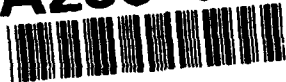


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PERESTROIKA: IT'S IMPACT ON UNITED STATES NATIONAL SECURITY

by

Timothy M. Lund
Major, USA

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature:

Timothy M. Lund

11 February 1991



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While many of the diplomats, politicians, and common people of the world are applauding Mikhail Gorbachev and his revolutionary programs of "restructuring" and "new thinking", one can only wonder about Gorbachev's true intentions. While contemplating these initiatives, one must also consider their implications for future U.S. policy and ultimately true peace. Mr. Gorbachev has questioned some of the very principles of Marxism-Leninism, which may ultimately lead to the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself. Are these intentions sincere or are they a disguise to buy him time while he revives communism and enhances Soviet power? Is he embracing the west out of sincerity or only to revitalize his economy and obtain advance technology? Is his demilitarization straight forward rhetoric or is he inducing the west to reduce military forces thus, setting the stage for Soviet military superiority in the future? This essay will examine this "new Soviet thinking" and the impact it may have on U.S. National security. The first two chapters of the paper trace the history of perestroika from the Revolution of 1917 through Gorbachev. Chapters three and four will address Soviet and U.S. military implications while Chapter five summarizes and provides recommendations as to a U.S. response. Radical changes have been made by the Soviets over the last two years which is cause for cautious optimism. However, actions of late may indicate that the Soviet power structure may be wearing thin, potentially jeopardizing Perestroika as we know it. We must continue to monitor these events carefully, remain flexible, and make national security decisions that will respond accordingly to whatever the Soviet threat may be.				
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Abstract of

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT		ii
I	PERESTROIKA: NOTHING NEW	1
II	PERESTROIKA: GORBACHEV'S VERSION	4
III	PERESTROIKA: EFFECTS ON THE SOVIET MILITARY .	7
IV	PERESTROIKA: U.S. MILITARY CONCESSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE . .	14
V	SUMMARY	20
NOTES		24
BIBLIOGRAPHY		27

CHAPTER I

PERESTROIKA: NOTHING NEW

Mikhail Gorbachev in his book "Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World" defines perestroika and its end result as a thorough renewal of every aspect of Soviet life; it is giving socialism the most progressive forms of social organization; it is the fullest exposure of the humanist nature of the Soviet social system in its crucial aspects - economic, social, political, and moral.¹ There are those that could be led to believe from this statement that perestroika is to improve the living conditions of the Soviet people - nothing could be further from the truth. Living conditions of the Soviet people under present and past regimes are incidental, if considered at all.² Mr. Gorbachev as well as his predecessors initiated various forms of perestroika for one reason only - to enhance the power of the party elite and the Soviet state.

As Soviet history since 1917 will attest, the Soviets are willing to use any and all means available be it political, economic, or if need be military to achieve victory over capitalism. This pattern of manipulation started with the Revolution in 1921, when Lenin needed help to rebuild the Soviet economy ruined by the civil war. To do this he introduced his New Economic Policy (NEP) which offered

concessions to foreign capitalists in return for help. Soviet leaders allegedly commented "the capitalists will sell us the rope with which we will hang them."³ Other examples of Soviet manipulation include: the Soviet acceptance of Herbert Hoover's massive famine relief program; Stalin's first Five-Year Plan of industrialization which made concessions and in return saw this brutal regime receive significant help from some of the most prestigious firms in the West; and Krushchev's "thaw" which heavily influenced our thinking. The concessions made to the West during all these periods was for one purpose, to increase the power of the state.⁴

In 1985 the Soviet economy was once again floundering and technology and science were lagging. The Soviets had for the previous 30 years, been aggressively pursuing the West in all military categories and had achieved either parity or superiority. During this same period they engaged in international saber rattling, supported wars of national liberation, and aggressively pursued a policy of expansionism and influence in every corner of the world. This policy however, did not come without a price. It virtually bankrupt the Soviet economy, left their technological field stagnant, left their superpower status in question, and their people hopelessly repressed and wrought with numerous social problems.

