

Unraveling the Soviet Union: Gorbachev's Change in World View

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When Georgian film director Tengiz Abduladze showed the script of his film *Repentance* to then Georgian First Party Secretary Eduard Shevardnadze in 1981, the future Soviet foreign minister took on, as a personal mission, the struggle of getting permission for its production and then later for its release. The film, a surreal depiction of the evils of despotism and the moral need to confront the past, was a transparent allegory about Stalin and Stalinism. Shevardnadze's family, like those of many in the apparat, including Mikhail Gorbachev, had been ravaged by the purges, and he wanted to break the silence on this painful part of Soviet history. Shevardnadze pitched the film to Moscow saying that it was about "a moral and ethical problem."¹ Five years later, when he was battling for its release, he recounted the deep unease that pervaded the Politburo. Exhuming the Soviet past and questioning Stalin were perceived as threatening the system itself. This was so because, as Shevardnadze explained in his memoirs, "a public condemnation of the past threatened an inevitable break with its 'methods.'"²

Indeed, the break with past "methods"—the suffocating party and state controls, which spawned a fearful and browbeaten population; the lies about the past, or what Robert Conquest has aphoristically called "the psychological horrors of mass falsification" that buttressed those controls; and the maintenance of a society and economy in a state of virtual war-preparedness by perpetuating the threat of the enemy and fostering a siege mentality—is precisely what Gorbachev wanted to change. These "methods" were part of the norms and rules that defined Stalinist, and indeed Soviet, political practice. While the party and state controls of the economy and society were well suited for earlier, wartime operations and Stalin's industrialization effort, they had now brought the country to the brink of economic and political disaster, threatening the promise of an "enlightened socialist future." Gorbachev's intention was to eradicate the vestiges of Stalinism and bring the Soviet Union back to its Leninist roots by revitalizing the country economically and politically and breathing new life into the ideals of the Soviet Commu-

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nist Party. Stalinism was perceived as a corrosive force that could be removed, like barnacles on the hull of a ship. But Gorbachev did not anticipate that in removing the barnacles, he in fact would end up dismantling the ship.

Indeed, the radical nature of Gorbachev's reforms has been obfuscated by his much-vaunted slogan of *perestroika*. Translated as "restructuring," it was a politically correct term in the Soviet context and accurately reflected the type of reform that was considered necessary in the first two years of Gorbachev's rule. From his first days in power, Gorbachev sought to demilitarize the country. That was his chief objective and one that linked his domestic reforms to the successes of his foreign policy initiatives. The process, however, became progressively more radicalized as he came to understand the deeply embedded nature of Stalinism.

Gorbachev began his process of de-Stalinization by gradually changing the Soviet world view as it was shaped by the language of Marxism-Leninism. This can best be understood by viewing ideology not merely as a reference for political discourse, but as political discourse itself.³ Ideological concepts and terminology define identities and relationship and constitute the very political practices to which they give expression. Writing that politics is a linguistically constituted activity, William E. Connolly observed that "the language of politics is not a neutral medium that conveys ideas independently formed; it is an institutional structure of meanings that channels political thought and action in certain directions."⁴

Although the impact and role of ideology in the Soviet Union continue to be debated, with some scholars still dismissing it as part of an outdated "traditional approach,"⁵ other recent works on the period give greater weight to it. John Lewis Gaddis, in his recent study on the cold war, which relies extensively on newly released archival documents, states that these sources "seem to suggest that ideology often *determined* the behavior of Marxist-Leninist regimes: it was not simply a justification for actions already decided on."⁶ Even Jerry Hough, in his new book on why Gorbachev allowed the Soviet system to collapse, concedes that "it was impossible simply to introduce market reforms without ideological preparation." The years of indoctrination that capitalism was evil meant that the Soviet people "needed to be reeducated."⁷ A part of this reeducation meant changing the Soviet world view.

While ideology at times may have been used cynically by the Bolsheviks to ensure the dominance of the Communist Party and by Stalin to legitimize his tyranny, it nonetheless defined Soviet interstate and societal relations, and the years of unswerving propaganda and indoctrination led to its institutionalization. Officially, it stated the Soviet Union's grand purpose—to build communism at home and to foster it abroad, thereby contributing to the inevitable demise of capitalism. This historical process was predetermined, and its engine was the class struggle.

Under Lenin, the militarization of politics, a result of the Manichean division of the world and society into friend and foe, led to the consolidation of Bolshevik power. Under Stalin, this belligerent world view consolidated Stalinism, culminating in Stalin's notorious "theory" that the closer communism approached to final victory, the more intense grew social conflicts—a notion that justified the

bloodbath of the purges. In short, Soviet ideology and its conflictive world view became more than only a set of slogans; it became a way of life. Although one can argue about the extent to which the population believed in these ideological tenets, in the end it is irrelevant, because everyone, indisputably, was forced to live by them.

In contrast to Brezhnev, who maintained there could never be détente in ideology, Gorbachev understood that to make his proposed shift in political and economic priorities lasting, he would have to make a corresponding shift in ideology to reflect a more benign view of the world. He did so by dismissing the relevance of the central Marxist-Leninist tenet of class struggle in describing interstate relations in favor of a focus on “common human interests and values” and an emphasis on global interdependence. Gorbachev wanted more than just détente with the West. He also wanted something more fundamental than just smoothing out the discomfiting contradiction posed by the nuclear age, which did not conform to the underlying premise of a socialist victory in the class struggle. He wanted a radical shift in course that would result in a lasting change in relations with the West, which in turn would enable him to decrease the military burden at home—one of his central objectives for reform.

But as Gorbachev’s adviser, Georgi Shakhnazarov, observed, “it was impossible to become free of the monstrous burden of militarism without political reform.”⁸ To that end, Gorbachev sought to legitimize the Communist Party’s leading role and make it a competitive, popular alternative. He envisioned something along the lines of Enrico Berlinguer’s popularly elected Italian Communist Party (except that it would be in power), rather than the European social democracy of Felipe Gonzalez’s Spain.⁹ That assessment is countered by Archie Brown’s study, which, while acknowledging the importance to Gorbachev’s reform effort of reducing the defense budget and the role of the military-industrial complex, maintains that Gorbachev was striving for a real “pluralist democracy.”¹⁰ Such a view, however, interprets the language used to express concepts, such as Gorbachev’s ubiquitous use of “democratization,” from a Western-centered perspective that fails to consider the institutions, practices, and intersubjective meanings of the Soviet system of which that language was a part.¹¹

There have been a variety of approaches in the study of Gorbachev’s reforms and the underlying pressures for collapse. Scholars focusing on domestic determinants cite the emergence of a reformist political elite, the demands of new social groups created in Soviet society as a result of modernization, and institutional self-interest that undermined a common purpose when an opportunity for individual gain was perceived.¹² Other scholars give more weight to external pressures and point to the opportunities presented by the rise of a peaceable, liberal, capitalist system of states and the exigencies resulting from the military and economic rivalry with the United States.¹³ Together, these reasons help to piece together a complex picture, but one that is far from complete. None of them addresses why Mikhail Gorbachev acted on these various internal and external pressures as opposed to his predecessors, who also recognized the growing severity of Soviet domestic problems. Nor do those explanations get at *how* Gorbachev

implemented his reforms, the understanding of which provides a compelling explanation for the fall of the Soviet external and internal empires and the collapse of its system.

This article, inspired by the approach of “interpretive social science,” will focus on how Gorbachev set about changing the Soviet world view and thereby its political practice by altering the language of Marxism-Leninism that defined relations with the outside world. The objective of such an approach is to make the social and political life of a society intelligible in its own terms by understanding the connection between social and political life on the one side and the language that expresses and is constitutive of both on the other. Such an approach differs from the positivist method in two fundamental ways: First, the assumption of rationality from a strictly Western-centered perspective is discounted in favor of one that, while assuming that actors seek to maximize their gains, considers the actor’s trade-offs within his nation’s specific context; second, an interpretive approach, unlike the positivist method, which assumes that a social and political reality exists independent of the language of that society, views language as “constitutive of the reality . . . as essential to its being the kind of reality it is.”¹⁴

Gorbachev’s efforts to change the Soviet world view, naturally, had significant implications for several key Soviet institutions, namely, the Defense Ministry, the Foreign Ministry, and the military-industrial complex. Because Gorbachev’s doctrinal innovations, subsumed under his term “new thinking,” challenged traditional institutional privileges, they met with resistance. The battle was most clearly played out between Gorbachev and his allies in the foreign policy establishment on the one side, and the military, with the military-industrial complex or *voenno-promyshlennyi kompleks* (VPK) exerting resistance in the background, on the other. The implications of dismissing the relevance of class conflict in favor of “common human values” and interdependence in international relations meant for the military budget reductions and a substantially reduced political role. For the foreign policy community, in contrast, Gorbachev’s new thinking elevated political over military means in foreign policy and promised greater control over the defense agenda, which had traditionally been under the exclusive purview of the military.

