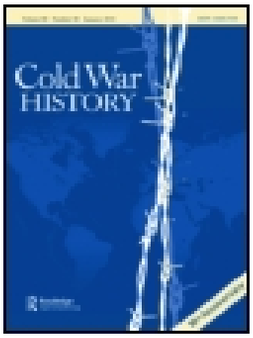

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Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War: Perspectives on History and Personality

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The article explores the impact of Mikhail Gorbachev on the end of the Cold War and the self-destruction of the Soviet Union. It is based on a wealth of memoir literature, interviews, and primary sources, including the archival collections of the Gorbachev Foundation in Moscow. It first discusses the standard explanations of the Cold War's end which highlight structural changes in the international system, a structural domestic crisis within the Soviet Union, and a radical shift of ideas in the Soviet leadership, showing the important anomalies they all leave unexplained. Then it analyzes Gorbachev's character, revealing what set him apart from other leaders, finally, assessing in detail how these traits influenced the ending of the Cold War. Particular attention is paid to the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. The article concludes that many aspects of the end of the Soviet Union and the Cold War can only be understood through the Gorbachev personality factor, and that the impact of Gorbachev's personality cannot be understood until we abandon simplistic judgements.

It is a perennial human illusion to attribute great events to great causes. Particularly during the past century scholars have tended to attribute transitions from one historical period to another to grand, impersonal forces – shifts in the balance of power, inter-imperialist contradictions, revolutions, the rise of new ideologies and social movements. In the current scholarly climate the other extreme has become fashionable: to highlight the micro-levels of history – the role and beliefs of 'common people', incremental changes in social life, and power as a phenomenon of everyday life. As a result of these two trends, the view that history is shaped by 'great men' is utterly discredited. Today, many historians would rather die than admit that the character of a personality in a position of power at a critical juncture can make a major difference in the course of history.

Among recent exceptions is the figure of Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev. This energetic, handsome man with sparkling eyes and a charming smile 'did more than anyone else to end the Cold War between East and West', asserts British political scientist Archie

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Brown in his seminal study, *The Gorbachev Factor*. Yet his book deals more with the domestic field of Gorbachev's activities than with his foreign policy. And, surprisingly, in discussing the reasons for Gorbachev's policies, Brown pays only slight attention to the character and personal traits of the last Soviet leader: Gorbachev is a 'factor' in his study, not a human being in flesh and spirit.[1]

Perhaps this reluctance to analyze Gorbachev the person can be excused. It is indeed very hard to write about a living historical personality. Proximity warps our vision. But is it possible to evaluate recent history without evaluating a person who so dramatically influenced its course? It is worth quoting Anatoly Chernyaev, the most loyal and supportive of Gorbachev's assistants. Gorbachev, he claims, 'was not "a great man" as far as set of personal qualities was concerned'. But he 'fulfilled a great mission', and that is 'more important for history'.[2] A more critical Dmitry Volkogonov provides another, yet also remarkable, estimate: Gorbachev 'is a person of great mind, but with a weak character. Without this paradox of personality it is hard to understand him as a historical actor'. Volkogonov writes that the 'intellect, feelings, and will of Gorbachev' left a unique imprint on the Soviet transition.[3]

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate in what ways Gorbachev's less-than-great personality shaped the end of the Cold War. It proceeds in three sections. The first discusses the standard explanations of the Cold War's end which highlight structural changes in the international system, a structural domestic crisis within the Soviet Union, and a radical shift of ideas in the Soviet leadership, showing important anomalies often left unexplained. Gorbachev's personality and character in general are then analyzed, revealing what it was that set him apart from other leaders. The third section assesses in detail how these personality and character traits influenced the ending of the Cold War. The bottom line is that many of the most extraordinary aspects of this remarkable series of events can *only* be understood by according primary importance to the Gorbachev *personality* factor.

The Standard Explanations – and their Shortcomings

Realists argue that by the mid-1980s the distribution of capabilities shifted drastically in favour of the United States and the West. Relative decline offered the Soviets no practical alternative to a policy of imperial retrenchment and engagement with the powerful West.

When the Kremlin leadership perceived this power shift, it brought its behaviour in accordance with reality.

It is obvious, however, that the distance from this logical scheme can be nothing but a hypothesis for historians. After all, the position of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s was no worse than in the late 1940s, when, after a devastating war, a costly confrontation with the United States began. Why did Gorbachev choose reconciliation with the West while Stalin had chosen confrontation? No reality, however harsh, dictates one set of perceptions. In the Kremlin, as everywhere else, the distance between reality and perceptions was great and conditioned by many intersecting motives, interests and, above all, by diverging perspectives stemming from social and historical experience. And, most importantly, people in the Kremlin perceived more than one option by the mid-1980s.

One possibility – dangerous for the world and the Soviet Union itself – was discussed by the aged Soviet leaders in 1981–84 as linked to their sense of threat from the military buildup and 'aggressive' behaviour of the Reagan administration. Leaning on their experience of the Stalin era and the Second World War, Yuri Andropov and Marshal Dmitry Ustinov contemplated emergency measures to mobilize Soviet society and state for the task of preserving 'strategic parity' with the United States in the all-out arms race.[4] There were even plans to repeat 'the Cuban scenario' of 1962 by responding to US deployment of Pershings in West Germany with equally provocative deployments of Soviet arms in the immediate vicinity of the United States.[5] The core of this response was mistrust, fear, and reliance on deterrence by force – very similar to Soviet behaviour in the last years of Stalin's life. Even Gorbachev, when he first came to power, was under the influence of Andropov's opinion that no compromise could be reached while the Reagan administration stayed in power.[6]

Another option was an 'amicable agreement' with the West on the basis of mutual reductions of arms and withdrawal from the Third World. This option was offered at the end of the Second World War by, among others, former Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov, and came into focus after Stalin. Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev branded it as 'peaceful coexistence' and adhered to it despite all failures and frustrations in Soviet–American relations. At the core of this option was 'Realpolitik' not dissimilar to the Nixon–Kissinger strategy of the early 1970s. It aimed to preserve Soviet imperial influence in the world, including strategic 'parity'

with the United States, Soviet allies abroad, and the ideological support of international communist and 'progressive' movements. According to Chernyaev, Gorbachev in his first years in office also believed that 'peaceful coexistence' was the option of 'common sense' and that 'socialism' and 'capitalism' 'could coexist without interfering with each other'.[7]

There was also a third option of unilateral, calibrated reductions of Soviet armed forces, similar to what the Kremlin carried out in the first years after Stalin's death. It did not mean bailing out of the arms race with the United States, but rather procuring 'a breathing spell' in order to lift the burden of military-industrial expenditures from the Soviet economy. This option, by contrast to the first one, corresponded to the needs of a gradual reform of the Soviet centralized system, but implied gradualism and firm control over society and economic life. A majority of analysts in Washington suspected and feared until 1989 that this was exactly what Gorbachev intended to do.[8] Indeed, some elements of this option were present in Gorbachev's arguments before the Politburo during 1986–87 and became public after 1988 in his rhetoric of 'strategic sufficiency'.[9]

The key – and frequently unrecognized – point is that *Gorbachev never pursued any of these options systematically*. While some domestic critics and Western policymakers might have *thought* he was following 'peaceful coexistence' or 'breathing spell' strategies, in fact, as shown below, he was doing something quite different and arguably far less coherent and calculated. This is recognized, *post facto*, even by Gorbachev loyalists.

Soviet domestic politics is a second standard explanation for the end of the Cold War. The deterioration of the Soviet economy, ecology, and quality of everyday life – so-called 'stagnation' – as well as deep and growing problems in the multinational state contrasted dramatically with the spectacular upsurge of the United States and Western Europe in the 1980s. Even before Gorbachev, under Konstantin Chernenko, the old leadership of the Soviet Union agreed that a policy of détente and taming the arms race was imperative for the country. Gorbachev's foreign policy during 1985–86 can be largely explained by this search of détente for the sake of *perestroika* of the USSR. Gorbachev's primary foreign policy goal was to prevent a new round of the arms race (associated with Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative). He is on the record saying to the Politburo that this race will be 'beyond our capabilities, and we will lose it, because

we are at the limit of our capabilities. Moreover, we can expect that Japan and the FRG could very soon join the American potential … If the new round begins, the pressure on our economy will be unbelievable'.[10]

This crisis of the communist political and economic system inherited from Stalin and preserved essentially intact, was, of course, inevitable. By 1985 the USSR – plagued by its long-term systemic crisis – was a superpower only in the military sense. Under Gorbachev's leadership, the domestic political and economic systems deteriorated further and faster. Some on the US side, among them Secretary of State George Schultz and top CIA watcher Robert Gates, realized it was very advantageous for US interests that the deepening crisis pushed the Soviet leadership to move unilaterally to meet American demands and conditions for the end of the confrontation. In fact, if it were not for Presidents Reagan and Bush, who took significant steps to meet Soviet concerns, the end of the Cold War might have looked like a Soviet surrender.[11]

The 'domestic structural' explanation seems persuasive, but a closer look reveals that it, too, is less 'structural' than man-made – not to say one-man made. The key is that the grave economic, financial, and state crisis began only between 1986 and 1988 and the *immediate cause* was Gorbachev's choices or non-choices. From the beginning his approach to economic affairs was deeply flawed. He sanctioned investing hundreds of billions of rubles in reforming main industries. Simultaneously, without waiting for the technological renovation, Gorbachev proclaimed a policy of immediate 'acceleration' that planned to raise the growth rate of Soviet economy by 20–22 per cent and catch up with the United States in industrial output by the year 2000. Finally, at the same time, his foolish anti-alcohol campaign cost the budget up to 100 billion rubles – a terrible blow to state finances.[12] In a Russian fairy-tale the knight has to choose at the junction of three roads which one to take. Gorbachev attempted to go in all directions simultaneously.

