

1989

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### Recommended Citation

Bremant, Marshall (1989) "Reflections on Soviet New Thinking on Security Questions," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 42 : No. 4 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol42/iss4/3>

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# Reflections on Soviet New Thinking on Security Questions

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Marshall Bremont

**T**hese are momentous times. It does not take a Toynbee to grasp that we are living in a period when great empires, built on the blood, the sacrifice, the lives of millions of martyrs and victims, are beginning to crack at the seams. Even the most casual television viewer is able to appreciate that three great contiguous areas of the world, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the People's Republic of China, and Eastern Europe, are being convulsed by currents and forces which ultimately may not be controllable—that they are, in short, in a pre-revolutionary situation.

We may be witnessing the breakup of the Marxist-Leninist system. We are certainly witnessing its profound transformation, a transformation that has been brought about by the boldness and vision of our prime potential adversary, the only man on earth who has the power at his fingertips to inflict indescribable destruction on our historically sheltered country.

This man has shaken up his own society in a way and at a pace previously unimaginable, not only to expert foreign observers, but to his own countrymen. He has proposed a new domestic agenda and has directed a creative group of civilian strategists to formulate a new rationale for looking at defense and security questions, known as the "New Thinking." In doing so, he has questioned the fundamental assumptions underlying Soviet perceptions about their own security. We are thus walking in new and uncharted country, deprived of familiar landmarks.

In this situation, it behooves us to look again at our own assumptions regarding security, particularly in Europe, assumptions which have convinced us as a society to spend more than \$1.5 trillion in the past decade to maintain

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## 6 Naval War College Review

a forward posture designed to contain and deter a war with Moscow. A number of influential thinkers have recently pointed out that this is an awful lot to pay for an insurance policy whose goal is to protect us from something which will not happen, particularly since critical defense needs in other areas will not be met in our present stringent budgetary environment if these premiums continue to be paid at current rates.

I

Within the past two years, Mikhail Gorbachev has called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons by the turn of the century; the reduction of Warsaw Pact and Nato conventional forces to equality at half Nato's current levels; and the restructuring and redeployment of residual forces in an entirely defensive mode. As an earnest of his seriousness, last December he announced unilateral cuts in Soviet tank, artillery, aircraft and manpower levels, including nearly half the Soviet tanks now in Eastern Europe. And last May he proposed a first-phase treaty which would require massive Soviet ground force cuts in the area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains in return for minimal Nato changes.

Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze has repeatedly acknowledged that the Soviets need to change an image which others understandably find threatening. Moscow's new thinking, its adherence to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, its recognition of a military defeat in Afghanistan, as well as its constructive contribution to peaceful settlements in southern Africa and hopefully Indochina, may in part reflect this realization.

Gorbachev has captured the imagination of the world. In country after country—particularly in Western Europe—polling data indicates that people generally rate the Soviet leader as working harder for world peace than any Western politician, including the American president. He has achieved this effect, at least in part, because the Western response to his actions has been cautious. Given Soviet history and the enormous and redundant size of Moscow's force structure and weaponry, this caution is understandable.

Nevertheless, this country cannot afford to convey the impression that when the chips are down, we somehow prefer maintaining leadership of an alliance based on fear to a fundamental transformation of our relationship with the only nation that can destroy our homeland. Furthermore, these new opportunities are opening up at a time when many of us are beginning to conclude that a fundamental strategic reassessment by the United States and its allies is long overdue, that now is the time for us to determine whether we are pursuing the right path to lead us smoothly and safely into the next century.

Americans are aware that the international commitments which we assumed 40 years ago may no longer be entirely appropriate. For one thing

we are not as rich, relative to the nations with whom we are allied, as we were when we formulated the basic framework of our international military presence just after World War II. At that time we consistently produced more than 40 percent of the world's gross domestic product. In recent years that figure has been closer to 20 percent.

Equally important, there is enormous pressure on our leaders to reduce our military budget. With a smaller U.S. military, no matter how efficient, we would have trouble maintaining our international commitments in the same manner as over the past four decades. Diminishing natural resources, changes in the world's economic structure, the growth in importance of the countries bordering the Pacific Basin, the recent political shifts in the U.S.S.R., China and elsewhere, and the improved capabilities of many of our allies dictate that we must, perhaps for the first time since the late 1940s, seriously debate the military posture of the United States around the world and the roles and missions assigned to our military services.

The total population of our four largest European allies—West Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy—is only slightly less than that of the Soviet Union. Their total annual gross national product exceeds that of the U.S.S.R. by at least \$500 billion. They are much more developed industrially and scientifically. They have a great military tradition and a credible nuclear deterrent. It is therefore legitimate to question why U.S. ground forces should be poised in such quantities on their front lines.