The struggle to implement the new world view meant addressing the horrors of the Stalinist past. In contrast to Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization efforts, which were incomplete because they were directed at Stalin personally and failed to challenge the philosophical and economic foundations of Stalin’s regime, Gorbachev’s reforms, in the words of Alexander Tsipko, were directed “against the ideological foundations of Stalinism, especially the idea of uniformity, forcible collectivization, and the subordination of life to a theoretical scheme.”¹⁵ Gorbachev’s reforms are best understood in terms of his objective of changing Stalinist political practice by demilitarizing both foreign and domestic policy. He began by altering the Soviet world view and the language and concepts that described it by changing the belief in the primacy of the class struggle, a belief that his predecessors all had left intact. It was on this tenet alone that Stalin legitimized the monstrous political and economic machine he had built and the human

sacrifice he had exacted. This tenet was the linchpin that upheld the idea that defined the Soviet Union.

Demilitarizing Foreign Policy

Gorbachev's objectives in foreign and domestic policy were interdependent, as he himself tirelessly repeated, and indeed, one cannot fully be understood without reference to the other. "The foreign policy of each government is inseparable from its internal life, social-economic goals and necessities," Gorbachev said in his December 1984 address to the British Parliament while still second secretary. "The main objective of our plans consists of significantly raising the material and spiritual level of life for our

people. . . . To realize these grandiose, constructive plans, the Soviet Union needs peace."¹⁶ The objective seemed straightforward: to revive the Soviet economy, international tensions had to be decreased, which would make the reduction in defense spending possible (an expenditure that consumed more than half of the

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economy). Gorbachev, however, had a clearer idea of how to change Soviet foreign policy than of how to proceed with domestic reform. While the maxims of "new thinking" were clearly defined and Gorbachev remained faithful to them, the notion of perestroika constantly evolved to encompass new elements of the economy, political system, and society. The fluidity of perestroika, in an enormous country with an ultimately irreformable party apparatus, resulted in an ad hoc internal reform process that differed fundamentally from the changes Gorbachev implemented in foreign policy.

Still, Gorbachev perceived the shifts in Soviet foreign policy as central to his ultimate domestic objective of recharging the economy by decreasing the military burden. He began introducing shifts in ideological dogma, which were necessary to increase his maneuverability in implementing domestic reforms, and decreasing international tensions by redefining international relations. In changing long-held ideological tenets, Gorbachev was altering the Soviet world view by changing the language and concepts that described it. Although many observers, as Hough notes, are inclined to see ideological phraseology as too abstract and esoteric to be significant, it is precisely its esoteric character (in the Soviet context) that usually makes it "a reliable indicator."¹⁷ This is so because, as Martin Malia maintains, the Soviet Union, first and foremost, was "an ideocratic regime."¹⁸

Gorbachev's new thinking differed from past Soviet formulations in foreign policy in three fundamental ways: The nation's security was perceived as indivisible from that of other nations, as opposed to the belief that security was equal

to military advantage; the Brezhnev Doctrine (previously seen as an internal socialist matter) was repudiated in favor of respect for each country's sovereignty and noninterference in its internal affairs; and the belief that interstate relations were an extension of the "international class struggle" was subordinated, in light of the realities of the nuclear age and increasing global interdependence, to a focus on "human interests and values." In part, some of these shifts were dictated by the "scientific-technical revolution," which in Soviet parlance meant the scientific and technological developments in the postwar era that accounted for unexpected changes in world politics, the most revolutionary of which was the fact that the development of nuclear weapons rendered senseless the Clausewitzian formulation of war as politics by other means. Modifications to dogma had been germinating and developing in academic institutes in the years predating Gorbachev but were not adopted as policy. The specialists had justified their innovations along instrumentalist lines—they would make Soviet foreign policy more effective. But bending dogma for the sake of expediency was a tactical move and was not the same as a fundamental change in direction, and that is what Gorbachev implemented.¹⁹

All of Gorbachev's policies to demilitarize Soviet foreign and domestic policy stemmed, first and foremost, from his redefining the image of the enemy by emphasizing "common human values" and interdependence in international relations over class conflict. This key ideological innovation provided the undergirding for his moves to demilitarize foreign policy. It made the military doctrinal shifts possible, including emphasizing mutual security over absolute military advantage; advancing the utility of political over military means in foreign policy; altering the nature of the threat by stressing the primacy of economic over military forms of competition; and enforcing a defensive doctrine and force posture. The logic of these shifts pointed in one direction—decreasing military expenditures. On another issue, dismissing the relevance of class conflict also allowed for the renunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine in favor of respect for each country's sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs.

Renouncing the International Class Struggle

While Gorbachev's ideological innovations were motivated principally by a desire to make the changes in Soviet political priorities lasting, there was also the uncomfortable contradiction posed by nuclear weapons whose destructive potential did not conform to the underlying premise of a socialist victory in the class struggle. This embarrassing fact was sidestepped by Brezhnev in his 1977 Tula speech, in which he said that the *aggressor* could not expect to fight and win a nuclear war. The defender's (the Soviet Union's) prospects for winning a nuclear war, however, were pointedly left unaddressed, and interestingly, war avoidance under Brezhnev never attained a formal place in Soviet military doctrine.²⁰ That took place only under Gorbachev in 1987. Manipulated by the military, Brezhnev did not resist the military push for the SS-20 deployment that same year. However, the unexpected U.S. response of deploying INF missiles capable of reaching Moscow in less than ten minutes underscored the vulnerability of socialism to

the nuclear threat, irrespective of its perceived moral superiority. Gorbachev acknowledged this contradiction, explaining that “with the emergence of weapons of mass, that is, universal destruction, there appeared an objective limit for class confrontation in the international arena: the threat of universal destruction.”²¹

Gorbachev first officially discounted the primacy of the canon that international politics was the continuation of the class struggle, to the surprise and consternation of many of his advisers and foreign delegates alike, at the Twenty-seventh Party Congress in February 1986. In his speech, Gorbachev stated that “under conditions of complete unacceptability of nuclear war, not confrontation, but peaceful coexistence of systems should be the law for intergovernmental relations.” While the peaceful coexistence of socialism and capitalism had been a Soviet slogan since the days of Khrushchev, it always meant a temporary respite in the external battle and remained a “specific form of class struggle.” At Gorbachev’s urging, and for the first time in the history of the Soviet Union, the CPSU program adopted by the Twenty-seventh Party Congress “deemed it no longer possible to retain in it the definition of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems as a ‘specific form of class struggle.’”²² This point was not ceded easily by the conservatives who feared an undermining of the Communist Party ethos.

Later, Gorbachev’s chief of the general staff, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, admitted that for him and many in the military, to view the world “from a different angle was very painful.” Indeed, the unquestioned status of the military had always been rationalized by the principle of the international class struggle. As evidence, however, of the pervasiveness of ideological indoctrination, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze said the doctrinal change “gave rise to a very stormy reaction” in the foreign policy establishment. He explained that it was very difficult to conceptualize international relations apart from the struggle between class systems. “Our underlying basic, fundamental position was the position of class and class values and this is how we were brought up—all of us.”²³

A year later, in his speech commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the Soviet revolution, Gorbachev was the first Soviet leader to imply that the military-industrial complex was not essential to the economic vitality of capitalist countries. He dispelled the Marxist-Leninist notion that there was a “growing crisis in capitalism,” a belief central to Stalinism that implied the inevitable supremacy of socialism in the conflict between two systems.²⁴ It is key to understand that far from striving for a *peredyshka*, or breathing spell, Gorbachev was intent on reorienting Soviet policy altogether. To make an improvement in relations with the West lasting, which would allow him to radically reallocate resources away from defense, Gorbachev had to reconceptualize Soviet relations with the West and redefine the Soviet world view.