There were also two consequential choices that Gorbachev did make. First, instead of relying on the most pragmatic elements of the old nomenklatura in restructuring the country, he tried to build up new political forces and movements while gradually diminishing the power of the party and the central state. Second, instead of moving to economic reforms within the framework of the existing political system, he encouraged a very rapid dismantling of this system and the communist ideology that gave it legitimacy.[13] These choices led after

1988 to political chaos and economic catastrophe. Gorbachev's 'remedies' were killing the sick patient.[14]

And even with the economy and finances in steep decline, the Soviet Union still could, until 1988, maintain a respectable Potemkin façade on its weakness and negotiate with the United States from a position of relative parity. During 1988 this situation changed drastically: Gorbachev's decision to launch radical political and governmental reforms, coupled with the removal of the party nomenklatura from economic life, created a severe crisis of the state and strengthened centrifugal political. All this was tantamount to a revolution that – for all to see – engulfed the Soviet leadership. These policies essentially destroyed the Soviet capacity to act like a superpower in the international arena. The Soviet Union was in no position to bail out its allies or to present itself as an equal partner to the United States in negotiations. A close assistant to Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze asserts that after mid-1988, 'when we encountered domestic difficulties, we began to realize that we would be able to stay afloat for a while and even to preserve the status of great power only if we lean on the United States. We felt that if we had stepped away from the US, we would have been pushed aside. We had to be as close as possible to the United States'.[15]

There are other aspects that also contradict the 'domestic structural crisis' as a determining factor in the Soviet desire to end the Cold War *pronto* on the best available terms. Even as the crisis became visible and American visitors advised Gorbachev and Shevardnadze to cut their assistance to Soviet 'friends' in Cuba, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and so on, the Gorbachev administration continued, even with empty coffers, to pour billions of dollars and supply military equipment for its clients. Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, and others did this during 1989, 1990, and even part of 1991.[16]

Although many scholars and politicians contend that there was no way to reform the USSR without dismantling the old Soviet system, it is possible to imagine another option: a gradual transformation of the post-Stalinist communist model into a post-communist authoritarian model. A leader supported by the pragmatic elements of the nomenklatura might have gradually privatized state property. The remarkable transformation of some party secretaries and communist ministers into bankers and rich oligarchs under Yeltsin supports this proposition. One keen observer suggested that even under Gorbachev 'the higher echelons of the party' would have been ready 'to send to Hell at any moment the whole of Marxism-

Leninism, if only such an act would help them preserve their hierarchical positions and continue their careers'.[17] Instead of coopting the old elite, Gorbachev chose a policy of leading Soviet society to 'democracy' over the heads of the nomenklatura; and this 'populism' soon brought to the fore elements of liberal and nationalist intelligentsia that turned vehemently against the Soviet leader. This, and the growing sabotage of the nomenklatura in all spheres of state policies and in economic life left Gorbachev hovering without real political support. Denied political recognition and support at home, he increasingly looked for it abroad, from Western foreign leaders and Western public opinion.

In sum, at each stage of the Soviet endgame, Gorbachev either produced conflicting and therefore inefficient policies or made fateful choices that destabilized the USSR and sapped its ability to act coherently as a superpower. And as shown below, those choices can be explained only by reference to Gorbachev's peculiar preferences and personality traits.

A third standard explanation for the end of the Cold War is the shift of ideas among the Soviet leadership, both as a product of the longer term erosion of communist ideology and as a short-term by-product of the *glasnost* of 1987–89. Some focus on Gorbachev's 'new thinking' as a set of ideas that replaced the old Soviet 'mentality', in particular the core ideological thesis about 'class struggle' and the inevitability of the world's division into 'two camps'. The key to this new thinking was the idea of plurality, global interdependence, and indivisible security of the world in the nuclear age. As Robert English demonstrates, the roots of these new ideas about the world can be traced inside the Soviet political establishment and intelligentsia as far back as the 1940s and 1950s.[18] Some scholars point out that Gorbachev absorbed 'new thinking' from various international sources and from his liberal-minded advisers. The records of Gorbachev's conversations with foreign leaders reveal some of them (Francois Mitterand, Richard Nixon, Margaret Thatcher, Rajiv Gandhi) as important partners in Gorbachev's intellectual evolution.[19] Archie Brown stresses Gorbachev's 'capacity for learning'.[20] He clearly regards 'new thinking' as an anti-thesis to 'structural' explanations for the end of the Cold War.[21]

Indeed, the role of ideas in changing Soviet international behaviour was great. But even at the time there was something bizarre about this role. To put it simply, Gorbachev took ideas *too seriously*. They played an *excessive* role in Soviet behaviour. They

took precedence not only to immediate interests in negotiating processes, but also to the formulation of state interests. The real action is thus not in the ideas themselves, but in the historical personality that espoused them and made them his own.

The rejection of the old ideology could have led to more pragmatic and flexible attitudes, a version of 'Realpolitik' based less on lofty principles and ideas than on modest and clear formulation of 'state interests'. When Margaret Thatcher said in 1984 that one could do business with Gorbachev, she was particularly impressed with his quoting Lord Palmerston on the value of 'permanent interests'.[22] Yet the thrust of Soviet foreign policy since 1988 was far from Palmerston's dictum. It was highly idealistic and imbued with an almost Messianic spirit. In mid-1987 Gorbachev wrote a book called *Perestroika for Our Country and the World*. It contained a universalist image of international relations based on a new just and democratic world order, where the USSR would play a key role and the United Nations would reign supreme. In a word, Gorbachev replaced the Messianic 'revolutionary-imperial' idea of communism with the equally Messianic idea 'that perestroika in the USSR was only a part of some kind of global perestroika, the birth of a new world order'.[23]

The new ideological motives of foreign policy did not necessarily dictate the total rejection of the use of force and projection of power in one form or another. For Gorbachev's predecessors, from Stalin to Andropov, and for most of his colleagues in the Politburo in 1985–88, 'realism' based on strength, coercion, and balance of power was even more important than communist ideology. They cared about power and empire as much, if not more, than about 'socialist' perspectives and 'proletarian internationalism'. In his shift of paradigm, Gorbachev rejected not only the communist tenet of 'class struggle', but also the post-Stalin, imperialist 'Realpolitik'.

There is nothing intrinsic to the 'new thinking' ideas themselves that necessitated Gorbachev's radically conciliatory course. One could subscribe to the whole package of ideas and yet completely part ways with Gorbachev on the question of whether or when to draw a line in the sand and call a halt to Soviet imperial decline. For most statesmen ideas are tools – and to understand their impact on history, one must examine how they are moulded and manipulated by the human agents who espouse them. In Gorbachev's case, he clearly overreached himself when he tried to mould Soviet realities according to the ideas of 'new thinking'.

There are few, if any, precedents in history when the leader in charge of a huge ailing state would willingly risk the geopolitical positions of a great power and the very foundations of his political position for the sake of a moral global project. Even Lenin, Gorbachev's hero, compromised the project of 'world revolution' in 1918 for the sake of staying in power. Gorbachev, however, did exactly the opposite. By the spring of 1989 it became obvious even to his closest assistants, that he was losing control over foreign and domestic events. Anatoly Chernyaev in May 1989 wrote in his diary with anguish and amazement: 'Inside me depression and alarm are growing, the sense of crisis of the Gorbachevian Idea. He is prepared to go far. But what does it mean? His favorite catchword is "unpredictability". But most likely we will come to a collapse of the state and something like chaos.'[24] The outcome of 1991 and subsequent history of Russia validated these fears to a great extent.

A Fateful Personality

The standard explanations for the end of the Cold War are important and necessary – to describe the critical material, political, and intellectual setting in which Gorbachev's peculiar personality and leadership style wrought their powerful effect. Both critics and admirers of Gorbachev inevitably come to a point at which they just scratch their heads in astonishment and begin to talk about an 'enigma'. One admirer, a perceptive scholar, concludes that 'those six years of systematic dismantling [of the Cold War and communism] were not an organic Soviet and Russian development. Rather, it was a contribution to history linked to Gorbachev as an individual'.[25] Yegor Ligachev writes that politics 'cannot explain the zigzags of the political course associated so closely with Gorbachev's name. There was an entire complex of interrelated causes, including Gorbachev's personal qualities'.[26] This section begins with a brief discussion of the sources and methods for analyzing this remarkable personality, and then turns to a discussion of his most salient character traits.

The sources for writing about this topic are nearly all problematic. The most important collection, Gorbachev's personal archive, is still out of researchers' reach. Fortunately, there is partial archival evidence on the evolution of Gorbachev's thinking and the ways he operated in the archive of the Gorbachev Foundation. This archive contains mostly transcribed notes, memos, and other documents of Gorbachev's assistants – Anatoly Chernyaev, Georgy Shakhnazarov,

Vadim Medvedev, and others. Recently, three transcribed collections of Politburo notes (different from official Politburo transcripts that are still unavailable in the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation) were released, and these are to be published in the near future. Much of this article is based on extensive research in the Gorbachev Foundation archive in 1993–96.

Another major collection of documents originated from the Kremlin archives and emerged during the court proceedings against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1992. It became known as 'Fond 89' – most of its documents have been published in the Russian press and have been available since 1998 on microfiche. By its very nature, this collection is highly selective and designed to be biased against Gorbachev and his associates. It is not easy to glean evidence from Gorbachev's memoirs; they are so craftily opaque and carefully edited that only the most well-trained reader can tease real data from them. The same reservations apply to the retrospective observations of many of his critics. Some of them seem to seep with poison and viciousness, for example, the books of Valery Boldin (the aide who was closest to the Gorbachevs) and former Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov. Still, such books – as well as more measured writings of and interviews with KGB's chief Vladimir Kryuchkov, Deputy General Secretary Yegor Ligachev, Vice-President Gennady Yanaev, Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Kornienko, Gorbachev's personal body-guard Vladimir Medvedev, and many others – *do* reward careful reading.[27] The observations of Gorbachev's friends present another kind of problem. Chernyaev, Georgi Shakhnazarov, Vadim Medvedev, Andrei Grachev, and other Gorbachev aides and admirers spare their former boss and do not dwell on his mistakes and weak spots.[28]

A very important source on Gorbachev's personality are the minutes taken by his assistants at the Politburo sessions and the records of Gorbachev's conversations with foreign leaders and public figures, in part published, in part available in the Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation in Moscow. Finally, perhaps the most important source on Gorbachev's personality continues to be Gorbachev himself. Though they are carefully crafted political documents, his memoirs and other recollections on his years in power do bear the strong imprint of his personality. Even though he long ago abandoned the post of General Secretary of the CPSU and the Presidency of the USSR, it is unmistakably the same personality, with unique behaviour and discourse that even today set him far

apart from the rest of Russian politicians of all brands.[29] Sometimes wittingly and more often not, Gorbachev reveals himself in his voluminous retirement writings.