A prerequisite for making significant changes in our defense policy is coming to terms, both within our government and with our allies, on how we want relations to develop with our only major potential military enemy, the U.S.S.R. Those who urge caution in response to Gorbachev's initiatives and who defend a straight-line continuation of past strategy and policy point out that we have experienced four decades without war in Europe, an era of peace on that continent unprecedented in the past millennium. They state that Nato deserves the credit for preserving that peace and stability.

They have in mind not just Nato's success in deterring war in Europe for 40 years, but also the framework it has provided for West Germany's reintegration into the Western community. They warn that significant changes in the U.S. military role in Europe could be destabilizing during the present period of ferment in Eastern Europe. Only by remaining firmly locked in an Atlantic alliance led by the United States, they warn, can Bonn pursue political and economic ties in Eastern Europe beneficial to all of us without alarming its Eastern and Western neighbors.

The present moment of unparalleled East-West opportunity, this argument runs, is the worst possible time to confront West Europeans with hard political choices about how to organize their own defense, including the appropriate conventional and nuclear role for the *Bundeswehr*. Many thoughtful Germans share this view. One of them recently described his country as being like a

## 8 Naval War College Review

teenager with a million dollars in the bank and consequently with lots of very nervous friends, neighbors, and relations.

Those who urge caution on military grounds point out that despite Gorbachev's various assertions and proposals, and the beginning of his promised unilateral cuts, there has been little diminution of the Soviet military threat, as evidenced by the enormous investment which the Soviets continue to put into their military effort. What real value does the elimination of old tanks have when new and better tanks continue to pour off the assembly line in thousands? Indeed, we would all agree that declarations of defense sufficiency and defensive defense do not in themselves turn swords into ploughshares and that the size of Moscow's current force structure is entirely out of proportion to any kind of defensive need on its part.

When Nikita Khrushchev assumed power in the U.S.S.R., its armed forces totalled 5,732,000 men. He reduced that to 3.2 million, a cut of 2.5 million men. This manpower was desperately needed by the civilian sector in the late 1950s. Similar needs exist in the stultified Soviet economy of the late 1980s and the 1990s. Yet today the armed forces of the Soviet Union, a country which faces no real military threat from any of its neighbors, total more than five and a quarter million men.

These forces are not only immense in size but have become extremely sophisticated and effective. That the maintenance of such enormous, well-equipped, well-exercised, and well-trained forces by an economy which is about half the size of that of the United States has bollixed the Soviet civilian sector is not a matter of dispute. The Soviets themselves have acknowledged this repeatedly.

Yet if they have no hostile intentions, why are they distorting their economy, overburdening their society, and dissatisfying their citizenry? What are they afraid of? Aleksandr Yakovlev, who ranks just behind Gorbachev on the Politburo and who spent a year studying at Columbia University and four years as Ambassador to Canada, understands that the United States does not have aggressive intentions against the Soviet Union and that Nato is not an offensive threat to Moscow.

Surely Willie Brandt's private secretary, who was a Soviet spy throughout the entire period Brandt was Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, managed to convey to his KGB spy-masters that there was no threat to the U.S.S.R. from West Germany. And surely brilliant and highly experienced Soviet China experts such as Mikhail Kapitsa and Igor Rogachev have explained to the Politburo that Beijing has neither the capacity nor the desire to initiate hostilities with the U.S.S.R., as evidenced by the fact that the lowest priority among China's "Four Modernizations" is accorded to military modernization.

To explain this propensity of the Soviets to overspend on armies and weaponry, analysts have been reduced to disquisitions on paranoia, inferiority

complexes, and aberrant behavior. But there is perhaps a better explanation. The Soviets approach military planning with a seriousness and scientific methodology that warms the hearts of war college professors. And my own experience at the Naval War College, where the exigencies of wargaming placed me in the shoes of Soviet military commanders, first on the Western front and then in the Pacific, has given me insights into the basic dilemma facing the Soviet General Staff which I had not been able to obtain elsewhere.

I found that the military problems confronting the Soviets in a protracted, global, nonnuclear war against Nato, China and Japan—the worst case scenario which the Soviets must consider—are literally insoluble. The Soviets simply do not have the economic and military resources to prevail in a protracted war against such a formidable array of enemies. As long as China, Japan and Nato are determined to fight until victory is attained, the Soviets cannot win, even if they do achieve initial victories in Western Europe.

Given the inability of the Red Army to smash all its opponents and the realization by Moscow that nobody emerges a winner from nuclear warfare, the very best possible war scenario for the Soviet generals—and the construction of such scenarios is what they are paid to do—is to drive to the Channel within three weeks to a month, outflank and destroy our armies, and try to kill or capture the 325,000 troops and the 300,000 dependents the United States has on the Continent.

