S.S.R and other, more industrialized nations such as Japan and the United States, was widening and there appeared to be no end in sight. The Soviet government was pouring money into agriculture, but it continued to perform poorly. The standard of living was stagnant, given the low quality of consumer goods, and the recurrent food shortages. Discontent among

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<sup>55</sup> Bromke, Adam, East-West Relations in the 1980's. Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security Occasional Paper #9, 1988, p. 25.

<sup>56</sup> Perhaps these figures are optimistic. Given the notorious difficulty in deciphering Soviet statistics, some estimates, for example those of Gorbachev, indicate that the system was in much worse condition. He estimated zero percent growth since the 1960's.

Soviet citizens grew and many turned to alcoholism, bribery and theft. Economic and social reform was urgently needed.<sup>57</sup> However, with the end of détente, the superpower arms race, with the new challenges from the Reagan administration, placed a heavy burden on the Soviet economy. Soviet foreign policy placed even further burdens on Moscow's purse given its commitments and subsidies to communist client states in the Third World, most notably, Cuba and Vietnam.<sup>58</sup> The political turmoil in Poland and the war in Afghanistan placed an immense strain on the Soviet economy. In the 1980's, the Cold War deepened with the advent of the Reagan administration and continuing good relations between the United States and China, which limited the scope for the possibility of détente.

Brezhnev's health rapidly deteriorated after 1982 and when he died in November, Yuri Andropov replaced him as General Secretary. Andropov acknowledged the sad shape of the Soviet economy and made efforts to end alcoholism and to stress discipline, to curb the growing social ills. He occasionally hinted at the need for a comprehensive restructuring of the economy, however he had no time for such an undertaking, as he died less than two short years later.<sup>59</sup> Despite this start, his efforts did not amount to much. Chernenko inherited an economy which had not really changed at all.

Andropov and his successor, Chernenko, were nothing more than transitional leaders. The negative changes that were taking place in the Soviet Union were a function

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<sup>57</sup> Bromke, op cit., pp.25-26.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.p. 27.

of inertia and were beyond the control of both men. Chernenko abstained from instituting any major reforms, and even if he had wanted to do so, he was far too ill successfully to affect change in the Kremlin.<sup>60</sup> To his credit, Andropov had at least the presence of mind to see that reform was essential and to this end, he groomed the relatively young Mikhail Gorbachev to succeed him. In the final months of Chernenko's life, Gorbachev increasingly emerged as his most obvious successor.<sup>61</sup> During this interregnum, East-West relations were exceedingly poor. The inertia that existed in Moscow and the growing assertiveness in Washington led the two superpowers toward a worsening bilateral political climate.<sup>62</sup>

A series of events led to the resurgence of tensions between the two countries. President Reagan, in a March 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelists, characterized the Soviet Union as "the source of evil in the modern world," and was followed by the launching of his "star wars" initiative later that month.<sup>63</sup> August that same year witnessed the Soviets shoot down a South Korean airliner carrying John Birch, a member of the United States House of Representatives. These incidents ignited the old flames of Soviet-American tensions and this culminated with the Soviet delegates aborting their participation in the Geneva arms control talks.<sup>64</sup> A new round of weapons acquisition

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<sup>60</sup> While it is true that the aging Chernenko was indeed far too ill to effect the necessary changes in the U.S.S.R, he also failed to possess the personal drive to affect change. By comparison, it should be noted that while Deng Xiopeng was an aging and ailing leader, he continued to rule China with an iron fist until the day of his death.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.p. 28.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



was under way, indicating a “clear cut retrogression, especially from the halcyon days of East-West détente in the early 1970’s.”<sup>65</sup>

Why was Brezhnev criticized as much as he was? After all, during the 1970’s, many families benefited from increased availability of television sets and refrigerators. An electricity plant was built in Krasnoyarsk, a gas pipeline constructed as well as the 3,200 km long BAM (Baikal-Amur Railway). The Tiumen oil and gas fields were developed, and the output of commodities of mass consumption almost doubled and medical services improved.<sup>66</sup> Brezhnev launched the largest public housing project in all of Europe, nuclear parity was achieved, and the blue water navy was developed. So, then, why did Gorbachev have so many criticisms of his predecessor? He was criticized for economic stagnation, poor leadership, and the emasculation of critical discussion.<sup>67</sup> The Brezhnev era was said, by many Soviet critics, to be an era of high stability; all major groups of Soviet society had participated in the general improvement of living conditions and the standard of living did indeed improve.<sup>68</sup> By all appearances the Soviet economy actually seemed to be getting stronger. Under the surface, however, the reality was of an inefficient economy stretched to the limit.

Toward the end of Brezhnev’s reign, the dangers of apathy, inefficiency, double thinking and double standards became a reality. There was a loss of vigor and direction

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Lacquer, Walter. The Long Road to Freedom. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1989. pp. 23-24.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

from Moscow and between 1979-1982, the Soviet economy stood still, life expectancy dropped, infant mortality rates rose, alcohol consumption skyrocketed, working conditions worsened, the agriculture policy was a disaster, and the quality of goods produced plummeted as lines to purchase them increased. As Walter Lacquer points out, the biggest crisis was not the stagnation of production, but the loss of morale and lack of incentive, corruption and the elite abuse of power.<sup>69</sup> There was unsurprisingly a growing feeling of pessimism in the U.S.S.R in the late 1970's that pervaded the 1980's as well. The cause of this was of course the struggling economy, but also bitterness over the unmet expectation of a better future; one that would catch up with and surpass the West. Gradually, Soviet citizens became aware that contrary to what they were told, their system was falling even further behind. Solidarity among the people had deteriorated along with the quality of life. Brezhnev, it had been reported, was not blind to the situation. He knew that there was a growing idea that the system contained scarcely more than "senility at the top and apathy among the masses."<sup>70</sup>

Andropov, despite his KGB connections, during his short tenure, showed surprisingly "liberal" tendencies as he rejected some of the old ways of Brezhnev. He was only in power for fourteen months and throughout this time there was no improvement in domestic affairs and there was arguably a deterioration in foreign affairs.<sup>71</sup> It has been argued that Andropov saw a need for reform. He began the process of the renewal of the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

elite as soon as he came to power.<sup>72</sup> Although a process of renewal at the top began with Andropov, it was not until the advent of Gorbachev that there was much turnover among the elite. However his health deteriorated to the point that he could not carry out reforms he may have intended. He did attempt to open up Politburo meetings and he worked to reduce corruption at higher levels. Nothing he did had any great effect and he was willing to admit that he had no quick fixes for the problems facing the Soviet Union.<sup>73</sup>

Andropov died in 1984 and was replaced by Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko. This provided little opportunity to judge the ability of his leadership to affect change because Andropov was only in office for fourteen months and was ill throughout. It was ironic that the aged Chernenko, who epitomized all that was lamentable about the Soviet regime, continued to promote the career of Gorbachev. When he died, Gorbachev was ready to assume the supreme position of power in the Soviet Union. On his plate were many important domestic and foreign policy issues such as the question of what to do with the abruptly suspended arms control process, a characteristic failure of *détente*. It seemed SALT II was doomed, and the Soviets had begun to diverge ever more significantly from the letter of the treaty by developing two new ICBM's. There was a distinct reversal of Soviet political and military *influence* around the world, and to many in Moscow this was a fundamental problem that Gorbachev would have to take very seriously.

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<sup>72</sup> Smith, Gordon B., Soviet Politics: Continuity and Contradiction. St. Martin's Press, 1988. pp. 84-87.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31.

When Gorbachev came to power in March 1985, he symbolized the desire for change and progress in his country. He was a younger, more charismatic and modern leader who promised to take his country into a new era of economic hope and to put an end to stagnation and decline. It was said that he never made promises that he felt he could not keep. However he was criticized by many party functionaries who agreed that reform could no longer be postponed, but were shocked by the specifics of his reform programme.

Throughout the decade of détente, there was a gradual move toward collaboration illustrated in SALT I. When Gorbachev arrived on the scene, he pushed this idea further and questioned why such an emphasis was placed on conflict and corruption when Moscow could solve its problems through *cooperation*. Gorbachev adopted a management approach to problems and abandoned the older, ideological and directive approach. In 1980, Seweryn Bialer predicted an economic stagnation in the late 1980's and 1990's if economic reform, with the intention of stimulating the intensive factors of production, particularly productivity and technological progress, was not carried out. This is exactly what Gorbachev inherited. He even more aptly predicted that strong leadership was required to carry out the necessary reforms in the Soviet Union, one that would emerge after an interim period in which a transient leader would fail to consolidate his power. Bialer predicted a young, confident leader by the late 1980's that would inherit a recasting of defence and security priorities as a direct result of economic disability.<sup>74</sup>

Gorbachev was this man.

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<sup>74</sup> Bialer, op cit., p. 30.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Foreign Policy Under Gorbachev: Lessons and Legacy

There is nothing more difficult to take in hand,  
more perilous, to conduct, or more uncertain in  
its success, than to take the lead in the introduction  
of a new order of things.

Machiavelli

In light of problems with the Soviet economy, Gorbachev realized that the bottom line was that basic survival was more important than a struggle for other political or international interests. Basic survival was attainable through an easing of conflict and competition between East and West and cooperation was the key to the U.S.S.R's survival. It was no longer the age of optimism. It was the age of realism. There was an understanding among Gorbachev's closest colleagues that severe and harsh changes were inevitable. There was also growing doubt about the country's ability to sustain its role as a superpower.<sup>75</sup>

Gorbachev took center stage early on and announced his intention to create a revolution within a revolution. He introduced two major concepts into Soviet political culture, *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, (openness and restructuring). These two new ideas were intended to allow for public debate and scrutiny, democratic elections (which culminated in elections to the newly created Congress of People's Deputies), and a

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<sup>75</sup> Lynch, Allen, The Cold War is Over Again. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992. p. 106

restructuring of the entire economic system involving an overhaul of economic decision making and the banking and financial institutions.<sup>76</sup>

What Gorbachev also understood was the importance of international politics in the Soviet psyche. The Soviet Union was a superpower and at all costs sought to maintain this international prestige. This superpower status was attained at the cost of the Soviet economy which could no longer afford competition with the Americans. Gorbachev realized that if the Soviets had any hope of retaining their international role, they would have to work with the Americans in an environment of cooperation. Beginning with Khrushchev, there was a growing feeling among the industrialized powers that war could no longer be used as a tool of diplomacy. In the nuclear age, there would be no winners and losers and thus there was a need for cooperation in the area of disarmament.<sup>77</sup> Gorbachev himself claimed that it took far more courage to safeguard peace than to prepare for war.<sup>78</sup>

1985 marked a decisive shift toward the idea of cooperation with the West and the final fulfillment of all that was embodied in détente. Gorbachev attempted to forge a new sense of security among citizens that every concession did not mean defeat and that every negotiation was not a test of survival.<sup>79</sup> This approach to international relations was

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<sup>76</sup> Bromke, op cit., p.30-31

<sup>77</sup> Lacquer, op cit., p. 226

<sup>78</sup> Gorbachev, Mikhail, Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1987. p. 127.

<sup>79</sup> Sakwa, Richard, Gorbachev and his Reforms 1985-1990. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1990. p. 330.

undeniably calculated in that Gorbachev knew that the Soviet economy did not stand a chance for survival in a continued environment of international competition. He also knew that he would stand no chance for survival if he did not inject some life into the economy and affect dynamic change in the socio-economic and political culture. These two ideas were inextricably linked and Gorbachev saw that domestic reform would have to go hand in hand with improved international relations. The linkage between domestic and foreign relations is an axiom of the Marxist-Leninist approach to international politics<sup>80</sup> and it was clear that domestic reform was a means of achieving changed relationships with Russia's neighbors and former adversaries. At the same time, improved international relations would facilitate domestic reform.

Gorbachev's reforms would involve making a clean break with past Soviet tradition. He created a framework for change, allowing for the improvement of civil and political society, an end to the Communist Party's monopoly, a non-communist Eastern Europe, and a more stable political military relationship with Western Europe and the United States. It appeared he would leave no stone unturned and that every aspect of the Soviet system would be somehow touched. It seemed to many as though "Westernization was the price of survival."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid p. 315.

<sup>81</sup> Theodore Von Laue, *Why Lenin, Why Stalin?* quoted in Valerie Bunce, *Domestic Reform and International Change: the Gorbachev Reforms in Historical Perspective*. International Organization, Winter 1993, p. 120.

Few at the time could predict that once these reforms were put in place they would actually grow to become larger than those who implemented them. They began to take on a life of their own, becoming an unstoppable force, gaining momentum and making retreat, and sometimes even moderation, impossible. The Pandora's box had been opened and at times, even Gorbachev could do little to stop the momentum. As Richard Sakwa recounts, "the concept of change was itself now restored to social consciousness after years in which the core value was stability and controlled development."<sup>82</sup>

This chapter will discuss the nature of Gorbachev's foreign policy and will do so through the lens of domestic reform and relations with Washington. Although Gorbachev's foreign policy was calculated largely by his intentions for domestic reform and was intended merely to facilitate his own domestic political interests, what resulted was a fundamental shift in the balance of power in the international system and the eventual end of the Cold War. He attempted to cloak old Soviet strategy in a more open, cooperative international environment and provided for Soviet security through cooperation with the very nation that had previously presented the greatest threat to it.

This chapter will examine Gorbachev's strategy and will demonstrate how, in an attempt to de-emphasize the U.S.-Soviet dynamic, he only made it stronger. When it took on a life of its own, foreign policy became one of the most talked about areas of change brought about by Gorbachev which led to one of the single most important international events in the history of mankind. Following the discussion of Gorbachev's foreign policy,

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<sup>82</sup> Sakwa op cit., p. 403.



there will be an analysis of the relative success and failure of his reforms as well as an outline of the legacy, intended or otherwise, left by Gorbachev for his successor.

The Soviet Union was in serious trouble and faced “downward mobility in the international system because of military weakness and economic deficiency; these two problems were inextricably tied.”<sup>83</sup> The changes that were required in the U.S.S.R were serious and daunting. Gorbachev focused on the need to remove and breakdown the legacies of the past in the areas of economics, politics, social structure and foreign policy. There was always the lurking possibility that these reforms would fail leaving the state with less power, growing domestic instability, virtually inviting other nations to take advantage of the wounded giant.

Gorbachev was facing tremendous pressure as a result of the severe economic crisis, and there was a potential for popular rebellion which could deal a dramatic blow to the Soviet Union’s status as an international beacon of military power and economic might. Gorbachev did not appear to be terribly worried about the future of his country and its ability to rise above the crisis. He subscribed to the resiliency of the system and its capacity to deal with reform. He appeared to be fairly confident about the changes his country was about to undergo. Valerie Bunce argues that although Gorbachev was not hesitant about the need for reform, he was indeed taking a great risk and he tries to understand Gorbachev’s motivations for such an undertaking.

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<sup>83</sup> Bunce op cit., p. 116.

The previous leadership was unable to reverse the decline of the economy and other countries continued to overtake the Soviet Union. Because of poor economic performance, the Soviet Union was becoming increasingly marginalized as its technological backwardness became more obvious. The gap began to impinge on Soviet military prowess and this concern was heightened by the weakening of détente, the build-up of American forces and capability and Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI).<sup>84</sup> This led to a crisis of confidence among the Soviet elite and among the growing, urbanizing middle class. There was an emerging realization that the authoritarian and exclusionary rule of the past must be put to rest. Gorbachev sought to solve these problems and inject a dynamism into Soviet political and economic culture that had long been absent. Gone was the optimism of the 50's and 60's and in its place was profound pessimism.

Gorbachev's reform agenda was three-pronged. He sought to make the government, the economy and foreign policy more efficient. He wanted radical results by moderate means, radical because of his willingness to borrow from the West its more efficient government institutions, its more robust economies and its capacity to influence states in the international system.<sup>85</sup> Gorbachev introduced Glasnost and Perestroika in order to achieve this end. He injected the system with competition, he rationalized the political structure of the U.S.S.R and he liberalized the role of the media. Bunce cites these various reforms as being essential to:

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<sup>84</sup> Lapidus in Juviler, P. and Kimura, H. eds., Gorbachev's Reforms: U.S. and Japanese Assessments. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1988. p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Bunce op cit., p. 120.

1) making decision making more informed, more efficient and therefore, more rational; 2) creating a new body of public officials with some stake in the reform process; 3) enhancing the possibility (rare in Soviet history) that policies made would actually be implemented; 4) obscuring all these moves that were, in fact, not just augmenting his political powers, but also creating an institutionalized base for the exercise of those powers; 5) keeping his enemies divided; 6) giving the public and the intelligentsia a stake in the reform process; 7) kicking the state out of the economy by kicking the public into the politics; 8) providing a cushion for the costs of economic reform by giving at least some segments of the public more political influence; and 9) mobilizing support in the West for the Soviet reform process in general and for Gorbachev in particular.<sup>86</sup>

Gorbachev introduced capital markets into Russia, he set in motion the privatization of land ownership and shifts in state investment priorities toward more modern sectors such as computers, modernization of the fiscal system, encouragement of foreign capital investment, and the encouragement of free enterprise in the economy. He reformed the prisons, the educational system and he expanded a “private sphere” that was autonomous from the state. He released political prisoners, allowed greater tolerance for political diversity and criticism of public officials and public policy. He introduced judicial reform and created a powerful and genuinely representative national legislature.<sup>87</sup>

The most significant liberalization of politics came in the form of Glasnost, or “transparency.” It was used to encourage people to speak out about their perception of the way politics was run. They were encouraged to criticize policy and finger corruption. This feedback from citizens, media and even from political opponents was expected to enhance debate and therefore efficiency in a system that had been lacking the usual mechanisms for such. However, what was meant to be constructive feedback quickly led

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 122.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 123

to pressures from below for the democratization of Soviet politics, something which Gorbachev had not fully intended to implement.<sup>88</sup> Many argue that this was indeed his fatal flaw. He attempted democratic-style reform in a society that depended on authoritarianism for its very existence. Democratic reform and the Soviet Union were incompatible.

The major thrust of Glasnost was to open up society to criticism and self examination and to lift restrictions on access to information. Censorship was relaxed and the many blank pages in Soviet history began to be filled in. Statistics from government departments were released and new computer technology was introduced that would promote and facilitate international communication. As Richard Sakwa explains, Glasnost had a two-pronged effect: it allowed the public to have greater access to information; and it forced the leadership to pay more attention to what the population was thinking and what they wanted. Glasnost saw the public airing of controversy, the “demise of the notion of a single truth,” the expansion of Soviet educational practice to include the study of contentious issues, and of greater importance, it demanded the participation of the populace, an informed public, which is required in any democratic society.<sup>89</sup>

Gorbachev’s Perestroika of the economy began with the promise of a revival of some of the NEP practices led by the slogans, “invigoration” and “acceleration,” which resembled the ambitious nature of the reforms of Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p. 124

<sup>89</sup> Sakwa op cit., p. 70-72.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 269

Sakwa accuses Gorbachev of a false start to reform. The first effects of Perestroika for the Soviet consumer were less choice and fewer goods, and the reform Gorbachev wanted could not take place in an economy of forced growth. Gorbachev soon learned that growth needs to move at its own pace and the strikes of 1989 in the “summer of discontent” were evidence of the early failures of Perestroika. This marked the beginning of the structural transformation of the economy.