All the arguments regarding Gorbachev's personality put forward by his friends, critics, and foes, deserve a careful and balanced scholarly analysis. While the critics' versions should be taken with a pinch of salt, it would be a mistake to discard and ignore them. To admit that Gorbachev was not a great statesman is not to denigrate or deny Gorbachev's historic contribution to the process of a peaceful end to the Cold War. Besides, Gorbachev is so unpopular at home that a serious and unvarnished study of his personality and statesmanship can only contribute to dispelling the cloud of exaggerations and mythical indictments that currently hang over him in Russia.

In short, the sources on Gorbachev's personality must be treated with extreme circumspection. Only by 'triangulating' among a variety of sources – the writings of supporters, opponents, and the man himself – as well as the concrete record of Gorbachev's real behaviour in office, can a rough portrait be constructed.

Western scholars often compare Gorbachev to Nikita Khrushchev. Despite a huge difference in generational experience, education, and style, they did indeed have something in common as personalities: peasant social background, sincere and feverish reformist urge, unflagging optimism and ebullient self-confidence, moral revulsion against the Soviet past, and simple-minded belief in the common sense of Soviet people and the possibility for a better life. Gorbachev makes this comparison in his memoirs, putting himself in the same boat with Khrushchev and making a point that in Russia 'no reformers' had 'a happy life'.

This comparison should go deeper and use the methodological instruments and approaches of modern social history, historical sociology, and social psychology. For instance, Russian scholar Natalya Kozlova has recently studied diaries, letters, and other written evidence on the peculiarities of socialization of Russian peasantry in the USSR. She found how the rapid collapse of 'peasant civilization' led to breath-taking social and physical mobility of young peasants to big cities, which of course also influenced their thinking. New recruits to urban civilization were burning with desire to leap from the 'idiocy of village life' to 'culture' and the highest social status they could obtain. The first cohort of such people was shaped by the 1930s and the Second World War. The second cohort came in

the 1950s, during the final stages of Soviet urbanization. An immense vitality and naive belief in the 'ideas' and 'concepts' of 'cultured' discourse made them different from the sophisticated, cynical, double-thinking urbanites.[30] The roots of both Khrushchev and Gorbachev should be sought here.

Arguably the central feature of Gorbachev's personality was his remarkable *self-confidence and optimism*. His ability to 'recoup', to 'bounce back', was extraordinary. In personal and confidential conversations with foreign leaders Gorbachev always posed as a buoyant optimist, even after things began to go wrong. He did feel enormous stress, and admitted to Mitterand in April 1989: 'I have a feeling that had lived four lives since 1985.' But, he quickly added, difficulties were 'normal during any revolution'.[31] He easily and naturally dominated at all the meetings of the Politburo he chaired; even as various crises began to shatter the consensus and destroy his power base, he hardly revealed it to his Politburo colleagues.[32]

There is a psychological foundation for all of this and political psychologists may one day explain it. Undoubtedly, as an individual, Gorbachev possesses a very healthy ego and fairly stable values. The political and social environment he lived in (Moscow State University, the region of Kuban cossacks in the south of Russia, the Politburo where he was the youngest member) fostered his healthy self-esteem. In any case, he had unflagging faith in his own capacity to succeed.

Flowing from this essential optimism, admirers say, was Gorbachev's natural liberalism and democratic instinct, based on the assumption that the Soviet people and Soviet society were essentially as good and healthy and as well-intentioned as he was himself. In Chernyaev's estimation, Gorbachev's 'natural [*prirodnye*] democratic instincts had not been completely spoiled by his long career in the party apparat, although he acquired some "pockmarks"'.[33] These instincts lived side by side with the discovery of how awful and corrupt was the 'system' under which Soviet people lived. In Chernyaev's words: 'Gorbachev was a very healthy personality, physically and morally. [And] he suffered a genuine shock from observing the society, the norms and mores which everybody had to live with, which unveiled before him in all their ghastly light when he moved to Moscow and joined the ruling party and state strata.' This moral revulsion against the existing regime, continues Chernyaev, remained a 'backbone' supporting Gorbachev in his actions, despite the many transgressions and dirty compromises of politics.[34]

A second key attitude, in the opinion of supporters, was his *naïvite*. One of his assistants, Georgy Shakhnazarov, points to this in his book, stressing Gorbachev's 'naive belief in his colleagues' common sense'.[35] This refers not only to colleagues. A firm belief that reasonable compromise is always possible underlined Gorbachev's 'human approach' to foreign policy. In essence, it was an appeal to the common sense and common values of Cold War opponents. It is striking how quickly Gorbachev moved from the simplistic picture of Reagan as a tool of the US military-industrial complex to a naive belief that, given enough personal trust, he and Reagan could together bring the Cold War to an end. The Soviet leader may have confused the personal trust that did emerge between him and Western leaders with an equal and candid relationship between the Soviet Union and Western countries. He mentioned in a narrow circle in 1986: 'It is hard to say when new thinking will emerge [in the West]. But it will emerge, and it even may happen rather quickly. Life teaches us.'[36] In March 1988 he triumphantly reported to the Politburo on the first meeting between American Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci and Soviet Minister of Defence Dmitry Yazov: 'It was a very substantive and candid discussion, sometimes even surprisingly candid. This is the sign of the times. There are human beings, not beasts. The human factor is at play here; as well as in the relations between the Presidents.' Reagan's admission in Red Square that the Soviet Union was no longer 'an evil empire' elated the Soviet leader. 'The President, despite all his prejudices, was capable of looking at things realistically and corrected his former odious views … Thus, the human factor that we hold in such great esteem in our foreign policy played its indispensable role.'[37]

This combination of optimism and naivety helps explain why Gorbachev grossly underestimated the perils of nationalist separatism inside the Soviet Union. For him the nationalist movements in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were irrational – he refused to believe that the people of these republics would support such an 'irrational' and 'stupid' step as separation from the Union. Even in November 1989, as the collapse of the Berlin Wall was about to reinforce centrifugal forces in all Soviet domains, Gorbachev dismissed the fears of his Politburo colleagues about the Baltic republics. 'Are we becoming panic-stricken prematurely? Is there really the occasion for us to start crying wolf?'[38]

Even today, observes a reviewer of Gorbachev's memoirs, 'it seems to him that this or that idea whose truth he discovered, is so

obvious, that people will absolutely grasp it. In the same way, Luther probably thought that his truths were so obvious, that he could easily convince the Pope with them'.[39] Indeed, in his most recent publications – nearly a decade out of power and almost completely ignored at home and increasingly even abroad – Gorbachev continues to preach the virtues of 'new thinking' for the entire world, as if the truth and usefulness of this political philosophy were self-evident.[40]

It was not Luther, but Lenin who remained Gorbachev's role model as late as 1989. Sympathizers notice this special affection to Lenin and attribute it to the profound impact of the Soviet political culture on Gorbachev. But Gorbachev must also have felt attached to the personality of Lenin in whom – in his idealized, censored image – he saw a reflection of his own traits – the feverish intellectualism, 'historic' optimism, and unflagging determination to muddle through social and political chaos. Gorbachev confessed to Chernyaev that he mentally 'asks for Lenin's advice' until early 1989.[41]

The critics see Gorbachev in completely different light. They stress his cynical and manipulative behaviour towards subordinates and people in general. Ligachev argues that Gorbachev 'did not have in his character any room for understanding how difficult [the reforms]' would be.[42] Gorbachev's Chief of Chancellery Valery Boldin, head of his personal security Vladimir Medvedev, and Boris Yeltsin stress, almost in unison, that the Gorbachevs, as a couple, displayed an exceptional talent to enjoy the luxurious, comfortable life of the party nomenklatura. In Medvedev's view, Gorbachev was no more 'democratic' than others in the party elite. There was, Medvedev observes, a profound psychological gap between him and the vast majority of the Soviet people. Medvedev writes that Gorbachev, unlike the patriarchal Brezhnev, felt uncomfortable with Soviet crowds, but rather preferred talking to Westerners.[43]

Gorbachev's friends recognize how much Gorbachev's personality was (and still is) at loggerheads with the mainstream of Russian-Soviet mentality. But they side with him, not with the people. Chernyaev, for instance, defines Soviet society as 'a totalitarian boulder', 'a lumpenized population with [a] give-me psychology'. In the opinion of his friends, Gorbachev accomplished an Herculean feat of waking society from the terrible stupor and slavery of Soviet totalitarianism. He yanked 'boulder' off its moorings and he gave it a push. The rest, Chernyaev contends, was inevitable: society turned out to be not worthy of the leader; the new thinking was ahead of his time. Given all this, Gorbachev could not really apply the brakes

when the 'boulder' of Soviet society went down, crushing everything in its way.[44] Another author argues that Gorbachev had a 'simple-minded' and 'unfailing' faith that 'the people simply need to be awakened' and that the 'living creative work of the masses' would by itself lead to everything good.[45]

Foes and friends alike debate Gorbachev's personal abilities for statesmanship and state management. They nearly all highlight a key *consequence* of Gorbachev's essential optimism and naivety: his 'ad hocism', his congenital lack of a long-range strategic plan, and his aversion to the practical details of governance. They all recognize that 'perestroika' had no plan and 'new thinking' was vague and could not be a practical guide for reforms. Gorbachev's favourite phrases, beside 'unpredictability', were 'let processes develop' and 'processes are in motion' [*protsessi poshli*]. Analysis of available transcripts of Politburo discussions, as well as of conversations between Gorbachev and his close advisers, demonstrate that Gorbachev juggled with many interesting ideas and propositions, but halted at the point where practical administrative matters began.[46] He had little doubt that it would be the best just to wait and watch while 'processes' ran their course and provided the most sensible outcome.

