At the Core of the Cold War: Soviet Foreign Policy and the German Question 1945-1990

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AT THE CORE OF THE COLD WAR:
SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY AND THE GERMAN QUESTION
1945 - 1990

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Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Government
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts

by
Marc R. Cheek
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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The reunification of East and West Germany on October 3, 1990 marked a radical change in Soviet foreign policy toward Germany and Europe. The German Democratic Republic had been Moscow's most important point of leverage against the West and had provided ideological support for Soviet control of Eastern Europe. Yet the Soviets permitted the merging of the GDR into the FRG, which meant that the new Germany remained a part of NATO.

Various explanations for this extreme change in foreign policy emphasize the role of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in formulating Moscow's new policies. These explanations, however, focus too narrowly on Soviet policy during the late 1980s. A true understanding of the strategic shift must take into account the historical context of the changes.

The forty years preceding Gorbachev had witnessed Soviet strategies that alternated between confrontation and cooperation with the West in order to achieve postwar objectives. Neither approach had proven successful. These years had so limited the options of Soviet strategy that when Gorbachev took office in 1985 he had few viable choices left regarding Germany and Europe.

The 1989 uprisings in Eastern Europe renewed speculation about German reunification. Gorbachev was faced with two choices concerning East Germany: to intervene militarily or to allow events to continue. Intervention threatened the Soviets with military confrontation with NATO and political and economic isolation, as the previous forty years had demonstrated. Realizing this, Gorbachev took the only viable option; he consented to a united Germany that would remain in NATO.
AT THE CORE OF THE COLD WAR:

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY AND THE GERMAN QUESTION

1945 - 1990
INTRODUCTION

On October 3, 1990 the German Democratic Republic merged into the Federal Republic of Germany, ending the postwar division of Germany. The reunited country remained within NATO and did so with the acquiescence of the Soviet Union.

This event marked a radical change in Soviet objectives for Western Europe in general and Germany in particular. Because of the unique relationship between East and West Germany, the GDR had been the Soviet Union's point of contact with Western Europe, both for importing Western goods and technology and for exerting political and military pressure on the Western alliance. Far more important was the strategic significance of this reversal. In yielding East Germany, Moscow relinquished the most important point of leverage against the West that it had gained from World War II.

Why would Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, a committed leader of the Communist Party and President of the Soviet Union, make such a one-sided concession to the West? One explanation is that Gorbachev and his government pursued foreign and domestic policy incompetently—their reactions to the changing world situation in the late 1980s were simply a series of mistakes. A former People's Deputy of the USSR, explaining in April 1990 why he had resigned at the previous
CPSU Congress, stated his frustration with the Soviet leader:

Mikhail Sergeyevich is a strong politician, of course. But either he is not managing to get to grips with everything or he has lost his way and does not have the courage to admit this even to himself.¹

Another explanation is that the Soviets actively sought change in Eastern Europe and in the traditional balance of power. Moscow offered to relinquish control of Eastern Europe and show Western Europe a more friendly, cooperative Soviet Union.

The prize for the West Europeans, and especially the Germans, is the re-fusion of Europe along the Elbe River, but the price is no less evident: deference toward Soviet sensitivities. If Gorbachev and his successors can pull this off, the rewards will be handsome: maximal Soviet influence in all of Europe, which will more than compensate for the loss of Moscow's East European fiefdoms.²

Gorbachev was the brilliant diplomatic strategist whose gamble failed: the Soviet Union surrendered Eastern Europe, but Western Europe remained firmly linked to the United States.

A third explanation is that Gorbachev, while making apparently sound tactical foreign policy decisions, unleashed more than he could control. For example, when Gorbachev decided to quit supporting East Germany's Erich Honecker, he expected a reformed communist state to remain. The torrent of

¹"Gorbachev May Have Lost His Way," in Pravda (28 April 1990): 4, quoted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service--Soviet Union (3 May 1990): 42.

reunification fervor that followed Honecker's resignation and the opening of the Brandenburg Gate caught the Kremlin leader off guard.\(^3\) The current disintegration of the Soviet Union is another example of Gorbachev's tactical brilliance and strategic short-sightedness. In decentralizing the decision-making authority in the USSR, Gorbachev sought to insure its cohesion, not to initiate numerous independence movements.

Each of these explanations, however, focuses too narrowly on Gorbachev and his position. A true understanding of Soviet acquiescence to German reunification in NATO must examine the historical context of Soviet strategy during the Cold War. Forty years of Soviet foreign policy preceded Gorbachev. These years had so limited the options of Soviet strategy that when Gorbachev took office in 1985 he had few viable options regarding Germany and Europe. Indeed, when the uprisings in Eastern Europe began in 1989, the Soviet leader had but two choices: to intervene militarily, risking conflict with NATO and international isolation abroad and economic collapse at home, or to allow the course of events to continue. Soviet postwar history had revealed that the first choice was not feasible and that only the second choice held any prospect for the survival of the Soviet state.

In order to understand how profound the shift in Soviet policy toward Germany was, the significance of Western Europe

\(^3\)Angela Stent, "The One Germany," *Foreign Policy*, no. 81 (Winter 1990-91): 59.
and Germany to the Soviet Union must be considered. Western Europe was the most important area of the Cold War. It had a more developed infrastructure, technology and industrial base than the Soviet Union. It provided a center of attraction for Eastern Europe because of its superior cultural and economic development. Western Europe was also the route for American influence in world affairs. In addition to a common cultural background and a similar economic system, the United States and its Western European allies shared a strategic interest in containing Soviet influence both in Europe and in the Third World. The US presence in Europe, especially through NATO and its nuclear capability, proved particularly vexing to the Soviets because it negated their military and geographic advantages.

After World War II, the Soviet Union had three objectives concerning Europe. The first was to secure the territorial and political gains it had purchased at high cost during the war. This included the Soviet desire to gain worldwide recognition of its status as a new superpower, with the political clout that accompanied that status, and recognition of the legitimacy of the Soviet Union's and Eastern Europe's postwar borders.

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5Joffe, 99.
The second objective was to establish Eastern Europe as a buffer zone against further European hostilities. Having been twice invaded in the twentieth century by Germany, the Soviets wished to form a protective barrier of docile client states in Eastern Europe. This would have the dual advantage of insulating Soviet territory from invasion and allowing the Soviet conventional forces easier access to (and leverage against) Western Europe.