Perestroika was also meant to reintegrate the U.S.S.R into the world economy and to reverse the creation in 1922 of a state monopoly over foreign trade and external economic contacts. In order to achieve this reintegration, Gorbachev saw the need to create economic relations with non-socialist countries. It was in December 1988, at the United Nations, that he announced the Soviet Union’s desire to rejoin the world.<sup>91</sup> He announced he would do this through association with international organizations and agreements that had for so long been condemned by Moscow. It was soon after, in Malta, in December 1989, that President Bush invited the U.S.S.R to become an observer at the GATT talks. The Soviet Union also made efforts to join the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Commercial partnerships with the West increased despite some Western reluctance about the stability of Gorbachev’s reforms. Special consideration and tax exemptions were offered to companies looking to invest in or expand to the Soviet Far East, much like what was done in China with respect to their “special economic zones.” A new détente with the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p. 282

West could also allow Moscow to borrow from the West and in return use this money for importing sophisticated machines or consumer goods in short supply. In this way, foreign relations could help Perestroika.<sup>92</sup> In order to facilitate this, Moscow sought normalization of trade with the United States in order to help the Soviet Union become better integrated into the global economic order.<sup>93</sup>

Perestroika of the domestic economy and polity was accompanied by a radical reappraisal of its foreign policy. Gorbachev went so far as to inaugurate a foreign policy parallel to his economic policies. He was facing a dire legacy in terms of foreign relations. War in Afghanistan continued, Eastern Europe remained in a state of political and economic stagnation, and détente had broken down leaving relations with the West the worst they had been in thirty years. Brezhnev's foreign policy had ended in encirclement by hostile powers and Andropov and Chernenko's foreign policies were characterized by a lack of direction which left their allies uncertain as to the main objectives of Soviet policy. Gorbachev began an era of new realism in foreign policy and introduced reforms that were strategic in nature.

Under Gorbachev emerged a new definition of security. Certainly relations with the West were inextricably tied to Russian security, only now Moscow could use Western elite opinion to forge alliances within the international system as a means of safeguarding

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<sup>92</sup> Desai, Padma, Perestroika in Perspective: The Design and Dilemmas of Soviet Reform. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1989. p. 96

<sup>93</sup> Caroline Kennedy in Pravda. Alex, Yearbook of Soviet Relations 1991. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1991. p. 10.

its security during its tough economic reform. Although it appeared to outsiders that Russia was heading toward less power and influence in the international system, it became increasingly clear that Gorbachev's purpose through reform was to "increase Russian power in international affairs by investing in new institutions and new procedures."<sup>94</sup>

This new thinking in foreign policy even changed the way in which international relations were studied in Russia. The discipline grew in both size and importance. In the late 1980's, undergraduate courses were introduced and taught by international relations specialists. This established a forum for the new political thinking to take root in the minds of students and future Soviet decision makers. Areas never before studied were now important lessons in the classroom. These lessons included common security, global issues instead of the strict emphasis on the Soviet-American rivalry, arms control, and most interestingly, Keohane and Nye's conception of interdependence.<sup>95</sup> This implied a shift from the détente era definition of peaceful coexistence from competition to cooperation in an integrated global society. Ideological struggles between capitalism and socialism were played down in the promotion of globalism and interdependence.<sup>96</sup> No longer would Soviet foreign policy be defined in terms of finding disagreements with the West. It would focus on reaching agreements and finding common ground. Gorbachev was still a socialist

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<sup>94</sup> Bunce op cit., p. 124.

<sup>95</sup> Sakwa op cit., p. 317.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p. 318

at heart, but he did see an international system in which all states' interests were legitimate and in which cooperation was crucial.<sup>97</sup>

He gave a speech at the 27th Congress and then later at the United Nations which stressed the importance of a comprehensive system of international security (CSIS). He renounced war against third parties by nuclear powers, he advocated the destruction of nuclear and chemical weapons, preventing the arms race from reaching into space, and reducing conventional forces to a level of "reasonable sufficiency."<sup>98</sup>

The definition of security had changed in Moscow. It was no longer defined as a military problem, but was cast "in terms of economic, ecological and political concerns and based on humanitarian considerations."<sup>99</sup> This new idea of security centered around the nature of the nuclear threat. Such new thinking considered that military means were no longer sufficient to secure peace. Security was now a political problem with a political solution. The fundamental idea in this new realism about security was that not only could nuclear weapons no longer be used as a guardian of security, they could no longer be used as a tool for the achievement of political and economic goals. Moscow began to see that it was no longer useful or necessary (or feasible, in their case), to pursue increases in arms production as they already possessed sufficient capability to deter attack. With this in mind, Gorbachev developed his idea of reasonable sufficiency which understood that both

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<sup>97</sup> Although Gorbachev initiated democratic reform, the bottom line was that he still advocated a form of socialism. Though this was downplayed to avoid offending American sensitivities, Gorbachev never rejected socialism in general.

<sup>98</sup> Sakwa op cit., p. 319.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.



sides could reasonably reduce their nuclear arsenals without placing their security in jeopardy. This delegitimization of weapons of mass destruction led Reagan and Gorbachev to their famed discussion about intentions to abolish nuclear weapons by 1996.<sup>100</sup> This further led the Soviets to renounce all former Cold War ideas about the utility of deterrence.

In his famous “guns or butter” speech in 1989, Gorbachev outlined the belief that a reduction in military expenditures would necessarily allow for economic reconstruction. One only needed to look to the examples of Germany, Japan, Italy and China for encouragement in this regard. This disarmament for development idea led the U.S.S.R to begin a programme of rapid arms reduction unprecedented in history.<sup>101</sup>

Linked to the importance of disarmament was the idea that violence and revolution were no longer the definitions of Soviet internationalism. Sakwa notes that the new thinking about the Soviets and their allies changed from “proletarian internationalism” to “unity in diversity.” This allowed for closer cooperation among Moscow and its allies in order to promote just solutions to crises involving mediation by international organizations and confidence building measures. Gorbachev announced at the 27th Party Congress that the end of bi-polarity was near as he claimed that the world should no longer be seen through the prism of U.S.-Soviet relations. This is not to say that Moscow de-emphasized its role as leading power. However he did stress the rise of a multi-polar dynamic. But

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 324

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 325

Gorbachev may have been idealistic. One cannot deny that the mere possession of nuclear capability by the Americans and the Soviets renders their relationship central to themselves and to the rest of the world as well.<sup>102</sup> Gorbachev's policy reflected this understanding but often his rhetoric did not. This provided evidence for the view that Soviet strategy never really changed, it just manifested itself differently in foreign policy.

This attempt at a multilateral theme in Soviet policy can be seen in Gorbachev's new understanding of Europe as a "common home." His speeches were full of references to the usefulness of the European approach to world affairs and a "common heritage among Europeans."<sup>103</sup> He was careful in his criticism of the American pillar of NATO and U.S. involvement in the region, and he did stress a European Community effort toward innovation in world politics and development.

In his book Perestroika: New Thinking for our Country and the World, Gorbachev began to question the bi-polar international system and at the same time his suspicion of NATO remained. This suspicion endures today as a characteristic of Russian foreign policy. This is contradictory. He encouraged open dialogue with the U.S. and an amicable relationship between the two countries, however he still remained averse to American involvement close to Soviet borders. He hailed Europe as a "common home"<sup>104</sup> yet he made it clear that NATO no longer had a mandate there. This demonstrates that while his foreign policy took a new direction, the old strategy of removing the Americans from

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p. 327

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Gorbachev op cit.. p. 180

Europe had not changed. He displayed resentment of NATO despite good relations with the U.S. when he accused Western Europe of sitting back and taking American direction during the bombings in Tripoli and Benghazi.<sup>105</sup> He expressed concern that if Western European countries allowed American planes to take off from their air bases in the event of a bombing attack on Libya, then little would keep them from disallowing similar American action directed toward a Warsaw Pact country.<sup>106</sup>

Gorbachev suggested that the independent policies of Western European nations had been abducted and that policies were being determined across the ocean. Though he was diplomatic in his reminder that Moscow did not intend to belittle the ties between the United States and Western Europe, he did wish to see European security in the hands of Europeans. NATO's American pillar clearly was a problem for Gorbachev and later for his successor. Moscow likened American involvement in Europe to "kicking in the doors of the European home and taking the head of the table in someone else's apartment."<sup>107</sup> He stressed the importance of allowing American affairs to remain American and this displays a fundamental feeling of insecurity on the part of the Soviets, and understandably so. For decades, NATO represented the primary threat to Soviet security and to the security of the Warsaw Pact. There is something deeply ingrained within the Russian psyche that will likely never feel comfortable with the Americans in Europe.

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* p. 193.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* p. 194

With respect to the arms race, Gorbachev indicated that while the U.S.S.R would do all that was necessary to safeguard its own security, it realized that it was no longer responsible, nor within the Soviet Union's best interests, actively to pursue an arms competition with the United States. The arms race was a dead-end pursuit and he had to remove the Soviet Union from this arena without jeopardizing Soviet geostrategic interests and alliances. He claimed that any pace for the arms race in the past was set by the Americans and it has been the Soviets always struggling to "catch up." He asked the Americans to embrace his new way of thinking and to stop trying to "bleed the Soviet economy white" by forcing an arms race by playing on Soviet insecurities.<sup>108</sup>

To many Americans these subtle accusations sounded paranoid and unfounded. However it must be noted that Gorbachev fully supported the ABM Treaty, SALT I and II. It was Washington that failed to ratify SALT II and refused to back down on the SDI. Gorbachev claimed that these decisions were political, not military in nature, and that they sent a clear message to Moscow that the United States was not really committed to strategic coordination with the Soviet Union. This understandably worried Moscow and contributed to its insecurity. At both the Reykjavik and the Washington summits of 1986-87, Gorbachev called for the respect of the ABM Treaty (which would disallow the SDI), and he proposed a 50% cut in both American and Soviet strategic arms which would include the whole 'triad' of nuclear arms: land-based missiles, sea launched missiles and

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 207

It has been suggested that Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) was the final indication for Gorbachev that for the Soviets, the arms race was a dead-end pursuit.

heavy bombers.<sup>109</sup> In his attempt further to balance the U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship, Gorbachev recommended an elimination of intermediate and short-range land-based missiles at the Washington summit. This was perhaps the most significant summit of the Gorbachev era.

Gorbachev sensed American reluctance fully to commit to a joint disarmament programme. He attempted various confidence building measures in order to put the Americans at ease. He understood that Moscow had a lot to gain from easing American hesitancy and fear of Soviet intentions. It was essential that he create a more flexible, benign environment for his domestic reform and so to support this effort he released Andrei Sakharov and other political dissidents from exile and was even willing to engage in dialogue about the traditionally touchy subject of weapons verification.

As part of his new flexibility in foreign policy, Gorbachev targeted the old Soviet stubbornness in his foreign policy reform efforts at home. This stubbornness permeated domestic and international life and contributed to the economic and political stagnation discussed earlier. Such introspection led to a new kind of honesty about the past and its legacy. In the diplomatic realm, Gorbachev implemented impressive new initiatives and supplemented traditional diplomacy with direct contacts with the moulders of public opinion.<sup>110</sup> He strengthened cooperative links between Soviets and Americans by, among other things, fostering and endorsing exchanges between students and encouraging

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<sup>109</sup> White, Stephen, Gorbachev and After . New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. p. 195

<sup>110</sup> Sakwa op cit., p. 329

meetings between business leaders and academics. In order to make changes to foreign policy drastic enough to affect relations with the West, Gorbachev made serious and important personnel, institutional and policy changes at home.

The most significant personnel change was the replacement of 28 year veteran foreign affairs minister Andrei Gromyko with Eduard Shevardnadze.<sup>111</sup> This move demonstrated Gorbachev's intention to modernize and de-ideologize Soviet diplomacy. Because Shevardnadze had no experience in foreign affairs, Gorbachev was able to remain closely involved in foreign policy management.

The institutions responsible for foreign policy were restructured as well. He reorganized the International Department dealing with East-West relations, the Central Committee Secretariat, the International Policy Commission and he created the Institute of European Affairs and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations. He also placed great importance on the U.S.A and Canada Institute in Moscow.

Many important policy changes took place as well. No longer did the KGB and the military take such a large role in policy making. Gorbachev sought the advice of academics, diplomats and civilian and defence analysts. His personnel changes were meant to underline the importance of the civilian control over the military. He intentionally did not give high ranking military officials voting seats in the Politburo. However military

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<sup>111</sup> Shevardnadze was of the belief that the old strategic concept of the U.S.S.R needing to be as strong as any coalition opposing it was obsolete. His views fit those of Gorbachev's and he was a likely choice for the post of foreign minister.

power did remain an area of importance for Gorbachev. He fueled a revolution in military doctrine that saw a change from ideas of mutually assured destruction (MAD), to non-offensive defence.<sup>112</sup> This was a major departure from the assumptions of MAD, as it involved a mass reduction of forces and a mandate for defence through cooperation. Emphasis was placed on confidence building measures and this was achieved through a promise to reveal Moscow's real defence budget and a promise to reduce armed forces personnel to a level of necessary sufficiency.<sup>113</sup>

Gorbachev initiated a series of cutbacks to the defence budget and he proposed a reduction of army personnel by 10% and a withdrawal of 50,000 troops and offensive weapons from Europe. If major cutbacks were to be made, it only made sense to make these cuts in the area of personnel. Strategic offensive weapons were relatively cost-efficient so the major economic benefits came from the reduction of troops.<sup>114</sup> Because of the emphasis on cooperation and collaboration in Soviet foreign policy, defence spending decreased. The size of the Soviet army was reduced in accordance with promises made to the United Nations. Rumors began to flow that Gorbachev had gone too far, sacrificing too much. In his efforts at reform he may have become too carried away with appeasing the West and focused too much on social and economic reform at the expense of Soviet defence capability and policy. The military was always kept in tight control, however as Sakwa wrote, perhaps before his time, in 1990, military intervention in domestic politics

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<sup>112</sup> Sakwa op cit., p.333.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. p.334.

was possible.<sup>115</sup> Many were growing uneasy with what they regarded as Gorbachev's continuing capitulation to the West.

As has been mentioned, despite Gorbachev's comprehensive reforms, the major concerns of Soviet foreign policy remained the same. What was different were the methods engaged to pursue these goals. Perestroika in international relations was created to find new ways of making existing policies effective. The bottom line was still that the U.S.S.R was to remain a world power and to retain its influence. The difference was that the old "bluster and threat" from yesteryear was to be replaced with a willingness to share the burden of global management. Despite what in retrospect looked like a desire to create a new world order, there were certain balance of power concepts that remained in evidence in Soviet thinking.<sup>116</sup>

It was always essential to the Soviet Union's role to maintain its status as an international power and this is exactly what Soviet leaders attempted to do through their foreign and domestic policies. Retention of its great power status was the most important value of Soviet foreign policy. Gorbachev himself said, "the success and efforts at internal reform will determine whether or not the Soviet Union will enter the 21st century in a manner worthy of a great power."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. p.336.

Gorbachev faced major opposition from conservatives and before long, the right had gained so much strength that Gorbachev had to make concessions. Conservatives such as Ligachev saw the collapse of Eastern Europe as an indication that the Soviet Union's great power status was beginning to slip.

<sup>116</sup> cf. Lapidus in Juviler and Kimura, p. xix.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p. 1.



The new thinking in the Soviet Union meant the end of utopian aspirations. Sakwa refers to the changes in foreign policy as a revolution (just as Gorbachev had intended), and adds that while strategy remained the same, the vehicle (the foreign policy), radically changed and it was then that Soviet foreign policy entered adulthood.<sup>118</sup> Evidence in support of Sakwa's view can be found in Gorbachev's speech to the 19th annual all-union conference of the CPSU. Here he said "the military threat became for us a constant factor and it has not been removed to this day." He then went on to say, "we do not forget about the threat to peace...there are no guarantees that the positive processes that have begun are irreversible."<sup>119</sup> Soviet security concerns continued to center around the relationship with the United States and although security could be achieved through different means, the dynamic between the two superpowers was at the heart of the debate about security and it was at the heart of Soviet strategy.

Gorbachev understood that in the new international security environment he sought to create, there were different ways of relating to former adversaries that would better promote security and the Soviet Union's continued role as a great power. This new thinking about security took place in an entirely new conceptual framework based on ideas of interdependence and mutual security. In the nuclear age, no state, regardless of its military capability, could be safe from nuclear weapons. There could be no winners or losers in the event of nuclear war and Gorbachev understood that the only way to achieve

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<sup>118</sup> Sakwa op cit., p. 356.

<sup>119</sup> Both quotations were taken from Gorbachev, Mikhail, Documents and Materials: Reports and Speeches by Mikhail Gorbachev. Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1988. p. 30-33.

security in the nuclear age was through a cooperative effort to secure peace. The emphasis shifted from competition to cooperation. In order to understand this shift, a definition of the two main principles considered in Gorbachev's new thinking on foreign policy must be given.

The concept of interdependence focused around the understanding that the world was growing smaller and that it was characterized by common needs among nations that transcend frontiers and social systems. Interdependence was increasing in science and technology, information and communication systems, economics and politics. Human activity was being integrated beyond national barriers and had resulted in a new host of international differences between social systems. These were said to be threatening the existence of civilization itself and were of equal concern to everyone, of all nationalities. It had become increasingly necessary to look to other areas such as science and technology and the integration of economic systems to solve global problems and threats to security. The acknowledgment of the importance of this idea can be seen in the Soviet Union's involvement in inter-governmental organizations (IGO's) and non-governmental organizations (NGO's). Gorbachev saw a serious role for Moscow in the United Nations and Gromyko's "Mr. Nyet" policies of the past gave way to newer, more cooperative and flexible policies. He sought to use the U.S.S.R's position in the Security Council to aid in the resolution of the Gulf War in 1991.

Mutual security is a concept borne out of a past urgency about the threat of nuclear war. In the nuclear age, a nation's security could not be guaranteed unilaterally - security could only be mutual. National and international security have become indivisible. The Soviets no longer saw the international system as a backdrop for rivalry, but as a place where all states and all people could peacefully coexist and it was in their best interest to promote this. These two concepts, though they have different origins, are very closely linked. They are what lay the foundation for Gorbachev's new thinking.<sup>120</sup> This thinking was based entirely on the following ideas: nuclear war could not be won; Soviet military superiority was impossible; Soviet military-technical capabilities were insufficient; deterrence was an inadequate strategy; parity was no longer sustainable; strategic stability through reasonable sufficiency was essential; and, military means were no longer sufficient to resolve international conflicts.<sup>121</sup>

By December 1989, the Cold War was over. The next challenge for Gorbachev was how to oversee a transition to Bush's "new world order." He sought to secure somewhat of a trade-off with the West. He would withdraw from Eastern Europe and the global arms race and would be rewarded with a promise that the West would do nothing to destabilize the already shaky integrity of the U.S.S.R itself.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Hasegawa in Juviler and Kimura op cit., pp. 115-116.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. pp. 125-126

<sup>122</sup> Sakwa op cit., p. 351.