Change in Military Doctrine and Force Posture

The renunciation of the tenet of class struggle had profound implications for Soviet military doctrine and force posture. It also highlighted the ideologically rationalized misadventure of the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Détente with the United States did not, after all, mean the Soviet abandonment of its “internation-

al duty to other peoples.” According to former Soviet ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet leadership was taken aback by the negative reaction from Washington to its forays into the Third World since it perceived these adventures as justified Soviet policy.²⁵

The new direction for Soviet military policy was enunciated at the Twenty-seventh Party Congress. Gorbachev declared that the party’s primary objective was “to provide the Soviet people with the opportunity to work in conditions of solid peace and freedom.” He again emphasized what he had expressed for the first time in his address to the British Parliament in 1984, that true security was mutual and could best be provided by political, not military, means. “The provision of security increasingly becomes a political task, and it can be decided only by political means,” Gorbachev said. “Security, if one is to talk about relations between the USSR and USA, can only be mutual, and if one is to talk about international relations in their entirety, then [it can only be] universal.” Relatedly, “striving for military superiority, objectively cannot bring political rewards to anybody.” Then Gorbachev addressed Soviet military doctrine. “Its purpose is synonymous with defense,” he affirmed. “Our country is for removing weapons of mass destruction, limiting military potential to boundaries of reasonable sufficiency.”²⁶ In the adopted program, instead of the traditional vow giving the military *carte blanche*, the party promised only to do “everything to ensure that the imperialist countries do not attain military superiority.” This wording also gave rise to a debate with conservatives who expressed concern that such a formulation signaled the party’s weakening commitment to defense. Exercising his authority as general secretary, however, Gorbachev was able to prevail and slowly set about changing the course of Soviet policy.²⁷

During his speech at the congress, Gorbachev called the conflict in Afghanistan a “bleeding wound” and was the first Soviet leader to say that Soviet troops should be withdrawn. Referring to relations with the socialist bloc, Gorbachev pointedly said that while “diversity in our movement is not synonymous with separateness . . . unity has nothing in common with uniformity, with hierarchy, with interference by some parties in the affairs of others, with the objective of any party for the monopoly on truth.”²⁸ The road to withdrawal, however, would prove to be a long and arduous one. According to Gorbachev’s adviser, Anatoly Chernyaev, even Shevardnadze resisted unconditional Soviet military withdrawal, arguing that the Soviet Union should fulfill its promises to the Third World lest it lose its credibility (a testament to how thoroughly indoctrinated were those even of a reformist bent).²⁹ Overall, the reaction to Gorbachev’s speech was one of general apprehension. Defense Minister Sergei Sokolov, in his address to the congress, ignored all of Gorbachev’s statements that placed emphasis on the political rather than the military determinants of security, toeing instead the traditional Soviet line.

Indeed, the principles of new thinking contradicted virtually everything in which the military believed and for which it stood, challenging its traditional mission with the renunciation of the class struggle and the new emphasis on mutual security and sufficiency in defense. The stress on political rather than military

solutions challenged the military's traditionally dominant role in foreign affairs and was an approach that the military leadership found "new" and was "unaccustomed to," as Akhromeyev put it.³⁰ The military resisted the implications that these doctrinal shifts had for their traditionally unquestioned lion's share of economic resources. According to Shakhnazarov, "it was necessary to literally beat out an agreement [from the military] on any small move in the direction of real arms control." He complained that both the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff "did not seriously accept the conclusion that militarism was sapping the strength of the country, and forcing it to sink." Accustomed to having their demands always met, the military's attitude would be that "the people will always find money for their army."³¹

In an unusual meeting at the Foreign Ministry in May 1986, at which diplomats, Foreign Ministry, and Defense Ministry officials were present, Gorbachev lectured on the new direction of Soviet foreign policy and had a specific message for the military. Although the defense of the country should never suffer, it was "imperative to learn to spend no more than is necessary" on Soviet military needs. "We already have a powerful potential," Gorbachev stressed. "It should be maintained at the level at which it completely provides for our defense, but without damage to the economy." In this speech, Gorbachev emphasized the relevance of qualitative versus quantitative indicators of military prowess and, overturning a long-held Stalinist maxim, he said it was "untenable" to believe that Soviet armed forces could be as strong as any possible coalition of states opposing the nation. He restated once again that the threat facing the Soviet Union was not military in nature, but economic. The policy of the United States, Gorbachev pointed out, was "to try to wear us out with the arms race."³²

The military resisted the implications of new thinking for its force posture, which essentially meant only one thing: reductions. This attitude was on display after the May 1987 Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee meeting in Berlin, which resulted in the document "On the Military Doctrine of the Warsaw Pact States." At a press conference on the new military doctrine, Akhromeyev's deputy, Col. General Makhmut Gareyev, asserted that there were "no contradictions whatsoever" between the "political and military-technical aspects of military doctrine"—both had only a "defensive character in their objectives as in their capabilities to decide defense matters."³³ In other words, there was no need for large-scale, unilateral adjustments. Defense was based on offensive military operations, a concept that had been rationalized by the belief in the aggressive nature of the imperialist West and the inherently pacific character of socialism. The document "On the Military Doctrine of the Warsaw Pact States" nonetheless was significant, not so much because of the explicit formulation about the defensive nature of Soviet military doctrine, but because it stated that the primary purpose of military policy must be to prevent the outbreak of war and because of its stress on resolving international disputes by political means rather than declaring the necessity of always being battle-ready.³⁴

The general intransigence of the military, coupled with its stubbornness in linking the progress of negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF)

to a simultaneous agreement on strategic weapons and space defenses, made any accord on arms control frustratingly elusive. The military put up obstacles at every turn. Only after the fortuitous landing of a young German on Red Square in his small Cessna aircraft enabled Gorbachev to shake up the military top brass, by removing Defense Minister Sergei Sokolov and about one hundred generals and colonels in summer 1987, was there progress on arms control. In December 1987, Gorbachev pushed the military to agree to vast, asymmetrical cuts with the signing of the INF Treaty with the United States and for the first time in the history of arms control eliminated an entire class of weapons. It was probably not a coincidence that after the military shakeup the Soviet Union also finally made plans

to withdraw from Afghanistan and bring to closure that ruinous war.

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Events, however, soon outpaced Gorbachev’s plans to implement the peace dividend that would be the result of new thinking in military policy. Gorbachev’s insistence that Soviet military doctrine and strategy reflect the premises of new thinking, combined with

his unilateral withdrawal of troops announced at the United Nations in 1988, loosened the military and ideological controls that had kept the Warsaw Pact together and set the stage for the fall of Eastern Europe.

The unilateral Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe sharpened the differences between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Staff in their opposing assessments of the threat facing the Soviet Union. Having reluctantly conceded the unilateral troop and weapons cuts, the military fought to preserve its institutional self-interest and stave off pending budget cuts promised by negotiations on conventional weapons. While Gorbachev and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs downplayed the specter of a threat by discounting the relevance of class interests in international affairs and emphasizing the primacy of “values common to all mankind,” the military stubbornly maintained the continued existence of a military threat, describing it in Marxist class terms. In an interview in January 1989, Akhromeyev said that the current opinion that the Soviet Union did not face military danger or threat was “mistaken” and the threat posed by “imperialism” had not been “completely liquidated.”³⁵ In his memoirs, written jointly with Georgi Kornienko, Akhromeyev wrote that the country’s interests took second place to the “common interests of mankind,” and he faulted Shevardnadze in his diplomatic work for “squandering” the “military might of the armed forces and the defense capabilities of the country.”³⁶ Akhromeyev’s successor as chief of the General Staff, Moiseyev, in his first major speech also warned that “the aggressive orientation of imperialist policy [had] been maintained” and that as a result, the Soviet Union could not let down its guard.³⁷

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs put forth its evaluation of the threat shortly after the appearance of Akhromeyev's interview. Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Karpov, one of Shevardnadze's top aides, said that among the chief "stereotypes" that required change was the "image of the enemy, which was a necessary element in the former military doctrine." He implied that the armed forces rationalized their existence by conjuring up the existence of an enemy, yet when the image of the enemy was changed, as in the case of the INF Treaty and Gorbachev's UN speech, then "new psychological approaches to resolving problems in international relations are needed."³⁸

While the military naturally put up resistance to arms control, the military-industrial complex, or VPK, was the more vociferous opponent because of the revenue it would stand to lose with the signing of agreements on weapons cuts.³⁹ By 1989, there were signs that the military-industrial leadership was exerting pressure on Gorbachev to slow down disarmament and conversion efforts. Both were wreaking havoc in the defense industry and jeopardizing their institutional interests. The status and revenue generated by the production of SS-20 missiles clearly were far greater than those provided by the production of pedestrian consumer items. By 1990, the VPK lobby was forcibly applying brakes to Gorbachev's reforms.⁴⁰