The third objective was to avoid strategic isolation and maintain Soviet influence in European and world affairs. Reducing the American presence in Europe was crucial to this goal, since the US provided the strength of the alliance that sought to contain Soviet influence on the continent.

Germany occupied a unique position in each of these objectives. Its geographic location and economic potential made it especially significant in Soviet foreign policy.\(^6\) Its position in the center of Europe made Germany the natural gateway between East and West; for the Soviets, this gateway provided access to the more developed Western states, both for acquiring goods and exerting influence. The postwar division of Germany contained the German military threat. The presence of a strongly communist East Germany provided ideological support for Soviet control of Eastern Europe.\(^7\) The GDR also

\(^6\)Ibid., 97.

\(^7\)Michael J. Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany and the West from Khrushchev to Gorbachev* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 392.
gave Moscow the opportunity to station Soviet forces in the heart of Europe.

The Federal Republic represented both threat and opportunity to Moscow. West Germany was the easternmost arm of NATO and therefore the most important state in the forward-based defense system of the West. With the withdrawal of France from NATO in 1966, the FRG provided the most important military bases, geostrategic location and industrial and human potential for maintaining an effective NATO presence on the continent. Potential reunification offered a threat to the cohesion of the Eastern bloc; yet the Soviets were willing in the 1950s to accept reunification in exchange for German neutrality. The Soviets even offered reunification in an attempt to prevent West German entry into NATO. A neutral Germany would have left an unattached industrial giant in the center of Europe, but such a state would have been more susceptible to Soviet manipulation than one entrenched in the Western bloc. Furthermore, the loss of the FRG would have undermined NATO's ability to contain the Soviet Union.

Even attached to the West, the Federal Republic offered the Soviets access to Western goods and technology. Although there were voices in the Eastern bloc, most notably that of

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East Germany's Communist Party leader, Walter Ulbricht, that warned of the political implications of economic dependence on the West, the Soviets cultivated trade with West Germany during the postwar period.

Thus the Soviets had three objectives specific to Germany. The first was to insure that Germany would never again be a military threat to the Soviet Union. The second was to insure that the FRG would not be a political threat to the Soviets—to prevent West Germany from undermining or weakening the Soviet control of Eastern Europe. Finally, the Soviets wished to decouple the FRG from the Western alliance in order to isolate or neutralize Germany and weaken NATO.

Critical to any explanation of Soviet postwar policy is understanding the Soviet concept of security. Until recently, the Soviets have defined security in terms of defense rather than deterrence. The Soviets believed they had to maintain regional (i.e., European) military superiority not to prevent a war, but in order to survive and win one.\(^\text{10}\) This explains the Soviet desire for a nuclear-free Europe. The presence of American tactical nuclear weapons in Europe deprived the Soviets of regional superiority, since the destructiveness of these weapons greatly reduced the ability of Soviet forces to

\(^{10}\text{Gerhard Wettig, "Germany, Europe and the Soviets," in Soviet Policy Toward Western Europe: Implications for the Atlantic Alliance, ed. Herbert J. Ellison (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1983), 36.}\)
survive and win a war in which such weapons were used. In presenting their demands for a non-nuclear Europe, the Soviets argued that the United States could threaten the Soviet Union with both theater weapons and intercontinental missiles, whereas the Soviet could threaten only with the latter.

In the Soviet view, the intended capability to deprive the United States of its European and other military bridgeheads along the periphery of the USSR is an essential requirement of "equal security": the United States is not to have its military foot near the Soviet borders as long as the Soviet Union has no similar military strongholds on the American continent.12

The FRG's position at the eastern edge of NATO made it especially significant with respect to theater forces. From German soil, theater nuclear weapons could reach the Soviet heartland.

From the Western viewpoint, theater weapons had value as a deterrent not only against large scale Soviet aggression but also against limited warfare. They insured that the Soviet Union could not wage even limited war in Europe without threatening its own territory.13 This viewpoint was surely not lost on the Soviets. It would be incorrect, however, to assume that the USSR believed it was pursuing an aggressive military policy during the Cold War.

Soviet military planning should rather be seen as ever

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12 Wettig, "Germany, Europe and the Soviets," 37.

more desperate attempts to give the Soviet Union the capacity to survive in a "world war" against technologically superior states.\textsuperscript{14}

Also critical to explaining Soviet foreign policy is the concept of the "correlation of forces." This "correlation" is not merely an assessment of the balance of military power. Traditional Soviet doctrine sought to interpret the international situation according to the military, economic political, social and ideological relationships prevailing at any given moment between peoples and states.\textsuperscript{15} Throughout much of the postwar period, the Soviets believed that the global "correlation of forces" was changing in favor of socialism. One way of exploiting the change was to play up differences of opinion among the Western powers to Soviet advantage. Arms control negotiations were particularly suited to exploitation of "contradictions," since the "diversity of national situations" created tension within NATO's ranks.\textsuperscript{16} In the late 1970s, for example, the Soviets sought to arouse popular opinion in the West against the Western governments over the proposed NATO deployment of Pershing II and cruise


\textsuperscript{16}John Van Oudenaren, Soviet Policy Toward Western Europe: Objectives, Instruments, Results (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1986), 51.
missiles.

A corollary to the belief in the "correlation of forces" is the pragmatic Soviet commitment to flexibility in formulating foreign policy. The Soviets did not "design strategic master plans in advance." Instead, they tried to keep their options open (for example, by alternating between cooperation and confrontation with the West), even if this led to short-term policy contradictions. Even after developing intercontinental missiles that could threaten the United States directly, the Soviet Union maintained massive conventional and nuclear forces in the European theater.

Finally, it is important to note the asymmetry of Soviet efforts in military and economic development. In its attempts to use its military and geostrategic advantages to extort economic gains from the West, the Soviet Union failed to establish economic security, thus giving credence to Ulbricht's warning about economic dependency on the West. Moscow became too dependent on economic relations with the West and failed to promote internal reform. The Soviet neglect of the economic foundations of security would prove extremely costly at each acceleration of the arms race. Maintaining the massive forces in Europe, competing with the United States in the arms buildup, subsidizing client state

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17Wettig, "Germany, Europe and the Soviets," 41.

economies and intervening in the Third World would become too great a cost for a stagnant economy to bear.

At the end of the 1980s, Gorbachev would have little choice but to relinquish Soviet control of its empire. Nowhere would this be more evident than with the merging of East Germany into its Western counterpart.