What an opportunity for someone willing to take some political chances to take control - that someone was Mikhail Gorbachev.

CHAPTER II

PERESTROIKA: GORBACHEV'S VERSION

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985 he faced massive problems. He faced those problems head-on and subsequently made sweeping changes in the political, economic, and ideologic life of the Soviet Union that no one could have predicted. His new policies would transform not just the Soviet Union but the entire world.⁵ Gorbachev began to call into question some of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism; introduced Western-style free market reforms; began to open a closed society, pulled Soviet troops out of Afghanistan; and proposed diplomatic and arms control agreements that helped to ease tensions between the superpowers.⁶ Gorbachev had thus set out to change the Soviet Union through a series of economic, political, and social reforms collectively known as perestroika (restructuring).⁷

What then is Gorbachev's purpose and how far will the Soviet Communist Party relinquish its strangle-hold over the military, the state, KGB, and armed forces - all those instruments through which life is controlled in the Soviet Union? No one really knows the answer to these questions. However, it is imperative that we pause at this time to analyze what has happened to insure we understand as best as possible

the future strategic implications to the United States and the rest of the world.

Western analysts who study perestroika's reforms express a number of different viewpoints as to the beginning and direction perestroika is headed. The diversity of the views range from the optimistic belief in every change claimed by the Soviet media to total rejection of any change in the Soviet totalitarian system. The theory that is probably most correct is the theory that suggests that although perestroika was born from dire economic conditions, it represents an attempt to restructure the Soviet Union as a more efficient and perhaps a more Communist state which is better able to compete with the West.⁸

Gorbachev lends credence to this theory and the fact that the Soviet Union is not simply restructuring out of economic or technological needs when in his book he says:

There are different interpretations of perestroika in the West, including the United States. There is the view that it has been necessitated by the disastrous state of the Soviet economy and that it signifies disenchantment with socialism and a crisis for its ultimate goals. Nothing could be further from the truth than such interpretations, whatever the motives behind them.⁹

He goes on to say:

Of course perestroika has been largely stimulated by our dissatisfaction with the way things have been going in our country

in recent years. But it has to a far greater extent been prompted by our awareness that the potential for socialism had been under-utilized.¹⁰

It seems clear through these statements that yes, Gorbachev believes there are serious problems in the Soviet Union and changes need to be made, however, those changes will be within the realm of socialism. Gorbachev also reinforces this theory of socialism as the genuine goal of perestroika when he tells us:

We will proceed toward better socialism rather than away from it. We are saying this honestly, without trying to fool our own people or the world. Any hopes that we will begin to build a different non-socialist society and go over to the other camp are unrealistic and futile. Those in the West that expect us to give up Socialism will be disappointed. It is high time they understood this, and even more importantly proceed from that understanding in practical relations with the Soviet Union.¹¹

The disaster Gorbachev inherited in 1985 required him to map out a plan; a plan incorporating actions that would enable the Soviet Union to become competitive once again. This plan, albeit confusing and inconsistent at times, was one of drastic action, with the end result being a stronger socialist state retaining its military superpower status. It is with this in mind that I will evaluate perestroika and its effects on the Soviet military.

CHAPTER III

PERESTROIKA: EFFECTS ON THE SOVIET MILITARY

As the decade of the 80's began, the world was shocked and dismayed as they watched Soviet forces invade Afghanistan. The Soviet leadership simultaneously reassured everyone that their military was not a threat and that there was no real reason to be overly concerned. General Secretary Brezhnev used the meeting with other East bloc leaders in mid-May of 1980, to issue a Declaration on the subject of Warsaw Pact military doctrine. He said "there is not now, never was and never will be any strategic doctrine other than a defensive one. There is not now, never was and never will be the intention of creating a potential for a first nuclear strike. Additionally, the Warsaw Pact nations had never and never would aim for military superiority and are invariably advocating maintaining the military balance at ever lower levels, for reducing and ultimately culminating military confrontation in Europe".¹² The Declaration also called for confidence-building measures, renunciation of force or threat of force, limitation of forces and arms of each state or group of states solely to suit defense needs, and mutual renunciation of attempts at gaining military supremacy".¹³ As a follow on to these statements, the Soviets further demonstrated their good intentions by

announcing a unilateral withdrawal of troops and arms from Central Europe.