They could then use these hostages and this early success to try to conclude the war on favorable terms through political negotiations and before our naval superiority became a decisive factor and we had time to engage them in the Pacific and elsewhere on a global basis. In fact, there is considerable and credible evidence that this Hitler-like plan had been the Soviet global military grand strategy until the emergence of the new thinking. It had seemed to the Soviet General Staff the only way Moscow could win.

When looked at in this context and from the view of Soviet military planners, one finds that the 156 divisions in Europe and the 57 divisions along the Sino/Soviet border and facing Japan are by no means overwhelming. Indeed, they are an inadequate force, since there can be no reasonable guarantee that the Soviets could achieve victory through a blitzkrieg strategy. Nato is getting stronger, not weaker. The *Bundeswehr* has become a formidable force. Moscow well understands this. As high-tech solutions come more and more to dominate military problem-solving, as will certainly be the case in the 21st century, the chances of emerging relatively unscathed from a war with the West becomes less realizable for the Soviet military planner with each passing year.

And this may be one of the most important reasons why a fundamental strategic turning point is opening before us and why the Soviet military—albeit reluctantly—is going along with the radical proposals of Gorbachev and his new thinking strategists. Thus, both Soviet weaknesses and our own

internal need to readjust our grand strategy suggest that major initiatives are possible in U.S./Soviet relations in the coming decade, provided that we play our cards right. In order to do so, we must first understand why the Soviet leadership is calling for a fundamental restructuring of their society and for "New Thinking" about security problems.

## II

What the Soviet leadership has come to realize is that Leonid Brezhnev's long-sought total security was not only unattainable, but counterproductive. The time has come, various "New Thinkers" assert, to react to the other side's intentions, and not just to its capabilities. It is true that by giving the Soviet military everything it desired during a 20-year period, the Kremlin achieved such awesome military power that none of its neighbors would dare to attack it. But no matter what the Soviets had spent on defense from 1964-1984, they still would not have been attacked by any conceivable enemy.

Even more important, the Kremlin now realizes that granting the military on a regular basis somewhere between 15 and 25 percent of the Soviet gross national product had the effect not only of crippling economic growth and lowering living standards, but also of decreasing Moscow's capability to participate in the technological revolution which will alter the nature of warfare in the 21st century. Thus, Soviet strategists have concluded that the attempt to achieve total security has paradoxically resulted in a weakening, rather than a strengthening, of the U.S.S.R. vis-à-vis its potential enemies. They realize that Moscow's unrelenting military expansion during the Brezhnev period, plus the reckless adventurism which followed the fall of Saigon and lasted through the invasion of Afghanistan, made the U.S.S.R. weaker by spurring Nato nuclear deployments and causing the Reagan military buildup.

In one of the most notable passages in Shevardnadze's extraordinary speech to his foreign ministry colleagues in July 1988, he acknowledged that the Soviet Union had actually weakened its security by neglecting the development of its economic base for the sake of current military readiness. Even in strictly military terms, he maintained, the arsenal at hand at war's outbreak would be far less crucial than the capacity to generate new sinews of war.

Contributing to Moscow's uneasiness about its security was the inability of the vaunted Red Army to subdue an ill-equipped, disunited, and primitive foe in Afghanistan. The performance of Soviet troops in this tough mountain country was an eye-opener for the Kremlin. Problems of logistics, sanitation, morale, and even drug abuse revealed surprising military weaknesses which the General Staff failed to correct over an eight-year period. The best glasnost face has been put on the Politburo decision to withdraw. But let there be

no doubt that it was an unequivocal military defeat and that the inability to prevail against Afghans has kindled internal doubts about the Red Army's ability to subdue Germans and Americans.

Similarly, Gorbachev's call for the elimination of nuclear weapons, which I believe must be taken seriously, was not the result of a sudden philosophical conversion to the antinuclear movement, but was instead based on hard military judgment. Keep in mind the enormous cost—in fiscal, human, and prestige terms—which the current Soviet leadership paid as a result of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl and the subsequent evacuation of a city of 40,000 people. Nothing could better bring home to the Politburo the problems and costs of nuclear warfare, problems and costs which would make their efforts at Chernobyl seem like child's play. In fact, Soviet "New Thinkers" have specifically pointed out that even in a world free of nuclear weapons, nuclear deterrence would remain because of the ability of both sides to target nuclear power plants with conventional weapons.

Equally important, Soviet strategists believe that increasing missile accuracies coupled with enhanced conventional fuel-air explosives will give the battlefield commander of the 21st century all the advantages of nuclear weapons without their enormous ancillary drawbacks. They anticipate that future nonnuclear systems will experience an order of magnitude increase in destructive potential, thereby making nuclear systems redundant. Furthermore, conventional weapons of the future will be far more expensive than those in the present inventory.