Renouncing the Brezhnev Doctrine

Following Chernenko's funeral in March 1985, Gorbachev called each leader of the Warsaw Pact to a meeting and noted that relations with the socialist bloc had not changed much since Stalin's time and that this state of affairs was no longer contributing to "socialist construction." Gorbachev told the geriatric assembly of tough East European Communists that the Soviet Union "was for equitable relations, respecting the sovereignty and independence of each country and mutually beneficial cooperation in all spheres. Recognition of these principles, at the same time, signifies the complete responsibility of each party for the situation in its own country." The message was that the Soviet Union would no longer prop up leaders who were having trouble controlling their nations. Gorbachev explained that his "declaration at that meeting signified a new turning point in our relations; the repudiation of the so-called 'Brezhnev Doctrine,' which was never proclaimed officially, but in fact determined USSR relations with the socialist countries."⁴¹

If the world was no longer irrevocably riven by class antagonisms, then there were a number of implications for the socialist alliance. For one, priority would no longer have to be accorded to defense. Indeed, Akhromeyev cited the "constant arms race" among the chief reasons for the growing strains among the Warsaw Pact states.⁴² Since defense policy was dictated from Moscow, the Eastern bloc allies were obligated to purchase any Soviet weapons deemed necessary for the alliance's security by the Soviet high command. In a reaction to a speech that was to be given by Marshal Pyotr Kulikov, commander of the Warsaw Pact forces, to a 1988 Warsaw Pact meeting, Shakhnazarov noted that there was no reason for Kulikov to scold the socialist allies for refusing to buy Soviet weaponry; they sim-

ply could no longer afford it. "What is in our interest," Shakhnazarov asked, "that they arm themselves and face an economic crash, or instead, that they economize on military expenditures and improve their economic position which would actually strengthen the security of the alliance?"⁴³

After Gorbachev's success at proposing radical government reform at the Nineteenth Party Conference in June 1988, which accelerated the process of de-Stalinization in domestic and foreign policy, there surfaced among the foreign policy establishment the question of maintaining an alliance at all. (As part of the restructuring, the Department for Relations with Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist Countries was abolished and subsumed into the International Department, which meant that other communist countries would no longer be treated as vassal states.) In an address to the Foreign Ministry, Shevardnadze declared that "it is in everyone's interest (including ours) to seek to have the military activity of all countries confined to their national boundaries." Going even further, he stated that it was in the Soviet Union's interests "to dismantle military bases on the territory of other countries and also to dissolve opposing military-political alliances."⁴⁴

As an indication of the growing disparity of views among the party leadership, a week after Shevardnadze's speech Second Secretary Yegor Ligachev retorted that the Soviet Union worked "on the premise of a class character in international relations." Any other approach to the question, he maintained, "only brings a mishmash to the consciousness of Soviet people and our friends abroad. An active involvement in resolving problems of mankind by other means would result in the artificial slowing down of the social and national-liberation struggle."⁴⁵ Reflecting the conservative views of the party apparat, Ligachev consistently repeated this traditional Soviet world view in an effort to safeguard the integrity of socialism.

After Gorbachev's announcement of a unilateral troop withdrawal from Eastern Europe at the United Nations, the military maintained the continued existence of a military threat and, like Ligachev and other conservatives, described it in Marxist class terms. A continued threat was posed by "imperialist sources of aggression," declared Akhromeyev in January 1989.⁴⁶ By then he had resigned as chief of the General Staff, explaining in his memoirs that the unilateral withdrawal from Eastern Europe highlighted the "evolving complex relations" among the Warsaw Pact nations and he felt that to preside as military leader "at the funeral of the Warsaw Pact Organization was inadmissible."⁴⁷ A few days later, Shevardnadze, struggling to prevail over the military as always, again repeated to the Council on Security and Cooperation Europe in Vienna that the "declared fundamental goal" of the Soviet Union was "to end any foreign military presence and bases on the territories of other countries."⁴⁸ Soviet policies directed by new thinking had changed the image of the enemy and nature of the threat. Seconding the idea of dismantling the alliances, the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee in July issued a declaration at the end of its conference in Bucharest stating that the "principal position of the Warsaw pact member governments is to free Europe from military blocs, simultaneously dissolve both alliances and, as a

first step, liquidate their military organizations.”⁴⁹ Shevardnadze repeated this objective at the United Nations in September and in his address to the Supreme Soviet in October, a month before the Berlin Wall came down.⁵⁰ Once the division of East Germany looked less certain, however, Gorbachev reconsidered doing away with alliances and told President George Bush at their summit meeting in Malta that “realism forces [us] to proceed from the assumption of preserving the existing alliances of NATO and the Warsaw pact in the foreseeable future.”⁵¹ His idealistic vision of a “common European home” had been sobered by the new political realities in Eastern Europe. The repeated Soviet proposal to disband both military alliances reflected Gorbachev’s pervasive illusion that its relationship with its allies was not going to change significantly.

At the Warsaw Pact meeting in Bucharest in July 1989, Gorbachev optimistically held on to his belief in the future of socialism and again promoted his ideas for reform. The new Hungarian leadership of Károly Grósz, which was already in place by then, and Poland’s General Wojciech Jaruzelski were receptive to Gorbachev’s innovations, but the other East European leaders were shaken with the changes taking place. Complaints about the “disunity” in the alliance were voiced by the host of the conference, Nicolae Ceausescu, as well as by East German leader Erich Honeker, Bulgaria’s Todor Zhivkov, and Czechoslovakia’s Milos Jakeš. All took a hostile view of the de-Stalinizing reforms taking place in Soviet domestic and foreign policy because, by implication, they put into question the very legitimacy of their rule. With the ascent of Gorbachev, however, the imposition of bloc unity through ideological dogma—fostering the threat of imperialism and defining international relations in terms of class conflict—had significantly eroded, undermining the very foundation of those regimes. Symbolically, the seventy-seven-year-old Honecker fell ill during the conference. The more liberally inclined Poles and Hungarians joked that it was the result of Gorbachev’s message.⁵²

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in November and the various demonstrations that ensued in East Germany, Gorbachev ordered the General Staff to ensure that the thousands of Soviet troops that had guaranteed “the inviolability of the GDR and the steadfastness of her socialist construction” remained in their barracks.⁵³ Although it was generally acknowledged in the Gorbachev camp that the use of force would mean an end to perestroika, there was another factor that was at play—the unrest was viewed as a national manifestation of perestroika finally taking root in the countries, not as a rejection of socialism. Gorbachev explained to a panicking Ceausescu a few weeks before he was to be shot that the processes under way, although “contradictory and painful,” were “dominated by a democratic character.” For this reason, Gorbachev insisted, “there was no basis for claiming the collapse or the end of socialism,” valiantly holding to the possibility that the Communists, once reformed, could be reelected.⁵⁴

When Akhromeyev groused in his memoirs that the military “was not briefed on the possibility of how the situation [in Eastern Europe] may develop,” it was for the very simple reason that the political leadership did not expect anything to significantly alter the alliance.⁵⁵ Moreover, the roiling nationalities problem within the Soviet Union was absorbing much of everyone’s attention while the East

European empire was disintegrating. This, of course, sharply changed in early 1990 when the conservatives fiercely attacked Gorbachev and Shevardnadze and the policy of new thinking at the February plenum. In his address, the Soviet ambassador to Poland, V. Brovikov, criticized the political leadership for turning a “superpower, which was admired by the world, into a government with a mistake-ridden past, a joyless present and an unsure future. And all this for the amusement of the West which, while praising us, sweetly chuckles at the collapse of the ‘colossus on clay feet,’ the death of communism and world socialism.”⁵⁶

Demilitarizing Domestic Politics

Central to Gorbachev’s aim in domestic policy was decreasing the defense burden. While traveling about the country during his first few months in power, Gorbachev saw firsthand the deleterious effects of the centralized economic system on the neglected consumer sector. In searching for a solution, he concluded that “in first place, it was necessary to establish a rational proportion between civilian and military sectors” in the economy.⁵⁷ Toward this end, in March 1985 he instructed the conservative editor of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Alexander Chakovsky, that “there is no need to scare the Soviet people with American weapons.”⁵⁸ Alexander Yakovlev, one of Gorbachev’s closest advisers and a mastermind of his policy of perestroika, wrote in 1994 that “to this day, it is not exactly known what portion of the gross national product was claimed by military production. Some say 70 percent, and others cite even a higher percentage.”⁵⁹