As we analyze Gorbachev's perestroika, and how it relates to Brezhnev's pronouncements of the early 80's, we begin to see some significant parallels; parallels that were layed out right at the beginning during the 1986 27th Party Congress. During the Congress Gorbachev declared that military doctrine in the Soviet Union was unequivocally "defensive," and that in the military sphere of things, the Soviets intended to act in such a way as to give nobody fears, even imagined ones about their security.¹⁴ The significant difference between Gorbachev's statement versus Brezhnev's was only in the impact.¹⁵ In 1980 there was very much an awareness among the U.S. and its NATO allies of the Soviet military strength and potential, and everyone was most concerned. Seven years later, however, similar announcements made by a new and more dynamic leader, touted as "new thinking," made a much greater impact on the West.¹⁶

Gorbachev's statements brought new hope to the free world that fundamental changes were taking place inside the Soviet Union. This subject has been the topic of conversation in every corner of the free world among all walks of life. However, before drawing any quick conclusions, one must remember that there have been these similar hopes before in the

60's, 70's and yes, in the 80's (under Brezhnev) that were only later dashed. In the 1960's, following the Cuban Missile Crisis, leaders in Washington, DC as well as most European capitals thought that the Kremlin's military policy had changed. In particular it thought the new Soviet leadership of Brezhnev's and Kosygin would reject the nuclear madness of Krushchev - it did not. In the 70's, after the signing of SALT I, the U.S. thought that ties with the Soviets were so strong that detente was irreversible - wrong again. In the 80's, with Brezhnev's "Declarations" of a defensive strategy and no military supremacy only "reasonable sufficiency", hopes were high once more. However, the same pattern as in the 60's and 70's was repeated and Soviet military doctrine remained the same.¹⁷

There is another aspect of the 27th Party Congress that must also be thoroughly understood - that being the Party Program that was approved. The program essentially was a slightly revised program of 25 years earlier, emphasizing the aggressive circles of imperialism, particularly the United States, as being a danger. However, at the same time declaring that world war was not inevitable providing that the Soviet Armed Forces were properly equipped with the necessary weapons and maintained at a high state of combat readiness. To ensure this, Gorbachev pointed out at the 27th Congress, that "the

Communist Party of the Soviet Union regards defense of the socialist homeland, a strengthening of the country's defenses, and the ensuring of state security as one of the most important functions of the Soviet State".¹⁸ Nothing significantly different between this pronouncement and those of Brezhnev and Krushchev.

As the Soviets moved into the 80's amidst the stagnation of the Brezhnev years and against the resurgence of western strength, the Soviet General Staff became deeply concerned with the USSR's inability to keep pace in the superpower competition. This ultimately led to the Soviet Military High Command supporting Gorbachev's restructuring agenda because it totally responded to their needs. Perestroika promised to deliver what the military so badly needed: a modern economy capable of producing the requisite quantity and quality of high-tech weapons and a healthy society capable of producing educated, fit, and motivated citizens to man these new systems.¹⁹ Gorbachev's global initiatives were to stabilize the international environment, grant the USSR access to Western technology, and constrain the U.S. from racing ahead to field its technological edge.²⁰ In sum, perestroika promised the Soviet Armed Forces time to rebuild in order to propel the USSR into the next Century as a full-fledged superpower with a military to match.

From 1985 - mid to late 1990, Gorbachev's initiatives have served him well. They at least partially accomplished two of his major objectives, those being: (1) eliminate barriers to western technology and (2) weaken the main enemy - the U.S. defense establishment.