Even sympathizers admit that this psychological feature contributed to Gorbachev's chronic inability to chart a practical course for the state apparat, to carry out a sustained and thought-through programme of actions, to prevent psychological disarray and ideological breakdown in the society. Chernyaev's political memoirs are replete with his frustration and nagging doubts about it.[47] Gorbachev, he writes, failed to begin meaningful economic reforms when he still could undertake something, he let the Brezhnev–Andropov–Gromyko war in Afghanistan become 'Gorbachev's war', he let Yeltsin take the political initiative in breaking with the old discredited political order.[48] Still, the sympathizers stress that all this was not a crucial flaw. They argue that since nobody knew how to transform a 'totalitarian' country, it could be done only by trial and error. Also, in the words of one sympathizer, 'the work that Gorbachev did could only have been done without accurately perceiving all its complexity and danger. If he had started to compute everything, to think through various alternatives in his head, he simply could never have undertaken it'.[49] Quite obviously, this assessment of Gorbachev's abilities is based on an assumption that nobody could have reformed the old system; it only could be destroyed in one way or another.

Ten years after he lost power, Gorbachev himself, in a candid discussion, agreed that there was 'a lot of naivety and utopianism' in his actions. But he adamantly stuck to his ideals of 'new thinking'. He admitted that he deliberately ran a risk of political destabilization since 1988, but that it was necessary. Radical political reforms were 'deliberately designed' to 'wake up [Soviet] people'. Otherwise, he said, 'we would have shared the fate of Khrushchev. Even after we introduced new fresh forces into the already liberated structures – the party nomenklatura set a goal … through the plenums to remove the General Secretary because he intended to bury its privileges'.[50]

It is impossible to support or falsify this assumption with the available archival evidence. If there were any inclinations in Soviet party and military elites in 1987–88 to remove Gorbachev, one will hardly find any paper trail of them. The critics deny there was ever a serious challenge to Gorbachev's authority on the part of the party nomenklatura.[51] They believe that Gorbachev's zigzags, procrastination, and tolerance of chaos was the key flaw in Gorbachev's character, accounting for his lack of ability as a statesman. Ligachev writes that 'being too late, of reacting too slowly to events, was one of the most characteristic traits of Gorbachev's policies'.[52] In a recent interview he added:

> When some controversial things happened, Gorbachev often reacted with delay. My explanation is that he wanted others to analyze what affected society, what was painful to society. He wanted a ripe fruit to fall in his lap, one that he could pick up. But often it was necessary to row against the tide. There were many instances in history when the leader remained in the minority, but turned out to be right. Gorbachev, unfortunately, lacked this quality.[53]

Kryuchkov talks and writes about Gorbachev's 'impulsiveness that is linked to his personality, to the traits of his abnormal character'.[54]

The critics are convinced that another type of leader, with a stronger and steadier hand, would have made a huge difference. This hypothetical 'other' could have brought about 'détente' with the West and gradually transformed the Communist party and the Soviet Union, but, unlike Gorbachev, without destroying the foundations of state power and without creating political and social chaos.

Personality and the End of the Cold War

The self-image of Gorbachev as a leader is extremely important for understanding the end of the Cold War. It is linked to his goals and ideals, but at the same time it reflects the personal, intimate psychological 'core' that allowed him to stick to these ideals and goals. In late October 1988 Gorbachev began preparations to announce this 'core' to the world from the most salient podium, the General Assembly of the United Nations. He told his 'brain trust' – Shevardnadze, Aleksandr Yakovlev, Anatolii Dobrynin, Valentin Falin, and Anatolii Chernyaev – to prepare a speech that would be an answer to Churchill's famous speech at Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946. It 'should be anti-Fulton – Fulton in reverse', he said. 'We should present our worldview and philosophy based on the results of last three years. We should stress the demilitarization and humanization of our thinking.'[55]

This episode reveals how a comparison with Stalin can help clarify the impact of Gorbachev's personality. Consciously or not, Gorbachev posed and acted as 'anti-Stalin', both in the sense of direction he gave to the Soviet Union, but also on the world arena. Stalin, the creator of the Soviet state and empire, barely distinguished his personality from what he created. He took the slightest challenge to them as a personal assault, and, vice versa, regarded any slight to his prestige and authority (particularly from foreigners) as an intolerable insult to the prestige of the USSR as a great power.[56] By contrast, Gorbachev did not feel personal association with Soviet state and empire in the form and shape he inherited them from his predecessors. Later he claimed that he did everything 'to preserve the Union', but, as an individual, he sought to become a creator of a new state based on the principles and ideas that he internalized.

Stalin, particularly when the Soviet Union became a world empire, played two roles, that of leader of an internationalist revolutionary movement and that of Russian czar. The second role was a central part of his self-image. Gorbachev, wittingly or unwittingly, stepped into the shoes of Russian czars and, by all his personal inclinations, meant to be a kind, good czar. But, after all, it is hard to fit Gorbachev into this category.[57] For he had other priorities than the power, prestige, and stability of the state. His first priority, as mentioned earlier, was the construction of a global world order on the basis of 'new thinking'. This puts Gorbachev, at least in his own self-image, in the ranks of such international figures of the twentieth century as Woodrow

Wilson, Mahatma Gandhi, and other prophets of universalism, none of whom excelled as state-builders and statesmen.

Thus, both Stalin and Gorbachev had enormous influence on the fate of the Soviet Union, though, of course, the contrast between the 'statesmanship' of the two cannot be greater. Stalin permeated the entire Soviet state and society with extreme xenophobia; he regarded Western cultural influences as a mortal threat to his regime. Khrushchev and Brezhnev were heirs to this malignant legacy. By contrast Gorbachev had not a trace of xenophobia and cultural hostility towards the West. Stalin was intolerant of differing opinions once he made up his own mind on any issue. He counted the slightest deviation from his 'line' as an intolerable sign of dissent, danger of chaos, symptom of loss of governability. He displayed an uncanny ability for 'worst-case scenarios' and suspected all Western statesmen and politicians, even those who sought to appease the USSR, of the worst anti-Soviet schemes. Personally, he had little or no respect for Western public opinion and called Western leaders every obscene word in the Russian dictionary.[58] Gorbachev, by contrast, liked the West and Westerners, respected Western statesmen of all creeds, and came to regard some of them as personal friends. He had a striking capacity for 'best-case' thinking and began to act on assumption of good faith, honesty, integrity, and fealty to agreements in international affairs.

Stalin was, in his crude and bloody way, an architect of 'Realpolitik' for the Soviet Union; his policies turned the country into a superpower. His favourite *modus operandi* was carving up 'spheres of influence', making these spheres totally impervious to outside penetration and imposing complete control over them through a combination of crude threat of force and devious manipulation of the politics in the countries under Soviet domination. As for Gorbachev, he resolutely refused to treat even the countries where Soviet troops stood as a Soviet 'sphere of influence'. In fact, he meticulously observed the 'hands-off' attitude towards internal affairs in Eastern European countries. When in January 1989 Henry Kissinger attempted to discuss in Moscow the idea of a USSR–USA condominium over Europe – an idea Stalin would have grasped immediately – Gorbachev, as a preacher of 'new thinking', was dismissive.[59]

The only common feature between Stalin and Gorbachev was a remarkable 'chutzpah'. Stalin pushed for recognition of 'legitimate' territorial annexation even when the Nazis stood at the door of

Moscow. Gorbachev attempted to talk as a world leader and peacemaker (he even tried to negotiate a US–Cuban rapprochement)[60] when the Soviet empire in Europe was already in political ruins and his own domestic base was falling to pieces. Clearly, the manifestations and consequences of this overconfidence were dramatically different in the case of the two leaders. In particular, while Stalin was the archetypal xenophobe and anti-Westerner, Gorbachev was by nature open and inclined towards the West. And while Stalin prided himself on his cold-blooded ruthlessness and willingness to spill blood, Gorbachev retained a deep inner aversion to the use of force.

In the opinion of his foreign admirers, Gorbachev was the first Soviet statesman who acted almost like a Western politician, a phenomenon that, given his background, they failed to comprehend. Indeed, by contrast to his predecessors, Gorbachev had not the slightest tinge of xenophobia or hostility towards the West. To be sure, in his first years in power he retained many standard Soviet political and ideological stereotypes of Western countries, particularly of the United States. But even when he treated Reagan, Kohl, and their colleagues as 'adversaries', he began to dismantle the iron curtain, first allowing free contact with foreigners for the select group of establishment intellectuals and officials, then opening the outside world (information, travel) for the rest of the society.[61]

As Gorbachev's sympathizers argue, this was not just a calculated policy of 'showing Europe to Ivan' and breaking a lock of obscurantism and isolationism on the mentality of Soviet people. Dmitry Furman remarks that Gorbachev's Westernism was a complex of cultural and psychological dependency shared by his own milieu of educated Russians. 'For all Soviet people, including the higher echelons of the party', he writes, 'the West has always been an object of longing. Trips to the West were a most important status symbol. There is nothing you can do about this; it is "in the blood", in the culture. It is obvious that such was to some extent the case of the Gorbachevs.' Gorbachev, Furman continues, liked his huge personal success in the West, including the United States.[62]

It is remarkable, indeed, how many of Gorbachev's remarks in the Politburo contained reference to various Western opinions and often were triggered by these opinions. He liked to relate to his colleagues what 'they in the West' said about events and measures of perestroika. He took the opinions of US Sovietologists especially seriously (probably too seriously).[63]

Chernyaev believes that Gorbachev's natural Westernism, his ability to be on the same wavelength with the West, provided the key factor for the end of the Cold War. He waxed enthusiastic in his diary about Gorbachev's talent for establishing friendly relations with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. After all, he observes, the entire 'new thinking' in foreign policy was not original or terribly new. What was new was that the leader of the Soviet system, conditioned by Soviet society, could so quickly and decisively break out of the Soviet mentality.