Peter Boettke claims that “reform efforts under Gorbachev failed to introduce anything that would correct the error-prone situation in the former Soviet Union.”<sup>123</sup> Gorbachev addressed political and economic stagnation but failed to address fundamental questions concerning the organization of the Soviet Union. However Gorbachev did lay the groundwork for the liberalization of the economy and of the political system. He did this through the destruction of Stalinism both domestically, through ending central planning, state ownership of the means of production and a dictatorship of the proletariat, and internationally, by ending Russia’s isolation from the global economy, ending the hierarchical regional system that had overpowered Eastern Europe and by ending political-military competition with the United States.<sup>124</sup> Despite these gains, there were many costs to Gorbachev’s reforms, costs that would eventually see him lose power to radical reformers who demanded more reform at a quicker pace.

The costs of Gorbachev’s reform were nothing less than the loss of the Soviet regime itself, the collapse of the communist movement internationally, the end of superpower status and the introduction of new instabilities in the former communist world. However Bunce does point out that all revolutions, even those begun from above, appear to have many costs before their benefits can even begin to materialize.<sup>125</sup> The Gorbachev reforms are not over; the consequences will continue to present themselves in the years to come under Yeltsin as he struggles to reconcile Russia’s new role in the international system with its past legacy.

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<sup>123</sup> Boettke, Peter, Why Perestroika Failed. New York: Routledge, 1993. p. 137.

<sup>124</sup> Bunce op cit., p. 127.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

The new thinking in foreign policy was very fragile. There was no way it could survive without support at home. Certainly its success would be influenced by Western responses to foreign policy initiatives. However, even more important was the view of the top and middle cadres of the CPSU, the military and the secret police. As mentioned earlier, Perestroika sought to redistribute funds from the defence budget to the modernization of the civilian economy. This was to be done partly through a measured decline of military influence in policy decisions and harsh, honest criticisms of the military. High ranking military officials were not terribly supportive of Gorbachev and resisted the radical changes in defence policy. The retirement of Chief of General Staff Nikolai Orgarkov, a hawkish Soviet strategist who once presented the world with Soviet justifications for shooting down Korean Airlines flight 007 in 1983,<sup>126</sup> removed yet another legacy of Brezhnev and the Soviet past.

Military leaders saw themselves as having been forced by Gorbachev to sacrifice the advantages they had gained in the area of nuclear and conventional hardware which they had traditionally identified with security.<sup>127</sup> They lost the Warsaw Pact and thus, the military hold they had on Central and Eastern Europe. Many defence systems such as the early warning, air defence and logistic systems were rendered useless and the army was ordered to withdraw from conquered territory gained in W.W.II.

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<sup>126</sup> Sakwa op cit., p. 334.

<sup>127</sup> Gelman, Harry, for the IISS, Gorbachev and the Future of the Soviet Military Institution. Adelphi Paper #258, 1991. p. 39.

Gorbachev's new foreign and defence policies left deep wounds with the Soviet military who saw their importance undermined and their actions in question.<sup>128</sup> He intended that the temporary transfer of resources from the defence industry to the civilian industrial base would be in the long term interests of the armed services. It was a small yet logical price to pay for improvements to the civilian economy. This excuse began to wear thin with the military as all evidence pointed to the failure of Perestroika. The technological lag between the U.S.S.R and the West still existed and the military was further behind now than before the restructuring began.

His reforms had fallen short of the mark. Instead of creating an enlightened Communist Party, he saw party hegemony collapse. Rather than creating an efficient economy, he saw the economy hit a downward spiral which led to the eventual fall of the Soviet Union. By 1991, Russia had found itself on a downward trajectory in the international system. Gorbachev found himself facing a coup d'etat which led to the rise of the popularly elected Boris Yeltsin. The coup forced a showdown between the pillars of the old system and the defenders of the "white house" led by Yeltsin. The coup undermined Gorbachev's efforts to preserve a centrist coalition in the face of hard-liner criticism and tipped the balance in favor of more democratic reformers. The coup was poorly orchestrated by communist hard-liners and it provided democratic reformers with the opportunity to take advantage of the situation. The failed coup gave Yeltsin the opportunity to lead the citizens in a series of demonstrations which ended in the resignation of Gorbachev who had remained trapped between communist hard-liners

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<sup>128</sup> To add further insult to injury for the military, the CFE Treaty required that Soviet installations and

seeking a return to the old ways, and democratic reformers who sought a more comprehensive, democratic series of reforms that would set Soviet society on a faster track toward curing economic and political ills.

The failed coup accelerated the further break-up of the Soviet Union; the three Baltic Republics gained official independence and separatist wheels were set in motion in other republics. The final blow to Gorbachev's failed attempts to preserve the U.S.S.R in the face of reform was the referendum in Ukraine in which a majority endorsed independence.<sup>129</sup> The links between Gorbachev's reforms, the break-up of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War are obvious.

On December 21, 1991, the Commonwealth of Independent States(CIS) was initiated by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus and expanded into a loose confederation of powers including all former republics except Georgia and the Baltics. Gorbachev resigned his presidency and the red flag was lowered at the Kremlin for the last time.<sup>130</sup>

Peter Boettke explains that if anything can be learned from the Gorbachev experience, it is that mankind must resist the Faustian urge to control, to know in advance.<sup>131</sup> Man must, to a certain degree, allow economics naturally to flow,

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deployments were now subject to inspection by the West and also by former European allies.

<sup>129</sup> Lapidus, Gail and Dallin, Alexander, eds., The Soviet System: From Crisis to Collapse Boulder: Westview Press, 1991. p. 566.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Boettke op cit., p. 145.

uninterrupted. Instead of trying to design and control economic and social forces, leaders should concentrate their efforts on questioning and improving the institutional framework in which these activities beyond one's control take place. The problem with Gorbachev's reforms was that there was no transitional model to guide Soviet society through its restructuring. A detailed economic reform plan should have included a series of laws to regulate the markets including which subsidies were to remain and which sectors were to be privatized. Reformers should have focused on working out the details of economic reform before committing themselves to the change in the polity's relationship to the economy.<sup>132</sup>

In the words of Andrei Sakharov, Gorbachev's reforms sought to achieve democratic change by undemocratic means.<sup>133</sup> Many claim that Gorbachev did not want to take the reforms far enough, but it is important to remember that he was asking extremely powerful men voluntarily to relinquish power without provoking a backlash. Arguably, this was an impossible task. He unleashed a revolution but had no means to channel it and he ended up with an awakened population with feeble political institutions incapable of handling the new political thinking. His attempts to marry one-party rule, constitutionalism and popular sovereignty landed him in a sea of major unmanageable contradictions.<sup>134</sup> A new set of relations was required based on the rule of law that would establish lines of

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p. 79

<sup>133</sup> Walker, Rachel, Six Years That Shook the World .Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993. p. 138.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. p. 143.

An example of one of these contradictions was the attempt to have free elections while at the same time securing the presence of party members in the nomenklatura.



authority, accountability and responsibility between different levels of government. Adam Bromke was one of many in the late 1980's who predicted that the impending failure of Gorbachev's reforms could spill over into the political sphere, leading to a popular explosion.<sup>135</sup> This prediction shows concern, as early as 1988, that uncontrolled and rapid reform could take on a life of its own and a momentum that would be impossible to harness. This is in fact what directed Gorbachev's foreign policy and what charted Yeltsin's foreign relations as well.

In the beginning of his career, Gorbachev was seen as a charismatic, international celebrity. Only a few short years later people began to see him as a faltering leader beset by defeat and failure. There has been no other leader in this era whose fall has been so insistently and repeatedly predicted.<sup>136</sup> He came to power at a time when there was a growing understanding among the Soviet elite that old policies and strategies were ill-suited to the needs of the 1980's and that policies in the past had been counterproductive and had led to stagnation of the Soviet economic and political culture. Gone were the dogmatism and the subjectivism of the Brezhnev years.<sup>137</sup> The Soviet ideal, as a system, had lost credibility and there was a need to earn back lost legitimacy. The only perceived way to regain international and domestic recognition was to reform drastically the old ways of thinking, and this is what Gorbachev set out to do.

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<sup>135</sup> Bromke op cit., p. 45.

<sup>136</sup> Lewin, Moshe, The Gorbachev Phenomenon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. p. 59.

<sup>137</sup> White, op cit., p. 189.

Some have accused Gorbachev of a calculated and deliberate attempt to further his own rise to power by exploiting a program of reform. Much evidence however points to his genuine understanding about Soviet society's needs. This new thinking about peaceful coexistence and cooperation in foreign policy was necessary. Gorbachev effected a revolution of consciousness "awakened originally by Khrushchev's de-Stalinization and frustrated by Brezhnev's conservative reaction."<sup>138</sup> Gorbachev understood the depth of the economic, social and political problems he inherited. He attempted to continue Andropov's initiatives, but realized these were not enough and so he used Glasnost as a vehicle to inform the public of the severity of the problems and the need for radical reform. Joseph Nye Jr. foreshadowed in 1988 that if Gorbachev could not demonstrate benefits from his policies of reform in a few years, he would lose support.<sup>139</sup> This is exactly what happened.

Whether Gorbachev's revolution was a success or a failure depends entirely on one's perspective. For many in the CPSU, Gorbachev was an unmitigated disaster, while in the West, he was something of a hero. He used foreign policy to strengthen domestic policy and his approaches were rife with contradiction. Though he was successful on the international front, his domestic reforms were accused of being "too little, too late" and he was abruptly replaced by a man who rather unwittingly promised to do more with less and who even today struggles with the legacy of his predecessor.

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<sup>138</sup> Bialer, Seweryn, and Mandelbaum, Michael, eds., Gorbachev's Russia and American Foreign Policy. Boulder, Westview Press, 1988. p. 386.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p. 387.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Yeltsin's Foreign Policy: Continuity and Change

"History may not repeat itself,  
but it certainly rhymes."

Mark Twain

The end of communist party dominance late in Gorbachev's reign undermined the ideological basis for Soviet foreign policy and radically altered the world which the Russian Federation would inherit. His reform strategy proved highly corrosive to the Soviet regime's legitimacy. At the very least, it gave broad scope for opposing political forces to question Soviet rule and at the most it transformed the communist party from the self appointed position of leader of an historic mission to change the world into an insular ruling oligarchy.<sup>140</sup>

Gorbachev did not realize that the new mandate he had fashioned for his country left no room for the communist regime's monopoly of power and that the "new thinking" in foreign policy constituted a direct threat to Russian rule in the non-Russian republics. He was accused of abandoning the country's core principles and for irreparably damaging Soviet international prestige. It was for these reasons, and because of economic decline and institutional decay that the Soviet Union dissolved. The seventy-four-year-old state could not withstand these drastic blows to its foundation and the resulting loss of political legitimacy left the regime defenseless against the new political and ethnic challenges.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Smart, Christopher. The Imagery of Soviet Foreign Policy and the Collapse of the Russian Empire. Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1995. p. 143.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* p. 144.

Gorbachev was accused of “transforming the Soviet Union into a beggar country, touring the world with outstretched hands.”<sup>142</sup>

When Yeltsin took power after taking advantage of the failed August 1991 coup, he had numerous concerns with respect to foreign policy. His first consideration was the need to fashion a new international role for the Russian Federation from the ashes of the former Soviet Union. This new role would be influenced by important debates among Russian leaders with respect to Russia’s new policies. Should their country be democratic or authoritarian? Should they have free or planned markets? Should the state be liberal and pluralistic or should some neo-imperial Russian strains be cultivated? How should Moscow deal with the ‘near abroad?’<sup>143</sup> How should Moscow restore its dwindling economic, political and military power? How should Russia’s relationship with the West be cultivated?

Christopher Smart claims that unlike Gorbachev, Yeltsin was blessed with a visceral feel for the people and he knew the importance of image in politics.<sup>144</sup> He was the principle challenger of the Communist Party’s claims to legitimacy and he knew that the recipe for a successful government necessarily included strong and coherently articulated values and interests. Again, unlike Gorbachev, Yeltsin’s political persona was carefully crafted as he was surrounded daily by the Prime Minister’s apparatus, the Foreign

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> The term ‘near abroad’ is a curious term. While Moscow has been credited with distancing itself from its former republics, this term suggests a reluctance to see the former republics as being separate or foreign.

<sup>144</sup> Smart, op cit., p. 148.

Ministry, the Defence Ministry and the legislature - many rivals who would have liked to have seen him fall.

As previously mentioned, when Yeltsin took power in 1991, he was left with an unstable and uncertain institutional setting in which to conduct foreign policy. Peter Shearman attributes this to the fact that under Gorbachev, the politburo was at the apex, controlling all government bodies, providing little opportunity for organizations (such as the Foreign Ministry), to pursue their own institutional interests<sup>145</sup> and to develop their own decision making structure. Russia entered the post-Soviet era without a foreign policy decision making framework and as a result, clear boundaries were not defined with respect to institutional actors, parliament and the presidency. Following 1991, there was constant debate between the presidency and parliament over who had control of policy-making.<sup>146</sup>

The old 1977 Soviet constitution was still in place in 1992. Parliament had the ability, under this constitution, to impeach the president and to block his appointments. Therefore, the Duma was able to put a lot of pressure on Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev's pro-Western initiatives. In order to overcome these difficulties and generally to stabilize the political system, Yeltsin drafted a new constitution that allowed him to fulfill his duties with less parliamentary interference. This new constitution, a mixture of the American and French models, was accepted by the people in a national referendum.

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<sup>145</sup> Shearman, Peter. *New Political Thinking Reassessed*. Review of International Studies, 1993. 19. p. 13.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

In January 1992 Yeltsin began his democratic reforms. These went further toward establishing a market economy than any of Gorbachev's proposals. Throughout his rule, Gorbachev was committed to some sort of centralized control over the market. His approach therefore constrained economic reconstruction. Yeltsin rejected Gorbachev's remaining socialist inhibitions and embraced the need for capitalist markets to enhance prosperity. Not only did Gorbachev's economic reforms fail to achieve their intended purpose, they actually contributed to making the economy worse.

Yeltsin came to power and was forced to introduce sweeping reforms in order to end the era of "small steps"<sup>147</sup> in the reform process. His broad program consisted of macroeconomic stabilization, including the unfreezing of prices, privatization and the creation of a healthy mixed economy with a strong private sector, and the liberalization of foreign trade.<sup>148</sup> Through a process of presidential decrees and resolutions in November 1991, he arranged to possess full economic power. In January of the following year, he acted unilaterally in freeing most consumer-goods and producer-goods prices from administrative regulation. However Yeltsin, too, has been criticized for the nature of his reforms. He has been accused of "conducting experiments on the Russian economy" consisting of not taking time to understand basic economic principles that would call for the quick transfer of resources into private hands and of failure to establish a rule of law that would protect private property and freedom of entry.<sup>149</sup> Perhaps what was needed

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<sup>147</sup> Boettke, *op cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* p. 141.

most was the flow of private financial resources into an economy in which efficiency, innovation and mutual gain were promoted. It is this type of course that could lead Russia to become the thriving world economic power it desires to become.

Yeltsin understood that the economic crisis in Russia was the area requiring most of his attention and that a new foreign policy would have to reflect this concern. He, like Gorbachev, understood that Russia's domestic economic status would necessarily determine its international status. In order to stimulate growth in the new market economy, he had to seek external finance and increasing integration into the global market with respect to consumption, production, labor and trade.<sup>150</sup> Here then, is the first obvious continuity between the foreign policies of the two regimes.

To enable the Russian economy to penetrate global markets, there was a need to focus on the wealthiest Western capitalist states and Russia's ability to gain economic assistance. In order to do this, Yeltsin had to focus his attention on creating a foreign policy that was agreeable to the West and one in which Russia and the West could forge new economic and political partnerships. This understanding of using the West as a means to resolve Russia's economic crisis went hand in hand with the realization among the Russian political elite that the country could no longer afford a superpower military capability and that heavy defence spending only served as a brake on development and undermined Russia's international status.

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<sup>150</sup> Shearman, Peter, Russian Foreign Policy Since 1990. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995. p. 114.

In time Yeltsin eventually managed to gain some limited success in his dealings with the international political elite. He eventually managed to gain admittance for Russia into the G7, (now the G8). Russia's inclusion underscored the fact that it was still an important player in the international system especially with respect to regional stability and nuclear proliferation.<sup>151</sup> In speeches leading up to the Naples Summit in June 1994, Yeltsin demanded equal status for Russia in the area of political affairs and he insisted Russia was not a 'beggar' country even though he did acknowledge that it was not yet strong enough to gain equal economic status. At the meeting in Naples, he insisted upon Russia's admittance into the Paris Club of nations (as an observer), because he believed Russia still played a role as a "major creditor of both developing and CIS countries."<sup>152</sup>

It appeared as though the Russian elite, including Yeltsin, was slow to understand that the new Russia was "no longer a second superpower with the imperial U.S.S.R's capacity to promote world order in tandem with the West."<sup>153</sup> Certainly Russia would play a role in world peace. However it was gradually becoming marginalized in the international system and it took several years before the Russian elite began fully to understand their new role.

Even up to the present, shifts in Russian foreign policy have been a result of the need to respond to external forces beyond the control of the Russian Federation. In the

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. p.115.

<sup>153</sup> Robert Tucker in Kraus, Michael and Liebowitz, Ronald D., eds., Russia and Europe After Communism. Boulder: Westview Press, 1996, p. 288.



'near abroad,' there has been a continuing interest in the status of the Russian Diaspora. There has been a need to integrate Russia into the global economy and the need to form a partnership with the West. Like Gorbachev, Yeltsin has looked to the West both for threats to Russia's security and for solutions to Russia's domestic political and economic problems. Given this tension in outlook and the absence of internal support for his policies at home, Yeltsin's foreign policy has lacked consistency, coherence and most importantly, it has not led to solutions for a country in crisis.

Yeltsin has been accused of both selling out Russia's interests to the West and of jeopardizing Russia's status as a great international power. Throughout his tenure, he has been caught between the need to rely on a partnership with the West to secure Western financial assistance and the growing anti-Western sentiment among oppositionists who criticize his acquiescence to the West. Arguably, Russia has been unable to recast its foreign policy priorities at a crucial time. Emphasis must be shifted to domestic concerns and economic cooperation with the 'near abroad.'

It is important when looking at foreign policy under Yeltsin to understand the domestic debates on foreign policy and the internal conceptions of the national interest. There are two important bodies in the Russian Federation that serve to influence foreign policy quite heavily: parliament and the presidency. Since 1992, these two bodies have often been in conflict with respect to their visions of what Russia's foreign policy should be. Certainly policy has been easier to understand in the post-Cold War world. Gone are

the hidden meanings and contradictions and in their place are differing conceptions, though not terribly well defined, of the national interest that lead to foreign policy formulation.

National interest, as defined by Peter Shearman, is “the common good of a society within the bounds of a nation-state.”<sup>154</sup> This means that all members of a state, despite individual or group preferences, have a basic agreement about their common interests, such as basic survival, territorial integrity of the state, and influence with other states. Russia is no different. While a shared national interest could be seen under Gorbachev, the lengths to which the Soviet Union would have gone to attain their goals is unclear. Even toward the end of his tenure, there was still a degree of confusion and competition inherent in the partly reformed Soviet-era constitution and political institutional structures. Shearman claims that the lack of a “coherent foreign policy decision making institutional setting and the absence of a clearly defined division of powers” were guaranteed to cause problems between the executive and legislative branches on issues of foreign policy.<sup>155</sup> Carol Saivetz agrees with Shearman and claims that because there were so many groups, political and economic, within Russia and so many individuals with different conceptions of the national interest, it has been nearly impossible for Yeltsin, or anyone else, to determine a foreign policy based on these interests.