He accomplished this by making concessions to the West and successfully projecting to the world a kinder, gentler, more peace loving nation.²¹ This new image has been successful to a large extent, and has allowed them to obtain the following: new technology that they so desperately need for their military; western concessions at the bargaining table such as the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the 1989 Conventional Forces Europe Treaty (both of which could ultimately serve to give the strategic advantage to the Soviets) and lastly; has caused many western countries to cut defense budgets drastically and will continue to have this effect in the future.

You can expect the Soviets to continue to make concessions in order to buy additional time and technology and to keep the west off balance. Meanwhile, the Soviets continue to spend between 15-20 percent of their GNP on defense to both modernize and produce as a minimum; one submarine every six weeks, and six tanks, two aircraft, and one missile on a daily basis. Additionally, they are continuing to modernize their

strategic and nuclear strategic defensive capabilities. Examples of this modernization include: (1) ICBM system upgrades which include both mobile and fixed versions of the multiple warhead systems of the SS-18, SS-24, and SS-25. With these upgrades the Soviets retain a credible first strike capability against U.S. silo based forces;²² (2) production of the new Bear H and Blackjack aircraft equipped with cruise missiles; (3) the deployment of the Delta IV and Typhoon Class submarines capable of carrying between 16-20 nuclear missiles each; (4) upgrades in command, control, and communications systems; (5) upgrades to their anti-satellite capability; and lastly, (6) extensive research on lasers indicating (probably) future use in space.²³

The transformation of the Soviet Armed Forces is a do or die proposition. The overall effort and political price the USSR is ready to pay reflect their conviction. Defense Minister Yazov succinctly put it: "It is precisely because we are unhappy with the existing state of affairs that we began to restructure the Armed Forces."²⁴ The General of the Army Shabanov echoed Yazov's sentiments when on 23 February 1990, he said, "the main objective of perestroika is the qualitative improvement of the Armed Forces."²⁵

While we should not ignore the possibility of actual change in the Kremlin's goals, we must be realistic about the

chance of that happening. Remember, the military doctrine announced by Khrushchev in 1960 remained the same under Brezhnev and essentially the same under Gorbachev - the goal being in the final analysis, the overthrow of capitalism.²⁶

CHAPTER IV

PERESTROIKA: U.S. MILITARY CONCESSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

To be sure, the Soviet military threat has diminished over the last few years. The virtual collapse of the Warsaw Pact as we knew it, the internal turmoil of the Soviet Union, and the unilateral withdrawal of many Soviet forces from formerly Eastern Bloc countries, all lessens the threat of a "bolt from the blue" War on the Central European front.²⁷ It is now time to assess what the United States has already given up in terms of strategic and conventional forces and its overall effect on national security for the future.

General Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated in a recent article in Defense 90, that the Soviets have not made the mistake of equating withdrawal and restructuring with disarming and neither should we.²⁸ One can make a case that the United States has already given up a great deal with the signing of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) in 1987, the Conventional Forces Europe Agreement in 1990, and the decreased priority of the Strategic Defense Initiative Program. Additionally, with the lack of any credible START agreement on the table, the Soviets hold and will continue to hold a significant strategic advantage both defensively and

offensively. With this in mind, we need to briefly examine the over-all impact on the balance of power with the Soviet Union.

With the signing of the INF Treaty in 1987, Mr. Gorbachev scored a major victory. The result of the treaty was an agreement that removed all NATO nuclear and conventional land based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 500-5500 KM. The elimination of these missiles significantly reduced NATO's ability to strike deep into the Soviet and heartland. Additionally, it cut deep into NATO's defensive doctrine, which because of the relative numbers in conventional arms, is totally dependent on the use of theater nuclear missiles.²⁹ The Soviets on the other gave up the SS-20 which did not have near the impact on them.