Germany had been the perennial graveyard of Soviet hopes ever since the Bolsheviks had banked on the victory of a proletarian revolution there in 1918. No other country had been so crucial to Moscow as the indicator of capitalism's future, and no one had given rise to so many Soviet miscalculations.19

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I
PROVOKING THE WEST, 1945 TO 1955

The failure of the victorious World War I powers to secure a lasting peace in Europe was not forgotten by their World War II counterparts in the final years of that war. At a Moscow conference in 1943, the Allied foreign ministers believed that the Allies had made a vital mistake in 1918 when they sought peace with Germany without having completely defeated and occupied the country. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin were determined not to repeat this error.\(^{20}\)

The Soviet leader was especially adamant on this point. His reasons were understandable. Of all the Allied nations, the Soviet Union had suffered the greatest destruction and heaviest losses. Consequently, Soviet demands at the 1945 Yalta Conference for German reparations were considerably more severe than those of Britain or the United States; the Soviets wanted industrial equipment and labor from the German people in addition to money.\(^{21}\)


Yet Stalin was aware that fear of Soviet occupation and harsher Soviet terms of surrender might cause the Germans to surrender to the West alone. A separate peace might leave the Soviet Union out of any settlement of Germany, thus ending Soviet hopes for reparations and denying them the opportunity to form part of the occupational forces in the defeated country. To discourage any one-sided capitulation, Stalin insisted that the possible dismemberment of Germany be listed among the stated Allied terms of surrender, knowing that the Germans would not want their country divided. The strategic reason behind the severe Soviet reparations was to eliminate the German capacity to wage war, thus insuring that Germany would not threaten the USSR again.

Stalin's insistence on the dismemberment clause displays the Soviet desire not to lose out on the spoils of the War. Any rapport between victor and vanquished that excluded the Soviet Union would allow the West to establish the postwar order in Europe and deny Moscow any significant influence in the process.

The American use of the atomic bomb also seemed calculated to limit Soviet influence in shaping the postwar order. The sheer destructive capability of the bomb undermined the Soviet advantage in conventional forces.

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22 Vojtech Mastny, Russia's Road to the Cold War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 242.

23 Ibid., 303.
Whereas the United States considered its nuclear monopoly to be a deterrent to Soviet aggression, the Soviets believed that it provided the American leadership with the means to limit Moscow's gains from the War. Moscow's buildup of conventional weapons and troops acquired two new purposes in addition to insuring German docility and establishing control over Eastern Europe. The first was to provide leverage against the US nuclear superiority by holding Europe "hostage." The second was to allow the Soviets time to catch up with and cancel the American nuclear advantage.24

In the late 1940s the military buildup in Europe marked the first use of the Soviet confrontational strategy. By exploiting its conventional military advantages, Moscow hoped to gain leverage against its new opponent, the United States. The confrontational approach, however, had consequences that conflicted with Soviet interests. Maintaining large amounts of weapons and troops in Europe alarmed the West and prompted a continued US involvement in Europe to halt the Soviet domination of the continent.25 Conscious of the American nuclear monopoly and fearful of American hostility, the Soviets believed they could deter an attack by the United States only by making credible the Soviet threat of invading

and occupying Europe.\textsuperscript{26} Rather than assuring Soviet security and Soviet influence in shaping Europe, however, Moscow's military posture provoked a defensive reaction from the West that would culminate in the formation of NATO in 1949.

The Berlin Blockade of 1948 marked the peak of the confrontational strategy in this period. Berlin offered leverage through which the Soviets, by force, planned to prevent the integration of West Germany within the Western alliance.\textsuperscript{27} The Blockade produced the opposite effect. It pushed West Germany further toward the West.\textsuperscript{28} It also aggravated Soviet anxiety about the American nuclear superiority, as President Truman authorized "the use of atomic weapons in case of war."\textsuperscript{29}

Confrontation had therefore failed to distance Germany from the West and had galvanized Western desires to contain the Soviet threat. Having found this approach unproductive, Stalin turned to a more cooperative strategy. His search for peaceful relations with the West in 1949 and 1950 attempted two things: to undermine Western unity against the Soviet Union and to gain time to secure Eastern Europe and to

\textsuperscript{26}Wolfe, 34.

\textsuperscript{27}Joffe, 100.


overcome Soviet technological inferiority.\textsuperscript{30} During this period Moscow sought to exploit anti-war and anti-nuclear feelings in the West. The Soviets also expressed their interests in settling differences with the West through negotiations. Stalin hoped that the Western alliance would weaken in the absence of an immediate enemy; a peace initiative might also deprive Western governments of support by exploiting anti-war sentiment.

With respect to the United States, however, Stalin's attempt at coexistence was undermined by the start of the Korean War in 1950.\textsuperscript{31} Yet this cooperative phase of Soviet foreign policy did not end here. Still hoping to prevent West German entry into NATO, the Soviet Union sent a note in March 1952 to the governments of the United States, Great Britain and France. The note outlined the Soviet offer for the reunification of Germany, provided the new Germany would remain unattached to any military alliances. The offer was promoted by the Soviets with some modifications as late as 1954, during Khrushchev's tenure.

Also in late 1954 and early 1955, the Soviets suggested several proposals for security in Europe, each as an alternative to West German integration into NATO. These included a collective security system of East and West European states that excluded the United States, and a plan to

\textsuperscript{30}Wolfe, 25.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., 26.
extend NATO so that it included the Soviet Union and some East
European countries.\textsuperscript{32}

Nevertheless, in May 1955 the Federal Republic joined
NATO. The Soviet military buildup following World War II had
brought the Western states together to contain the perceived
Soviet threat. Stalin had provoked this reaction, and his
later overtures of peace had been unable to reverse the
process. The Soviet Union now confronted a Federal Republic
that formed the eastern arm of a rival military bloc and would
soon house theater nuclear weapons capable of striking Soviet
cities.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 74-76.
THE POLARIZATION OF EUROPE, 1955 TO 1961

The Federal Republic's entry into NATO came at an uncertain time for the Soviet government. Stalin, the man who had led the country to victory in World War II, had died two years earlier, leaving what Khrushchev would later call "a legacy of anxiety and fear."\textsuperscript{33} Stalin had left no appointed successor, and Moscow was still painfully aware of the threat of US nuclear superiority. In the early 1950s the Soviets had discussed placing the military forces of the socialist countries together under joint command.\textsuperscript{34} This happened ten days after West Germany joined the Western alliance; a mutual defense pact was signed in Warsaw by the Soviet Union and the Eastern European states.