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<sup>154</sup> Kanet, Roger E., and Kozhemiakin, Alexander V., eds., The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. London: Macmillan Press, 1997. p. 1.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* p.3.

The idea of foreign policy connotes some degree of borrowing from an established set of formal doctrines. One would expect foreign policy to flow from a statement from actors about proposed courses of action. However in the post-Cold War world, the collapse of bipolarity has created conditions which make it difficult to follow a given course of action in which precedents may determine success. A 'trial and error' approach to foreign policy is gradually becoming more common among states today and Russia is no exception.<sup>156</sup> The term "policy" implies a sense of coherence and consistency and many have argued that these qualities have been noticeably absent from Yeltsin's foreign policy. It is arguable that what has passed under the guise of Soviet and Russian foreign policies has been nothing more than "ill-considered moves that reflect the personal values of the actors concerned and certainly not the community."<sup>157</sup> However, since 1992, Yeltsin has been faced with strong opposition to his foreign policy and he has had to adapt it in the interest of his political survival.

Saikal and Maley claim that it is essential for any successful state to define its relationships with the wider world. The new frame of reference for Moscow's foreign policy was founded on four basic realities: the political disintegration of Russia; economic and social crisis; the absence of clear policy leadership; and, changes in the international environment.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Saikal, Amin, and Maley, William, eds., Russia in Search of its Future. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. p. 102.

<sup>157</sup> Buszynski, Leszek, Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War. Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1996. p. ix.

<sup>158</sup> Arbatov, Alexei, *Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives*. International Security, 18:2 Fall 1993. pp. 6-8.

The Soviet Union's disintegration resulted in the loss of its near and far outposts, its colonies and semi-colonies. The Russian Federation comprises sixty percent of the population and economy of the former Soviet Union and seventy-six percent of its territory. Russia's geopolitical parameters have been reduced and the former republics, once controlled by Moscow, are rife with internal instability and many are now open to influence from outside powers. Russia, as revealed in the expression 'near abroad', has had some difficulty in accepting the status of these former Soviet territories. This reluctance is reinforced by continuing "vital economic, military strategic, ethnic, cultural and psychological ties."<sup>159</sup>

Although there have been some hopeful signs that Russia is on the way to overcoming the worst of its problems, unlike many of its former republics, such as Belarus and Ukraine, the issue is very much in doubt. Overall, between 1991 and 1997 Russia has experienced an unprecedented decline in production, a huge deficit, rapid inflation, an increase in foreign debt and a decline in gold reserves.<sup>160</sup> Despite this crisis, Russia still remains one of the world's great powers and regardless of cutbacks in troops and conventional weapons, they still remain the second largest nuclear power in the world. Past mismanagement of economic and defence reform has left Moscow with the huge and perhaps impossible task of modernizing its defence capabilities in the midst of economic crisis.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

As for the quality of foreign policy leadership it must be noted that a new foreign policy elite has not yet emerged in Russia. Foreign policy is determined by a small and isolated group of participants who constantly face opposition from wider interests with respect to their policy preferences. New opinions are coming from various political groups and Yeltsin faces a constant struggle to define an international role for Russia that will be based on a wide consensus. The main problem has been the Duma, with its majority of nationalist and communist members.

The international environment has also raised extraordinary challenges to Russia's foreign policy objectives. The time of two global superpowers has come to an end, replaced not by American hegemony, as some have argued, but by multi-polarity. The international system's greatest emerging players are Western Europe, China, Japan, as well as the United States. The Russian government would wish to be another major center of power and perhaps Russia will be, if it can get its domestic affairs in order. The threat of an East-West war is greatly reduced, but in place of the old threats, there is a new concern about numerous ethnic and regional conflicts set loose by the end of the Cold War. Russia must also gear its foreign policy toward the understanding that the importance of nation-states as the major players in the international system is being diluted as "transnational economic, ecological, ethnic and humanitarian problems invite actions by international organizations and interventions by multi-state coalitions."<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

For the U.S.S.R, prior to and during the Gorbachev era, one of the goals was to promote the official Marxist-Leninist ideology.<sup>162</sup> This ideology was ever-present in the various foreign policy doctrines from Stalin's inevitability of war to Brezhnev's promotion of peaceful coexistence and détente. Soviet behavior could always be ideologically rationalized.

With Gorbachev, the philosophy of international relations changed radically. The "new thinking" marked a break with Communist ideology. This new philosophy placed reduced emphasis on military power as a key guarantor of security and it stressed cooperation and multilateral security as being key to Soviet national interest. When Kozyrev was appointed Foreign Minister in 1990, he immediately adopted a pro-Western agenda.<sup>163</sup> His task, through improved relations abroad was to "make the utmost, concrete contribution to the improvement of the everyday life of Russian citizens."<sup>164</sup> He emphasized the benefits of integration with the West, as they were the logical source of economic and political capital so desperately needed by the Russian economy. Kozyrev's objectives have subsequently been fully endorsed by Yeltsin.

In visits to the West, Yeltsin invoked the failed coup of 1991 as the birth date of Russian democracy and he emphatically thanked the United States for its moral support during the delivery of Russia into democracy. He took care to demonstrate that his new thinking was distinct from that of his predecessor. He claimed Gorbachev had known of

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<sup>162</sup> Saikal and Maley, *op cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* p. 105.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

Americans imprisoned by the Soviet regime and he had neglected to free them. He reminded the West that Queen Elizabeth had refused Gorbachev's invitation to tour the U.S.S.R but had accepted his own invitation for a tour of the new Russia. He and Kozyrev endeavored to paint the picture of Russia as a young democracy striving to integrate its policies into Western structures.<sup>165</sup> They announced Russia's return to Europe and its building of a partnership with the West. In a speech to Congress in June 1992, Yeltsin said,

The new Russia does not aspire to change the world in its own image or likeness, nor to impose or coerce, but to share generously and to exchange experience, spiritual values and heartfelt warmth.<sup>166</sup>

Yeltsin and Kozyrev labored to avoid undermining the fragile legitimacy of their regime. At home and abroad they understood that it was necessary to stress that Russia remained a great power deserving ample respect. Both rejected the idea that the Cold War had been won by the Americans and they were careful to avoid expressing desperation with respect to their dependence on aid from the West. Yeltsin underlined that Russia in no way altered its foreign policy behavior in exchange for financial support from the West.

Initially, the foreign policy of the Russian state had a strong pro-Western orientation. Kozyrev's view was that foreign policy should look to further economic growth and development within Russia. The West could provide large scale foreign aid, loans, investment capital, and the new technology and financial experience Russia so

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<sup>165</sup> Smart op cit., p. 150.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

desperately needed. These improved relations with the West would allow Russia to significantly and safely reduce its defence budget. Improved relations would serve to “undercut the position of the still powerful military-industrial complex that was trying to stall the conversion of military industry to civilian production.”<sup>167</sup> Kozyrev even went so far as to say that “open hatred of the West is open hatred of the whole process of the evolution of mankind.”<sup>168</sup> Such statements were made in the hope that this would lead Russia to a quicker and more strongly reinforced process of democratization.

One of the first major steps Yeltsin took toward securing relations with the United States was to reveal his intention to establish a firm foundation for alliance with the West symbolized by the signing, with George Bush, of the Camp David Declaration of 1992. This new condominium was based on the understanding that enduring peace and friendship between the two nations “rests on lasting common values,”<sup>169</sup> the reduction of nuclear arsenals, the reduction of conventional weapons proliferation, the resolution of regional conflicts and cooperation to counter terrorism and drug trafficking. The Camp David Declaration, for Russia, was a means of affirming its status as an international power. Yeltsin continues to advocate further deep cuts in strategic offensive arms and conventional armaments for elimination of chemical weapons and for winding down nuclear tests. For the Americans, Camp David appeared to be little more than a diplomatic courtesy extended to one of many American partners, in order to strengthen the position of a reformist government among its nationalist opponents. Many have argued that once

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<sup>167</sup> Paul Marantz in Kanet, Kozhemiakin, op cit., p. 79.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Buszynski, op cit., p. 54.



Yeltsin's political foothold was secured, close partnership with Russia dropped in American priority.<sup>170</sup>

Like Gorbachev, Yeltsin attempted to use strategic nuclear arms reductions as a basis for partnership with the United States. For the military establishment, arms reduction was necessary in order to harmonize military capability with economic reality. However, the military wanted no partnership with the United States and accused, along with the nationalist critics that the success of nuclear arms reduction could deprive Russia of its international status. Yeltsin, although he promised he would make no concessions during START II negotiations, made several.<sup>171</sup> START II became the subject of much debate in Moscow as the hallowed principle of mutually assured destruction was abandoned. Many accused Russia's main striking force of having been dangerously surrendered and many feared an American ability to maintain a strategic advantage.<sup>172</sup> Many in Moscow were apprehensive about a new single superpower world in which the U.S. was dominant. Some argued that it was MAD that had insured lasting stability during the Cold War.

Kozyrev was accused of failing to give enough consideration to Western intentions. He strictly focused on economic interdependence, the spread of political

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<sup>170</sup> This feeling that Washington had abandoned Russia can be seen in the fall of 1993 when Russia threatened to veto UN Security Council sanctions against Libya to punish the country for its refusal to surrender two suspects in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 183 over Scotland in 1988. Russia opposed the sanctions because they would render Libya unable to repay its four billion dollar debt to Russia. Russia was asserting itself in the international system, but for different reasons than in past decades. Economics, not ideology, was guiding their policies, and as a result, the U.S. and Russia were better able to compromise and negotiate. East-West relations were no longer seen as a zero-sum game.

<sup>171</sup> For a good discussion of START II, see Buszynski, Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War, ch.2.

<sup>172</sup> Buszynski, op cit., p. 57.

democracy, and a recognition of the potential destructiveness of nuclear weapons. He believed that in a democracy where leaders are bound by legal institutions, aggressive foreign policies can be ruled out. He claimed that no rational, democratic, civil society posed a threat to Russia and it was from this basis that he sought to focus on economic improvements.<sup>173</sup> He and Yeltsin, like their predecessors, sought to win Western approval and therefore economic assistance by proving to the West that the Russian state was radically different from the Soviet state. All traces of Cold War rivalry were to be erased as Moscow attempted to cooperate with the West in international matters deemed important to Washington (i.e. Attempting to contain Iraq and the war in the former Yugoslavia).<sup>174</sup>

The new Russian foreign policy, building on the legacy of Gorbachev, was met with enthusiasm from the West. Moscow signed START II, was on its best behaviour at the UN and in a rather surprising move, voted in favour of sanctions against Serbia in response to its attempted expansion into Bosnia.<sup>175</sup> It was crucial for Yeltsin and Kozyrev

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<sup>173</sup> Marantz in Kanet and Kozhemiakin op cit., p. 80.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

It should be noted that the Persian Gulf War posed a major and untimely crisis for Russian foreign policy. Moscow displayed a confused, shifting, contentious and contradictory approach to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the American response to it. For more about Moscow's role in the Persian Gulf, see Graham E. Fuller's article in Foreign Affairs, *Moscow and the Gulf War*.

<sup>175</sup> While Russia officially supported UN sanctions against the former Yugoslavia and allowed Russian troops to participate in peacekeeping operations, there were numerous attacks on this "anti-Serbian" policy, led by vice-president Rutskoy. There was scathing criticism from parliament for allowing the U.S. to dictate terms in Yugoslavia. In December 1992, parliament passed a resolution criticizing Russia's stance on Yugoslavia and called for the extension of economic sanctions against all parties to the conflict, not just Serbia, and to begin humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia. Yeltsin was lucky, however, because the West's vacillating position on Serbia allowed him to endorse the West's policies while at the same time avoid antagonizing those at home. For more on Russia's involvement in the former Yugoslavia, see Robert Tucker's chapter in Kraus and Leibowitz, eds., Russia and Eastern Europe After Communism. Boulder: Westview Press, 1996.

that Moscow be seen as an equal contributor to building a stable post-Cold War environment in Europe.<sup>176</sup>

In keeping with the confidence building measures that began under Gorbachev, Yeltsin arranged for troops to be removed from Germany and Eastern Europe and from many former Soviet republics. He wanted to avoid any policies that would detract from the main goal - to support the ambitious economic and political reforms already underway at home. At first Yeltsin was a hero in the Kremlin. He had resisted the August 1991 coup and had used it to his advantage. He was a strong leader, intent on reforming Russia and seeing it rise again as an international power. However by 1992, sharp criticism of his foreign policy began to take root. He and Kozyrev were accused of taking measures that countered Russian national interest in favor of continuing close relations with the West. Further, in this pursuit of Western favor, Russia's other important relationships were being neglected, such as those with China.

Like Gorbachev, Yeltsin was frequently accused of doing the opposite of what he promised. He was blamed for policies that instead of improving Russia's international standing, had only served to darken it with respect to relations with Cuba, Iraq, Libya and Serbia. Despite the decline in Russia's status with its former allies, there was little to show for Moscow's sacrifices. Critics accused Yeltsin and Kozyrev of not paying enough close attention to the former republics and they claimed that as the emerging regional power,

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<sup>176</sup> Marantz in Kanet and Kozhemiakin. op cit., p. 80.

Moscow had a responsibility to ensure stability and dampen conflict.<sup>177</sup> These critics advocated less economic dependence on the West and more economic cooperation and integration within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Many oppositionists have mourned the loss of the empire and have blamed Yeltsin and Kozyrev for selling out Russia's great power status to the advantage of its former Cold War protagonists.<sup>178</sup> There were many anti-Western patriots who stood in stark opposition to Yeltsin; all of them focusing their attention on relations with Washington. These men included Alexander Rutskoi, Yeltsin's former vice-president, Vladimir Lukin, Chairman of the Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee, Gennadi Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party, and nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsy, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, among others.<sup>179</sup> These critics argued that Russian foreign policy remained tainted with the idealistic elements of Gorbachev's new thinking and that Yeltsin's policies were nothing more than an extension of Gorbachev's thinking. Yeltsin was accused of failing to give priority to former republics and of focusing almost exclusively on the West, which jeopardized Russia's great power status. Many noted President Clinton's tendency to treat Yeltsin as the "village idiot," who was always willing to follow big brother unquestioningly.<sup>180</sup> Some of Yeltsin's opponents did not wish adversarial relations with the West, but they did seek acceptance of the fact that disagreements between the two

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 81.

<sup>178</sup> Kanet and Kozhemiakin, op cit., p. 5.

<sup>179</sup> There are various groups, either by political orientation or by institutional mandate, that at any given time can influence foreign policy decision making. The opposition parties in the legislature consist of those who have traditionalist or integrationist tendencies, those who are pro-Western, the Eurasianists, the nationalists, the neo-Bolsheviks and the communists. The actual decision making actors can be any one or all of the Presidency, the Foreign Ministry, the Security Council and the military.

<sup>180</sup> Kanet and Kozhemiakin, op cit., p. 7.

powers are natural and could be worked out without Moscow's acquiescence to Washington.

There was resentment among Yeltsin's opponents about the role the U.S. played in keeping Russia down. Resentment of America grew as Washington failed to deliver on promises for aid and as a result, Moscow remained economically constrained. However what many did not realize was that Russia still benefited from having the U.S. act as a patron because American support served to galvanize the world community behind the need to support Russia. Both Clinton and Bush encouraged the IMF to dispense funds to Russia at a time when economic indicators dictated restraint. The U.S. also encouraged the Germans to reschedule Russia's debt repayment and they conditionally supported Russia's entry into the G7(8). With Western support, Russia has been able to join the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and has become more involved in the European Bank, the EU, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and various Asia Pacific fora.

Ultranationalists wanted to see a focus placed on Russia's historically interdependent relationship with CIS states, with Russian/American relations put on the back burner. Neo-communists called for a tough approach to the West and a return to the empire, and the centrists saw Russia as a bridge between East and West. Russia's international prestige was important in the national psyche and like Gorbachev, Yeltsin

was seen as being too caught up with “playing nice.” Many of Yeltsin’s opponents called for a renewed surge of pride in Mother Russia and many were convinced that Yeltsin was undermining the proud tradition of strength.<sup>181</sup>

Given this opposition within the Duma to Yeltsin and Kozyrev’s pro-Western stance, the two had to alter their public position somewhat. Both Yeltsin and Gorbachev experienced these similar pressures and both had to make concessions with respect to policy and personnel in order to accommodate their critics. Yeltsin modified his rhetoric to reflect the growing feeling in the Duma that Russia deserved to be treated with the respect and status deserving of a great power. Both men attempted to re-focus foreign policy away from the West and toward the ‘near abroad.’ Both were compelled to borrow rhetoric from members of the opposition about maintaining Russia’s spheres of influence in the ‘near abroad.’ It seemed, as in the Gorbachev’s era, that there was less debate over what constituted the national interest and more debate about how to promote these interests.

In the wake of the 1993 elections in Russia, the changes in the thinking of academics and political opponents were reflected in the foreign policy of Yeltsin and Kozyrev. Old questions such as “Who are we? Are we Europeans? What is our mission in the world?” gave way to such questions as “What do we need, how can we get it and what will it cost?”

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

By April 1993, Kozyrev, Grachev (Minister of Defence), and Ambartsumov (Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee), were able to put past differences aside and endorse a comprehensive foreign policy concept. This agreement meant a retreat from the pro-Western attitudes of Yeltsin and Kozyrev and placed a stronger emphasis on other matters which were important to Russia. Much more attention was to be paid to the Russian relationship with the 'near abroad.' Certainly rapprochement with the West was important, but Moscow would no longer seek unconditional Westernism. This was a tidy agreement on paper. However, Kozyrev probably never abandoned his view that the key to Russia's success was inextricably tied to good relations with the West. This was so even though he had no choice, for the time being, to explore other foreign policy options. In fact, he even cautioned in the late 1980's, that the U.S.S.R should retreat from costly competition with the West and that the two superpowers should join together to prevent regional conflicts from spilling over into U.S.-Soviet confrontation. He acknowledged that the Soviet Union could no longer afford to keep pace with the United States. He was a realist, and his way of thinking sought to put an end to Gorbachev's idealism and to focus on realistic, goal-oriented policies.<sup>182</sup> What is remarkable about the making of Russian foreign policy after the Cold War is that the Foreign Minister and the President were willing to work with other ministries to fashion a comprehensive policy that was politically expedient and less susceptible to personal influences.

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<sup>182</sup> Kozyrev, Andrei, and Shumikhin, Andrei, *East and West in the Third World*. International Affairs, 3, 1989.

The 1993 election provided proof that it was no longer practical to consider foreign policy in terms of elite preferences and personalities, but to examine policy in light of social and political conditions. The shift toward a more assertive foreign policy is not indicative of a resurgence of the 'evil empire,' but according to some observers, it was instead an attempt by Moscow to define its new role as a "normal regional power."<sup>183</sup> As in any democracy, when political opposition begins to mobilize public opinion against current government policies, it is only natural to expect some change in existing policies.