The Soviet General Staff realizes that to keep the U.S.S.R. in the military forefront—and this is almost certainly the aim of Gorbachev as well—the leadership will have to make enormous investment in microelectronics, automated decision support systems, lasers, enhanced munitions lethality, telecommunications, and other high technologies. In order to do so, savings will have to be found elsewhere, perhaps—"New Thinkers" suggest—by reductions in nuclear expenditures, perhaps by reductions in the size of conventional forces. The East's proposal in the Conventional Force Negotiations last Spring to cut Soviet tanks from 41,500 to 14,000 almost certainly was motivated in part by this need.

"New Thinking" also asserts that the Soviets must strive for defensive sufficiency through mutual security, i.e., a situation where each side takes into consideration the security needs of the other. "By relying exclusively on technical-military assets," New Thinkers assert, "a country inevitably sets its own security against world security."

As noted earlier, a constant theme of Foreign Minister Shevardnadze is that the U.S.S.R. must change its international image. True security can only be achieved by the Soviet Union, he argues, when potential enemies realize that Moscow is not a threat to its neighbors. To achieve this, peaceful intentions have to be demonstrated by actions as well as by words. This is



## 12 Naval War College Review

why the unilateral troop and tank reductions Gorbachev announced last December—which even the most skeptical must admit have genuine military significance—focused so heavily on Eastern Europe. This is why Soviet tanks are not now threatening Poland, even though current developments in that remarkable country are far more ominous for the Kremlin than they were in 1981, or for that matter in 1956.

Correspondingly significant steps have been made by Gorbachev in helping to settle seemingly never-ending disputes in Angola and, hopefully, Cambodia. Despite a stated commitment to *détente*, the Brezhnev regime could not resist taking unilateral advantage of our defeat in Vietnam by engaging in the grossest kind of adventurism in Angola, Ethiopia, Yemen, Cambodia, and finally, Afghanistan. Gorbachev, by his actions, now seems to be saying that such moves were mistakes and that by making the U.S.S.R. seem a threat, they detracted from, rather than enhanced, Soviet security. Whatever their intention, their result turned out to be great increases both in American defense budgets and in Third World hostility.

Furthermore, to enhance its security in the 21st century, Soviet society and the Soviet educational system must be restructured to enable the U.S.S.R. to achieve the kind of widespread computer literacy which is common in the West and in Japan. This will be enormously expensive. It will mean the introduction of tens of millions of computers and copying machines into the Soviet Union—with all that implies for KGB control of Soviet society. As former President Reagan said last June in a speech in London, “the Goliath of totalitarianism will be brought down by the David of the microchip.” The Soviet Union by any rational calculus is, in every way except military power, a second-class nation. If the U.S.S.R. does not remedy its shortcomings, Soviet strategists predict that it could become a second-class nation militarily as well.

Gorbachev is an apparatchik. Educated in the law, which is very unusual for a top Soviet leader, he has spent his entire working career in party affairs. Everything he has done since taking over in March 1985 suggests that his preeminent goal is to restructure, rejuvenate and reinvigorate the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and fit it within an overarching legal framework. The widespread cynicism and apathy endemic throughout Soviet society can only be countered by an injection of the kind of idealism and mass participation which motivated party workers in the 1920s. This idealism is now moribund. Whether Gorbachev can resuscitate it is doubtful.

The rulers of the Soviet Union are widely perceived—both within and without the U.S.S.R.—to be in charge of a failed imperial system and a bankrupt society. It takes more than military power to rule a great empire. It takes a powerful cultural force, the kind which others seek to emulate, which London and Paris still exert today over many of their former dominions, whose sons and daughters—just as their grandfathers did—seek to be educated at Oxford and the Sorbonne. But which Hungarian or Polish or Czech

philosopher, poet, or painter yearns for tutelage in Moscow or Leningrad? Even the Russians themselves look abroad for cultural stimulation. After all, the greatest living Russian writer now lives in New Hampshire; the greatest Russian poet in upstate New York; the greatest Russian dancer in Manhattan; the greatest Russian musician in Washington.

Before the Russian revolution, Russia and Poland were the breadbaskets of Europe. Now they suffer perpetual food shortages. Before the Second World War, Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia were world-class centers of heavy industrial production. Today the products manufactured in those regions—and in the U.S.S.R.—are hopelessly uncompetitive on world markets. It is the task of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to sell its program to its citizenry. But as Willy Loman and other salesmen long ago discovered, hyping a second-class product over an extended period of time corrodes both one's morale and one's morality. It destroys the soul.