As Stalin's eventual successor, Khrushchev continued Stalin's policy of holding Europe hostage with massive conventional forces, even after the Soviet Union acquired the capacity to threaten the US territory with nuclear weapons. Although this policy did little to distance the United States


\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., 194.
from Europe, it had several advantages in Soviet eyes. Maintaining forces in Europe provided security against European aggression independent of America; it provided leverage against the US in case the Soviets were unable to reach strategic superiority over America; it also sustained the Soviet military advantage around Berlin.\textsuperscript{35}

Berlin was to become once more the focus of Soviet pressure against the Western alliance. Khrushchev's objective was to avoid war but to expand Soviet influence in Europe and the world. The growth of Soviet nuclear capabilities relative to those of the United States encouraged a more assertive approach to foreign policy than Stalin could have enjoyed. Sputnik's launch in October 1957 demonstrated Moscow's superiority in rocket technology; it now appeared that the Soviet Union was capable of delivering warheads to American cities. Whereas Stalin had initiated the Berlin Blockade for defensive purposes (to prevent the FRG's entry into NATO), Khrushchev initiated the Second Berlin Crisis to demonstrate a rise of Soviet power relative to that of the United States—a shift in the "correlation of forces" in favor of socialism.\textsuperscript{36}

Khrushchev also had more immediate objectives in mind. One aim was to force the Western Allies out of Berlin, thus

\textsuperscript{35}Wolfe, 154-55.

\textsuperscript{36}James L. Richardson, Germany and the Atlantic Alliance: The Interaction of Strategy and Politics (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 304.
undermining NATO by proving the US commitment to the city unreliable in the face of Soviet demands. In November 1958 the Soviet Union gave the West a six-month deadline to surrender the rights to West Berlin. If the Western forces, especially the United States, acquiesced to this demand, West German faith in the ability of its alliance partners to resist Soviet challenges would be shaken. The Federal Republic would therefore have less confidence in other Western commitments, including that of the American nuclear deterrent against Soviet attack.

Another purpose was to force recognition of the GDR by the world, especially by the West. The Federal Republic and its Western partners had refused to recognize the legal existence of two German states. For West Germany, to recognize the German Democratic Republic meant to acknowledge the division of Germany and virtually end hopes of reunification in the near future. For the United States, recognizing East Germany would eliminate any influence America had in that region as one of the four powers privy to a final settlement of the German question.

When Khrushchev issued his demand for the withdrawal of Western forces from West Berlin, he threatened to sign a peace

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treaty with the GDR without the involvement of the other Allied states. This peace treaty would have given the East Germans the right to operate as a sovereign state without Soviet control. The East Germans might then deny access to Berlin, thus forcing the West to deal with the GDR as a legal entity. If the West should attempt to regain access to the city by force, it would risk hostilities with the Soviet Union. By exaggerating its missile capacity, Moscow could imply a shift in the balance of strategic power and thus substantiate its threat of war.\textsuperscript{39}

The American reaction to Moscow's demand was to refuse to negotiate the Berlin issue under an ultimatum. The deadline was dropped, and in July and August 1959 the two sides met in Geneva, where no progress was made on the issue. During the negotiations, however, Khrushchev temporarily abandoned the confrontational approach to Berlin and accepted an invitation from President Eisenhower to visit the United States.

Khrushchev's enthusiasm in accepting the invitation arose partly from his belief that the Soviets had "finally forced the United States to recognize the necessity of establishing closer contacts with [the Soviet Union]."\textsuperscript{40} His visit demonstrated his willingness to adopt a cooperative approach to solving the Berlin issue. Yet the deteriorating relations

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{39}Horelick and Rush, 120.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{40}Khrushchev Remembers, 374.}
between the Soviet Union and China provided another motive.\footnote{Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, Force Without War: U.S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1978), 365.} Ideological tensions between the two had started when China announced the "Great Leap Forward" in May 1958, which announced Chinese intentions to deviate from the Soviet model of Communism. In June 1959 the Soviets abruptly terminated an agreement to provide military (including nuclear) technology to China. As relations between Moscow and Beijing soured, Khrushchev showed a willingness to be more flexible in dealing with the United States. The Soviets were eager to avoid the isolation that tensions with both East and West would insure.

Despite Khrushchev's enthusiasm, the visit to America and the talks with President Eisenhower brought no progress on the Berlin situation. Nor did subsequent talks with President Kennedy at the Vienna Summit in June 1961 achieve results. Almost immediately after returning from Vienna, Khrushchev dropped his efforts at cooperation by announcing a December deadline for a four-power settlement on Berlin.

The new ultimatum would be in vain, however. In February of that year US Defense Secretary McNamara had held a press briefing to dispel the notion that the Soviets held an ICBM-based strategic advantage over the United States. The Soviets had failed to demonstrate any shift in their favor of the balance of power. In addition to the continued deployment of thousands of tactical nuclear weapons, the Kennedy
administration answered the Soviet challenge by requesting and receiving a three billion dollar military appropriation from Congress in order to expand conventional forces.\textsuperscript{42} The purpose of the increased spending was to make credible the American threat of a military response to Soviet demands and to create a greater range of strategic options.\textsuperscript{43} The threat worked, as the Soviets realized that the United States considered war a real possibility and might actually choose war, conventional or nuclear, as a tenable option in the Berlin Crisis.\textsuperscript{44} The American willingness to consider armed conflict called Khrushchev's bluff. The Soviets didn't gain their four-power settlement on Berlin. On August 12 barricades were erected between East and West Berlin, soon to be replaced by the more permanent Berlin Wall. With the failure of his desperate attempt the following year to regain the strategic initiative by installing IRBMs in Cuba, Khrushchev's tenure was finished.

Khrushchev's attempt to use Berlin to exert leverage against the West had fared no better than Stalin's. The Soviets were faced with an ill-afforded acceleration of the

\textsuperscript{42}Horelick and Rush, 124.