By replacing the tenet of the international class struggle with the maxims of new thinking, Gorbachev wanted to make a threat assessment in his own terms, with corresponding implications for future resource commitments. He sought to gain control over the Soviet defense agenda and modify it to allow his evolving policy of perestroika to proceed unfettered. Gorbachev emphasized that perestroika at home and abroad dictated “sufficiency” in defense. The concept of “sufficiency” was further buttressed by an emphasis on quality versus quantity of weapons and personnel, thus forcing the military’s hand in implementing reductions. Less successful was the attempt to have the foreign policy establishment assert control over military issues and force the military to divulge its expenditures as a way of eroding its previously unchallenged status. Still, Gorbachev began early to reduce the politically privileged status that the military had enjoyed under Brezhnev. At the funeral of Chernenko, there were no military figures atop Lenin’s mausoleum for the first time in Soviet history. Then, scuttling a two-decade-old tradition, Gorbachev failed to appoint a military representative to full membership in the Politburo. The General Staff’s traditional monopoly on military issues was progressively eroded and openly questioned. Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Karpov stressed in January 1989 that more glasnost in military affairs was necessary, especially with regard to the military budget, which still was not being fully disclosed. “We need to really know the size of our military expenditures,” Karpov said, “so we can see—are we not spending too much?”⁶⁰

The process to gain control over the defense agenda culminated with the reorganization of the government in 1988, the effort to separate the role of party from

that of the state, and the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies early the following year. With the election of young reformist military officers to the Congress of People's Deputies, the façade of monolithic unity presented by the military was irrevocably fractured (a division that played an instrumental role in the collapse of the coup). These military deputies were an unrelenting force for military reform, and combined with the centrifugal movements of the republics, they hollowed out the military institution from within and rendered it ultimately powerless.

By cutting military expenditures and increasing military conversion to civilian production, Gorbachev hoped to provide the country with a short cut for meeting consumer demand without additional government outlays.

Even though the ultimate objective of perestroika was to divert more resources to civilian industry, that did not mean doing away with the military-industrial complex. Instead it meant increasing its production of consumer goods above the 40 percent it already was devoting to civilian produc-

“The loosening of party and ideological controls resulted in the dissipation of fear in society, and that set into motion what became known as the ‘parade of nationalities.’”

tion, such as the manufacturing of washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and televisions. This in part explained the preponderance of defense industry managers in the government. But Gorbachev overestimated the military-industrial complex's enthusiasm for perestroika. Like so many of Gorbachev's initial supporters, they could not accept the evolving nature of what Gorbachev's reform policy entailed. And indeed, by 1990, the leaders of the VPK began to reassert themselves, making increasing objections to Gorbachev's shift in political priorities, which resulted in a sharp drop in revenue and severe dislocations in the defense industry. In a June 1989 military conference on defense industry conversion, speakers complained that there was no “comprehensive concept for the development of the Armed Forces that takes into account not only the changes in military doctrine, but also the new socioeconomic developments.” But the chief problem was succinctly summarized by a military officer who noted that with “conversion to civilian production . . . [the defense industry] will lose the priority right to receive financial and material resources on short notice.”⁶¹

In addition to taking control of the defense agenda and decreasing military expenditures, Gorbachev's policy of demilitarizing Soviet domestic politics also encompassed a campaign criticizing Stalin and loosening party controls in the state and society. This had the unintended consequence of unmasking age-old rivalries among nationalities. The loosening of party and ideological controls resulted in the dissipation of fear in society, and that set into motion what became known as the “parade of nationalities,” with the republics asserting autonomy and moving away from the center.

Perceiving that Gorbachev's policies were threatening their interests, the conservative party apparat dug in its heels against implementing economic reform, and the military and VPK resisted defense cuts. Gorbachev saw that the only way he would be able to get around this opposition was by turning to political reform. As Shakhnazarov explained:

[There was] desperate resistance to any attempt to excessively reduce the swollen military budget (up to 40% of national revenues!). Gorbachev could not overcome this resistance without leaning on the support of the parliament and social opinion.

Something else also became clear: just as it was impossible to become free of the monstrous burden of militarism without political reform: without [political reform] all efforts to breathe new life into the economy would be doomed to failure.⁶²

Criticizing Stalin and Implementing Political Reform

After the overthrow of Khrushchev, the very term "Stalinism" was outlawed as an expression of blatant anticommunism. The trend was toward a more benign view of Stalin himself. Brezhnev even planned a full rehabilitation of Stalin, in 1969 and again in 1979, for the 100th anniversary of his birth (this was averted both times only after strong pressure from leading Soviet intellectuals and foreign Communist leaders).⁶³ And when Gorbachev himself was asked about Stalinism by the French Communist newspaper *L'Humanité* in February 1986, he gave a stock, defensive Soviet reply: "'Stalinism' is a concept thought up by enemies of communism and widely used to slander the Soviet Union and socialism as a whole."⁶⁴

During his first two years, Gorbachev did not perceive the system itself as troubled and so found no need to revisit the murky Stalinist past. But as preparations for the January 1987 plenum became difficult and acerbic—it was postponed three times because of fierce disagreement over the degree of decentralization, the party's role in the economy, and its relationship with society, which was being questioned for the first time—Gorbachev realized that the party itself was resisting perestroika. He came to the conclusion that the problem lay deeper than he thought and went back to the question of Stalinism. In private discussions with his advisers, he acknowledged that Stalin was associated with more than just the 1937 purges, a fact no other leader since Khrushchev had even hinted at. Gorbachev admitted that Stalin had defined the system and that Stalinism had permeated the consciousness of the country.⁶⁵ But in public he said nothing. Ligachev, meanwhile, in preparation for the June plenum on economic reform, in which he defended the party from criticism and praised the achievements of Stalin, warned that the "class enemy, secretly and openly, hopes for the weakening of Marxist-Leninist ideology in society under the influence of perestroika."⁶⁶

Gorbachev understood that Ligachev was expressing the sentiment of the majority of the party conservative apparat, who were retrenching by conjuring up the threat of the class enemy. He also realized that any criticism of Stalin was still equated with criticism of the system. But in his speech commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution, Gorbachev publicly broached the "mistakes" of Stalin for the first time. After justifying many of Stalin's ruinous

policies—from the collectivization of agriculture as “necessary” for modernization, to Stalin’s defense pact with Hitler as an expedient to prepare for war—Gorbachev criticized Stalin’s “crude political mistakes,” which he called “unforgivable,” and acknowledged the “repression” of many Communists and noncommunists alike, although he refrained from saying “millions.” He stated that a special Politburo commission, headed by Yakovlev, had been established to review the rehabilitation of Stalin’s victims, and pointed out that knowledge of the past was necessary for perestroika to move forward.⁶⁷

At the January 1987 plenum, Gorbachev only obliquely attacked Stalin by criticizing the system he wrought as resulting in “serious deformations in planning” because of the overbearing nature of the “administrative command” system.⁶⁸ He understood, however, that the party apparat was resisting his reform policies precisely because of its vested interests in the Stalinist system of centralized planning, and he struggled to renew the membership of the Central Committee, which was obstructing his ideas for perestroika and which, he believed, could be reformed. Toward this end he pushed for the convening of a Nineteenth Party Conference; the preceding one had gathered under Stalin in 1941 to staff the party ranks after the purges. Suspicious of Gorbachev’s motives, the party apparat resisted and reluctantly gave its consent only at the June plenum. When it became clear that the Nineteenth Party Conference would not be given the authority to bring in new Central Committee members from the outside but would be able to make only limited changes, Gorbachev decided to reorganize the party structure altogether.

The party conference, held in June 1988, dealt the first lethal blow to the institutionalized Stalinism of Soviet politics and the system of government, especially with the formation of an elected Congress of People’s Deputies. With the establishment of this semidemocratic legislature, the party’s monopoly of control over society and government was essentially over, and its constitutionally guaranteed right to rule was severely undermined. The implications for the military and the VPK were, in the words of Shevardnadze, to subject both to “democratic control.” The idea was to put all military departments and those engaged in military-industrial activities under the control of the proposed new elected legislature.⁶⁹ In practice, however, that objective was not attained. The Committee for Defense and State Security, established by the newly elected Supreme Soviet to oversee military matters, turned out to be nothing more than a “lobby” for the military-industrial complex, in the words of Gorbachev’s adviser Georgi Arbatov. The VPK was not to submit readily to new political controls that were to approve its activities, and Gorbachev was compelled to appoint Vladimir Lapygin, an old VPK hand, to act as chair of the committee.⁷⁰ Lapygin warned against “unilateral disarmament” and excessive zeal in the conversion of the defense industry for civilian needs.⁷¹ The appointment of Lapygin and consequent composition of the committee in favor of the military-industrial complex were concessions Gorbachev had to make to the conservatives, who thought his push for reforms was having a negative impact on Soviet defense capabilities. This was an early indication that Gorbachev’s efforts to rein in the VPK were, in fact, negligible.