> When I saw this striving [of Gorbachev and Kohl] to speak as one human being to another human being (mutually), I felt physically that we are entering a new world where class struggle, ideology, and in general polarity and enmity are no longer determinant. And something all-human is taking the upper hand.[64]

The critics have an ominous view of Gorbachev's affinity with the West. They claim that Gorbachev's stunning personal success among West European and American audiences made his head swell. He began to put his friendly relations with foreign leaders ahead of 'state interests'. Psychologically, they argue, Gorbachev turned to the West for recognition all the more as his popularity at home began to sink rapidly as a result of the growing social and political chaos. As Valery Boldin sees it, 'democratization began, but it suddenly took a wrong turn and not Gorbachev, but his arch-enemy Yeltsin became its leader. Then Gorbachev placed all his hopes on the West'.[65] Also, the critics point out that Western advice played an ever increasing and sinister role in 'diverting' Gorbachev from the foreign and domestic policy course of 1985–87 towards a new course of radical political reforms. They suspect Gorbachev's 'euphoria' from his Western trips and high-level contacts were the main reasons for his hurry in all policy areas, including the diplomacy of ending the Cold War.[66]

Soviet diplomats Anatoly Dobrynin and Georgi Kornienko are particularly blunt in stating that Gorbachev 'frittered away the negotiating potential of the Soviet state' in exchange for the ephemeral popularity and good relationship with Western statesmen. They sketch a gloomy picture of how the primacy of reaching understanding with the West degenerated in Gorbachev's behaviour into his psychological and later political dependence on the West. In Dobrynin's opinion, Western statesmen profited from Gorbachev's weaknesses. After 1988 Gorbachev was in a hurry to end the Cold War, because he had a personal need to compensate for his declining

prospects at home with 'breakthroughs' in foreign policy. As a result, 'Gorbachev's diplomacy often failed to win a better deal with the United States and its allies'.[67] Kornienko also believes that Gorbachev's excessive sensitivity to Western opinion and advice explained his hasty move to set up a new political system. Gorbachev the statesman was eager to replace the dubious 'legitimacy' of a chief of the communist party with a broadly recognized international title of President of the Republic. Western advice also can be traced in Gorbachev's political reforms, which amounted to a political 'shock therapy' for the communist party and the people.[68]

An analysis of the records of Gorbachev's conversations with foreign leaders stored in the Gorbachev Foundation Archive reveals beyond any doubt that after 1988, if not earlier, Westerners – from Social Democrats to anti-communist conservatives – became perhaps the most crucial 'reference group' for Gorbachev. There he found the understanding, willingness to listen, and, quite importantly, the ability to appreciate the grandiose universalist scope of his 'perestroika' that he missed among his colleagues in the Politburo and even among his intellectual advisers.

Importantly, this dependence on the West is acknowledged, although in a less negative way, by Gorbachev's sympathizers. According to Furman, 'Gorbachev's attention was diverted in the extreme to the West. He clearly relaxed his soul during his frequent trips, while in the country opposition and chaos grew'. The same author rejects the notion that the West took advantage of Gorbachev and hastened the collapse of the USSR. But he deplores the fact that Gorbachev took so much Western advice literally. In his opinion, it would have been better for the country, and for the 'correctly understood' interests of the West itself, 'if Gorbachev had showed more indifference' to the recommendations of American, German, and other politicians.[69]

An additional feature of Gorbachev's personality that perplexed contemporaries and witnesses was his deep aversion to the use of force. To be sure, as the evidence shows, Gorbachev's scepticism about the efficacy of force was widely shared among new thinkers.[70] Former Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, for example, privately called Gorbachev and his advisers 'the Martians' for their ignorance of the laws of *Realpolitik*. 'I wonder how puzzled must be the US and other NATO countries', he confessed to his son. 'It is a mystery for them why Gorbachev and his friends in the Politburo cannot comprehend how to use force and pressure for defending

their state interests.'[71] As Anatol Lieven – a keen observer of Russia – commented ten years later, there was a growing social trend towards non-militarist, non-violent attitudes since Stalin's death, when the Soviet state and its controlling ideology began to weaken. Those attitudes, Lieven writes, 'grew slowly through the last four decades of Soviet life'.[72]

Yet it is clear that Gorbachev himself personified the reluctance to use force. Indeed, for him it was less a reasoned lesson from experience than a fundamental part of his character. The principle of non-violence was not only Gorbachev's sincere belief, and the foundation of his domestic and foreign policies, but it also matched his personal 'codes'. Gorbachev's collaborators and assistants emphasize that 'the avoidance of bloodshed was a constant concern of Gorbachev', that 'for Gorbachev an unwillingness to shed blood was not only a criterion but the condition of his involvement in politics'. Gorbachev, they observe, was a man of indubitable personal courage. Yet, 'by character he was a man incapable not only of using dictatorial measures, but even of resorting to hard-line administrative means'; 'harsh and dictatorial methods are not in the character of Gorbachev'. The critics claim that Gorbachev 'had no guts for blood', even when it was dictated by *raison d'etat*.[73]

And it is important to note that Gorbachev's renunciation of force was not an inevitable consequence of new thinking or democratic values. Liberals will use force for liberal ends. A substantial number of liberals and former dissidents believe that Gorbachev's absolute rejection of force was erroneous and perhaps even not moral. For instance, the liberal philosopher Grigory Pomerantz praised Gorbachev's decision 'to let go' of Eastern Europe. But simultaneously, he said, Gorbachev 'let loose the forces of destruction' – forces of barbarism, ethnic genocide, and chaos – in South Caucasus, Central Asia, and other areas of the Soviet Union. 'The first duty of the state was to contain chaos.' Gorbachev's inactivity, however, opened the Pandora's Box. Another critic, Vladimir Lukin, noted: 'Firmness [*zhestkost*] was necessary in such a country as Russia, not to mention the Soviet Union.'[74]

As the Cold War was ending in Europe, the first fissures appeared in the Soviet state. This was not a mere coincidence. Rather, in both cases, Gorbachev's approach – linked to his personality – played a major and indispensable role. On the ideological level, the Soviet leader had a firm linkage between the two goals: the end of the Cold War and the successful transformation of the Soviet Union.

One of the staples of this was the idea of non-violence that was a continuation of Gorbachev's personal aversion to using force. After the tragedy in Tbilisi in April 1989 (when Russian troops protected the Georgian communist leadership against nationalist demonstrations and killed Georgian civilians), Gorbachev declared a taboo on the use of force, even though nationalist forces began to break the country apart. He said to the Politburo: 'We have accepted that even in foreign policy force is to no avail [*nichego ne daiet*]. So, especially internally, we cannot resort and will not resort to force.'[75] Despite various setbacks, Gorbachev adhered to these prinicples with remarkable tenacity until his last day in power.

Western politicians, particularly Bush and Baker, understood very well that feature of Gorbachev's statesmanship and successfully appealed to it. At Malta, for instance, Bush suggested to Gorbachev a gentleman's agreement on the Baltics where popular movements began to demand complete independence from the USSR. This was a violation of a long-standing taboo in US–Soviet relations, the interference in the 'internal affairs' of a superpower. Bush, however, found the correct approach. 'I would like to have the fullest understanding of your approach to the Baltics', he said. 'There should be no setbacks here. Perhaps it would be better to discuss this issue in a confidential way, since I would very much like to perceive the core of your thinking on this extremely complicated issue.' Since the internal issue of the Baltics was presented in the context of concern for Gorbachev's 'new thinking', to prevent setbacks in the US–Soviet partnership for the sake of a new global order, Gorbachev readily agreed. As a result, there was an understanding that the Americans would refrain from any attempts to help the Baltic nationalists, while in return Gorbachev refrained from using force in dealing with the Baltic problem.[76]

Gorbachev himself, years after he lost power, continues to be an adamant believer in the non-use of force. He regrets the cases when he used force against nationalists inside the USSR. Referring to other crisis situations (pogroms on Armenians by Azeri mobs in Sumgait in February 1988, bloodshed in Tbilisi in April 1989 and in Baku in January 1990, crack-downs in Vilnius and Riga in January 1991), Gorbachev said: 'How many were the attempts to baptize me by blood. But they failed.'[77] Essentially, Gorbachev agrees with what Ligachev said about him: 'As far as the measures involving the use of violence that were required to save people were concerned, Gorbachev resorted to them only when the last citizen in the country

became convinced there was no other choice. It was a trait of Gorbachev's character.'[78] Every time limited military force *was* used against nationalist crowds, on ambiguous (probably oral) orders from Moscow, Gorbachev immediately stepped aside and left the military in the lurch, exposed to the fury of the nationalist and liberal media. This pattern had the double effect of paralyzing the Soviet army and magnifying the forces of those who wanted to destroy the Soviet Union.[79]

Gorbachev's decision to renounce the use of force in foreign and domestic policies as a matter of high principle was remarkable, unique, and encouraging for world history. Canadian scholar Jacques Lévesque writes that 'the way the USSR separated itself from its empire and its own peaceful end' are interlinked and 'may seem to be its most beneficial contributions to history. These episodes are, in any case, masterpieces of history'.[80] But Gorbachev's principled non-violence, so much appreciated in the West, is not likely to evoke admiration inside Russia. For all of his other roles, for his fellow-countrymen Gorbachev was, first and foremost, a czar, guarantor of the country's stability and their livelihood, the very existence of the state. The clear inability and even refusal of Gorbachev to perform this role contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, dislocation and misery for tens of millions of people, and earned him long-standing scorn among the vast majority of the Russians. Younger Russians today, if they remember Gorbachev at all, are likely to perceive him as a 'holy fool' at the throne of the communist czars.