By the end of 1992 it was becoming clear that little benefit could be seen in the economy from the effects of stronger relations with the West and critics of Yeltsin's pro-Western stance appealed to the public's sense of outrage and humiliation. A direct link was drawn between foreign policy and the way people were living.<sup>184</sup> Many critics argued that because Yeltsin failed to emphasize Russian economic cooperation with the 'near abroad,' Russia's vital political, economic and security interests in this region were being ignored. The practice of 'tilting toward the West' was costly for Yeltsin's popularity as well as for economic success for Russia. Little tangible benefit could be seen from Western alignment, as foreign investment in Russia was modest, and Poland and Estonia were seen to have stronger economies than Russia.

In a February 1994 speech Yeltsin pointed out changes in his government's foreign policy, acknowledging earlier weaknesses. He purposefully visited South Korea, China

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<sup>183</sup> Malcolm, Neil, *The New Russian Foreign Policy*. The World Today, February 1994. p. 32.

<sup>184</sup> Marantz in Kanet and Kozhemiakin, *op cit.*, p. 83.



and India in a move to display his decreasing emphasis on Western relations. He claimed that “the main task of Russian foreign policy (was) the consistent advancement of Russia’s national interests.”<sup>185</sup> Kozyrev, under pressure from Yeltsin vowed similar goals and promised that Moscow would seek to further its own interests even if those interests contradicted those of the United States.

These verbal shifts were significant. The language in which Russian foreign policy toward the West was defended had changed, but the policies remained the same. Balanced relations with the West continued to be advocated by the government. There was still a need to promote Russia’s interests through partnership as opposed to confrontation. In order to defend these policies, however, they had to be advanced assertively. It was only by being rhetorically assertive about Russia’s interests that Yeltsin could avoid being overtaken by nationalists.

From Yeltsin’s point of view, the most difficult test for Russia’s Western policy has been the decision to expand NATO into Central and Eastern Europe. Fear of NATO expansion is widespread in Russia and Yeltsin has therefore expressed his opposition. This issue has perhaps been the most contentious and it is one that will likely continue to raise tensions in the years to come. Russia’s pro-Western stance has in many instances taken a back seat to its opposition to NATO expansion and it seems to many Russians as though their concerns have fallen on deaf ears. It is crucial at this stage to provide a discussion of the one issue that could challenge a Russian-American strategic partnership - the one issue

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid. p. 85.

that deeply threatens Russia's sense of security and in turn, Eastern Europe's continued stability.

### *Russia and NATO*

In November 1993, Yevgeni Primakov, Head of Russian External Intelligence, declared Russia's concern over NATO expansion and claimed that Russia greatly feared the possibility of Germany assuming a dominant position within the Alliance. Primakov claimed that expansion would create a "siege mentality" in Russia and would shift Cold War borders Eastward "reviving the spectre of Russia's isolation."<sup>186</sup> There was some concern that expansion would not only revive the threat of the Cold War for Russia, but would destabilize Ukraine and Belarus by playing into the hands of the nationalists. Primakov stated that "Russia was far from indifferent to which bloc extends its area of responsibility up to our borders."<sup>187</sup> According to Primakov, NATO remained a threat since the alliance had not changed from a political-military group to a collective security instrument which would suit the new political climate. He further said:

This expansion would bring the biggest military grouping in the world, with its colossal offensive potential, directly to the borders of Russia. If this happens, the need would arise for a fundamental appraisal of all defence concepts on our side, a redeployment of armed forces and changes in operational plans.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Buszynski, Leszek, *Russia and the West: Towards a Renewed Geopolitical Rivalry?* Survival, Autumn, 1995. Vol.37. No.3. p.110.

<sup>187</sup> *Russia's Strategic Renovation*. Adelphi Paper #289. U.K: Brassey's for the IISS, 1994.

<sup>188</sup> Shearman 1995, op cit., p. 82.

Sergei Yushenkov, Head of the Duma's Defence Committee, insisted that because Russia was a nuclear power, it should be given special consideration in terms of its status with NATO. Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, in the spring of 1994, also called for a Russia-NATO security collaboration as he saw this as a step toward an extended OSCE. NATO could not allow Russia such influence over the Alliance's future development because it could be seen as a betrayal of the Central European and Baltic States' security concerns. Due to these concerns, and this region's demand for protection, the West can hardly ignore their plight and turn their backs on the region's future security.

NATO leaders attempted to devise ways of mitigating the effects of NATO expansion and proposed a special non-aggression pact with Moscow, but Moscow was not interested. Instead, they sought a formal consultative mechanism with NATO which would grant them influence in Alliance decisions.<sup>189</sup> In a way, this is not surprising. However one wonders if NATO could not have conceded more to Russia's sensitivities.

Russian political leaders feel NATO expansion is directed against Russia and their national interests dictate their opposition to this process. For Russians, this is an emotionally charged issue and many feel humiliated, cheated and insulted by this failure to acknowledge Russian interests. There is a widespread feeling that the West, especially the United States, is deeply hostile to Russia, as NATO expansion attempts are seen as an American design to limit Russian influence. As already mentioned, Yeltsin is concerned

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<sup>189</sup> Buszynski 1995, op cit., p.111.

about the role of the new Germany in Europe, as well as the United States which has taken the lead in driving the expansion process.<sup>190</sup>

NATO expansion proponents have assured Russia that the Alliance's Eastward expansion into the Visegrad countries is not meant to secure them *from* Russia. However, Russian politicians are not deaf and blind. There is much suspicion about Western motives and Russian politicians are turning the issue into a democratic one, garnering political support for their firm rejection of NATO's proposals. Lieven claims that the 1989-92 era of the Russian love affair with the West is over.<sup>191</sup>

Since Russia has no hegemonic interests in the Visegrad countries, its opposition to the expansion of the Alliance into this area is curious. Lieven explains that Russian leaders, with the exception of Zhirinovskiy, have little interest in this region as they realize that the former Warsaw Treaty Organization allies have been lost to Russia indefinitely. Lieven quotes Dr. Alexander Konovalov with the Europe-Asia Institute,

Americans sometimes argue that NATO membership for Eastern Europe is the best way of sending a signal to our radicals that they must give up their dream of restoring the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe. But this is a dramatic misunderstanding of the situation there. They have no such dreams. All their hopes are of first taking power in Russia, and then restoring some form of the Soviet Union. By infuriating and frightening most Russians, NATO expansion would help them do both.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Lieven, Anatol, *Russian Opposition to NATO Expansion*. The World Today. Vol.51. No.10. p. 196.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. p. 197.

Even with the recent Paris agreements between Washington and Moscow, the new found cooperation is only skin deep. There is still much suspicion in Moscow of the entire process of expansion.

Russians are merely trying to protect their sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union and they are behaving *defensively*. Their actions are no different than the way the United States has behaved in various parts of the world. As was mentioned above, none of this applies to the Visegrad countries. Many are curious about Russia's motivations for rejecting expansion into this region if they have no security interest there. Perhaps the Russians have the right to ask why NATO is so concerned about Polish security when neither Russia, nor any other state, is threatening it.

What Moscow has been most concerned about is the open ended nature of expansion which could lead to the eventual inclusion of the Baltic states and/or Ukraine. There is a fear that NATO expansion is the finishing touch to a "pattern of Western betrayal, motivated by ambition and hostility toward Russia."<sup>193</sup> The failure of NATO to attempt to limit expansion has left Russia in fear of a U.S. desire to expand into the Baltics and subsequently form an anti-Russian security relationship. Moscow has already said that it would not oppose plans for the Baltics to join the European Union (EU), in which the Americans are noticeably absent. A renewed Russian relationship with the Baltics as part of the EU would provide for a great economic foothold for Russia in Europe. However, in terms of security, Russia is understandably opposed to NATO's presence in the Baltics as it would render its entire northern air defence system useless and it would open an invasion road into central Russia.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Lieven, *op cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* p. 198.

The really big issue for Russia with respect to NATO expansion has been the future of Ukraine. There is no doubt that moves toward Ukraine on the part of NATO could trigger a somewhat ferocious response from Russia resulting in a collapse of cooperation with the West, and perhaps an urgent hunt for allies elsewhere<sup>195</sup> (which the West should seek to avoid). NATO membership for Ukraine would be regarded by Russia as a catastrophe of epochal proportions and would challenge Russia's vital interests.

Russia has taken this firm position on Ukraine for a number of reasons, the most important of which is its concern about the prospect of NATO tanks being within striking distance of the Volga and the Don. Further, NATO could serve as a Western shield behind which Ukrainian nationalists could "Ukrainianise" the present Russian speaking population of Eastern and Southern Ukraine, cut the economy off from Russia and introduce strict border controls, shutting Russia off from its nationals in Ukraine and from Kiev, its historic birthplace.<sup>196</sup>

Regardless of this attitude toward Ukraine, Russia has really done very little to bring any pressure to bear to force Kiev into the Russian sphere of influence. Yeltsin has been cautious and has allowed Ukraine room to define its independence. However the fact remains that Russia will certainly not willingly see Ukraine fall into the Western sphere of influence. The issue of Ukraine elicits an emotive reaction from many leaders in Moscow

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<sup>195</sup> It appears as though Yeltsin is indeed feeling pressure to seek allies elsewhere. A perfect example of this is Moscow's renewed interest in forging good relations with China.

<sup>196</sup> Lieven, *op cit.*, p. 198.

from across the political spectrum. For Russian nationalists, NATO membership for Ukraine could mean a loss of the inherited leadership of the Slavs, and the loss of territory conquered by Russia in the past three hundred and fifty years.<sup>197</sup> For Soviet loyalists, it would end any hope of reconstituting some form of union in the old Soviet territory. For the Western liberals, the driving back of Russia's influence past her borders would signify the defeat of Peter the Great's Westernizing programme, the West's conclusive rejection of Russia as part of Europe and Russia's expulsion from Europe into Asia.

It is not surprising that Russia is reluctant to comply with the United States' international security arrangement. Moscow hopes to maintain or regain its status with Washington as an equal in Europe. Sergei Karaganov articulated the Russian view succinctly:

For Russians, NATO expansion is a psychological question as much as a strategic one: it involves mutual trust and Western recognition of Russia's status. Expansion would...confirm a feeling of having been, if not defeated, then at least tricked and framed... We have retreated a thousand miles without firing a shot, and you are still advancing. And yet you accuse Russia of aggression.<sup>198</sup>

In order fully to understand Russian opposition to NATO expansion, it is important to realize, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter, that its foreign policy is a direct function of its domestic concerns. Domestic political infighting and opposition from political opponents has made it exceedingly difficult for Yeltsin to define a set of foreign policy objectives. The centre of political gravity has shifted in a nationalist direction and

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. pp. 198-199.

geopolitics plays a large role in Russian foreign relations. Even Kozyrev adopted some of the rhetoric of the nationalists that was reflected in his position on NATO expansion. It is important to stress that there is no monolithic viewpoint in Russia at present and the election of 1996 has not really affected Moscow's conduct with respect to its foreign policy.

Peter Shearman suggests that Russia has three major security concerns at present. It has a definite stake in the security of Eastern Europe, and concerns about the rights of ethnic Russians living in the 'near abroad.' To this end, Russia tried to use the OSCE as a means of protecting human rights against ethnic discrimination. Russia is also seeking cooperation with Western Europe in combating non-conventional threats to security such as terrorism and the illicit trading of plutonium. It seems Russia's security relies on its ability to ensure political stability by resolving disputes and preventing armed conflict within its former empire. In order to regain their status as a great power both in Europe and in the rest of the world, Russia must work to involve itself in UN operations and in European security structures. It must find the kind of *modus vivendi* with NATO which will prevent the expansion of NATO from foreshadowing a new Europe to the exclusion of Russia which in no way fits with Russia's priorities for the future. Whether or not the recent agreements in Paris represent a new *modus vivendi*, it is too early to say.

The expansion of NATO, made reality after the 1997 Madrid Summit, has made it difficult for Yeltsin to focus on domestic priorities. It seems clear that Russia has neither



the inclination nor the ability at present to pose any security threat to Europe.<sup>199</sup> Despite Russia's recent grudging acceptance of NATO expansion, it is reluctant to accept NATO as the sole guarantor of security in Europe. The fact that NATO has been Russia's adversary for fifty years serves as a psychological obstacle for Russia in terms of accepting NATO expansion Eastward. Russia feels that it alone can ensure the security of its former allies and has attempted to make assurances that it has no interest in acquiring these territories for anything more than a cooperative alliance within the CIS. The Russian government has been forced to deal with the issue of NATO expansion at a time when they should be focusing their political attention inward toward pressing economic concerns.

It seems as though Russian popular opinion does not harbor any real imperialist intentions. However it still opposes any European military alliance that excludes them. It is the American pillar of NATO that many Russians still distrust.

Does Russia have any real power or influence regarding the expansion of NATO? It has been suggested that Yeltsin does have a few options. It is unlikely, though still possible, that Russia could work against NATO. It could try to transform the CIS into a counter bloc to NATO. It could increase the pressure on Ukraine and the Baltic states. It could build up its military presence in Belarus, Kaliningrad and Moldova. It could abrogate arms control agreements such as the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

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<sup>199</sup> Kozyrev, the Foreign Minister, suggested that the OSCE, a non-military body that included all states in Europe, most importantly Russia as a full member, was better suited to deal with the future demands of Eastern Europe.

(CFE) or START II. It could opt out of the Partnership for Peace. It could curtail bilateral defence cooperation with Western countries and it could reduce its cooperation with UN operations.<sup>200</sup>

Such extreme reaction on the part of Moscow is unlikely as Yeltsin would risk jeopardizing the political and economic relationship with the West he has worked so hard for. Russia can hardly afford to subsidize the weaker economies of states within the CIS, and pressure on Ukraine or the Baltics could push them to seek closer ties with the West. It does appear that realistically, Yeltsin has been left little choice but to accept American directed drives toward expansion with quiet protest.

Russia is clearly seeking recognition of its status as a world power. The debate over NATO expansion has failed to take into account Russia's position. Great care must be taken with Moscow in order to ensure and maintain European security. The West, primarily the United States, now that Russia's domestic political situation has stabilized itself, appears uninterested in Russia's search for its great power legacy. As a result of the West's failure to acknowledge Russia's role, Russia has tried to consolidate its position in Eastern Europe with the former Soviet Republics. Toward the end of 1993, Yeltsin called for expanded economic ties with Eastern Europe and reminded the West that Eastern Europe remained in Russia's sphere of vital interest and that Moscow was not averse to taking measures to counteract NATO's Eastward expansion.

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<sup>200</sup> Asmus, Kugler, Larrabee, *NATO Expansion: The Next Steps*. Survival, Spring 1995. Vol.37. No.1. p. 21.

Michael Ruhle and Nicholas Williams suggest that the best way to ensure good relations between Russia and the West is to work toward cooperation between the CIS and the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). Acknowledging the CIS as a rightful political actor might act as a stimulant for a stronger NATO-Russia relationship. An active policy of engaging Russia through the PfP and a close political dialogue would counter its suspicion that its function within the European security structure is not more than a distant gatehouse.<sup>201</sup> The West must avoid demonizing Russia as the enemy and Russia must do its part to work with the United States, as Washington will likely be an integral part of any future European security framework. Russia's ability to determine a role in the international community will necessarily be determined by the response of the international community. Yeltsin appears to understand that continued cooperation with the West is essential for Russia to get back on its feet as an international power.

For most of his tenure, Yeltsin has been conducting a rather precarious balancing act with respect to foreign policy. Given his domestic political uncertainty and his unwillingness to fly in the face of opponents, he has been balancing his foreign policy between two camps. Kozyrev's view and that of the Foreign Ministry has been such that Russia's national interests largely coincide with Western views. This meant stressing inter-republican cooperation and cooperation with the West. Kozyrev believed that in the post-Cold War world the greatness of a people was determined not by the size of its empire, but by the standard of living of its people. Economic reform would lead to the realization

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<sup>201</sup> Brown, Michael, *The Flawed Logic of NATO Expansion*. Survival, Spring 1995, Vol.37, No.1. p. 88.

of Russia's national interest of retaining its "normal great power" status.<sup>202</sup> It was this self interest, not a desire to please the West, that Kozyrev insisted was his motivation.

Opponents to Kozyrev's view, many of them in the Russian parliament, advocated putting Russia ahead of the CIS in importance and they wanted to establish an independent Russian Ministry of Defence and Army as well as an autonomous strategic policy.<sup>203</sup> They attacked Kozyrev's view of Russia as a European power which they labeled an 'Atlanticist' view. They insisted that Russia was a Eurasian power with unique ties to both East and West that had to be acknowledged in order to best serve Russia's national interests. Of course, if Russia was a Eurasian power, it did not have to worry about criticism from the West, thus allowing them the uninterrupted freedom to conduct themselves as they pleased in the neighboring republics.

As has been discussed, Kozyrev and Yeltsin were accused of putting Western interests above those of Russia. Critics complained that this was due to the lack of a strong foreign policy concept. This lack of guidance was leaving Russia susceptible to reliance on the West for charting its future course. Though Yeltsin was perceived to locate himself within the Kozyrev camp, in reality he performed a rather miraculous balancing act, attempting to consolidate his power in parliament, while at the same time trying to reassure the West of Russian intentions. He even went so far as to institute the Russian Security Council in June 1992, meant to pacify the West and to allow him the ability to

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<sup>202</sup> Robert Tucker in Kraus and Liebowitz, *op cit.*, p. 299.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

enhance his personal role in framing the Russian foreign policy agenda. For the most part, this Western appeasement can be seen in many of Yeltsin's early foreign policy initiatives and even in some of his later negotiations with the U.S., with one notable exception.

Russia has made it clear that it does not want the former Soviet republics to be integrated into Europe through the EU or through the North Atlantic Alliance. This region has always been within the Russian sphere of influence and Russia leaders, across the political spectrum, feel they have the right to object to the expansion of military blocs or alliances into these countries. The decision to expand NATO has had a profound impact on Russia's relations with the West. As the U.S. pushes for expansion, the interest in affirming a strategic partnership with the U.S. will weaken. Russia feels that U.S. strategy is intended to push Russia out of Europe.<sup>204</sup> The United States appears to have forgotten about history and expects Russia to do the same.

Early in Yeltsin's term, the U.S. showered him with affirmation, support, and promises of a solid, equal partnership. Yeltsin and those around him perceived this relationship as a means of maintaining Russia's international great power status. Perhaps what the U.S. was doing was simply supporting the reforms to avoid the rise of nationalists and communists in Moscow and once the immediate internal threat to Yeltsin's power was gone, Washington's unconditional support for Yeltsin was abruptly withdrawn. This period of close cooperation with the West from 1990-1992 artificially elevated Russia's status and it did not take Yeltsin long to realize that he could not rely on

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<sup>204</sup> Buszinski 1996, op cit., p. 88.

the U.S. alone for Russia's security and prosperity. In fact, in the wake of negotiations surrounding the impending expansion of NATO, it appears as though Russia still looks West for threats to its security as it fears the potential for an American presence in NATO so close to its borders. Following the Madrid Summit of 1997, Yeltsin realized he really had very little political leverage with which to protest the expansion of NATO. He has subsequently and reluctantly given his conditional support for the expansion of the alliance as he realizes that interdependence with the West and a closer focus on relations with the CIS are the only sensible, realistic foreign policy options he has at present.