While Gorbachev was battling against conservatives for his reforms, Communist candidates, including senior military officers, suffered embarrassing defeats in the elections for the Congress of People's Deputies. Conservatives blamed Gorbachev's policies for these setbacks, proving to Gorbachev yet again that the attitude in the apparat was not likely to change any time soon. "This is how firmly Marxist dogma in its simplified Stalinist interpretation was knocked into their heads," Gorbachev observed. In addition, he noted that the elections "revealed that the authority of the CPSU fell as soon as people stopped fearing it, believing that it would no longer rule by force."⁷²

Gorbachev's policies, along with the subsequent easing of fear, not only encouraged change in Eastern Europe, but they reverberated unexpectedly among the Soviet republics, where nationalist sentiments suppressed by decades of Soviet rule and exacerbated by Stalin's rewriting of geography teemed just beneath the surface. Gorbachev and his allies came to accept the signs of nationalism as an inevitable consequence of perestroika; and this nationalism was acceptable as long as it was not violent, antisocialist, or most important, anti-Soviet. Indeed, in the case of the Baltic states, the national fronts in the beginning identified themselves very closely with the policy of perestroika and especially the process of de-Stalinization. As the general program of the Estonian People's Front of August 1988, stated, "The People's Front considers the current situation in the relations between the nationalities in the Soviet Union to be abnormal and see the cause of this in Stalinist nationality policy."⁷³ Such criticism was tolerated. Moves to secede, however, were not. Although efforts were made to contain expressions of nationalism in Alma Ata in 1986, in Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988, in Tbilisi in 1989, and in Vilnius in 1990, the momentum toward independence proved impossible to curb without the undisputed, centralized authority of the party in place, with its principal tool, that of stoking fear in society.

With de-Stalinization in full swing domestically, Soviet foreign and defense policy came under renewed scrutiny, and for the first time the history of both policies and their Stalinist legacies were subjected to detailed criticism. This polemic was led by analysts and officials from the Foreign Ministry in a bald effort to assert their primacy in foreign affairs, including questions of defense, over the military. In May 1988, Vyacheslav Dashichev blamed Stalin for creating "distortions" and "stereotypes" of the opposing side, which resulted in a "psychosis" in the nation and a fear of imminent attack. This fear enabled Stalin to proceed with his policies of collectivization and industrialization, as well as the isolation of Soviet society. Whereas in the "past decades the Soviet Union emphasized international class conflict," now, he concluded, it should focus on "interaction [and] cooperation in the most diverse of spheres."⁷⁴ In an extraordinary meeting at the Foreign Ministry three weeks after the Nineteenth Party Conference, Shevardnadze also criticized the effort and energy the Soviet Union had expended in creating an "image of the enemy." He lambasted "the preaching, during the détente period, of an erroneous . . . anti-Leninist view of peaceful coexistence as a specific form of class struggle." He argued that the Soviet Union was "justified in refusing to regard [international relations] as a specific form of class struggle."⁷⁵

Defending the role of the military, Akhromeyev, in a special address to the General Staff a month after the party conference, asserted the General Staff's role in defining the country's defense agenda and warned that because "imperialist sources of military tension continue to exist . . . attention to the strengthening of defense of the country cannot be weakened." He did concede, however, that "perestroika activity among communists in the General Staff is for now contradictory and coming along with difficulty. New thinking is not coming into our life with ease. Old stereotypes make themselves known."⁷⁶

The attack on the military continued unabated. It was taken to task for accumulating more weapons than it needed and for its decisions on weapons acquisitions, specifically the SS-20 missiles. The boundaries of what remained sacred in the Soviet Union were constantly being pushed further. Even Stalin's strategy in World War II came under ridicule. Andrei Kozyrev, then a deputy director of the International Organizations Department in the Foreign Ministry, wrote that "international confidence was hardly promoted by the crimes committed by Stalin's regime: its attempts to justify mass repressions with references to the capitalist environment, and the exacerbation of class struggle both within the country and in the international arena, which actually scuttled the formation of a broad anti-fascist front."⁷⁷ Taking advantage of this offensive against the military, Gorbachev pushed for a unilateral troop withdrawal. He announced the Soviet initiative in a historic UN address in which he once again affirmed his principles of new thinking. Moreover, by declaring Soviet respect for "freedom of choice," he publicly indicated that the Brezhnev Doctrine was no longer operative. The significance of these unprecedented declarations and initiatives of Gorbachev, however, was threatened by an embarrassing state secret—the amount of Soviet defense spending. The figure was so high that Gorbachev said it must be kept secret even from the party, "otherwise, sight would be lost of what has been accomplished."⁷⁸

Decreasing Military Expenditures

Soon after the military shakedown after the landing of the Cessna aircraft in Red Square in May 1987, another blow to the military's status was leveled by Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Petrovsky. He informed the UN-sponsored conference on disarmament and development in August that the Soviet Union "was for the broadening of glasnost and openness with regard to military activity, military doctrine and military expenditures." He said that this implied an "interest in limiting the allocated resources currently going to unproductive military expenditures. The Soviet Union has already begun this work, and of course will continue it."⁷⁹ Although the theme of the conference was how to increase aid to countries with the savings from disarmament, Petrovsky, restating much of the short statement that he read from Gorbachev, seized the opportunity to deliver an explicit message to the West and to the Soviet military: defense spending would be made public and would be decreased. Petrovsky acknowledged that because of the difference in pricing structures, it was difficult to compare the Soviet military budget with that of the Western nations. For the first time, a Soviet official publicly admitted that the published defense budget

of 20 billion rubles reflected only “the expenditures of the USSR Ministry of Defense for personnel of the armed forces, material-technical provisions, military construction, pension funds and a variety of other expenditures.” Financing for scientific research, testing, and design, and the “purchase of weapons and military technology, come from different sections of the government budget of the USSR.” In short, the Soviet defense budget did not include the production and acquisition of weapons. With the realization of a “radical price reform,” Petrovsky assured his audience that it would become possible to “realistically compare common military budgets.”⁸⁰ This accords with the view of some Western analysts who have contended that the Soviet production of weapons was treated as a nonproductive activity performed for the Defense Ministry and that the enterprises making these weapons were budget supported. Since prices on weapons excluded profit, the total value of produced weapons could be substantially reduced wherever they appeared in the Soviet budget. A reform of pricing would put an end to this accounting trick. Petrovsky emphasized that the Soviet Union and its allies were “already proposing to put a stop to the spiral of military budget growth and to limit it to the level of reasonable sufficiency.”⁸¹

In his article, whose publication was pegged to the opening of the UN General Assembly a month later, Gorbachev stated that a comparison of military budgets might be ready within two to three years. And indeed, in separate speeches in 1989, both Gorbachev and Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov affirmed that military expenditures were frozen in 1987–88, giving the economy an additional 10 billion rubles in the budget in comparison with what had been envisaged in the five-year plan. In 1989, Gorbachev and Ryzhkov both cited what was widely perceived as a “compromise” figure on defense spending of 77.3 billion rubles (U.S.\$128 billion). Both also mentioned plans to limit military expenditures in 1990–91 by an additional 10 billion rubles, or 14 percent.⁸² In another speech, made also in 1989, Ryzhkov explained that during the formation of the five-year plan in 1986, because of the “international situation at the time and our military doctrine, we were forced to traditionally provide for greater spending on defense, at a pace that exceeded our national revenue.” He pointed out that thanks to the conclusion of arms control agreements that had resulted in the reduction of different types of weapons and a new, defensive military doctrine, it would be possible to limit defense expenditures allocated in the five-year plan by “nearly 30 billion rubles” in the next two years and that by 1995 it was planned to decrease spending by up to 50 percent.⁸³