The Conventional Forces Europe (CFE) Agreement which was signed in November 1990, however, not yet ratified by either side, must be monitored carefully. On the surface it looks excellent by calling for the destruction of nearly two-thirds of major Soviet armaments west of the Urals and the probability of a complete withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe within a decade. Additionally, it has virtually eliminated the chief fear of NATO governments which was a "bolt from the blue" attack by the Soviet led Warsaw Pact breaking through shallow NATO defenses to reach the English Channel and the North Sea. However, as we watch the unilateral Soviet cuts

proceed we must understand that there are many areas that are still of grave concern. These areas include the Soviet residual equipment which is serving to modernize their remaining units; The lack of provisions in the agreement for the disposition of the soldiers that are being withdrawn from the Eastern bloc countries and the concern they may be used elsewhere in the force structure; no provisions to control reserve or mobilization forces, therefore, there is concern that as the active force scales down the reserve forces will be proportionately increased;³⁰ no effective measures in the treaty to impede any forward movement of reinforcement and/or reserve forces as well; no restrictions on logistics components and only limited restrictions on mobilizations and exercises.³¹

Finally, the most significant concern of CFE is the perceived lack of sincerity/honesty of the Soviets while negotiating and even after signing this agreement. It has been reported that the Soviet military leadership has been dissatisfied with what it views as "disproportional" concessions by President Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze at the recent arms control talks. Because of this dissatisfaction, they have begun to shift tanks and other pieces of equipment east of the Ural Mountains to avoid their inclusion in the CFE Agreement.³² If this is the case, all bets must be off until the Soviets show a sincere desire to

negotiate. The fact of the matter is, even after the implementation of CFE, the Soviets alone still have a conventional force larger and now as modern as its entire NATO rival. To keep this in context, the Soviets could cut their Army by 50 divisions and still have over 100 divisions of varying operational readiness still available.³³ CFE will be effective in cutting down the possibility of a short-preparation attack, however, does not do enough to cut back the threat of a potential reinforced attack.

As the Soviets maintain strategic superiority in both offensive and defensive capability, the START talks become critical. The reality is, that the Soviets have had a long-term strategic arms modernization program in place that has produced a very credible nuclear force posture. They have been shaping their strategic nuclear modernization programs to be within future Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty constraints thus, complicating the issue.³⁴ They have upgraded and will continue to upgrade land and submarine based ballistic missiles and bombers making them increasingly more accurate. They have already deployed many of their rail-based SS-18s and SS-24s, and road based SS-25s when we have yet to field a mobile missile with comparable capability - by the mid 90's mobile systems could easily comprise one-half of their total ICBM

force.³⁵ To provide a credible deterrent we need to field mobile missiles and systems such as the B-2 Bomber.

There is one final area that must be discussed - Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Funding for Star Wars has been steadily decreasing over the years for fear of fueling a new arms race. The debate continues, however, and as the Soviet threat as well as the third world threat continues to grow, ever increasing support grows for the program. The Soviets are focusing their attention in this area in hopes of success in space prior to the United States. The fact of the matter is, however, that they do not have the technology or the money to vigorously pursue this effort. In that light, we should continue our research in order to not only provide protection for the battlefield and the continental United States, but to ultimately force them to sit down at the negotiating table for sincere negotiations.

So where do we go from here? The reality of the situation is this. According to General Powell, our basic national defense policy will stay the same. Two of the basic objectives in this policy are to deter attack against the United States, its allies, and other important countries or defeat such an attack should deterrence fail; and to increase U.S. influence around the world, further an atmosphere conducive to democratic progress, protect free commerce and

ensure U.S. access to world markets, associated critical resources, the oceans, and space. To accomplish this mission it is a fact that there will be less dollars. Since 1985, before Gorbachev and before any Soviet announcements of troop reductions, Congress has been telling the Department of Defense there will be less money to spend on the military.³⁶ Since that time the defense budget has stayed fairly constant but now that we have seen Soviet reductions, albeit a small one in terms of capability, it is reasonable to require the military to wisely draw down its forces to a safe level.³⁷ We must, however, insure that the draw-down is not a precipitous act, is well thought out and will not compromise the future of this nation. The American people want a strong free world, a strong America and a credible defense - they simply want it at a reasonable cost.³⁸ Through an evolutionary approach to reshaping our armed forces we can avoid putting them at risk and give them that defense.³⁹