The effect of this complex mix of character traits – optimism, naivety, ad hocism, westernism, and aversion to force – is well illustrated by the diplomacy of German unification. On this, as on other issues, Gorbachev himself made Soviet foreign policy with remarkably few bureaucratic constraints. Critics and supporters point out that Gorbachev's foreign policy after 1987 was rarely discussed formally at the Politburo, but rather in a narrow circle of advisors. In conducting negotiations, Gorbachev relied on Eduard Shevardnadze, but increasingly discussed issues 'between four eyes', that is, directly with foreign leaders. The multi-institutional, bureaucratic decisionmaking structures (the Defence Council, 'the panel of Five' that worked out proposals on arms reductions, the informal 'alliance' of the KGB and the Ministry of Defence) were often not in the loop. On Germany, as one participant affirms, Gorbachev handled 'all the negotiations ... virtually by himself or in tandem with Shevardnadze, sweeping aside our professional diplomats and scarcely informing the Politburo'.[81]

Thus, Gorbachev's personal traits and his peculiarities as a statesman affected Soviet policy with remarkably few constraints. In particular, Gorbachev's 'anti-Stalin' personality had a lot to do with the peaceful death of communism in Eastern Europe (with the exception of Romania). It is stunning, in retrospect, to observe how easily Gorbachev let go Soviet geopolitical props in Eastern Europe. On 3 March 1989 Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Hungary Miklos Nemeth informed Gorbachev about the decision 'to completely remove the electronic and technological protection from the Western and Southern borders of Hungary. It has outlived its need, and now it serves only to catch citizens of Romania and the GDR who try to illegally escape to the West through Hungary'. He added cautiously: 'Of course we will have to talk to comrades from the GDR.' The only words for the record from Gorbachev were: 'We have a strict regime on our borders, but we are also becoming more open.'[82]

Gorbachev and his reformist entourage had been treating Erich Honecker as a reactionary relic since early 1987 when he began to voice opposition to Gorbachev's policies.[83] Yet they continued to play down Honecker's attacks on 'perestroika' and 'glasnost' and maintained formal relations as if nothing had happened. CC Secretary Vadim Medvedev, in charge of 'socialist countries' and ideology, was in the GDR in September and came back 'with grave thoughts'. His conclusion was:

> The first thing one should have done – to decide on the change of leadership [that is, the removal of Honecker]. More so, that, in comparsion with Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria here no problem emerged in selecting a successor. There were several strong and prepared people. They included, of course, [Hans] Modrow, as well as [Egon] Krenz, Schabowski, Krolikowski. But Honecker did not want to hear about such a decision.[84]

On 5 October, Chernyaev wrote down in his diary: 'Gorbachev is flying to the GDR to celebrate its 40th anniversary. He is very reluctant. Called me two times. Today called and said: I will not say a word in support of [the GDR leader Erich] Honecker. But I will support the Republic and the revolution.'[85] At the same time the KGB in the GDR reported to Moscow on the lineup in the GDR leadership and indicated (without giving political recommendation) that the situation urgently dictated Honecker's removal.[86] But Gorbachev took no preemptive action against 'the loss of the GDR'. Chernyaev,

a veteran of the Second World War and an expert in the CC International Department, believed that the Soviet leader had outgrown old fears and geopolitical concerns. He jotted in his diary: 'A total dismantling of socialism as a world phenomenon has been taking place. This may be inevitable and good. For this is a reunification of mankind on the basis of common sense. And a common fellow from Stavropol [that is, Gorbachev] set this process in motion.'[87]

Vitaly Vorotnikov recorded the first impressions that Gorbachev shared with the Politburo upon his return from Berlin: 'Honecker does not comprehend the complex situation around him. The mood of the public and [the party] is complicated. Our possible allies – Hans Modrow and Egon Krenz.' At the Politburo session on 12 October Gorbachev repeated that a storm was brewing in the GDR. Yet, again, he neither proposed specific measures nor discussed possible implications for the USSR.[88]

Only by 16 October did Gorbachev begin to formulate his policy positions, when Willi Stoph, Egon Krenz, and Erich Milke sent a messenger to Moscow to seek Gorbachev's support for the removal of Honecker. At the time Milke believed it was already too late for any transition. Instead of addressing the full Politburo, Gorbachev convened a conference in his office, including Yakovlev, Medvedev, Kryuchkov, Ryzhkov, Shevardnadze, and Vorotnikov. 'The issues are ripe and we must decide', announced Gorbachev.

> First, to warn the GDR against interference. We must get in touch with the leaders of socialist countries after the [removal of Honecker]. The same concerns European countries. We must speak to Bush as well – there could be nuances! Particularly, since the issue of German reunification would be on the agenda. [To clarify] their attitude. Their tactics. Our military should behave calmly, without demonstrating [force].[89]

This episode highlights the strangely ad hoc nature of Soviet decisionmaking on the German Question. The General Secretary, comments Vorotnikov, simply informed a small group of Politburo members. There was no discussion of the issue. The representatives of the military were not present at the meeting, and neither were experts on Germany. What is also striking is the predisposition of Gorbachev to a reactive, not proactive approach to the GDR crisis.

Incredible as it may seem, the collapse of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 resulted not only from chaos on the part of

Schabowski and his colleagues, but from glaring inattention on the part of the Soviet leadership. The Soviet embassy in East Berlin attempted to clarify the Soviet position on the border regime. Ambassador Kochemasov tried in vain to call Gorbachev and Shevardnadze on a secure phone. But, as a councillor of the embassy recalls, 'the entire leadership was busy and nobody could find time for the GDR'.[90]

During the crucial period of November 1989–March 1990, when the framework for German reunification was laid down, Gorbachev's approach to the German Question remained reactive and ad hocist. Gorbachev refused to state squarely and early enough Soviet terms for reunification (Germany's neutrality, demilitarization, compensation for withdrawal of Soviet troops, and so on). Instead, he temporized, played by ear, yielded one position after another. His behaviour contrasted with that of Helmut Kohl, whose well-calibrated steps towards swallowing the GDR enjoyed the full support of the United States. For this Gorbachev later invoked more criticism than perhaps any other aspect of his foreign policy. As Dobrynin puts it:

> In exchange for the generous Soviet concessions Gorbachev and his devoted lieutenant Shevardnadze offered the West [on Germany in particular], they could and should have obtained a more important role for the Soviet Union in European security and a stronger Soviet voice in European affairs. But they did not.[91]

In the months after the fall of the Berlin wall there were two conflicting impulses at work as far as Gorbachev was concerned. On one hand, he could not recognize that his vision of reform communism was doomed in Eastern Europe and East Germany. Gorbachev continued to believe that 'the socialist basis' would be 'preserved', and these illusions helped him to ignore a torrent of alarmist voices and watch with sympathy the spectacular process of dissolution of communist regimes, first in Poland and Hungary and then in the GDR and the rest of Eastern Europe. Gorbachev's friends stress his moral principles and different generational experience that contrasted with his predecessors' fears of 'losing Central Europe'.[92] But also at work here were all the main traits of Gorbachev's character: his remarkable optimism, his ad hoc impulse to 'let processes develop', his aversion to detailed strategic plans and affinity for larger principles, and his ultimate belief in his 'lodestar' and the magic of persuasion as a substitute for actions.

On the other hand, he rejected as immoral any agreement with the West to preserve Soviet 'interests' in Germany. From the beginning of his term he regarded Soviet–German relations as a matter of extreme importance, something that simply could not be bargained and haggled about. Also, Gorbachev fully realized that without West German support his idea of the integration of Europe, a New European home, could never be realized. He told Western German politicians repeatedly that 'tragic lessons of the past obligate our countries' to build new positive kind of relationship, with no possibility of reversal.[93] West German politicians were receptive to the idea of the special responsibility of Germany and the Soviet Union for a peaceful Europe. Even the Bavarian right-wing leader Franz-Josef Strauss assured Gorbachev that he renounced the old policies of forced reunification and left 'history' to decide when Germany would be unified again.[94]

By 1988 Gorbachev came to the conclusion that he could achieve this goal only through personal diplomacy and building personal trust with the Chancellor of West Germany Helmut Kohl. Their meeting in Moscow in November 1988 broke the old ice in their relationship. During Gorbachev's visit to West Germany on 11–15 June 1989 he believed he had achieved his goal: Kohl declared himself to be a supporter of Gorbachev's perestroika and his idea of 'Common European Home'. As a result, Gorbachev took a very tolerant stand, when Kohl, de facto, suggested a joint interference in the affairs of the GDR in order to remove Honecker and encourage change. Chernyaev believes there was a deliberate double meaning in the joint FRG–USSR declaration that singled out from the principles and norms of international law 'respect for the right to national self-determination'. At the same time, Kohl privately assured Gorbachev that he and his government did not want 'any destabilization' of the GDR.[95] This relationship was as crucial to the subsequent peaceful reunification of Germany as the relationship between Willy Brandt and Leonid Brezhnev had been to the detente of the early 1970s.