The Soviet defense burden, however, was much higher than these figures would imply. Gorbachev himself had admitted that defense expenditures were 40 percent of the state budget, rather than the often cited 16 percent. Given that the Soviet budget revenue in 1989 was 402 billion rubles, the cited 73.3 billion rubles spent on defense would account for only 18 percent. If defense spending was 40 percent, then the figure would have been 161 billion rubles. Indeed, even top Soviet analysts contended that the new official figures for the defense budget understated the real amount of the defense budget by 30 to 40 percent. In the end,

no one knew precisely how much was spent on the military because of incomplete and unverified evidence. Even Akhromeyev, when he appeared before the U.S. House Armed Services Committee in July 1989, admitted that some prices in the defense economy might not fully reflect the true resource costs.⁸⁴ A year earlier, Akhromeyev had announced that full details regarding Soviet military spending would not be made available for another year and a half or until after price reform, which would make evident the military's procurement subsidies. This much-awaited price reform, however, never came, and in the end the Soviet military budget was never disclosed.⁸⁵

After Gorbachev's surprise announcement at the United Nations in December 1989, the Politburo met to assess the results of Gorbachev's speech. In response to the point made that there was a general incomprehension in the country about why the Soviet Union decided on a unilateral withdrawal, and Ligachev's observation that the party apparat should be told outright about the need to decrease the "inordinately large military budget," Gorbachev, in a fascinating admission about the necessity of hiding the extent of military expenditures, explained why this was the case. He said that the Soviet Union had to "conceal" the amount spent on defense because "If we say today how much we take from our national revenues for defense, then this may bring to naught the speech at the United Nations. This is because such a situation no longer exists in any other country. Only poverty-stricken countries spend half their budget on the military. . . . If we were to do this now, then they would tell us: your proposal is nonsense; you need to limit your military expenditures by three-four times." Gorbachev hoped that by the thirteenth five-year plan, which was to begin in 1991, military expenditures would be brought under control and then they "will be nearer to that of the Americans."⁸⁶

The decrease in military expenditures ultimately depended on the military-industrial complex. While the representatives of the VPK were well suited to the initial perestroika objectives of discipline, efficiency, and quality control, they were the natural, and most powerful, opponents of Gorbachev's plans to decrease defense spending and decentralize the economy. Here were corporatist interests that had been left intact (as opposed to those of the military), interests that the VPK staunchly defended by supporting the notion of class struggle, the Stalinist image of the enemy, and the central-administrative system of control. The leaders of the military-industrial complex resisted any further moves toward reform and were in the forefront of the August 1991 coup attempt. According to Ronald Sagdeev, the VPK "realigned after the failure of the coup." They warned the new leadership of Boris Yeltsin about the consequences of hasty reforms and the danger of social unrest that would be provoked by massive layoffs from military enterprises. Yeltsin, according to Sagdeev, was "under relentless pressure" from the VPK and finally "compromised." The VPK industries were given the green light to actively sell weaponry in the international market, and the leading industries were given extended special subsidies to prevent bankruptcy. The military industrial complex, Sagdeev contends, "demonstrated that it will outlive the system that created it."⁸⁷

Conclusion

Unlike his predecessors, Gorbachev renounced the relevance of class struggle because he wanted to make the change in political priorities set out by his new thinking last and thereby shore up the flagging fortunes of socialism. To redirect Soviet domestic and foreign policy away from constant conflict to emphasis on “common human values,” Gorbachev had first to change the terms of political discourse and thereby begin altering the way the Soviet Union viewed the world. Domestically, the effect of discounting the relevance of the international class struggle in favor of “common human values,” in addition to the economic implications, was the dissipation of fear. By dismissing this Marxist principle as no longer tenable in the realities of the nuclear age, Gorbachev did away with the Stalinist image of the enemy. In so doing, he relinquished one of the principal tools of party control. The siege mentality that had been methodically fostered by the Manichaeian division of the world into friend and foe over decades was lifted. This, in turn, led to the following logic: (a) if international relations were to be perceived in favor of “common human values,” then the imperialist West no longer presented a military threat; (b) as a result, defense expenditures should decrease and there would be no need to keep the economy on a wartime footing; and (c) with an economy that was to redirect itself toward the production of consumer goods, party control of the economy would no longer be needed and, in fact, had already proved to be a hindrance.

Indeed, the tenet of class struggle was the linchpin that upheld the *raison d’être* of the Soviet Union. It rationalized domestic priorities by militarizing the structure as well as the content of the economy; and it rationalized foreign policy, resulting in misadventures such as Afghanistan and obstinacy in the arms control process. For Gorbachev, the tenet of class struggle posed a needling contradiction to his objectives. It was at the base of the conflict between the dictates of new thinking and the Marxist-Leninist beliefs that had informed Soviet political practice.

By changing the core tenet of Marxism-Leninism, Gorbachev promoted a new world view based on interdependence, common interests, and mutual security. In this way, he was also able to alter the rules and norms that were constitutive of Stalinist political practice, specifically, the maintenance of the society and economy in a virtual state of war-preparedness.

Did Gorbachev succeed? Although he was successful in changing the Soviet world view to a great degree, Gorbachev failed in his objective to revive the fortunes of the Soviet Union and the ideal of socialism. The bane of Gorbachev’s reform efforts was the conservative and tenacious Central Committee, which foiled his attempt to renew it at every turn. Gorbachev’s unswerving commitment to the party, and his inability to accept that as an institution it was inextricably tied to all the vestiges of Stalinism, marked the limits of his domestic reforms. Furthermore, Gorbachev’s doctrinal innovations had a host of unintended consequences, and the very fact that they were cognitively denied by Gorbachev attested to his unwavering fundamental belief in the socialist choice. Externally, it caused the crumbling of Stalin’s most notorious handiwork in foreign policy—

the East European Communist bloc—while internally it resulted in an explosion of nationalism, which had been brutally suppressed by Stalin, causing the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. This fundamental geopolitical shift signaled the end of the cold war and eradicated one of Stalin’s most enduring legacies.

By changing Soviet political discourse, Gorbachev sought to change Stalinist political practice, hoping to breathe new life into the Soviet system. What he did not comprehend, however, was that by renouncing the tenet of class struggle, he had begun the process of unraveling the Soviet system he had once sought to preserve. Gorbachev, with his aim of revitalizing the Soviet Union, did not fully grasp to what extent “speaking a language involves taking on a world, and [that] altering the concepts constitutive of the language involves nothing less than remaking the world.”⁸⁸

NOTES

1. David Remnick, *Lenin’s Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Random House, 1993), 44.
2. Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 173.
3. A premise of Michael Foucault in “The Discourse on Language,” *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 49.
4. William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 1.
5. Steven L. Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 14.
6. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1997), 290.
7. Jerry Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR, 1985–91* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 110.
8. Georgi Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody: reformatsia Gorbacheva glazami ego pomoshnika* (Moscow: Rossika, 1993), 41–42.
9. For the influence of Berlinguer, see Mikhail Gorbachev, *Zhizn i reformy* (Moscow: Novosti, 1995), 1:255.
10. Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 159, 156.
11. See Charles Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man,” in *Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look*, Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, eds. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 57–58. He explains that intersubjective meanings “are rooted in social practice” of a society.
12. On the emergence of a political elite, see Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Thomas Risse Kappen, “Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures, and the End of the Cold War,” *International Organization* 48 (spring 1994): 185–214. On pressures of modernization see Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR, 1985–91*; Jack Snyder, “Myths, Modernization and the PostGorbachev World,” in *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War*, Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 109–26; and Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “Soviet Reform and the End of the Cold War: Explaining Large-Scale Historical Change,” *Review of International Studies*, 17 (July 1991): 225–50; on institutional interests see Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions*.
13. See Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The International Sources of Soviet

Change,” *International Security* 16 (winter 1991/92): 74–118. Kenneth Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security* 18 (fall 1993): 44–79; and William C. Wolforth, “Realism and the End of the Cold War,” *International Security* 19 (winter 1994–95): 91–129.

14. Charles Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man,” in *Interpretative Social Science: A Second Look*, Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, eds. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 54.

15. Alexander S. Tsipko, *Is Stalinism Really Dead?* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), vi.

16. M. S. Gorbachev speech to the British Parliament, 18 December 1984, *Izbrannye rechi i stati* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1987), 2:115.

17. Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR, 1985–91*, 195.

18. Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 8.

19. On academic innovations predating Gorbachev, see Allen Lynch, *The Soviet Study of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 60–70; see also Jeffrey Checkel, “Ideas, Institutions, and the Gorbachev Foreign Policy Revolution,” *World Politics* 45 (January 1993): 271–300.

20. That the avoidance of war had no formal place in Soviet military doctrine, see Marshal S. Akhromeyev, “Dokriny predotvrashcheniya voiny, zashchity mira i sotsializma,” *Problemy mira i sotsializma* 12 (December 1987): 25.

21. See also Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 146.

22. M. Gorbachev, “Politicheskii Doklad Tsentralnogo Komiteta KPSS XXVII Sezda Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuz,” KPSS, *Materialy XXVII Sezda Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuz* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1986), 7; Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 147.

23. Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era, the United States and the Soviet Union, 1983–1990* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991), 161.

24. M. S. Gorbachev, *Oktyabr i perestroika: revolyutsiya prodolzhaetsia* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1987), 117.

25. Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Random House, 1995), 472.

26. Gorbachev, “Politicheskii Doklad Tsentralnogo Komiteta KPSS XXVII Sezdu Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuz,” 62, 64, 65, 67.

27. For the party program on defense support, see *Programma kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuz*, *Novaya redaktsiya* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1986), 115, cited in Stephen M. Meyer, “The Sources and Prospects of Gorbachev’s New Political Thinking on Security,” *International Security* 13 (fall 1988): 126.

28. Gorbachev, “Politicheskii Doklad Tsentralnogo Komiteta KPSS XXVII Sezda Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuz,” 73–74.

29. A. S. Chernyaev, *Shest let s Gorbachevym: po dnevnkovym zapisyam* (Moscow: Izdatelskaya grupa Progress Kultura, 1993), 269–73.

30. S. F. Akhromeyev and G. M. Kornienko, *Glazami Marshala i Diplomata: kriticheskii vzglyad na vneshnyuyu politiku SSSR do i posle 1985 goda* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1992), 70.

31. Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody: reformatsia Gorbacheva glazami ego pomoshnika*, 90.

32. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Gody trudnykh reshenii, izbrannoe: 1985–1992* (Moscow: Alfa-Print, 1993), 46–55.

33. For the text of the declaration on the new military doctrine, see “O Voennoi Doktrine: gosudarstv—uchastnikov Varshavskogo Dogovora,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 May 1987, 1. On Gareev’s comments at the press conference, see “Doktrina predotvrashcheniya voiny: v press-tsentre MID SSSR,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 23 June 1987, 3.

34. “O Voennoi Doktrine: gosudarstv—uchastnikov Varshavskogo Dogovora,” *Kras-*

naya Zvezda, 30 May 1987, 1.

35. Interview with S. F. Akhromeyev, "Armiya i perestroika," *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 14 January 1989, 1, 3; interview with Akhromeyev, "Sovetnik: predsedatelya Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 2 July 1989, 2.

36. Akhromeyev and Kornienko, *Glazami Marshala i Diplomata*, 229.

37. For Moiseyev's speech, see "S pozitsii oboronitelnoi dokriny," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 10 February 1989, 1, 2.

38. Interview with V. P. Karpov, "V XXI vek — bez oruzhiya," *Pravda*, 15 January 1989, 4.

39. The resistance of the VPK was pointed out by former Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh in Wolhforth, ed., *Witnesses to the End of the Cold War*, 34.

40. Arthur J. Alexander, *The Conversion of Soviet Defense Industry* (Santa Monica: RAND Corp, P-7620, January 1990), 14, 28.

41. Gorbachev, *Zhizn i reformy*, 2:311–13.

42. Akhromeyev and Kornienko, *Glazami Marshala i Diplomata*, 68.

43. Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody*, 355.

44. Eduard Shevardnadze, "The 19th All-Union CPSU Conference: Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," *International Affairs* 10 (October 1988):19–20.

45. Yegor Ligachev's speech in Gorky, "Za delo—bez raskachek," *Pravda*, 6 August 1988, 2.

46. Interview with S. F. Akhromeyev, "Armiya i perestroika," *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 14 January 1989, 1, 3.

47. Akhromeyev and Kornienko, *Glazami Marshala i Diplomata*, 214–16.

48. K novym mashtabam i kachestvu obshcheevropeiskogo dialoga," *Pravda*, 20 January 1989, 5.

49. "Za stabilnuyu i bezopasnuyu Evorpu, svobodnuyu ot yadernogo i khimicheskogo oruzhiya, za sushchestvennoe sokrashcheniye vooruzhennykh sil, vooruzhenii i voennykh rashhodov," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 9 July 1989, 1, 3.

50. For Shevardnadze's address to the United Nations, see E. A. Shevardnadze, "Sudby mira neotdelimy ot sudby nashei perestroiki," *Pravda*, 27 September 1989, 4, 5; and to the Supreme Soviet, see E. A. Shevardnadze, "Vneshniaya politika i perestroika," *Pravda*, 24 October 1989, 2, 3, 4.

51. "Vstrecha v Moskve," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 December 1989, 1.

52. Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little Brown, 1993), 86.

53. I. N. Kuzmin, *Krushenie GDR: zametki ochevidtsa* (Moscow, 1993), 4, 5.

54. Gorbachev, *Zhizn i reformy*, 2:404.

55. Akhromeyev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i Diplomata*, 227.

56. "Vystupleniya v preniyakh po dokladu," *Pravda*, 7 February 1990, 2, 4.

57. Gorbachev, *Zhizn i reformy*, 1:276.

58. Ibid.

59. A. N. Yakovlev, *Gorkaya Chasha: Bolshevizm i Reformatsiya Rossii* (Yaroslavl: Verkhne-Volzhscoe, 1994), 195.

60. Karpov, "V XXI vek—bez oruzhiya."

61. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 29 June 1989 and *Tass*, 2 February 1989, cited in Arthur J. Alexander, *The Conversion of Soviet Defense Industry* (Santa Monica: RAND Corp, P-7620, January 1990), 14, 28.

62. Shakhazarov, *Tsena svobody*, 41–42 (exclamation in the original).

63. Robert Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (New York: Viking, 1991), 315.

64. Gorbachev, *Izbrannye rechi i stati*, 3:162.

65. Chernyaev, *Shest let*, 163–66.

66. "Printsipy perestroiki—v praktiku," *Pravda*, June 4, 1987, 2.

67. M. S. Gorbachev, *Oktyabr i perestroika: revolyutsiya prodolzhaetsia* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1987), 44–45, 47–52.

68. M. S. Gorbachev, "O perestroike i kadrovoi politike partii," *Izbrannye rechi i stati*, 4:301, 303.
69. Shevardnadze, "The 19th All-Union CPSU Conference," 19.
70. For more details about the new Supreme Soviet and the military, see Susanne Sternthal, *Gorbachev's Reforms: De-Stalinization through Demilitarization* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 150–52.
71. Mikhail Tsypkin, "The Committee for Defense and State Security of the USSR Supreme Soviet," *Radio Liberty: Report on the USSR* 2 (11 May 1990): 8–11.
72. Gorbachev, *Zhizn i Reformy*, 1:431.
73. "Draft General Program of the Estonian People's Front (19 August)," in *USSR Documents Annual 1988: Perestroika—The Second Stage*, J. L. Black (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1989), 380.
74. Vyacheslav Dashichev, "Vostok-zapad: poisk novikh otnoshenii," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 18 May 1988, 14.
75. Shevardnadze, "The 19th All-Union CPSU Conference," 12–14.
76. For Akhromeyev's speech see, "Perestroika Trebuyet Del," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 13 August 1988, 2.
77. Andrey Kozyrev, "Confidence and the Balance of Interests," *International Affairs* 11 (November 1988): 7, 10.
78. For details of the debates, see Sternthal, *Gorbachev's Reforms*, 114–21.
79. For Petrovsky's speech, see "Vybor v polzu razoruzheniya i razvitiya," *Izvestiya*, 26 August 1987, 4.
80. Ibid. For Gorbachev's statement to the conference, see "Obrashchenie Generalnogo sekretarya TsK KPSS k uchastnikam Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii po vzaimosvyazi mezhdu razoruzheniem i razvitiem," *Pravda*, 26 August 1987, 2.
81. On the view expressed by Western analysts, see Dmitri Steinberg, "Estimating Total Soviet Military Expenditures: An Alternative Approach Based on Reconstructed Soviet National Accounts," in *The Soviet Defence Enigma: Estimating Costs and Burden*, Carl G. Jacobsen, ed. (Oxford, UK: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Oxford University Press, 1987), 42; Henry S. Rowan and Charles Wolf, Jr., eds., *The Impoverished Superpower: Perestroika and the Soviet Military Burden* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 1990). The proposal to openly discuss military budgets of the two military blocs and related issues goes back to the January 1983 Prague Political Declaration, but nothing came of it. Petrovsky, "Vybor v polzu razoruzheniya i razvitiya."
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83. "Sluzhit interesam naroda: doklad N. I. Ryzhkova 'O programme predstoyashchei deyatel'nosti pravitel'stva SSSR,'" *Pravda*, 8 June 1989, 3.
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