\textsuperscript{43}The United States' original postwar doctrine to counter Soviet aggression was that of "massive retaliation," taking advantage of America's nuclear superiority. The development of conventional force alternatives to allow strategic bombardment was prescribed by the Kennedy administration's new doctrine of "flexible response."

arms race. Their aggressive political and military stance insured that the Americans would remain in Europe indefinitely. Finally, the division of Germany was accepted by both the US and the USSR as a given feature of the postwar world. The division had not received legitimate recognition by either side, but each would base its foreign policy on the pragmatic acceptance of two German states.
III

CONSOLIDATING SOVIET HEGEMONY, 1961 TO 1968

Even during the Second Berlin Crisis, a Soviet strategy for decoupling the Federal Republic from the West based on cooperation with Bonn developed. Despite the political situation during the Crisis, trade between the Soviet Union and West Germany had increased considerably. \(^{45}\) During his last years, Khrushchev began opening to Bonn not merely for the economic benefits of trade with the more prosperous FRG but also for the political purpose of loosening the ties between Bonn and Washington. \(^{46}\)

The Soviet perceptions on West German-American relations were varied, but the opinion that the two countries were drifting apart was gaining strength in the USSR. The early 1960s change in US military strategy from "massive retaliation" to "flexible response" strained relations with West Germany. While the Americans believed that this change enhanced the credibility of deterrence, the Germans feared the switch demonstrated the US desire for a flexible diplomacy that would not necessarily require Washington to support

\(^{45}\) Stent, From Embargo to Ostpolitik, 79.

\(^{46}\) Sodaro, 52.
German interests. "Flexible response" could mean American tolerance of limited Soviet aggression in Europe. The perceived decline in US superiority in nuclear capabilities further undermined the credibility of the American nuclear commitment.

The pipeline embargo of 1962-63 provided the Soviets with another example of the potential divisibility of the West. By the early 1960s the Soviets had concluded deals with the Federal Republic and other West European states for the purchase of large-diameter steel pipe for the construction of pipelines. The American decision to impose a NATO embargo on pipe sales to the Soviet Union came during the tense period shortly after the Cuban missile crisis. There were three reasons for the decision. First, the US believed that the Soviets were dumping oil on the world market. The cheaper prices threatened to create a West European dependency on less expensive Soviet oil. Second, the US government wished to prevent the construction of the Friendship Pipeline, which would help supply Eastern Europe with Soviet oil. This pipeline could also be used to supply Soviet troops in Europe. Finally, the embargo would serve to assert American predominance on matters of East-West trade.

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47 Wolfram F. Hanrieder, Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 72.

48 Ibid., 13.

49 Stent, From Embargo to Ostpolitik, 103.
The embargo failed, however, to assert any US dominance on East-West trade policies; it did divide NATO members. The embargo was not observed by Britain. Italy continued to fulfill earlier contracts with the Soviets. West Germany honored the US decision, but German firms strongly opposed the German government's decision.\(^{50}\) The pipeline embargo succeeded in reaffirming Soviet belief in the "contradictions" present within the Western alliance.

Believing that such disputes could be exploited to Soviet advantage, Khrushchev initiated more extensive contacts with West Germany. In July 1963 he sent his son-in-law, and editor of *Izvestiya*, Aleksei Adzhubei to the FRG as a special emissary in order to express Soviet willingness to improve political and economic relations between the two countries.\(^{51}\) Two months later Khrushchev received an invitation to meet with Chancellor Erhard. The visit never took place, however. In October, the Soviet leader was forced to resign.

The Brezhnev-Kosygin regime that followed took a more cautious position with respect to German-Soviet rapprochement. The cooperative trend begun during Khrushchev's last years was halted. The impetus for change would come this time not from Soviet foreign policy, but from West German *Ostpolitik*.

In 1966 the Grand Coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats was formed. Willy Brandt's appointment

\(^{50}\)Ibid., 112.

\(^{51}\)Sodaro, 61.
as foreign minister marked the rise of the SPD in the Federal Republic. The SPD was considerably more flexible in its policies regarding Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.\(^5^2\)

The Kiesinger-Brandt government announced its intentions to pursue diplomatic relations with the Eastern European states (excluding the GDR).

The Soviet reaction to the Grand Coalition overtures was restrained. Brezhnev was conservative in his foreign policy. He was concerned that the more advanced West German economy would prove attractive to the Eastern bloc and might thus provide Bonn with greater political influence in Eastern Europe.\(^5^3\) The greater West German influence would threaten Soviet control of its satellites. Brezhnev's concern seemed well-founded as Czechoslovakia abandoned the hard-line position toward the FRG, turning to Bonn for economic aid.\(^5^4\)

The reform movement in Czechoslovakia threatened Soviet communist ideology and thus implied that Prague wanted some measure of independence. For Moscow, the changes in its Eastern bloc satellite seemed to challenge Soviet authority. In addition to straying from orthodox Soviet Communism, the reform movement threatened Soviet control of Czechoslovak lands that were crucial to the Soviet forward-based strategy against NATO.

\(^{52}\)Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik*, 132.

\(^{53}\)Wolfe, 316.

\(^{54}\)Sodaro, 113.
The result was the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The reform movement was stamped out, and Bonn received a clear signal that the Soviet Union was unwilling to allow its East European states to pursue relations independently with the West. Such independent endeavors could weaken the cohesion of the Eastern bloc.\textsuperscript{55}

At the same time, however, the invasion gave Moscow confidence in its ability to deal with threats to Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{56} The United States had offered only verbal opposition to the invasion; American reluctance to take a stronger stand against Soviet the intervention encouraged Moscow. Brezhnev had succeeded in consolidating Soviet hegemony in the East bloc, and the outcome would be a change in Soviet policy toward the West. Although Moscow would maintain its imposing military posture in Europe, it had gained a sense of security that allowed it to pursue détente with its Western adversaries.

\textsuperscript{55}Hanrieder, 192.

\textsuperscript{56}Sodaro, 109.
DÉTENTE, 1968 TO 1979

Whereas Brezhnev's policy throughout much of the late 1960s continued efforts at weakening the FRG's ties to the West, especially the United States, the Soviet government relaxed these efforts after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The growing Sino-Soviet conflict motivated this change in part; the conflict had erupted in open clashes along the Ussuri River in March 1969 and Moscow wished to prevent any US-Chinese rapprochement that could isolate the USSR.

Another motivation was the need to import Western technology and access Western credit in order to offset declining growth rates in the Soviet economy. Since the removal of Khrushchev, Moscow had increased its buildup of nuclear and conventional forces in order to create a greater range of military options and to improve its strategic posture with respect to the United States. The buildup strained the Soviet economy which lagged behind Western economies in

\[57\text{Adomeit, 203.}\]
\[58\text{Wolfe, 428.}\]
nonmilitary technology. 59

The Soviet stance toward NATO also shifted. Whereas the July 1966 Bucharest proposal had expressed the Soviet bloc's desire for a European security system that dissolved NATO, the March 1969 Budapest proposal accepted the participation of NATO in security arrangements. 60 The Soviets realized that the polarization of Europe into East and West reinforced the status quo; bipolarity strengthened stability in Europe.