Russia appears to be suspended between the past and the future like an elevator stuck between floors.<sup>205</sup> It is the struggle between competing values that lies at the heart of the foreign policy debate. Until this situation is resolved, Russia's domestic instabilities will intrude on its foreign policy initiatives and will likely lead to its continued stance of ambivalence toward the West.

As Christopher Smart claims, Russia has not yet taken its rightful place in international affairs. However when it does, it must do so in a friendly environment; one in which there is room for an enduring and genuine American-Russian partnership. This can be done only when the two sides are willing to strike a balance between continuity and change. The path to new security arrangements in Europe is strewn with obstacles and only time will tell if Rudyard Kipling's prophecy that East and West will never meet will hold true.

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<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* p. xi.

CHAPTER FOUR  
Détente II:  
The End of the Cold War or Temporary Respite?

Is the Cold War really over - or is the international system simply witnessing a period of unprecedented warm relations between East and West, a period that could easily be labeled Détente II? In twelve short years, following the rise of Gorbachev and the advent of his new thinking with respect to international relations, the international system has witnessed the relaxing of tensions between the superpowers, the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War. Western leaders, analysts and academics breathed a collective sigh of relief and raised their glasses to their certain victory in the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Democracy emerged victorious and the United States emerged as the only remaining superpower in the international system. Would this prove to be nothing more than a temporary respite from the tensions of the Cold War? Was this really the end of the “evil empire?” There are no guarantees in the post- Cold War era and Russia’s current political system is so precariously balanced that its future cannot be confidently predicted.

Richard Pipes claims that problems still lie ahead with respect to the U.S.-Russian relationship. The installation of democracy is not yet complete, no fresh elites have emerged, the country is run by ex-communists who seem unable to shed old mental habits, and the Duma is populated by communists and nationalists who are suspicious of the West

and seek to reclaim Russia's superpower status.<sup>206</sup> There is some question as to whether Russia will ever be truly democratic. The actions of Yeltsin fail to support democracy fully, even though he proclaims himself to be a democrat. Pipes criticizes the democrats for leaving in place the "myriad memorials glorifying their predecessors without substituting pervasive symbols of their own."<sup>207</sup> Yeltsin had his chance to institute radical democratic reform, failed to do so, and now it is too late. Now critics and analysts predict a potential return to some form of the former empire as Russia continues to pursue relationships with states that, at the same time, are not allied with the United States.

What went wrong? What happened to the promise of a democratic Russia? Why did things not turn out as originally forecast? Major institutional and ideological change cannot be implemented by one person. Enduring and comprehensive reform must be genuinely supported by the political elite and the people at large and cannot be effectively introduced and enforced by one person. Many claim that this was Gorbachev's mistake. However, arguably, major systemic change was not Gorbachev's intention.

Gorbachev was looking for a break in East-West tensions in order to end the Cold War mentality as he understood that the Soviet Union could no longer afford to sustain arms competition with the West. Perhaps he really did believe, to some degree, in multilateralism and the need for changes in the international dynamic between the superpowers. He had some idea of going beyond détente, but the extent to which he was

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<sup>206</sup> Pipes, Richard, *Is Russia Still An Enemy?* Foreign Affairs, Vol. 76, No. 5, September/October 1997, p. 67-68.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*



willing to do so is suspect. Certainly he had no dream of alignment with the United States. He was not advocating an East-West alliance, but was promoting a stronger détente with cooperation in ensuring mutual security. He announced democratic-style reforms in the hope of wiping out any future of armed conflict between the powers, as it is widely understood that democracies do not fight each other.<sup>208</sup> This hiatus in superpower conflict would allow Gorbachev the time to get his domestic house in order, perhaps even with the assistance of the United States. Throughout his tenure, Gorbachev continued to advocate socialism, albeit a softer, gentler version, since full-blown democracy was never his intention.

When Yeltsin came to power, he attempted to take control of the runaway political system. A strong momentum was propelling the system forward and Yeltsin could do little but vow to carry out the work of Gorbachev at a faster rate. Yeltsin's, unlike Gorbachev's commitment to democracy, was unequivocal. The intention under Gorbachev was not democracy, however it had been gathering momentum in the international community. It seemed that other states, primarily Western, began to see their future security tied to the ability of Yeltsin to democratize Russia.

Yeltsin advocated democracy and called himself a democrat, but he failed to institute the necessary reforms that would see it through. Early in his tenure, at a time when he actually had the ability to institute democratic reform, he was preoccupied with perpetuating Gorbachev's new thinking and with the legacy of warm relations with the

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<sup>208</sup> This concept is widely known as the Democratic Peace Theory.

West that he inherited. He did little to move the reform process along in any substantial way, and the old pillars of communism were continually creeping back into the political system. The popular base of democracy in Russia is “thin and brittle; the political climate can change overnight.”<sup>209</sup> Because the country is lacking strong party organizations and loyalties, the potential exists for wild swings from one extreme to another. In the early years, Yeltsin had his sights set on the West and cementing their economic assistance in getting the Russian economy back in order. With the introduction of democratic elections in Russia, he soon faced a Duma that was stacked with political opposition to democracy. By then, it may have been too late for democracy, and as Yeltsin was increasingly pressured on the domestic front, the legacy of warm relations with the West that Yeltsin inherited from Gorbachev, though still important, was put on the back burner.

Gorbachev would go to great lengths to gain Western approval and he knew that his support of cooperation with the United States and the need for multilateral security would be politically expedient. He attempted a second *détente*, but ended up with more than he bargained for. Yeltsin is dealing with this new rapprochement with the West, but there are visible hints of the old Russia returning, Russian opposition to NATO expansion being a good example. The question remains, is Yeltsin’s foreign policy about *détente* or something deeper? It is asserted in this chapter that Yeltsin’s policies are about whatever is politically expedient, and, like Gorbachev, he sees cooperation with the West as vital to getting Russia’s domestic situation back in order.

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<sup>209</sup> Pipes, *op cit.*, p. 70.

So what is the future of this new détente? What is the future of Russian foreign policy? Despite his advocacy of cooperative security with the West, Yeltsin's Russia still looks West for its threats to security. Even after six years of "democracy" in Russia, it is impossible to predict Russia's future path. Will the Russian government choose to be pro-Western or anti-Western? It appears as though the political elite may be pulling toward a reliance on military power and rapprochement with countries hostile to the West.

What must not be forgotten is that Russia will likely always be a great nuclear power and as a result, Russia's security will always be in the United States' vital interest. How the West treats Russia now could have serious ramifications on future relations. Whether relations between East and West will be warm or cold greatly depends on how the United States deals with Russia and its security concerns now. This chapter seeks to explain the shaky foundation upon which Russian foreign policy currently rests and the need for the West to exercise caution and never to forget history when dealing with Russia.

The Soviet Union relied upon foreign economic support and arguably the Communist experiment would likely not have been the success that it was if it had not been for periodic help from the West.<sup>210</sup> Gorbachev understood this to be an essential component of Soviet transformation. Given the grave difficulties facing the Soviet economy and the Russian government's subsequent inability to continue the arms competition with the United States, Gorbachev knew that getting the Soviet Union back

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<sup>210</sup> Sanders, Sol, Living Off the West. New York: Madison Books. 1990. p. vii.

on its feet would take more than simply the odd periodic transfer of resources. For the Soviet Union to survive it would need major Western endorsement and to achieve this goal, a restructuring of the system was required. Such reconstruction would have to appear to be “teeth-rattling reform as to put into jeopardy the very existence of the system, a truly great gamble...in the tradition of Lenin.”<sup>211</sup>

Gorbachev saw that the “dual track civilian-military economy and society” was becoming far too expensive to maintain. Gorbachev acted very strategically seeking both to perpetuate his power and to do what was necessary to promote openness and reform, two concepts that would serve to guarantee American support. Some have argued that his domestic reforms failed because they were not really at the heart of what Gorbachev was trying to do. Sol Sanders argues that Gorbachev’s purpose was not to execute real economic reform, as he was never fully committed to a truly free market, but to advance his hidden agenda: to give the Soviet State an injection of wealth that would allow it to continue to play a strong superpower role.

This then begs the question, why did Gorbachev ask for aid from the West? The answer, at least in part, was that the Soviet Union needed a break from competition with the U.S. in order to bolster its strength and it needed Western assistance to do so. This is not to say that economic assistance was not needed, but Gorbachev also needed a way to show the Americans that he meant business. Such reform was seen by Sanders as a “last

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

desperate attempt to resuscitate the system.”<sup>212</sup> The military gap was widening and Gorbachev faced few choices if the U.S.S.R. was to remain a superpower. It makes sense that if the Soviet Union wanted to rebuild its economy it would have to let go of its international status, which served as a drain on the economy. Security cooperation with the West would guarantee strengthened strategic ability and a reduction in the cost of arms production. The avoidance of aggravation of military conflict in geopolitically important areas would also follow. The Soviets may have also been able to preserve a strategic advantage over the military potential of Japan, Germany and other new centers of power. Cooperation with the West could also have lead to more control over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The important thing to remember about the nature of the Soviet system was its ability to conceal its military agenda. Gorbachev did this successfully. This is not to suggest sinister motives on behalf of the “evil empire,” but merely to demonstrate the extent to which Moscow would seek Western support to advance its own agenda. He admitted the Soviet Union’s cultural, political and economic backwardness and he asked the West for a “mutually beneficial program to improve the benighted (Soviet) society.”<sup>213</sup> Gorbachev initiated a period of détente with the West in terms of unilateral concessions in arms negotiations. The West embraced his “new thinking” as it seemed to realize the Western hope that the Bolshevik regime would finally reach its long awaited maturity. In reality, it appears as though Gorbachev never really intended to fashion a new economy

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid. p. xiii.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

and society in the manner the West was led to believe he would. He could not possibly have expected to reform the system into democratic capitalism and still retain complete control. These two concepts are incompatible. Gorbachev knew this, and was merely hoping to institute enough reform to secure Western confidence. However he was ousted before he could fully put his plan into action and for his successor, from the wreckage of the U.S.S.R., these warm East-West relations were a tempting inheritance.

Throughout the decade of détente under Brezhnev, the West was continually hesitant in trusting the Soviets. Détente failed in the 1970's because the Americans backed off. Gorbachev understood their skepticism and knew that the only way for multilateralism and superpower arms reduction to work would be full commitment from both sides. In order to secure American support and cooperation, Gorbachev had to undertake confidence building measures. Playing on Western hopes about the maturity of the Bolshevik state and a subsequent democratic-style Eastern Europe, he gave the Americans what they wanted.

Détente has been defined as “sufficiently vague to cover a reality infinitely subtle, fluctuating and ambitious....leaving final objectives in question.”<sup>214</sup> Perhaps the same can be said of the period of Détente II which began with Gorbachev's new thinking and which endures today. Brezhnev's détente stemmed from a radically different view of Soviet capabilities than did Gorbachev's. Gone were the days of Khrushchev's “we will bury

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid. p. 73.

you” challenges. It was slowly being discovered that the Soviet Union was undergoing a great economic crisis. Perhaps Andrei Sakharov explained it best when he said,

The Gulf between Russia and the U.S. is all the greater in the newest and most revolutionary sectors of the economy. We are ahead of America in coal extraction, but behind in oil, gas and electric energy; we are ten years behind in chemistry and infinitely behind in computer technology. . we simply live in another era.<sup>215</sup>

Little had changed under Gorbachev with respect to this feeling of backwardness. There was an understanding among the Soviet elite that there was a coming economic crisis that would require drastic action. Something stronger than old versions of détente was required. The purpose of the “new thinking” under Gorbachev was intended to bring large amounts of capital into the Soviet Union as well as the flow of Western technology. It was expected that American, Japanese and European technological capability would infiltrate the Soviet economy, help narrow the technological gap and do so at little cost to Soviet institutions.<sup>216</sup>

Sanders claims that Gorbachev’s highly publicized unilateral arms reductions were less than meets the eye and that they were quantitative reductions to make qualitative improvements. Even after the reductions, the U.S.S.R. would have an advantage of 2 to 1 in tanks, 2.5 to 1 in artillery and 3 to 1 in combat aircraft. The reductions were set to get

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<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* p. 77.

rid of redundant forces and obsolete weapons allowing for a more capable and prepared fighting force.<sup>217</sup>

To demonstrate further Gorbachev's insincerity in fundamentally changing the system, it has been suggested that he was also using Western support to solve economic and strategic problems facing the empire in Central Europe. He was willing to make great gambles. Sanders points out that Gorbachev allegedly authorized poison gas, instead of tear gas, to be used on demonstrators in Georgia in 1988.<sup>218</sup> Although he advocated sympathy toward nationalism in the Baltics, he often reverted to veiled threats when directly faced with threats of succession. His strategy was such that he would use Central Europe as a means of creating a belt of states between Moscow and Western Europe that still had close communist political ties to Moscow, but that also "reflected degrees of liberalization and accommodation."<sup>219</sup> These states were used in "bait and switch" tactics to enlist Western economic aid and to decrease NATO readiness in these areas.<sup>220</sup>

The Soviet foreign policy outlook in the Gorbachev years was such that it entailed the nearly absolute predominance of domestic over foreign affairs and an attempt to redefine the nature of the international environment in which the Soviet Union would be free to focus its attention on its domestic, social and economic crisis. This does not stray very far from a more general pattern of Soviet foreign policy concerns. The profound

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid. p. 197.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. p. 200.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. p. 202.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.



influence of domestic problems on Soviet foreign policy is a recurring theme throughout Soviet history from Lenin to Gorbachev. The “new thinking” was strictly political; it was not ideological or conceptual. It reflected the political priorities of Gorbachev to provide a more secure environment for his long term goals.<sup>221</sup> He took advantage of superpower rapprochement and the knowledge that American leaders’ domestic success was tied to their success in dealing with Moscow. This created an international environment which gave him room and time to maneuver and get his domestic affairs in order.

There is some question as to whether Gorbachev intended this new rapprochement with the West to have any lasting effect or influence on Soviet society. He believed that the way to lift pressure on the Soviet Union in the short term was through multilateral security cooperation with the West, but it is evident that he had no long term plans for alliance with the West. Alexei Arbatov cites four deficiencies in the new thinking about foreign policy that illustrate Moscow’s “quick fix” mentality: The first indicator was that Gorbachev failed to articulate Russia’s national interests in order to illustrate a “scaled down version of neo-imperialism” that would embrace his new thinking.<sup>222</sup>

Second, there was a failure to recognize that Russia’s priority following the disintegration of the empire was not relations with the United States. Top priority should

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<sup>221</sup> Lynch, *op cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>222</sup> Arbatov in Pelton-Johnson, Teresa, and Miller, Steven E. eds., Russian Security After the Cold War: Seven Views From Moscow. Washington: Brassey’s 1994. p. 11.

have been given to Moscow's former allies.<sup>223</sup> Gorbachev, like his successor, had a tendency to look Westward when defining or guaranteeing security.

The third deficiency in Gorbachev's foreign policy, according to Arbatov, was revealed in the widespread understanding that Russia was willing to concede to the United Nations on matters involving Russia's former spheres of influence. The Western position was at times unquestioningly given priority and such capitulation was not endorsed at home. The lack of domestic support naturally led to a fourth problem. The decision making pattern with respect to foreign policy was secretive and highly irregular. Decision makers too often rejected outside advice from academia, parliament and the newly awakened public. In other words, there was no solid domestic political base for foreign policy.<sup>224</sup>

Under Gorbachev, many Soviet republics had some state-like attributes. These were mostly for the purposes of national assertion against Moscow. Moscow continued to run the foreign affairs of the union as if the Soviet Union was still a single unified state. Gorbachev never sought the approval of the republics for his foreign policy. Dmitri Rurikov claims that "rights of the republics in the area of foreign policy were primarily decorative and declarative."<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>225</sup> Rurikov in Pelton-Johnson and Miller, op cit., p. 126.

Gorbachev's unwillingness to relinquish control demonstrated his lack of commitment to his ideas of "new thinking." It would be impossible for his aims to be carried out without some commitment to democratic principles. If he expected to introduce only those ideas borrowed from democratic principles that suited his purposes and reject those that were threatening to him, he was not truly "open" and was doomed to failure. Rurikov claimed that "already in 1989 it was clear that Gorbachev was neither willing nor able to travel the path of deep and radical reform."<sup>226</sup> It has been suggested that some remnants of the political and economic foundations of socialism remained. Perestroika proved only to intensify the social and economic ills of a system in crisis. The more the CPSU dug in its heels, determined to retain its leading role in society, the less practical it was to expect swift and comprehensive reform. Socialism as a system was "incapable of fundamentally changing itself of its own will."<sup>227</sup> It was upon this realization that the democratic reformers set about attempting to revolutionize the system and institute further democratic reform following free and democratic elections.<sup>228</sup> Using the mandate they received in the 1990 parliamentary elections, the democrats, led by Yeltsin, proceeded to dismantle the old order and attempted to create a new one in its place.

Throughout his tenure, Gorbachev continued to advocate socialism claiming that it could sustain the kind of reform that was necessary. He claimed that,

communism originated and exists in the interests of man and his freedom in order to defend rights and justice on earth...(it) has tremendous potential for humanitarianism.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid. p. 129.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. p. 130.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. p. 141.

Christopher Smart points out several contradictions inherent in the Soviet political system throughout the near seven decades of its existence. Based on Marxist-Leninist ideology, the U.S.S.R. vowed to lead the international transformation to socialism and to smash the “doomed structures of imperialist powers” in the process. At the same time, they sought to preserve the great power traditions of Czarist Russia thereby compelling them to manage the system which they were bound to destroy. Did Gorbachev seek to erase these contradictions? Arguably he sought better to manage such contradictions, not to eradicate them. He saw that the best way to avoid playing both rebel and establishmentarian was to downplay his role as establishmentarian, which was a major part of communist party doctrine, and to highlight his role as reformer.<sup>230</sup> The argument can be made that his intention was not radical change, but to promote the image of change. As Smart claims, image was everything in Soviet politics and Gorbachev understood this. A change in his image would go far toward improving relations with the West thereby reducing periods of extreme weakness in the Soviet Union.<sup>231</sup>

While retaining elements of both the Marxist-Leninist and the great power traditions, Gorbachev set forth a new way of thinking that would allow him to design his own conceptions of international politics that could even be taught to observers. This strategy was such that it would “liberate the regime from the contradictory restraints of traditional Soviet roles...while at the same time bolster its posture.”<sup>232</sup> The image of the

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<sup>230</sup> Smart, *op cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

U.S.S.R as a country undergoing profound social and political change allowed Gorbachev to emphasize a new role for the Soviet Union in the international system. With Gorbachev came a new emphasis on military and security policy. The Soviet Union sought to join a new security environment which emphasized collaboration rather than military confrontation.<sup>233</sup>

The notion of security was growing more and more complex. There was a kind of “demilitarization” of international security which saw nations cooperate to consider other factors influencing security such as economic, demographic and environmental problems.<sup>234</sup> Until the Gorbachev era, definitions of national security were intensely militarized. Academics and the civilian establishment were prevented from engaging in dialogue about national security. The active involvement of civilians in military affairs began to grow under Gorbachev to mirror the trends in the West.