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Our national security policy over the last 50 years appears to have been extremely successful against the Soviets and because of this policy, the Soviets have taken some significant steps towards reducing East-West tensions. At this point however, I believe it would be premature and highly optimistic not to consider crises in Europe still probable and the Soviet Union as the premier military power in Europe, still willing and able to exploit these crises.⁴⁰ The balancing of that power will remain the challenge to the United States

So much for the assessment. It is now time to lay out a plan to confront Gorbachev's "New Thinking". This is not an easy job. As General Powell recently said in an article in Defense 90, "there is not a tougher job than in this environment, to assess the scope, pace, and direction of the Soviet military strength in order to reshape America's defenses".

The proposal to combat Gorbachev's "New Technology" includes the following: (1) The continuation and expansion of the Strategic Defense Initiative Program. As the present crisis in the Middle East has shown us, even Third World countries have a significant ballistic missile threat and are

willing and able to use it. As for the Soviets, their capabilities speak for themselves. Why tempt whoever may be controlling their weapons by guaranteeing their effectiveness? As the Soviets show a willingness to scale down their ballistic missile and nuclear arsenal capabilities, so we then and only then proportionately scale down SDI development. (2) Restrain the transferring of any military significant technologies or economic assistance to the Soviet bloc. Any technological or economic aid should be tied to conditions requiring lasting structural changes to Soviet domestic and international policies.⁴¹ Premature help could make it easier for Kremlin leaders to procrastinate additional moves to democratic values. Senator Bill Bradley (D-New Jersey) goes so far as to suggest we treat our capital as a strategic asset and develop a plan and set of conditions for its flow Eastward.⁴² (3) Maintain forward presence, although on a limited scale, on the Eurasian landmass. In Europe with the threat of a come as you are war virtually non-existent, the Army could reduce safely to about one corps. Inherent in the scaling down of Army forces will be an increased need for assured sea control, significantly more fast strategic sealift and airlift for quick response, and more POMCUS sights strategically placed throughout the world. Army units must become ever more versatile in order to be used in Europe as well as any other part of the world such as Panama.

The operational commander will have less to do more and will be required to count heavily on reinforcements. (4) High priority needs to continue to be given to research and development. R&D is one significant advantage this country enjoys over any other and we must exploit it. Priorities should include conventional as well as nuclear and strategic capability. R&D should be generously funded. (5) Intelligence gathering and analysis will become exceedingly more difficult and important in the future. Our ability to gather intelligence must grow with the times if we are going to be able to protect our national interests. Good intelligence will buy time, allow reinforcements to arrive, and save lives. (6) Lastly, the United States must continue to encourage strong alliances and proportionately equal burden sharing among the members. Nations such as Japan, Germany, and even China must share the military as well as the economic burden to act as a counter weight to the Soviet Union. The United States can and should continue to be the balancer, however, must be able to rely on other nations to share responsibility in safeguarding overseas vital interests.

The objective of the United States should be the establishment of a new world order based on rule of law and peaceful competition between nations. This will require continued changes in the philosophical meaning of Soviet

communism. There are signs of positive change, (although recently things have begun to regress), however, U.S. foreign policy should not change significantly until Soviet behavior changes significantly. Caution should be the watch word, however, if opportunities arise, flexible and imaginative responses must prevail to encourage long-lasting U.S. - Soviet relations.

I conclude with a quote from a recent article written by General Galvin, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. He said, "Peace remains a delicate flower. So many times it has been allowed to wither and die because we lacked the foresight and wisdom to preserve it. Each time the price of our neglect has been tragic."

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