Despite Ulbricht's fears of economic dependence on the West and warnings of political dependency, Moscow's strategy during the early 1970s was to seek détente with the West in order to pursue economic relations. Western contact could help supply Soviet domestic needs for technology and consumer goods. Economic ties with the West would help secure détente by giving both blocs a vested interest in maintaining the peace. Economic contacts with Eastern Europe would enhance the political legitimacy of the status quo. 61 The Soviet mistake in economic policy during this period was relying on external economic contact rather than promoting internal

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59 Conservative CIA estimates of Soviet military expenditures as a share of GNP for these years placed defense spending at 11-13%. Some estimates placed the percentage even higher. See, for example, Franklyn D. Holzman, "Politics and Guesswork: CIA and DIA Estimates of Soviet Military Spending," International Security 14 (Fall 1989): 106-07.

60 Hanrieder, 201.

reform. Ironically, Ulbricht's warnings of economic dependency were to prove well-founded, but Ulbricht himself would be replaced in May 1971 by Erich Honecker.

Brezhnev's cooperative phase ushered in the first period of true détente during the Cold War. The year 1970 witnessed two notable accomplishments. The first was the signing in August of the German-Soviet Treaty renouncing the use of force. The Federal Republic declared its intention to regard all borders in Europe as inviolable. This accorded an all but diplomatic recognition of the status quo from West Germany. The treaty was a conciliatory gesture between the USSR and the FRG, and afterwards Bonn was able to turn to Eastern Europe with Soviet acquiescence.62

The second achievement of détente was the signing in September of the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin. In another exchange of conciliatory gestures, West Germany agreed not to conduct constitutional business in West Berlin, and the Soviets guaranteed the right of West Germans to travel to West Berlin and visit East Germany.63

Whether through a perceived advantage in the "correlation of forces" or simply through overconfidence inspired by the more favorable conditions with respect to the West, the Soviet Union was guilty of serious miscalculations during this time of détente. Warmer relations with the West deluded Moscow

62Hanrieder, 203.
63Ibid., 206.
into thinking that Western Europe no longer felt threatened by Soviet military might. Moscow's willingness to explore détente did not extend to the reduction of military forces. The Soviets had established control of Eastern Europe, maintained leverage against the West and intervened with some success in the Third World by building up their military might. The Soviets believed they could continue to strengthen their forces in Europe without alarming the West. Even during the 1970s thaw in East-West relations, the Soviet Union was unwilling to withdraw its forces from Eastern Europe. While such an action might facilitate the Soviet goal of reducing the American presence in Europe, it might result in a loss of Soviet control over Eastern Europe. Brezhnev's cooperative strategy, thus far successful in establishing improved relations with the West, would ultimately be undermined by his continued reliance on military might. His greatest mistake would be his failure to take advantage of warmer relations with the West to ease the military strain on the Soviet economy. This failure would severely limit Soviet strategy in the 1980s, when a collapsed economy would force the Soviets to redefine their concept of security.

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64 Sodaro, 232.
65 Ibid., 201.
THE DECLINE OF DÉTENTE AND COLD WAR II, 1977 TO 1985

Détente did not halt Soviet efforts to take advantage of American-West European "contradictions." There were two contrasting policies of how best to exploit differences in the Western camp, both of which were utilized. One advocated relaxing tensions between East and West; the other favored confronting NATO and the United States. These approaches were, of course, contradictory. Whatever success the Soviets could achieve by promoting economic contact between the two blocs and by using the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe to settle disputes was undermined by their rigid military posture that polarized Europe into its two alliances. The Soviet pursuit of contradictory policies would begin the decay of détente.

Moscow's willingness to work through the CSCE process was based on the unilateral benefits the process provided for the Soviet Union. Western participation in CSCE implied Western acceptance of the European status quo. Through CSCE the Soviets could insinuate that, while the Soviet Union was part of Europe and therefore had a legitimate voice in determining

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66Sodaro, 198.
security arrangements, the United States was not. Finally, Soviet participation in the conference promoted Moscow's peace initiative to divide the West on matters of military strategy and to distract the West from the continued Soviet arms buildup.67

The Soviets erred in this last point. The West was extremely concerned about the arms buildup, especially the modernized SS-20 missiles. Moscow's efforts to divide NATO by confronting it not only undermined the peace initiative, they served to unite the NATO members in opposition to the Soviet military stance. The Soviets had thought that the FRG in particular was ready to dissent from NATO policy. German skepticism about the American nuclear deterrent had seemingly indicated Bonn's desire to take a course independent of the United States.

Again, however, West Germany thwarted Soviet plans. In an October 1977 speech in London, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt warned that the Soviets had achieved a significant advantage in tactical nuclear capabilities with the modernized SS-20s and the new intermediate-range Backfire bomber. Schmidt called for a restoration of the military balance in Europe in order to maintain the political balance, fearing that Soviet Eurostrategic superiority would give them political leverage over the West.68

67Van Oudenaren, 60, and Clemens, 157.

68Hanrieder, 109-12.
Schmidt's concerns were shared throughout the alliance. On December 12, 1979 NATO ministers voted to restore the strategic balance by deploying Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe. The Federal Republic, much to Soviet surprise, supported this decision. US-Soviet relations would further deteriorate at the end of that month when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, unofficially marking the start of Cold War II.

The sharp deterioration that marred relations between Moscow and Washington did not extend to the European capitals, however. The Soviet government wished to maintain viable relations in order to avoid international isolation. This was especially true with respect to Bonn. The Soviets could not "punish" the FRG for its involvement with the NATO deployment decision because Moscow relied heavily on trade with West Germany to sustain its failing economy. Thus the Soviet Union had developed an economic dependency on the West that limited its foreign policy responses.

Maintaining warmer relations with Europe also suggested additional chances for exploiting contradictions and reducing American influence. In response to the 1979 Afghanistan invasion and the 1981 imposition of martial law in Poland, the

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69 Van Oudenaren, 9-10.
70 Sodaro, 273.
71 Ibid., 274-75.
Reagan administration imposed another pipeline embargo. This embargo was to hinder the construction of a natural gas pipeline reaching from the Urengoi peninsula in Siberia to Western Europe. The Soviet Union had concluded deals for the pipeline with the FRG, Great Britain, France and Italy; none of these states complied with the sanctions. The United States rescinded its decision in November 1982. Once again the Soviets perceived a large potential fissure among NATO members.