When Gorbachev began his foreign policy revolution, driven by domestic necessity, he thought he was renovating and modernizing a superpower’s foreign policy. He had no idea that what he had started would revolutionize the prevailing international order. He had little time to deal with the real consequences of his reforms or to plan the policies of a regional power. His “new thinking” began to take control of the entire system and in fact grew to become larger than its creator. The deepening social crisis that

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<sup>233</sup> Volk in Aron, Leon and Jensen, Kenneth M. eds., The Emergence of Russian Foreign Policy. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994. p. 196.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

followed served to disarm and dissolve the regime. The very new programs that he had introduced eventually led to his downfall.

The Soviet Union would crumble from the intense pressure of the new society that Gorbachev had created. Russia was no longer a superpower and relations with the West had been fruitful to the extent that Gorbachev had calculated. The opening up of society and the introduction of democratic-style reforms had whet the appetite of many Russian political elites and the push for stronger, more comprehensive reform was growing. Russia looked as though it would fashion itself in the Western likeness. Any successor to Gorbachev would have no other short term option but to continue to implement his predecessor's "helter skelter attempts to prop up the system."<sup>235</sup> Gorbachev's successor would have some serious decisions to make in a short period of time.

Following the Cold War, the Soviet Union was dismantled and Russia assumed whatever authority was left over from the communist empire. Moscow then possessed a significantly reduced land mass from which it could project its power on the rest of the world. Further, with its former republics gaining independence, what were formerly matters between cities such as Moscow and Kiev became matters of international politics.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Sanders, op cit., p. 192.

<sup>236</sup> Holloway, David and Naimark, Norman, eds., Reexamining the Soviet Experience. Boulder: Westview Press, 1996. p. 198.

The years following the demise of the Soviet Union have been characterized by internal economic decline, high inflation, rising crime rates, ecological disasters, bureaucratic conflicts and the rising nationalism of Russia's ethnic minorities. As a result, little attention has been paid to foreign policy. Further, Russia has inherited a tremendous arsenal of thermonuclear weapons and long range delivery vehicles. This, it has been argued, will likely play a significant role in Russia's future if its political system stabilizes. Should the political system stabilize, then nuclear assets will play a much larger role than they now do in determining Russia's place in the international system.

Throughout the Communist era, foreign policy, at least to some degree, reflected the priorities of communist ideology. In contrast to ideologically driven priorities, William Zimmerman predicts that the post-Soviet foreign policy process will provide an example of issue-determined politics. An issue driven agenda can be open to specific interests. The failure to arrive at a definition of the national interest with respect to foreign policy can be seen to indicate that post-Soviet Moscow lacks a new, fundamentally distinct national interest different from the Soviet era.

Much of the difference between Soviet and Russian foreign policy stems from the changing capabilities in both systems. Certainly Russia's inability to afford a major arms competition with the United States has had a great impact on its change in policy toward the West. Gone are the days of Moscow as the nucleus of a world superpower. Russia must now focus its attention on what is *possible* as opposed to simply what is *desired*.

The challenges that need to be met in Russia are not just threats to territorial integrity and military security, but they run deeper and involve fundamental questions of national identity. “What is Russia? What kind of state can Russians expect to live in? What is Russia’s role in the international system?”<sup>237</sup> In other democracies, some of the bigger questions are addressed in a constitution. The new Russian constitution needs to be updated to reflect the changes in society in accordance with democracy and the rule of law. What exists is somewhat of a circular problem. Volk claims that without definite solutions to these problems, domestic, social and economic instability accelerate and prevent the kind of internal climate conducive to making fundamental state decisions about policy.<sup>238</sup>

In the aftermath of the failed 1991 coup and the fall of the Soviet empire, Russia appeared poised to embrace its democratic destiny. Yeltsin led the democrats to commit their efforts to a federation in which civil liberties would be protected by a new constitution and a market economy would be fully introduced into Russian society.<sup>239</sup> Yeltsin promised continued demilitarization, a decentralization of power and the independence of the Russian Federation and the former Soviet republics. He vowed to set about overcoming the legacy of the Cold War and forming an alliance with the West in which Russia and the West could jointly address global issues.

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<sup>237</sup> Volk op cit., p. 201.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Lapidus, Gail ed., The New Russia: Troubled Transformation. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995. p. 1.



Gail Lapidus claims that within two years these expectations for a new Russia were shattered.<sup>240</sup> The new fledgling democratic institutions failed to address the political, economic and social deadlock they were designed to cure. There was growing hostility to reform and privatization as a result of the injustice and corruption that went hand in hand with democracy. The “era of romantic reform” was over.<sup>241</sup> Not surprisingly, Russian foreign policy toward the West began to change as Russian-American relations grew cooler. The political and psychological trauma caused by the fall of the Soviet Empire made it exceedingly difficult to craft any coherent policies of reform that would please everyone. The democrats were blamed for the domestic crisis and also for the disintegration of the Soviet state and its ramifications at home and abroad.

Yeltsin began his revolutionary liberal reforms from above in a style similar to many authoritarian leaders. He relied on the “administrative apparatus of the *ancien regime* to implement his program”<sup>242</sup> instead of going to the people. His “revolution from above” was in keeping with Soviet tradition and resembled Gorbachev’s attempts at reform. Yeltsin used his own charisma to personalize the political process and he still relied on the vertical “system of presidential power to implement his policies; and improved relations with the West in the hope that a new Marshall Plan would rescue the country.”<sup>243</sup> Like Gorbachev, Yeltsin lacked a carefully constructed blueprint for reform.

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Shevtsova in Lapidus, op cit., p. 9.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

Yeltsin did intend to abolish the old system of communism and to obliterate the old power structures and the state that supported them, and in their place build entirely new institutions. Shevtsova claims that this desire to destroy and rebuild is what sets Yeltsin apart from Gorbachev. Yeltsin's unqualified failure however, was similar to Gorbachev's in that he was unable to break with the old style of governance; a mentality he learned as a communist *apparatchik*.<sup>244</sup> He had a tendency to purge supporters when it served his political interests, which made it impossible to stress stable policy-making, build alliances, or create a strong power base. His revolutionary style was inconsistent and contradictory and he would often make a breakthrough on one issue at the expense of another. He would engage in haggling over details and would make sudden and erratic concessions. Essentially, Yeltsin failed to meet the challenges that he himself had set. He abandoned political reform in late 1991 and he failed to present society with a clear agenda for domestic change, which only deepened the economic, social and political crisis in Russia.<sup>245</sup>

Now this is not to say that Yeltsin is an unquestionable failure. Under Yeltsin, society became more comfortable with democratic principles; he has consolidated Russia's statehood; he took steps toward marketization and he kept extreme elements from triumphing. He, in many cases, provided the stabilizing element in a fragile new society.<sup>246</sup> In the larger picture, however, Yeltsin had accumulated many failures. When the need for reform was most acute, he had no clear idea of how to proceed. He governed with no

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

strategic plan and the decision making process was conducted largely by intuition, often reacting to an issue when it was too late. Shevtsova identifies his greatest failure to be his poor timing. He failed to construct a new political system immediately after the coup, allowing time for a political standoff to emerge, and created the domestic political nightmare he would face in the years to come.<sup>247</sup> To Yeltsin's misfortune and to the misfortune of those in his inner circle, schooling in the traditional Soviet paradigm of domination left the political elite in a communist mind-set that was difficult to shake.

Alexander Dallin argues that the democrats never stood a chance in Russia. He claims there were few democrats surrounding Gorbachev, who himself was a communist. Even under Yeltsin, who appeared democratic at first, the democrats never really stood a chance. Revolutionary liberalism was unable to solve Russia's problems both because of the personalities of its leaders and because it failed to offer a way in which the economic and political goals of the state could be realized. Yeltsin conducted much of his earlier decision making on the basis of two important myths. The first was that Russia could actually transcend the vast space between socialist authoritarianism and capitalist democracy in a single bound. Second, he believed, as did Gorbachev, that he could rely on the United States for help.

Dallin recalls that for decades communist party *apparatchiks* dotted the political and economic landscape and were unlikely to undergo rapid ideological change simply because the president said so. Dallin asks, "did anyone really believe that they (the

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

propaganda machine), would, or could, overnight change their convictions, their mind-sets, or even their style of work?"<sup>248</sup> He claims that party officials, plant managers and chairpersons on collective farms had many years of experience working within the system which taught them how to keep quiet when they disagreed with official policy. Dallin claims that it was astounding the extent to which business continued to operate as it had always done. Little had changed - the regime was never truly overthrown. He claims that the democrats' fatal flaw was that "they imagined that they had taken (real) power in Russia after the coup."<sup>249</sup> This is not to say that a full democratic sweep of the system was impossible, but Yeltsin's lack of dedication to his public principles saw him miss the boat. His unwillingness to complete the revolution foreshadowed the failure of democracy in Russia and it appears there is no way to get it back.

Jonathan Steele claims that the events of 1991 were a turning point, breaking the continuity of the old system, but not enough to lead the country unequivocally on the path to democracy.<sup>250</sup> After all, Russia had withstood many "revolutions from above" before which ended in failure and the democratic reforms would be no different. He says that in order to be serious about instituting democracy there is more required than simply "an independent press, a system of law, regular elections, a code of ethics for public servants, a full-time parliament, an accountable executive and organized political parties."<sup>251</sup> He claims that what was required, and what had indeed been missing under Gorbachev and

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<sup>248</sup> Dallin in Lapidus, op cit., p. 247.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Steele, Jonathan, Eternal Russia: Yeltsin, Gorbachev, and the Mirage of Democracy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994. p. xii.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. p. xiii.

Yeltsin, was “the fabric of consensus, the notion of solidarity, the feeling that the individual opinion matters, or, to put it at its most basic, self-confidence and social optimism.”<sup>252</sup>

Steele claims that the Yeltsin revolution was little more than “surface stirring” and that the dramatic attempt at upheaval certainly transformed many government institutions, but it failed to address the fundamental problems in Russia. The changes were significant on the surface; Soviet institutions had disappeared, the communist party was marginalized, the KGB was dismantled. However the changes did not go deep enough to create a revolution of *behaviour*. Steele asserts that true revolutions are about power and property and their transfer from the hands of the old elite and into the arms of the new. This did not happen under Gorbachev and it hardly happened under Yeltsin. There was no significant redistribution of power. Even in early 1994 following the first multi-party parliamentary elections, many observed that Russia was already more authoritarian.<sup>253</sup> Steele blames Gorbachev for his role in this hesitant process. In spite of his relative success in removing repressive institutions, he nonetheless failed in reforming Soviet society through a reformed communist party.<sup>254</sup>

After the 1991 coup many in Russia, and especially in the West, had high hopes for democracy. However no society can escape its own traditions. Democracy in Russia is weak due to the age-old culture of authoritarianism which Yeltsin could never quite shake.

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<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.* p. xvi.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.* p. xvii.

The tragedy for Russia's democrats is that in the first two years after the collapse of communism they seemed unable to encourage pluralism, tolerance and the search for compromise. Without these values it was questionable whether Russia would ever evolve toward genuine democracy.<sup>255</sup> The roots of democracy do not run very deep in Russia. Were the reforms *intentionally* democratic? Is the new game really democracy? Some have argued that the changes were a result of an elite driven revolt *against* the traditional trappings of communism, but were not necessarily *for* any particular new idea.<sup>256</sup>

Presently, in 1998, Russia is faced with the major task of choosing the direction of its foreign policy. Many changes have taken place in the past seven years that have left Moscow with many unanswered questions, the most important of which is: what is Russia's new role in the international system? There is consistent debate within Russia about how the country should proceed in the post-Cold War era and how Russia should maintain its security. Should Russia ally itself with Western powers, tying its security interests to those of its former adversaries or should it "strike out" on its own as an independent great power?

Yeltsin's early years in office, with respect to foreign policy, can be defined as increasingly disorganized, issuing often unintentional, unapproved and uncoordinated signals on international matters. The Communist Party was no longer in place but it appeared that with it went the tight discipline and organization of the Soviet years.

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid. p. 403.

<sup>256</sup> Lowenhardt, John, The Reincarnation of Russia: Struggling with the Legacy of Communism, 1990-1994. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. p. 146.

Yeltsin's primary task was to reinforce the legitimacy of his regime abroad at all cost. He saw that while Gorbachev had a great impact on relations with the West, there still existed lingering doubts about the Soviet Union's record abroad. Yeltsin saw that he had a chance to start fresh and he was able to use the emergence of a new Russian Federation under a pseudo-democracy to "convincingly begin from a clean slate."<sup>257</sup>

Yeltsin's foreign policy underwent a rather artful rhetorical evolution. While he inherited and continued Gorbachev's initiative in arms control negotiations with the United States, and while he advocated a "friendship alliance" with the Americans, he also stressed, through his foreign minister, the necessarily limited nature of the rapprochement with the West. Yeltsin added that if the West did not pay more careful and sensitive attention to Russia, Russian policy could turn nasty.<sup>258</sup>

Many arguments have been forwarded to explain the shift in foreign policy under Yeltsin. The most convincing of these arguments is the fact that Yeltsin and Kozyrev were biding their time until they could better afford a more assertive foreign policy, as they realized that the "Shevardnadze orientation" that they inherited would not sufficiently advance Russian interests.

The great debate within Russia has been that of Atlanticism vs. Eurasianism. Should Russia define its security in terms of its relations with the West or should the

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<sup>257</sup> Smart, *op cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.* p. 154.

Russian elite focus more on Russia's unique position between Europe, the Islamic world of Central Asia and the Pacific Rim countries? President Yeltsin attempted to bridge the gap between these two divergent trends in Russian security policy, thus perpetuating the view that he was indecisive and lacked control of policy making. However an attempt to combine the two approaches to security will likely continue to result in an emphasis on a multi-polar model of deterrence and on achieving strategic stability at both the global and regional levels.<sup>259</sup>

Security, based on nuclear and military-strategic issues, is now, in the post-Cold War world, complex and uncertain. Yeltsin has made it clear, as did Gorbachev, that Russia sees cooperation with the U.S. on some level, essential for determining new methods of collective global security that suit all parties. However, on the other hand, Alexei Arbatov, Director of the Center for Geopolitical and Military Forecasts in Moscow, warned in 1994,

In spite of all the nice declarations by U.S. and Russian leaders in 1992-93 that the two no longer considered each other enemies but partners and perhaps even allies, the sober reality that many thousands of strategic nuclear weapons are still predominantly targeted on each other for at least 10-15 years into the future effectively precluded the possibility of any real military alliance between the two.<sup>260</sup>

Yeltsin's task was to redefine a set of interests that would advance Russia's international role, one that would answer the "deeper aspirations of Russian society."<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Tsyarkin in Lieberman, Sanford R. Powell, David E. and Terry, Sarah M. eds., The Soviet Empire Reconsidered. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994. p. 197.

<sup>260</sup> Arbatov in Pelton-Johnson and Miller op cit., p. 1.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid. p. 156.



Even with the apparent abolition of communist party control, there remained deeply ingrained notions of great power privilege and lingering traditions of imperial domination. Peter Boettke notes, even a few years into Yeltsin's rule, that Communist Party influence still permeated society - it was a large part of the social fabric of Russia.<sup>262</sup>

Robert Legvold warns, as he claims do others, that it is wise for the West to beware of the perils of the failure of a democratic-style transformation in Russia. Such failure could lead to a deepening crisis in the international system. The deciding influence will be within Russia itself. It is the only potential great power among Soviet successor states. While its current leaders acknowledge the reality and the legitimacy of independence for parts of the former empire, even they retain domineering habits of thought.<sup>263</sup> Russian leaders see themselves as *the* successor state, taking on the three hundred years of history with pride. They are unable to separate themselves from this conception. Legvold explains that this can be seen in many instances "from the pride with which Yeltsin moved into Gorbachev's spacious Kremlin offices to the ease with which the General Staff imagines itself in command of Russia's armies."<sup>264</sup>

Naturally, as Russia sees itself as the only emerging great power from the wreckage of the Soviet Union, it has adopted a parent role toward its former republics, now on their own in the international arena. Russia does have a stake in their success or

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<sup>262</sup> Boettke, *op cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>263</sup> Colton, Timothy and Legvold, Robert, After the Soviet Union. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992. p. 171.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

failure and in their separate relations with the West. Legvold warns that the West should tread lightly on this ground to avoid waking the sleeping giant of Russian hegemony. He also warns that a cleverly engineered international environment will serve to ensure that the democratic process in the former U.S.S.R. does not go wildly astray.<sup>265</sup>

The current international climate is incredibly fragile. Andrew Pierre and Dmitri Trenin claim that the chief reason for this fragility is that there is an absence, seven years into the post-cold War period, of a viable peace settlement.<sup>266</sup> The present European security framework does not exclude Russia, but at the same time it does not endeavor to embrace Russia either. The creation of a Western security framework that includes Russia has been a slow and unsuccessful process, failing to become institutionalized.<sup>267</sup> Pierre and Trenin claim that “mutual frustration works to perpetuate mistrust, and a political deterioration resulting in an alienated Russia is now a possibility. For these reasons, the enlargement issue has become the first major crisis in Russian-Western relations since the Cold War ended.”<sup>268</sup>

Many Russian analysts have warned that if the West continues blatantly to disregard Russia’s views on expansion and if Russia is made to feel as though it has no influence in Eastern Europe, then “Russia could take certain steps to advance its own

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Pierre, Andrew J., and Trenin, Dmitri, *Developing NATO-Russian Relations*. Survival, Vol. 39 No. 1, Spring 1997, p. 7.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid. pp. 7-8.

interests.”<sup>269</sup> He claims that if Russia is provoked it will defend its interests, which, he warns, could result in stiff politics, a new division of Europe and an intensification of mistrust and suspicion. If the U.S. keeps treading on Russian territory, as they have, Russia and other CIS countries may have to form a tighter military union in order to fortify themselves against the West. This warning has been common in much recent Russian dialogue. This demonstrates a possible return to old ways, a move away from the new rapprochement with the West, and a re-emergence of the old posturing style of détente.

From 1985 to the present, Russian foreign policy has been reactive in nature, due to the massive social, political and economic transformation of Russian society. Now, in 1998, Russia, though still struggling, is growing stronger and it is difficult to predict its capacity in ten years. To safeguard future peace, the West must take Russia’s present concerns seriously so as to facilitate a U.S.- Russian rapprochement well into the next century.

Regardless of efforts toward reducing nuclear arsenals and regardless of the efforts of Washington and Moscow toward arms control and reduction, there will always exist a nuclear reality. Both may assert that nuclear weapons no longer play a role in their relationship, however it is impossible to deny or erase the fact that “the other power is the only one in the world in possession of the material capability to endanger at will one’s own

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<sup>269</sup> Gareev, Makhmut, *NATO Expansion: Security Aspects*. International Affairs, Vol. 42 No. 3. 1996, p. 145.

political survival,” and this fact will continue to haunt the relationship.<sup>270</sup> As long as both states possess such capability, their relationship, by strategic imperative, will always be based on mutual deterrence, which, as Arbatov argues, is not a solid foundation on which to build a strategic partnership, nor an alliance.<sup>271</sup>

As was mentioned earlier, there has been no major break in policy with respect to security. Russia continues to look Westward for its threats to security. Fear of NATO is bipartisan in Russia, which indicates that while Russia acknowledges the importance of cooperative security in the post-Cold War environment, they still have an inherent fear and suspicion of the United States. This notion begs attention. If Russia were truly seeking democracy, and this was a monolithic desire fundamentally to change the system, Russia would likely be less suspicious of the West than it is. Democracies have little reason to feel threatened by each other with respect to security. But Russia does. Gorbachev sought little more than a renewed *détente* and the West can expect no more from Yeltsin. The break in Cold War tensions was simply a respite, and relations now between Russia and the West may possibly point to no more than a peaceful rapprochement between the former superpowers.