The focus of perestroika is the Soviet economy, a genuine basket case. Despite a statistical system which exaggerates the level of real growth, the Soviets now admit that expansion has ceased. Living standards have fallen, as has life expectancy. Medical care is inadequate. Consumer goods are not available. The banking system is rudimentary. There are still no computerized banks or even private checking accounts in the Soviet Union. Instead of becoming a more modern country, the U.S.S.R. is falling further and further behind the West and the advanced Asian economies.

### III

Gorbachev's program to resolve the above problems, all of which are interrelated, has been encapsulated in three Russian phrases: *perestroika* [restructuring]; *glasnost* [openness]; and *novoe mishlenie* [new thinking]. We have every reason to wish him well in his efforts to restructure Soviet society and to make the Soviet military less threatening, both in appearance and in reality. Nevertheless, we have equally compelling reasons to maintain an attitude of hopeful skepticism about his chances.

First of all, it is highly doubtful that Gorbachev will succeed in his efforts to restructure the massive, sluggish Soviet economy. The implications of this probable failure are not clear to anyone, probably not even to Gorbachev himself; and we cannot be expected to take irrevocable decisions until the security ramifications of such failure can be gauged more accurately.

The Soviet Union, despite Gorbachev's reforms, is still a command economy. But many of the links which made that command economy function coherently have now been destroyed by perestroika. The result is something like an army in which each division commander suddenly has the right to deploy his troops and armored forces as he sees fit, but in an area of responsibility which is only vaguely defined. As a result, we are now seeing

## 14 Naval War College Review

economic dislocations and a consumer goods scarcity far worse than when Gorbachev took over four years ago.

Transforming a command economy into a market economy after 70 years of attempted extirpation of the very forces which make a market economy work is no easy matter. A lack of economic knowledge is pervasive throughout the top Soviet leadership. Although the "New Thinking" in economics pays tribute to market forces, incentives associated with profits make Soviet planners uneasy because the profit motive is still deeply distrusted, is still felt to be immoral. They remain committed to full employment and to fixed pricing of essential services and commodities and are therefore unwilling to condone taking risks or to reward entrepreneurial ability.

The collapse of the Stalinist economic system is already taking place. Since Peter the Great, the historical cycle in Russia has consisted of short periods of reforms inexorably followed by long periods of repression. Only the most starry-eyed observer would be willing to suggest that this historical precedent cannot be repeated.

Second, it is by no means clear that the Soviet military will ultimately accept radical cuts in the conventional force structure. Going along with perestroika and new thinking on nuclear matters is one thing, but agreeing to conventional cuts deep enough to persuade Western skeptics that Moscow no longer poses a threat to its neighbors will unquestionably evoke stubborn resistance from at least some elements of the General Staff and the uniformed services.

Khrushchev crippled the Soviet Navy and cut the Red Army significantly. As a result, the Soviet marshals played an important role in his ouster. Whether Gorbachev will be successful in a similar attempt must remain an open question until the cuts which the Soviets have proposed have actually been made. As Professor Thomas Nichols recently remarked, the Soviet military "has a view of the world, and a sense of duty to country, that is coming more and more into conflict with a general secretary who does not share those views, and who seeks to remove the military from a position in security policy they have enjoyed for at least twenty years."

Third, despite many changes of personnel at the top, those on whom the leadership is counting for innovation and new thinking beneath the upper layer are essentially the same people in the same jobs they have been holding for years, and sometimes for decades. Whether these people, especially the Soviet military and key defense production officials, can be prevailed upon to implement the kind of perestroika Gorbachev is proposing is highly doubtful.

Fourth, history suggests that other nations should be extremely leery about placing much faith in Soviet verbal declarations. An old Russian proverb asserts that words can be twisted into any desired shape. Two-thirds of the nations which signed nonaggression treaties with the Soviet Union in the 1930s, for example, were subsequently invaded by Moscow. This includes

Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland, none of whom took any action which could conceivably be interpreted as having provoked such attacks. A solemn 1972 agreement not to take unilateral advantage of the United States turned out to be a scrap of paper when prospective easy victories in the international class struggle in the Third World seemed to be in the offing for the Kremlin.

Fifth, an educated Western skepticism is far more helpful to Gorbachev in dealing with conservatives and doubters in his own society than uncritical acceptance of Soviet declarations and assertions would be. For six decades, some in the West have apologized for Soviet actions, catered to Moscow's rather leaden sensitivities, and urged that we be more forthcoming and more understanding in our treatment of Soviet security concerns. It is now possible to ask ourselves where we would be today had we followed their policy dictates. If we had listened to them, would we at this moment be trying to figure out how to respond to Moscow's exciting "New Thinking" and the proposals, and even actions, which it has generated—proposals and actions which would have been unimaginable only a few short years ago? The answer to that question is clearly no.