The evidence does not suggest that, as Dobrynin claims, Western leaders consciously manipulated Gorbachev and took advantage of his universalism to achieve their practical goals. Initially, the Bush administration was cautious and defensive as it watched the triumphal march of 'Gorbymania' in West Germany. The predominant mood among Bush's lieutenants was one of scepticism towards 'new thinking' and Gorbachev himself. Even the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, completed by February 1989, did not

convince them. Brent Scowcroft interpreted it as 'cutting the losses' and as a retrenchment of Soviet power. 'What was not evident was whether their [Soviet] appetite also had been dampened … Instead of changing, Soviet priorities seemed only to narrow.'[96] US intelligence analyses stressed that Gorbachev had opened a 'Pandora's Box' of radical changes and that he was 'gambling' with the future of the state. Bush and his Secretary of State James Baker, however, came to the opposite conclusion that Gorbachev's personality and statesmanship was crucial. 'Look, this guy *is* perestroika', Bush said to the sceptical experts.[97] He dismissed the analysis of the CIA's Soviet desk which indicated that Gorbachev was losing control over events and implied he could not be a stable long-term partner.[98]

After the fall of the Berlin Wall the Bush administration quickly took the initiative from the weakening hands of Gorbachev and played a very active and stabilizing role in ending the Cold War in Europe. At the same time, Bush and Baker took pains to treat Gorbachev with respect and generally avoided any situation that might have compromised him domestically and internationally. For Gorbachev, this was a very important development. He found in the 'new' Bush what he had missed since Reagan left the White House: an understanding and reassuring partner. On 2–3 December at the Malta summit Bush and Gorbachev achieved what they both probably had wanted for months, a personal relationship of mutual trust and respect.[99]

It is remarkable, in retrospect, how much Bush, like Reagan before him, came to believe in Gorbachev as a person of 'common sense' who would admit that the West had won the Cold War. In preparation for the summit, Bush told NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner on 11 October that the main thing was to persuade the Soviets to allow continued change in Eastern Europe and the GDR. When Wörner warned that Gorbachev would not let the GDR leave the Warsaw Pact, Bush wondered if he could persuade Gorbachev to let the Warsaw Pact as such go, to decide that its military value was no longer essential. 'That may seem naïve', Bush said, 'but who predicted the changes we are seeing today?'[100] One could hardly imagine any US leader trying to persuade Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, or Andropov 'to let go' the Soviet sphere of influence in Europe. However, there was a rare harmony between Bush and Gorbachev as they talked one-on-one and almost effortlessly agreed on all the main issues at their first official summit.

At first Bush startled Gorbachev by starting, instead of discussing the future of Europe, with the issue of 'export of revolution' and the

Soviet presence in Central America. The Americans were relieved when Gorbachev assured them that the Soviet Union 'has no plans regarding spheres of influence in Latin America'.[101] So revolutionary and improbable it seemed to them that the Soviet leadership was renouncing its geopolitical ambitions that even a year after Malta Bush had lingering doubts. When Gorbachev joined the United States in a coalition against its long-time ally and debtor Saddam Hussein, Bush, speaking to his advisers, vowed not to 'overlook the Soviet desire for access to warm water ports'.[102]

But despite this scepticism, Bush found it easy to deal with Gorbachev. When the two leaders began to discuss the German question, there was an excellent opportunity for Gorbachev to set the terms for the reunification of Germany and demand from Bush, in exchange for support for reunification, a firm commitment to the construction of 'a new European home' with simultaneous dissolution of the two military blocs in a new security structure. However, he limited himself to come down heavily on Kohl's Ten Point Plan, which he saw as a decisive move by West German Chancellor to swallow the GDR. In his words, this move

> put in question the trustworthiness of the government of the FRG ... What would happen? A unified Germany would be neutral, not belonging to military-political alliances, or a member of NATO? I think we should let everybody understand that *it would be premature to discuss now one or the other scenario* … There are two German states, so history ordered. And let history now decide how the process should evolve and where it should lead to in the context of a new Europe and a new world.[103]

This was vintage Gorbachev, preferring to talk about principles on which a new global order and 'new European house' should be based, rather than to haggle about practicalities of a German settlement. Again, it was a stark contrast with Stalin as a statesman if one compares the records of the Malta summit with the records of Stalin's negotiations of 1939–45. The Soviet dictator acted both as a stubborn bulldog and sly fox, fighting for every inch whenever Soviet 'state interests' (in his understanding) were at stake and making 'generous' concessions only when it fit his overall plan of negotiations. Stalin's foreign policy was imperialistic and very costly for his country, yet his negotiating 'techniques' evoked grudging admiration from other imperialist masters, such as Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden. Gorbachev, by contrast, did not even seek to

elicit any specific agreements and promises from Bush. At that time he obviously considered a 'special relationship' with Bush as a paramount interest. He was satisfied with Bush's assurance 'not to leap on the Berlin Wall' and not to 'jumpstart' the process of German unification.

Various officials in Moscow, including Ambassador to the FRG Yuli Kvitsinsky and Eduard Shevardnadze admitted since November 1989 that the GDR was about to disappear and suggested a preemptive strategy: to impose on Kohl the idea of a confederation of the two states. Alternatively, Anatoly Chernyaev proposed something that can in retrospect be viewed as 'a new Rapallo'[104] by reaching an early agreement with Kohl about German reunification linking it to Germany's commitment to a new pan-European security structure.

But Gorbachev revealed no inclination for preemptive action and realpolitik deals, no matter how good were their chances for success. For two crucial months Soviet foreign policy on German reunification was adrift. Only at the end of January 1990, in preparation for the meeting of foreign ministers in Canada, did Gorbachev hold a policymaking conference that accepted a 'four-plus-two' formula for negotiations on German reunification. While Gorbachev finally admitted that the 'processes' would lead to reunification, he still hoped against hope that the GDR could survive thanks to its own 'perestroika'. Gorbachev was prompted in his illusion by false advice from some German experts who reflected the anti-reunification attitudes in the West German Social Democratic establishment. At the same time, in fairness, other experts warned him very early that the GDR would not sustain itself for long. Also the Soviet leader preferred to let the 'two German states' take the lead in the settlement talks and later accepted with a light heart the replacement of the 'four plus two' formula with 'two plus four'.[105] Finally, in July 1990, he took Chernyaev's advice and reached a unilateral settlement with Kohl at the meeting in Arkhyz. At that time, of course, Gorbachev's negotiating hand was extremely weak; but even then he never attempted to use the last waning 'asset', that is, the presence of Soviet troops on German soil. No 'new Rappalo' (the term for a separate Soviet–German deal originated in 1922) took place, and Gorbachev did not seek it, very much to the relief of the United States and other Western countries.

It was a determined policy of both Kohl and the Bush administration to nudge 'history' in the right direction at a rapid but coordinated pace. Their joint actions, called by two younger 'realist'

members of the Bush administration 'a study in statecraft',[106] helped produce the desired result: Germany became part of NATO, while the USSR did not get any firm commitments about the future structure of European security and Moscow's role in it.

The Personality in Time

Mikhail Gorbachev's personal character was an important factor in the history of the end of the Cold War. It conditioned his preferences and choices. In retrospect, Gorbachev, in his determination to end the Cold War, had to wage two political campaigns: one aimed at the West and another at his own people. The main characteristics of his personality – tolerance for different opinions, idealistic and moralistic optimism, staunch belief in common sense, and a universalist interpretation of 'all-human values' – made him the darling of the West, but the subject of near ostracism at home. For this reason, gradually the relationship between his foreign and domestic priorities were reversed. Initially, foreign policy was meant to overcome the international isolation of the USSR, to improve economic and trade relations with the West, to wind down the arms race. But around 1987–88 Gorbachev, increasingly sabotaged by the party nomenklatura and without real support in society, assigned priority to the integration of the USSR in the world community as the only way to its restructuring – foreign policy became a determinant of domestic policy. His 'new thinking' became a goal in itself, a substitute for a 'normal' strategy of statesmanship. Gorbachev, in his idealism, believed it was 'a ticket' for him and the USSR to join the community of 'civilized nations'. While his domestic choices undermined the Soviet economy and state, his international vision precluded any chance for the USSR to get 'better terms' from the West for ending the confrontation.

No doubt, the debates about Gorbachev's personality and his personal choices will continue as long as Russia struggles between its need for a solid state, stability, and prosperous economy on one hand, and the need to develop a dynamic, self-reliant 'civil society' on the other. Perhaps a consensus on this question is impossible; in similar revolutionary circumstances in the past the vision of liberal internationalists in Russia differed sharply from the concerns of conservative statists, even the more enlightened ones. For instance, the remarks of one enlightened conservative, Count Sergei Trubetskoi, about Georgy L'vov, the first head of the 1917

provisional government, echoes some of today's criticisms of Gorbachev. Trubetskoi wrote in emigration in Paris in 1940:

> The populism [*narodnichestvo*] of L'vov was of a rather fatalistic nature. I am groping for proper words to characterize his faith in the Russian people in general, [and] in the common people in particular. He imagined them in false hues, as if through rosy glasses … "Do not worry", L'vov said to me on the eve of the first assault of the Bolsheviks in Petersburg in the summer of 1917. "We need not use force. Russian people do not like violence … All will settle down *by itself*. All will turn out well … People *themselves* will create from their wise instincts just and right ways of living." I was shocked by these words by the head of government in those difficult minutes when he ought to take energetic action. A true fighter in economic matters, in affairs of state he was some kind of "*neprotivlenetz*" [a believer in non-violence under any circumstances].[107]

Recently, another Russian emigre, Mikhail Geller, wrote about Gorbachev in a book on the history of Soviet society (edited by former radical democrat Yuri Afanasyev): 'Gorbachev continued to live in the world of illusions. He assuaged himself with chimerical schemes, in the belief that political zigzags would allow him to retain power, in fact, to aggrandize it.' As to the decision to agree to a reunification of Germany on Western terms:

> Gorbachev's decision was not an act of a statesman who carefully thought through the consequences of the steps he took. Rather, it was an act of a gambler who believed that, if he sacrificed the GDR, he would get in return some aces that he could use at home. Gorbachev seemed to behave like a balloonist who, having discovered that his balloon was falling down, would toss overboard everything that one could find in the basket.[108]

Any judgements on Gorbachev, positive or critical, should be qualified by time and context. Without Gorbachev, the dismantling of the Cold War would not have happened as quickly as it did. A different person could have taken a very different course of action and perhaps as a result the Soviet Union would have existed even today. But so would the Cold War. For millions of people, the end of the confrontation between the superpowers and the raising of the Iron Curtain created new opportunities, opened new choices for their life and work.

The opposing perspectives on the Gorbachev are rooted not in his personality but in the gigantic consequences of his actions and non-actions. Every group, faction, or 'school' evaluate him according to how they see these consequences. Gorbachev cannot be all these consequences at any one time. But certain qualities of Gorbachev's character help explain the quick end both to the Cold War and to the Soviet Union. The former fact secures Gorbachev's place in international history. The latter makes him one of the most controversial figures in the history of Russia – a country that, some argue, sank into lawlessness, cynicism, corruption, and misery as a result of the perceived unpredictability of Gorbachev's actions.