The foundation for democracy was never laid in Moscow, neither by Gorbachev, nor by Yeltsin, despite their voiced intentions. The dedication to real systemic change has been noticeably absent from Yeltsin’s administration and it is questionable that it will ever

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<sup>270</sup> Arbatov in Pelton-Johnson and Miller, *op cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22.

be present. It was internal development needs that drove external relations under both Gorbachev and Yeltsin. Tsyarkin predicts that as Russia sorts out its domestic problems, and begins to redefine its national interests, it might increasingly rely on its own resources, military, as well as political, outside a framework of international organizations and *this* is likely to become an integral element of its national security policy.<sup>272</sup> It is within the current Russian struggle to define itself that much of the international climate in the 21st century will be determined.

As Richard Nixon once said, shortly before his death, “if democracy fails in Russia, it will bring a despotism whose imperial nature could be far more threatening than the old communism.”<sup>273</sup> In time the flowers will bloom in Russia again and the West must seek to secure a lasting peace with the now sleeping giant of Russian power.

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<sup>272</sup> Tsyarkin, op cit.,p. 204.

<sup>273</sup> Colton and Legvold, op cit., p. 188.

## CONCLUSION

The year is now A.B.8 (After Bipolarity).<sup>274</sup> The collapse of the Soviet state and the subsequent end of the Cold War have seen a re-characterization of the international dynamic. A new international environment emerged with the wreckage of the Soviet Union; one which saw the erosion of many old values and a re-calibration of new definitions of security and the means to achieve it. In many cases, enemies have become partners and East and West have traded competition for cooperation in formerly unimaginable ways.

For many, it appears that democracy has emerged victorious in the new international system, its primary adversary having surrendered to democracy's massive appeals. While this seems to be true for the most part, it is important to be reminded that the semblance of democracy in Russia happened almost by accident. When Gorbachev began his "new thinking" revolution in 1985, he did so with the understanding that he would transform the domestic structure and foreign policy of a communist superpower. The events that followed were, in many cases, mostly not of his choosing.

The Soviet Union crumbled under the weight of its own social, political and economic ills and since 1991, Russia has struggled to get back on its feet. Whether the answer to these internal problems is full blown democracy remains to be seen. However it

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<sup>274</sup> Joffe, Joseph, *How America Does It. Foreign Affairs*. Vol.76, No.5. Sept/Oct 1997. p.13.

is certain that, for now, amicable relations with the West are necessary in order to allow Russia to focus its attention inward. It is because of this need to address domestic priorities that Russia's foreign policy has been inconsistent.

Under Gorbachev, foreign policy was seen to be the vehicle which Moscow used to secure good relations with the West. Gorbachev hoped that democratic-style reforms would be just what the Soviet Union needed to improve its domestic situation as well as to gain favor with the West. Certainly an end to the superpower competition with respect to military capability bought Gorbachev time to focus attention and resources inward in order to address the ills of the failing Soviet economy. He also believed, as did his successor, that good relations with the West would see Moscow as the recipient of Western favor, preferably in the form of resource transfers. Prior to 1985, the Soviet government allocated a huge percentage of the country's resources to developing and expanding its military capability. As it turned out, the emphasis on defence undermined the economy and the cohesion of society. The cost of the reprieve from East-West competition was seen by Gorbachev to be necessary in order to improve the Soviet system.

The cost of this reprieve from East-West competition however, was much higher than Gorbachev ever dreamed. Since the dramatic and unpredictable collapse of the Soviet Empire, Russia now occupies 4/5 of the territory of the Soviet Union and has 1/2 the population. Yeltsin must now deal with these difficult new realities in an attempt to reconcile Russia's reduced influence in the international system with its continued status as

a great nuclear power. Whether or not democracy will be allowed fully to flourish in Russia remains to be seen, however there are continuities that can be seen throughout both Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's governments that continue to effect the East-West dynamic at present.

These continuities lie at the heart of this thesis. There appears to be a general consensus that the fall of the Soviet Union marked a large *discontinuity* in Russian domestic political life and also with respect to Russia's relationship with the rest of the world. Much has been written about Russia since its collapse with particular emphasis on new problems. Many of the important works that examine late Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev and post-Soviet foreign policy under Yeltsin do so with a sense of new departure and with a great deal of optimism about George Bush's promise of a new world order.

This thesis reflects a comprehensive review of recent literature regarding the events surrounding Gorbachev's foreign policy reforms and Yeltsin's subsequent continuation of democratic-style reform in Russia. Much of this literature stresses the theme of discontinuity and focuses less on the theme of continuity.

The emphases in recent literature can be well illustrated by several of the most influential of these works. Richard Sakwa, in his important book, Gorbachev and His Reforms, addressed the nature and significance of the changes that took place under Gorbachev.<sup>275</sup> Sakwa focused on the impetus for change in Gorbachev's early years and

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<sup>275</sup> See Sakwa, Richard, Gorbachev and His Reforms. New York: Prentice Hall, 1990.



the steps toward democratic-style reform in the Soviet Union. While he was careful to stress that under Gorbachev history did not end, it merely turned a new page, his major focus remained on Gorbachev's reforms and the decisive impact they had on the Russian system.

Written several years after Sakwa, and with the benefit of observing the early years of the Russian Federation, the works of Jonathan Steele,<sup>276</sup> Saikal and Maley,<sup>277</sup> and Leszek Buszynski<sup>278</sup> examine Russia's foreign policy and its potential direction. While all are careful to note the disorientation and uncertainty inherent in Russian policy making, they tend to focus on the changes present in the current Russian system as well as new challenges facing Russia's post-Communist, democratic-style political system.

The above mentioned analyses are important to a comprehensive understanding of Russian foreign policy and the challenges it will face in the future. However these works have left room for a somewhat different emphasis. This thesis represents a small part of the ongoing effort to balance these assessments. More work likely can and will be done on the subject as many primary documents continue to become available.

The changes that have taken place in the Soviet Union and later in Russia have been monumental and they deserve a great deal of attention. This thesis complements the

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<sup>276</sup> See Steele, Jonathan, Eternal Russia: Yeltsin, Gorbachev and the Mirage of Democracy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

<sup>277</sup> See Saikal, Amin and Maley, William, eds., Russia in Search of Its Future. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

<sup>278</sup> See Buszynski, Leszek, Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War. Connecticut: Praeger, 1996.

existing work by testing the proposition that existing *continuities* between the Soviet and the Russian systems and their respective policies cannot be safely overlooked in an evaluation of Russia's emerging relations with its former friends and new partners. This thesis, while acknowledging very important discontinuities, complements the existing work.

As the post-Cold War dust settles and the promise of Mr. Bush's new world order fades, one becomes increasingly aware of new dangers that have presented themselves. Now, in 1998, there are a number of continuities with respect to Russian values and attitudes that will likely remain as challenges for Russia's neighbors and partners.

The continuities between Gorbachev and Yeltsin have been borne out of the main arguments of this thesis as it has been developed in the past four chapters. The first three chapters examined the domestic situation in the Soviet Union and subsequently in Russia. The arguments stressed the continuity of unresolved economic problems that permeated Soviet society immediately prior to Gorbachev and which face Yeltsin today. While this thesis was a study of foreign policy, it underlined the important understanding that the domestic sources of foreign policy are the most decisive. No state's foreign policy is immune to domestic pressures and Russia's is no exception.

The roots of the main argument of the thesis began with a discussion of the factors leading to Gorbachev's "new thinking." Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union at

a time when the country was in social, political and economic turmoil. Despite détente, Brezhnev's foreign policy was incredibly expensive as the arms programme was given top priority in a drastic attempt to answer American superiority. Soviet society was already overburdened and the arms race placed an even further strain on the economy. Ironically, a good bilateral relationship was important to Brezhnev, however he remained intent on expanding Soviet influence. It was largely these conflicting messages that justified Reagan's military programme. Brezhnev's successors, Andropov and Chernenko, did little to improve on the already deepening crisis at home. Gorbachev inherited a growing malaise exacerbated by a general weakness at the core of Soviet society.

When Gorbachev took power, he was saddled with a downward spiraling economy in which sustained competition with the West would be impossible. The Soviet economy was backward and there was little technological innovation. The costs of supporting the Empire were growing increasingly prohibitive and Gorbachev had little choice but to address these concerns. He symbolized the desire for change and progress in the Soviet Union and he promised to lead his country into a new era of hope and to end stagnation and decline.

Crucial to an appreciation of the direction of Gorbachev's reforms, is to keep in mind that he abandoned the directive/ideological approach to policy making and he adopted a management style approach to Soviet problems. This shift had a direct impact on East-West relations and opened the door to cooperation. The dramatic quality which

East-West relations suddenly acquired should not blind one to the fact that this new Western policy was firmly rooted in the economic imperatives of Gorbachev's domestic reform programme. The reforms are not yet over.

Yeltsin's struggle with his inheritance from Gorbachev began in January 1992 as Yeltsin began democratic-style reforms that went even further toward establishing a market economy than any of Gorbachev's proposals. Yeltsin continued to operate under many of the same assumptions as Gorbachev, the most significant, and the most integral to this thesis being the usefulness of strong relations with the West to forge important economic and political partnerships. However Yeltsin's foreign policy has arguably been less consistent than Gorbachev's. There is deep irony here. One of the consequences of the democratization of Russia has been to expose Russia to strong anti-Western undercurrents. Yeltsin's pro-Western stance grew hot and cold at the hint of domestic pressure. This was a factor with which Gorbachev never had to deal. Given Russia's new "democracy," Yeltsin had to consider domestic political pressure in the formulation of policy. Public opinion has made it increasingly difficult for him to maintain a partnership with the West. Although Russia seems to be growing more and more stable, it must be remembered that it is perhaps more vulnerable to domestic political changes and public opinion than was the former Soviet Union. The West must assist Russia where possible and attempt to be sympathetic to Russia's domestic political dilemma in order to avoid another historic and dramatic shift in Moscow's foreign policy orientation. The West has a new problem, one not imagined under the old Soviet system. It must convince the Russian

population and even members of the Duma that partnership with the West is in Russia's best interest.

The continuing, though diminished presence of Cold War attitudes has led to the inability of Washington and Moscow to reach agreement on a number of foreign policy issues, most notably NATO expansion, and more recently, the policies regarding Iraq. This indicates perhaps that the new relationship between the former superpowers is little more than a temporary respite from the tensions of the former adversarial relationship. This relaxing of tensions is certainly in Russia's best interest as it continues to try to put its domestic situation back in order.

What can be expected with respect to East-West relations in the future? Perhaps it is too soon to tell. Russia's opposition to and subsequent grudging acceptance of NATO expansion indicates that a partnership between East and West is precarious. While it is quite legitimate to remain positive about the potential for good relations in the future, there is cause for caution.

What emerges from the thesis is that three claims can be made with certainty. The first is that Russia will continue to seek Western economic support. Russia, just as much as the former Soviet Union, relies on transfers of resources and technology from the West. Without this political and economic link to the West, Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's reforms may never become a reality.

Just as during Gorbachev's era, it would now be prudent for the West to pay attention to Russian sensitivities in the Duma, the army and in society or they may risk throwing the new East-West détente into distress. Russia will not be down forever and it is incumbent upon the West to recognize this. Russia will continue to be a great nuclear power - this fact will not change. The West must ensure that when Russia finally does get its domestic affairs in order and begins to grow stronger, that it does not do so in an environment that has been hostile and unsupportive. It must be stressed that Russia is not, and may never be, a known quantity.

Third, and quite closely linked with the second point, is the fact that Russia has made it clear that it wants to be included in a new, revamped European security architecture. The expansion of NATO is greeted in Moscow with fear, hostility, and, as Moscow has little choice now, grudging acquiescence. The West must try to avoid marginalizing Russia and must grant it a certain degree of deserved influence in matters of European security. If it does not, the new détente may grow more unstable than it already is. Ironically, in the Gorbachev period, the West had less difficulty than it now seems to have in including Russia in the new security architecture.

In the West's struggle to define its security in a world without an enemy, it must treat its former adversary carefully so as not to push Russia into taking this role once again. Certainly the end of the Cold War is cause for optimism, but it is prudent for the

West to proceed carefully with respect to Russia. Many believe Russia remains, as the Soviet Union was once described by Winston Churchill, "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."<sup>279</sup>

Perhaps both the nationalists' and the communists' strong showings in the 1993 elections to the Russian State Duma did not go far enough to awake the world from its "post-Cold War complacency."<sup>280</sup> Perhaps it will take Yeltsin's misplaced comments about an Iraqi invasion inspiring a Third World War to make the West remember that they cannot take Russia for granted. Yeltsin may appear to be pro-Western in his current foreign policy orientation, but there is no guarantee as to how much longer he will be in power. Public opinion, as in any democracy, is a huge factor in policy making and there is a real public resentment of the West in Russia today. It is interesting that the system has not yet succumbed to these domestic pressures. Arguably this is due to the Russian government's continuous imposition of stiff controls on the negative urges of the population. It is worthwhile to point out that if Russian society was truly seeking democracy in the fullest sense, it would likely fear the West less than it does. Democracies do not usually fear other democracies. This supports the idea put forth in the thesis that the post-Cold War era is a *respite* from the tensions of the Cold War, but it cannot be relied upon to provide evidence of real systemic change. It is impossible to predict the future. In time the flowers will bloom in Russia again - their color has yet to be determined.

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<sup>279</sup> Malcolm, Neil, *The New Russian Foreign Policy*. The World Today, February 1994, p. 28.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

There is still a great deal more that must be done with respect to the study of East-West relations in the future. It is a very crucial period in international relations as the post-Cold War era is still in its infancy. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. warns that universal democracy will remain a struggle into the 21st Century and he predicts that if democracy fails to construct a humane, prosperous and peaceful world, it will again invite the rise of already existing alternative creeds, waiting on the sidelines to fly in the face of freedom. After all, democracy is only 200 years old. Schlesinger wonders “how deeply democracy has sunk roots in previously nondemocratic countries in the years since the collapse of totalitarian challenges.”<sup>281</sup> Perhaps democracy is no more than a brief part of history and will be unable successfully to confront those forces that threaten to “drive it onto the rocks.”<sup>282</sup> Only time will tell.

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<sup>281</sup> Schlesinger Jr., Arthur. *Has Democracy a Future?* Foreign Affairs. Vol.76. No.5. Sept/Oct 1997. p.4.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.* p.5.



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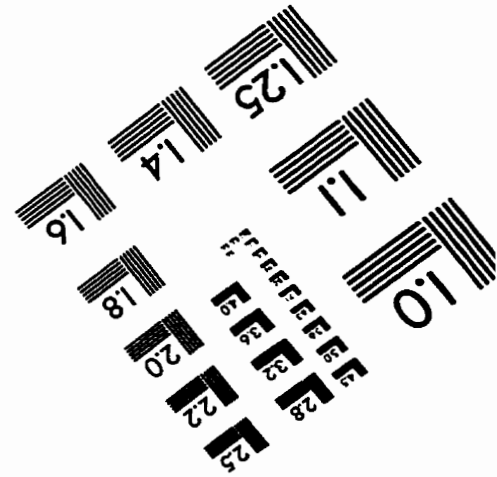
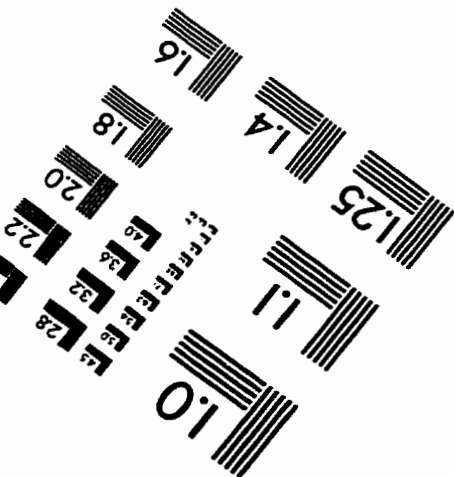
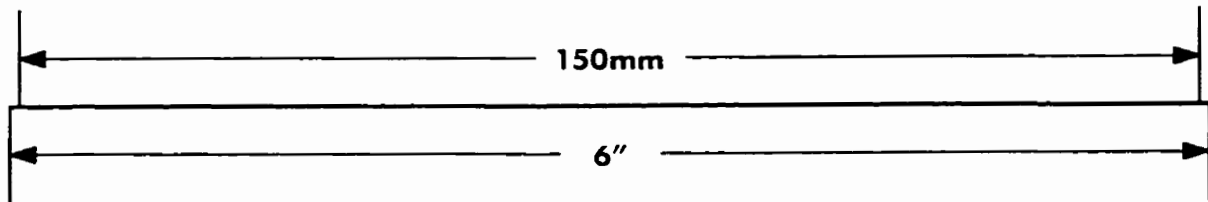
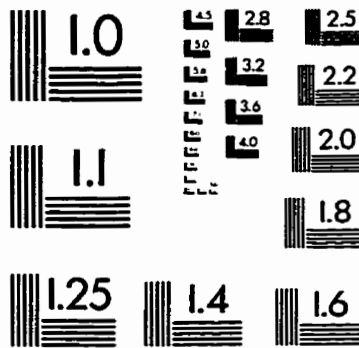
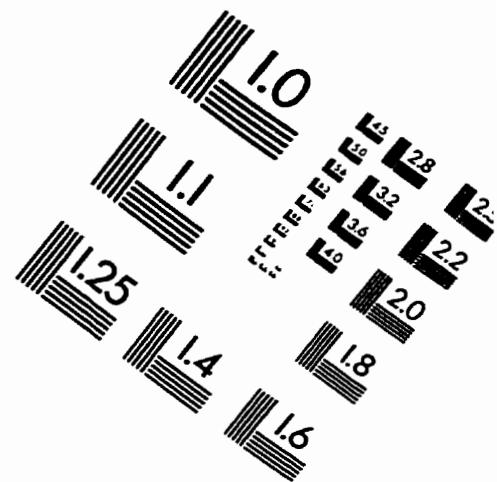
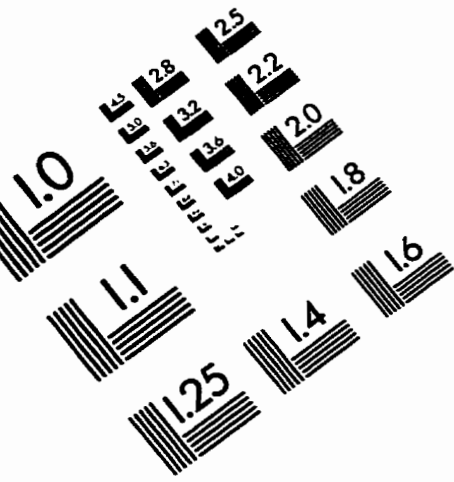
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