If we had listened to them, Brezhnev's program in the security arena would have been viewed in the Soviet Union as a great success and not as an abysmal failure. It was the strength of Western institutions and the solidarity of Western governments which were major factors promoting the new thinking. In this sense, the Westerners who have given Gorbachev a shot of much needed credibility are Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Gorbachev's fulsome praise for Reagan, by then a lame duck president, in his speech to the United Nations last December, was no empty gesture.

Finally, although Gorbachev himself is a political genius, his program, in much of its philosophical underpinning, is old wine in new bottles, cleverly articulated rehashes of ideas and phrases that the Soviets have been putting forward for decades. We have already experienced Khrushchevian reforms and Brezhnevian détente and have watched those reforms and that détente disappear when they no longer coincided with the dictates of proletarian internationalism. We hope Gorbachev will be more successful than his predecessors. But whether he will or not remains to be seen.

#### IV

However, while caution is understandable, there are also compelling reasons for attempting to match Gorbachev in boldness and vision, and for doing so without waiting for further Soviet evolution. First of all, the Soviet programmatic decisions which we would like to see will have to be made within the context of the upcoming five-year plan, i.e., within the next two years. Because of the need for significant immediate progress, Soviet "New

## 16 Naval War College Review

Thinkers” have argued that if the U.S.S.R. waits for mutual agreements, time will pass it by. They fear political inertia. So should we.

Furthermore, developments in Central America or the Middle East, an uprising in Eastern Europe or a major conflict between Soviet nationalities could all result in a situation in which Gorbachev himself would be forced to retreat from his perestroika goals in unforeseeable ways. Gorbachev has managed, thus far successfully, to blame the ills of Soviet society on his predecessors. But at some point, after he has been in power long enough, he will have to start assuming the blame for such ills himself. We must be on the path leading toward fundamental changes in our relationship well before this takes place.

This is even more true if one agrees with Defense Secretary Richard Cheney that Gorbachev is likely soon to fall and be replaced by a more belligerent Soviet leader. If we accept this rather shaky hypothesis, we should be doubly eager to obtain Moscow’s agreement to deep reductions while that is still possible. But in order to go further and change our fundamental relationship, we must first articulate what Moscow has to do to persuade us that it is no longer a threat to world peace and stability, that its proposals have genuine, permanent substance and are not just smoke and mirrors.

President Bush was criticized for his Texas A&M speech last May which laid out some simple markers by which to judge Soviet behavior. I disagree with such criticism and indeed wish the president had expanded his list and been even more specific. Gorbachev has already demonstrated—by deeds, not just words—that he is a serious and determined leader who deserves to be taken seriously. But nothing which he has done thus far is irreversible. Our task is to convince him that if he wishes to alter the political and security climate of our planet irrevocably and irreversibly and thereby give his party and his nation the breathing space [*peredishka*] needed for a basic political and economic transformation, he should publicly set as his ultimate goal the following 17 points:

- To reduce the total Soviet Armed Forces from five million to approximately two million men, which—along with their enormous reserves and their “cadre” system of mobilization—would still be a large force, adequate to maintain Soviet internal and external security.

- To withdraw all Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, Mongolia and the Kuriles, and to demilitarize the Sino-Soviet border.

- To halt further production of land-based ICBMs and to destroy these weapons or reconfigure them for space-launch purposes. (These are fearsome first-strike weapons of indiscriminate and immoral destructive power; one cannot build a relationship of trust with a neighbor who has a loaded 50-caliber machine gun pointed at one’s bedroom.)

- To convert a significant portion of Soviet military industry to civilian purposes.

- To renounce chemical warfare, to destroy stocks and production facilities for such weapons, and to agree to an intrusive inspection scheme verifying that such actions have been taken.

- To publish accurate data on the Soviet military budget in accordance with agreed cost-accounting methods.

- To limit lethal arms shipments to participants in Third World conflicts.

- To position foreign inspectors at appropriate Soviet command and control centers, arms depots, airfields, rail heads and fuel dumps to monitor preparations for going to war.

- To cease promoting and engaging in espionage activities (i.e., to stop suborning our citizens and running agents within our country and to close the mammoth phone-tapping operation at Lourdes in Cuba covering our entire East Coast).

- To cut out disinformation programs designed to discredit the United States. (Soviet media to the contrary, the AIDS virus was not invented in biological warfare laboratories in Fort Dietrick, Maryland; Noriega and Qaddafi are not noble victims of persecution by American reactionaries.)

- To destroy the Berlin Wall and the armed corridor which separates East and West Germany and Eastern and Western Europe and to renounce the Brezhnev doctrine as specifically as academician Bogomolov did at the 19th CPSU Party Conference.