Despite the Reagan administration's late reversal on the embargo, the association between the superpowers continued to sour in the early 1980s. In March 1983 Reagan unveiled the SDI program, threatening to carry the arms race to new heights at the very moment when the Soviets had finally been forced to come to grips with the economic and political costs of their vast buildup. The Soviets sought to manipulate Western popular opinion against NATO's nuclear policies and to exploit anti-nuclear fears, especially in the Federal Republic. In November following the SDI announcement, the Soviets walked out of the INF negotiations.

Brezhnev had died in November 1982, leaving behind a legacy of economic stagnation. The Soviets had neglected internal economic reform. The continued expansion of military

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forces drained resources needed for nonmilitary development.

As conditions between the United States and the Soviet Union worsened, the Soviets struggled with a succession crisis aggravated by the untimely deaths of both Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko. This would be the situation Mikhail Gorbachev would inherit in 1985. Forty years of Soviet strategy in Europe would limit his foreign policy alternatives. Strategies varying between confrontation and cooperation had failed to reach postwar objectives, trade with the West had not overcome economic backwardness, and the détente of the 1970s had eroded.
VI

GORBACHEV AND GERMAN REUNIFICATION, 1985 TO 1990

The history of Soviet postwar policy revealed the limited success of various strategies concerning Germany and the West before 1985. The Soviets had failed to prevent the Federal Republic's entry into NATO and the subsequent rearmament of West German territory. Using Berlin as a lever had failed to prevent German integration into the Western alliance. The Soviet Union had been similarly unable to use Berlin to demonstrate the change of the strategic balance in favor of Moscow. The Soviets did not establish regional military superiority as they had hoped to do; American nuclear forces still undermined the Soviet geostrategic and conventional force advantage. Peace initiatives had not succeeded in dividing the West, either by creating disputes among NATO members or by arousing Western popular opinion against government practices. Economic discord had been visible within the Western alliance, but Moscow had been unable to convert this to military advantage. More broadly, the Soviet Union had been unable to establish any European security system that excluded its nemesis, the United States. Most importantly, the Soviets had not achieved economic
independence from the West and had failed to overcome their technological backwardness and economic weakness through trade.

Gorbachev's "new thinking" is best understood against the background of forty years of frustrated Soviet strategy. "New thinking," spurred by economic need as much as defense considerations, reevaluated the view of security held by the Soviet Union since World War II. Whereas the traditional Soviet view had favored heavy military-industrial investment to prepare for conflict with the West, Gorbachev's reforms called for greater participation in the international economy, less military spending and avoiding conflict with the West. Gorbachev realized that the Soviet emphasis on the arms buildup had sorely taxed the domestic resources of the Soviet Union and had not improved the Soviet position worldwide. Moscow still faced a united NATO, expensive and unrewarding efforts at intervention in the Third World, and the threat of another acceleration of the arms race with the United States. The Soviet Union could no longer afford to pursue security in terms of unilateral advantage; it had to seek mutual security with the United States and its European allies.

Initially Gorbachev's foreign policy tactics did not

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deviate significantly from those of his predecessors. "New thinking" was in part a new variation on an old strategy, one that sought to advance a new peace initiative in order to turn popular opinion in the West against Western military practices. In January 1987 Gorbachev announced a proposal to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2000. Such an idea was not new to Kremlin leaders; denuclearization would revalue the Soviet geographic and conventional forces advantage and decouple the US and Western Europe by eliminating the American nuclear commitment that bound these entities together. The renewed Soviet military advantage would guarantee an increase in Soviet influence in Europe. Politically, if NATO were to resist Moscow's efforts at denuclearization, the Soviets could gather sympathy among popular anti-nuclear groups and put NATO into "an awkward political situation."

In this sense, the 1987 Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces was a Soviet gain. Eliminating intermediate forces meant that NATO's nuclear weapons could no longer strike the Soviet Union from European territory. The Soviets, hoping to arouse popular opinion against Western military practices, could then argue that NATO had abandoned weapons that could

75Gerhard Wettig, "Gorbachev and 'New Thinking' in the Kremlin's Foreign Policy," Aussenpolitik 38, no. 2 (1987): 150.

76Joffe, 109-10.

77Wettig, "Deterrence, Missiles and NATO," 325.
strike the Soviet Union but had retained those capable of inflicting mass destruction in the European theater, especially in Germany.\textsuperscript{78} Militarily, the INF Treaty partially undermined the doctrine of flexible response because it eliminated the range of possible nuclear responses between battlefield and strategic weapons. Politically, it loosened the nuclear ties that bound the Western alliance together, since it abolished the intermediate forces that had served throughout the Cold War as part of the deterrent against Soviet aggression against Europe.\textsuperscript{79}

Yet Gorbachev's version of the peace initiative could not offset the need for Soviet internal reform. In the mid-1980s the main strategic concern of the Soviet government was the cost of military expenditures and acceleration of the arms race threatened by SDI. The Soviets needed to spend their resources on economic modernization rather than military competition.\textsuperscript{80}

Realizing that Soviet military challenges during the postwar period had only provoked the West, Gorbachev declined to provoke it further. Instead he sought to deny the West its traditional enemy. In February 1988 Moscow announced its willingness to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} Wettig, "Deterrence, Missiles and NATO," 330.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Lewis A. Dunn, "NATO After Global 'Double Zero','" \textit{Survival} 30, no. 3 (May–June 1988): 197–98.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Sodaro, 323.
\end{itemize}
following May Gorbachev announced that the military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact relied on the minimum amount of strength needed for defense rather than regional superiority. Following the Soviet ratification of the INF Treaty in May 1988, numerous criticisms of past Soviet military policy appeared in the USSR. These argued that the search for nuclear parity with the United States had been a costly and vain endeavor, because parity was "... virtually useless militarily, counterproductive politically and exhausting economically. ..." Soviet vital interests were threatened not from the outside, as once feared, but from inefficient internal structures. "[T]he security of a country depends primarily on an efficient economy and on internal social and political stability." The Soviet military buildup had prevented Moscow from reducing its involvement in international conflicts, putting an excessive strain on our economy, handicapping our diplomatic flexibility ... and holding up the progress of Soviet initiatives aimed at forming a comprehensive system of international security.