- To stop meddling harmfully in various trouble spots throughout the world, particularly in Central America and the Middle East, and to join us in constructive efforts to settle these problems equitably, thereby laying the framework for cooperation in the security arena of the type envisaged by Roosevelt for the United Nations in 1945.

- To grant Soviet citizens reasonable and convincing guarantees that their fundamental rights will be respected.

- To increase scientific and space cooperation and significantly relax spurious definitions of what are considered to be state secrets in this area.

- To join the international economy, including the General Agreement for Tariffs and Trade and the World Bank, and to rationalize pricing and foreign exchange control systems with the ultimate objective of making the ruble a fully convertible currency.

- To allow for the opening of foreign university-level institutions in the Soviet Union, similar to the Johns Hopkins University Center in Bologna.

- To increase exchanges to the point where they reach a critical mass and make a significant impact upon Soviet society. (There are at present 20,000 Chinese students in the United States. Let us look forward to the day when we have 20,000 or more Soviet students as well.)

## V

Not long ago, calling for a Soviet leader to adhere to such a program would have seemed hopelessly naive. But none of these points are inconsistent with declared Soviet aims and with Soviet "New Thinking" on security questions. To press for genuinely radical global solutions may seem like pie in the sky, but keep in mind that China not too long ago was thought by many in the United States to be the most threatening of all nations. The joke in the early sixties was that optimists study Russian and pessimists study Chinese.

If the Soviet Union took major steps toward implementing all, or even a significant portion, of these 17 points, we obviously would be living in a different world. We would have laid the foundations of trust upon which a fundamentally different security relationship could be based.

What can we do to move Gorbachev along the path he claims to have chosen? In those areas which are internal to the U.S.S.R., we can achieve much by helping Gorbachev open up Soviet society and create a market-influenced economy. We have much to offer in the implementation of glasnost. Our interests in this regard parallel those of the Soviet leadership.

On the economic side, we can help him by providing managerial skills for a market environment at which we are expert, skills which Soviet economists and planners—who have no idea, for example, of simple Western accounting concepts such as depreciation or amortization—sadly lack. This can have a double payoff: first, by giving Moscow incentive to create an economic environment in which Western businessmen will want to operate, and second, over time, by the "constructive subversion" of exposing Soviet middle managers to Western practices and thinking.

Most immediately, we can help Gorbachev in framing a productive atmosphere in the security arena. It is essential to keep in mind that for Gorbachev to succeed in his domestic program, he must maintain the appearance and prestige of a successful world leader. He well realizes that an increase in East-West conflict would lead to a loss of domestic authority, which would strengthen those in the Soviet Union resisting his proposed changes.

What we say and do about him is watched closely in the Soviet Union and can be a critical factor in his success or failure. It is watched even more closely in Eastern Europe, the Achilles' heel of the Soviet Empire. Finding the right balance between continuing to hold Gorbachev to high standards, and acknowledging partial but encouraging improvements in Soviet behavior, should be a demanding challenge for President Bush.

Above all, we must constantly keep in mind that measured and reciprocal negotiations to achieve our goals are not the only answer. To proceed cautiously in a series of mutually agreed lockstep negotiations, trading narrow concession for narrow concession, being infinitely careful not to mix apples

and oranges, giving each of our bureaucracies a piece of the action, will be the overwhelming preference of bureaucrats, arms controllers, diplomats, and alliance managers. But it is a sure formula for stagnation. History suggests that time will run out on us. Negotiations develop a life of their own and, indeed, can and will be used by opponents of change on both sides to block creative moves which, by definition, probably must be unilateral and only ultimately reciprocal.

President Bush seems well aware of this problem. When he asked for arms control initiatives and the bureaucracy served up oatmeal, he took Baker, Cheney, Crowe and Scowcroft to Kennebunkport, decided that Soviet acceptance of our proposals on conventional ground forces in Europe merited Nato movement on aircraft and personnel, and consulted at the top of key Nato governments before most senior officials in Washington who work conventional arms control knew anything was up.

Having spent 30 years in the bureaucracy myself, I am certain that this move, for which the president so rightly has been praised, never would have survived the Washington bureaucratic process, much less the normal pattern of Nato consultations, which are at best painfully slow. Bureaucrats and negotiators can now work out the details, but the President himself will have to stay enough involved to ensure they do not gum up the works.

But there is also scope for moves outside the negotiating arena; indeed, this may be the most promising course on many, if not most, issues. For starters, we can stress the obvious: that Soviet action inevitably will beget Western response. Does anyone imagine that the United States could proceed with the MX program if Moscow began getting rid of ICBMs; that Congress would fund binary chemical weapons if Moscow invited international observers to the destruction of a chemical weapons stockpile consistent with our estimates of its holding; or that U.S. or West German publics long would tolerate the present large U.S. force levels in West Germany if Soviet forces left East Germany or Eastern Europe?

But we are not condemned merely to respond to Soviet moves, thus permanently ceding the initiative. In important areas we could challenge Moscow to make radical reciprocal changes. To cite just one example, we could announce our willingness to eliminate all ICBMs by a certain date, on a specific drawdown schedule, if Moscow would do likewise. Our preannounced schedule would be implemented only if the Soviets made proportional cuts on the same schedule. This could easily be verified by National Technical Means, and would leave the most secure and stabilizing legs of our deterrent—sea and air-based nuclear systems—intact.

But this kind of proposal is only desirable, or even viable, within the framework of a broad, overarching strategy. We have to know where we want to go before we decide how to get there. We cannot deal effectively



## 20 Naval War College Review

with U.S.-Soviet relations without a coherent concept of the kind of Europe—East and West—we want to bring about.

Any transformation of U.S.-Soviet relations inevitably will affect our relations with Western Europe, including our influence on European domestic and foreign policies well beyond what is usually thought of as the security area. But despite an extensive policy review, so far as I can tell, little if any thought is being given in Washington even to what Nato military posture would be desirable if the Soviet threat continues to decline. Nato's conventional reductions proposal calls for minimal Western change; even our big concession in agreeing to aircraft cuts would cost Nato about one-tenth of the aircraft it would cost the Warsaw Pact. More basic questions about the U.S. role, the German role, and the scope for greater West European defense cooperation and influence within the alliance seem to be getting even less attention.

This is at least partly because any U.S.-generated changes will trouble our allies. The same West European leaders who have been warning that we risk missing a historic opportunity to transform East-West relations also fear any diminution in the U.S. contribution to their defense. They are comfortable with the status quo. Change is scary, especially when it involves the formula which many credit with national survival. But growing European strength and American budgetary constraints, coupled with a declining perception of the Soviet threat, ensure that Nato is in for a rocky period in any case. Trying to resist unavoidable change is the best recipe for panicky action forced on reluctant Western governments by impatient electorates.

A major realignment of political and military forces in Europe is in the works. The inevitable comparative decline of Soviet power vis-à-vis a more integrated Western Europe after 1992 will make this happen. It is therefore only sensible for us to begin thinking about the kind of world we want to live in and the kind of Europe we want to achieve. Then we must design and articulate a strategy for bringing this about. We must not be caught in the trap of dealing piecemeal with issues such as arms control, defense realignment, trade, and burden sharing. Our aim in conventional arms control, for example, should be at least as much to change the Soviet political role in Eastern Europe as to reduce the number of tanks threatening Nato.

Nor can we allow Europeans and Europeanists to determine security questions which have implications far beyond Europe. We are a superpower and our interests are global. It is only through broad-ranging, strategic thinking at the highest levels of our government that we will be able to successfully navigate these uncharted shoals, these dangerous waters.

Let us firmly keep in mind that the most important difference between the superpowers is that the United States is a secure society held together by philosophical bonds that are indissoluble. Take away our armed forces, our FBI, our local police forces, and the United States still stays together.

There is no group in the United States, no matter how kooky or how radical, which is calling for a reshaping of our borders.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, is a society held together by force. Take away that force and at least seven of the 15 republics of the U.S.S.R. split off and become independent countries. Take away that force and the nations of Eastern Europe go their not so merry way. For this reason, we hold the stronger cards in any negotiation to bring about a safer world. And we must keep as our primary goal in such a negotiation the shaping of a world in which the citizens of this country need not be concerned about their own survival.

In sum, at first consideration in dealing with Gorbachev and his "New Thinking," caution and prudence might seem to be the order of the day. This, as we have already seen, will be the course recommended to our leaders by my former colleagues in the State Department and the National Security Council Staff. But there are also important—and in my own view overriding—reasons why the West should, on an urgent basis, react vigorously and imaginatively to the Gorbachev phenomenon, and why we should take a few gambles. We must first of all recognize that by constantly responding to Gorbachev's prodding, rather than initiating new ideas and proposals of our own, we could lose the worldwide public relations battle, a battle which is bound to have important effects over the long run on democratic states.

But this is not just a public relations problem. We are facing the first serious opportunity of the postwar era both for major improvements in European security and for fundamental changes in U.S.-Soviet relations. We must recognize that a window of opportunity has been opened to us and that both Soviet history and the course of human events strongly suggest this window will not remain open indefinitely. History will not forgive us if we fail to seize this extraordinary moment. And if what now seems so promising proves to be yet another false dawn, it is our obligation to make clear that the blame for not seizing this priceless opportunity cannot be laid on the American doorstep.

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This article is adapted from a speech delivered by Ambassador Bremont to the Current Strategy Forum at the Naval War College on 14 June 1989.