Realizing the necessity of economic cooperation with the West

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82 Ibid., 331.
84 Rubanov, 3-4.
in order for perestroika to succeed at home, the Soviets established formal relations with the European Economic Community in June 1988.\textsuperscript{86} At the 28th Congress of the CPSU in July 1990, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze stated:

Our country has no future outside of integration into the overall world system of economic and financial institutions and ties. We must emerge from the self-isolation from the world and from progress into which we have driven ourselves.\textsuperscript{87}

As the Soviets reexamined their foreign policy, the 1989 uprisings in Eastern Europe began. In the German Democratic Republic, a mass exodus from the country started during the summer. Finding no Soviet support for his continued hard-line policies, Erich Honecker resigned on October 18. On November 9 Berlin's Brandenburg Gate opened; East German police merely watched as hundreds of East Berliners crossed into West Berlin. Speculation about reunification began in Eastern and Western capitals. It was particularly significant that these events were occurring in Germany. As Shevardnadze would soon acknowledge in the "two plus four" talks in Bonn:

In the postwar years, the entire structure of military and political confrontation, everything that we connect with the cold war period, has been bound up with Germany as a geographic concept. Consequently, we are not discussing Germany alone; we are not solving German

\textsuperscript{86}Sodaro, 343.

\textsuperscript{87}"Report by E. A. Shevardnadze, Member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs," Pravda, 5 July 1989, 2, quoted in Current Digest of the Soviet Press 42 (22 August 1989): 13.
problems alone. . . .

Moscow was faced with the possibility of losing the GDR, and losing it to the Western alliance. Its westernmost military ally, its pillar of ideological control over Eastern Europe and its political bargaining lever against the West, was escaping Soviet control.

Gorbachev had two options: to intervene militarily and reestablish order in the GDR, or to allow events to continue. Intervention would threaten Soviet-West German relations, possibly alienating the Soviets from Europe's future economic superpower and Moscow's political and economic door to the West. It would also antagonize NATO, prompting a renewal of tensions between East and West. A July 1990 Izvestia article speculated on the repercussions of military intervention:

The result? The GDR would be a new pressure cooker, threatening to explode at any minute. The USSR would be isolated in all directions, not just from the West. Instead of disarmament, there would be new NATO military programs, to which we would once more have to provide an "appropriate response," draining the country's already skimpy resources. An oppressive situation in Europe, fraught with conflicts. A sizable extra burden tacked onto our domestic problems.


On the other hand, Soviet acquiescence to the seemingly inevitable reunification process could continue Moscow's peace initiative. The Soviet policy of disarmament and acquiescence might be more influential to the European populace than NATO's policy of deterrence. Furthermore, if the revolutions in Eastern Europe were to result in the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, the presence of at least one functioning military alliance in Europe would better safeguard stability—a united Germany in NATO was better than a powerful and independent Germany occupying the center of a disorganized Europe.

Faced therefore with two choices, one of which was clearly discredited by past Soviet experience with the West, Gorbachev took the one viable option. At a press conference in Zhiliznovidsk on 16 July 1990, the Soviet leader consented to a united Germany in NATO.

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91 Habakkuk, 261.

Gorbachev's radical departures from traditional Soviet policy during the late 1980s must be examined in light of the entire period of Soviet policy after World War II. The forty years preceding him had narrowed foreign policy options so that Moscow's only feasible reaction to the events of 1989 was to acquiesce to the loss of Eastern Europe and especially to the loss of the German Democratic Republic.

Soviet strategies had been unable to achieve their goals concerning Germany. The Kremlin had wished to insure that Germany would never again be a threat to the Soviet Union. West German rearmament through NATO, especially with tactical nuclear weapons, placed the Western threat at the very edge of the East bloc. The Soviets could not prevent the FRG from undermining their control of Eastern Europe. West Germany provided an enviable example of the prosperity of the Western capitalist nations. Its absorption of East Germany took away the ideological pillar the GDR had provided the East bloc. The loss of East Germany guaranteed that the Soviet Union could never again regain control of Eastern Europe. Finally, Moscow had been unsuccessful in its efforts to decouple the FRG from the Western alliance. No controversy between Bonn
and Washington proved divisive enough to split the ties that bound the two together. The Soviets had not merely failed to detach West Germany from the United States and its allies—reunification meant the Soviets had lost the GDR to NATO as well.

Soviet strategies concerning Europe met with similar frustration. Moscow could not maintain its territorial gains from the War, and Washington denied it the political gain of superpower recognition. The attempted buffer zone in Eastern Europe proved equally untenable. The Soviet geographic advantage that the region should have provided was negated by American nuclear weapons. Finally, militant policies toward the West threatened to isolate the Soviets. Cooperative attempts at foreign policy before Gorbachev were inevitably undermined by the challenging military posture. Soviet attempts to take by force what could not be won through diplomacy always met with a firmly united Western front.

The Soviet government had disastrously neglected economic reform. Placing economic parity with the West second to nuclear parity created a dangerous dependency on economic cooperation with the FRG and other Western states that gradually reduced Soviet ability to apply military leverage against these nations. Every confrontation with the United States threatened another acceleration of the arms race that the Soviet Union could ill-afford.

Economic stagnation at home and a narrowed range of
policy options abroad forced the Gorbachev government to reexamine and redefine the Soviet concept of security. Competing in the arms race and sustaining massive troop and weapon forces in Europe proved too expensive. Security in the traditional sense, meaning regional superiority in order to survive and win a war, eluded the Soviets. The quest for it alarmed and provoked the West. Gorbachev realized that one cannot seek security at another's expense. Faced with the inescapable collapse of the Soviet empire, he chose to accept the breakup of the old world order rather than attempting to suppress it with Soviet might. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in Gorbachev's acquiescence to a united Germany remaining in NATO. In accepting reunification on such terms, Gorbachev has perhaps achieved what his predecessors have never done. He has won more trust among the Western nations than any other Soviet leader. He has made possible a united Europe, one in which Soviet influence may someday exceed any previous level. He has forced NATO to redefine its objectives, and containing the Soviet Union is now no longer one of them. Americans themselves are now questioning to what extent should the US presence in Europe be continued.

Unfortunately for Gorbachev, the breakup of the Soviet empire has extended to the Soviet Union itself. For Moscow to enjoy its newfound improved standing with the West, it will have to secure its standing among the Soviet republics. It is
indeed ironic that the end of the Cold War has brought about a unified Germany and a divided Soviet Union.
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