NOTES

1. Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.317. An exception to the rule of playing down the personality factor – focused on an earlier phase of the end of the Cold War – is Fred I. Greenstein, 'Reagan and Gorbachev: What Difference Did They Make?' in William Wohlforth (ed.), *Retrospective on the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univertiy Press, 1996).
2. Anatoly Chernyaev, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva v Kontekste Liderstva', *Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn* [International Life], 7 (1993); idem, *Shest Let s Gorbachevim* [Six Years with Gorbachev] (now forthcoming in the translation of Elizabeth Tucker on Penn State University Press); idem, *1991 god: Dnevnik pomoshnika prezidenta SSSR* [1991: The Diary of an Assistant to the President of the USSR] (Moscow: Terra, Respublika, 1997).
3. Dmitry Volkogonov, *Sem Vozhdei: Galereia liderov SSSR* [Seven Rulers: A Gallery of the Leaders of the USSR] (Moscow: Novostki, 1995), vol. 2, pp.322–3.
4. On the reasons for Soviet fears see Ben B. Fischer, *A Cold War Conundrum: The 1983 Soviet War Scare* (An Intelligence Monograph, Center for the Study of Intelligence, September 1997); on the Andropov–Ustinov response see Robert D. English, 'Sources, Methods, and Competing Perspectives on the End of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 23/2 (Spring 1997), p.286; also Dobrynin, *In Confidence,* p.482
5. Oleg Grinevsky, senior Soviet arms negotiator, in 'Understanding the End of the Cold War, 1980–1987' (Oral History Conference, Brown University, 7–10 May 1998, translated and transcribed by Jeffrey W. Dillon; edited by Nina Tannenwald, pp.257–8.
6. Anatoly Chernyaev, personal foreign policy assistant to Gorbachev, in 'Understanding the End of the Cold War', pp.77–8.
7. Ibid., p.78.
8. See Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows. The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996), pp.330–34, 335–40.
9. Politburo Sessions, 4 and 8 Oct. 1986, notes of Anatoly Chernyaev, the Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, Fund 2, Opis 1; Chernyaev's notes of the Politburo meeting, 1 Dec. 1986, ibid; see also Vladislav Zubok, 'Gorbachev's Nuclear Learning', *Boston Book Review* (April–May 2000).
10. Politburo Sessions, 4 and 8 Oct. 1986, notes of Anatoly Chernyaev.
11. Gates, *In From the Shadows,* pp.385–8, 439; George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner's, 1993), esp. p.765; George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); also

the analysis of Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American–Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1994).

12. Georgi Shakhnazarov, *S vozhdiami I bez nikh* [With Rulers and Without Them] (Moscow: Vagrius, 2001), pp.294–96; Vitaly Vorotnikov, *A bilo eto tak … Iz dnevnika chlena Politburo TsK KPSS* [That's What Happened. From the Diary of a Politburo Member] (Moscow: Sovet veteranov knigoizdaniia SI-Mar 1995), pp.66–7.
13. See Rudolf Pikhoia, *Sovetskii Soiuz: Istoriia Vlasti 1945–1991* [The Soviet Union: A History of Power] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo RAGS, 1996), pp.491–2; also his 'Why Did the USSR Collapse?' (paper presented at the workshop on the end of the Cold War, Saratov, 1 July 2001, personal archive of the author).
14. On this, see Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kantorovich, *The Destruction of the Soviet Economic System: an Insiders' History* (New York: M.E. Sharp, 1998), pp.22–3, 165–9. The authors convincingly conclude that 'the USSR was killed, against the wishes of its ruler, by politics, not economics. The immediate cause of death, the dissolution of the Union, was the result of the chain of events set in motion by Gorbachev starting in 1985 … Unlike much of the Soviet elite, he was ambitious and optimistic about the system's capabilities' (p.26). Also by the same authors: 'The Collapse of the Soviet System and the Memoir Literature', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 49/2 (March 1997); a similar argument can be found in Kotz and Weir, *Revolution from Above*.
15. Interview with Sergei Tarasenko, 19 March 1999, Moscow, courtesy of Oleg Skvortsov, head of the Oral History Project on the End of the Cold War, the Institute for General History, Russian Academy of Science.
16. Documents on Soviet assistance from Fund 89 and other archival collections from Moscow are available on file at the National Security Archive, Washington, DC.
17. Furman, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva' [The Phenomenon of Gorbachev], *Svobodnaia Misl* [Free Thought], Moscow, 11 (1995), pp.70–71.
18. Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the Wet. Gorbachev, Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
19. Records of conversation of M.S. Gorbachev with President F. Mitterand, 7 July 1986, 7 April 1989, 5–7 July 1989; record of conversation of M.S. Gorbachev with former US President R. Nixon, 18 July 1986; record of conversation of M.S. Gorbachev with Prime Minster of India R. Ghandi, 2–3 July 1987; records of conversation of M.S. Gorbachev with Prime Minister of Great Britain M. Thatcher, 6 April 1989 and 23 September 1989 – all in the Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, fond 1, opis 1.
20. Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, p.59.
21. Ibid., pp.220–30.
22. Oral communication of Geoffrey Howe in Deborah Hart Strober and Gerald S. Strober, *Reagan: The Man and His Presidency: An Oral History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p.327.
23. Furman, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva', p.71.
24. Chernyaev, *1991*, pp.15–16.
25. Furman, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva', p.62.
26. Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (New York: Summit Book, 1990), pp.126, 128. Note that this book was entitled 'The Gorbachev Enigma' in the Russian version.
27. Valerii Boldin, *Krusheniie pedestala: Shtrikhi k portretu M.S. Gorbacheva* [The Pedestal Crumbled: Touches on a Portrait of M.S. Gorbachev] (Moscow: Respublika, 1995); Yegor Ligachev, *Zagadka Gorbacheva* [Gorbachev's Enigma] (Novosibisk: Interbuk, 1992); Vorotnikov, *A bylo eto tak*; Nikolai Ryzhkov, *Desyat let velikikh potraysenii* [Ten Years of Great Upheavals] (Moscow: Kniga, Prosvescheniie, Miloserdie, 1996); idem, *Perestroika: Istoriya predatelstv* [Perestroika: A History of Betrayals] (Moscow: Novosti, 1992); Vladimir Kryuchkov, *Lichnoie delo* [A Personal File], 2 vols (Moscow: Olimp, 1996); Nikolai S. Leonov, *Likholetie* [Times of Troubles] (Moscow: Terra, 1997; Vladimir Medvedev, *Chelovek za spinoi* [A Man

Behind the Back] (Moscow: Russlit, 1994); Oleg Shenin, *Rodinu ne prodaval* [I Did Not Betray My Motherland] (Moscow: Paleyia, 1994); Sergei Akhromeyev and Georgii Kornienko, *Glazami marshala I diplomata; Kriticheskii vzglyad na vneshnyuyu politiku SSSR do I posle 1985 goda* [Through the Eyes of a Marshal and a Diplomat: A Critical Assessment of Foreign Policy of the USSR before and after 1985] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodniye otnosheniia, 1992); Georgii Kornienko, *Kholodnaia voina: Svidetelstvo ee uchastnika* [The Cold War: A Memoir of a Witness] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1994); Valentin Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen* [Political Memoirs] (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1993); Vadim Pechenev, *Gorbachev: K vershinam vlasti: Iz teoretiko-memuarnykh razmyshlenii* [Gorbachev: To the Pinnacle of Power: Memoir and Theoretical Reflections] (Moscow: 1991); idem, *Vzlet I padeniie Gorbacheva; Glazami ochevidtsa* [Rise and Fall of Gorbachev: a Witness' Testimony] (Moscow: Respublika, 1996); Anatoly Gromyko, *Andrei Gromyko v labirintakh Kremlia* [Anatoly Gromyko in the labyrinth of the Kremlin] (Moscow, 1997); Boris Yeltsin, *Ispoved na zadannuiu temu* [A Confession on the Solicited Theme] (Moscow: PIK, 1990); Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962–1986)* (New York: Random House/Times Books, 19950 and his Russian edition: *Sugubo doveitelno: posol v Vashingtone pri shesti prezidentakh SshA (1962–1986 gg.)* (Moscow: Avtor, 1997). Also, I used transcripts of the interviews with Soviet officials produced by the Oral History Project on the End of the Cold War under the leadership of Dr. Oleg Skvortsov under auspices of the Institute of General History, Academy of Science, and with sponsorship of the National Security Archive, George Washington University.

28. Anatoly Chernyaev, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva v kontekste liderstva' [Phenomenon of Gorbachev as a Leader], *Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn*, 7 (1993); idem, *Shest Let s Gorbachevim: po dnevnikovim zapisiam* [Six Years with Gorbachev: from Diary Notes] (Moscow: Progress-Kultura, 1993); idem, *1991 god: Dnevnik pomoshnika prezidenta SSSR*(Moscow: TERRA-Respublika, 1997); Georgi Shakhnazarov, *Tsena Svobodi. Reformatsiia Gorbacheva glazami iego pomoshnika* [The Price of Freedom: Gorbachev's Reformation as seen by his assistant] (Moscow: Rossika-Zeus, 1993; Vadim Medvedev, *V komande Gorbacheva: Vzgliad iznutri* [In Gorbachev's Team: A View from Inside] (Moscow: Bylina, 1994); idem, *Raspad: kak on nazreval v 'mirovoi sisteme sotsializma'* [Downfall: How Did It Come About in the 'World Socialist System'] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodniie otsnosheniia, 1994); Alexander Yakovlev, *Predisloviie, obval, posleslovie* [Preface, Downfall, Aftermath] (Moscow: Novosti, 1992); Eduard Shevardnadze, *Moi vybor v zaschitu demokratii I svobody* [My Choice in Defense of Democracy and Freedom] (Moscow: Tnovosti, 1991); Andrei Grachev, *Dalshe bez menya. Ukhod Prezidenta* [From Now On Without Me: The Exit of the President] (Moscow: Progress: Kultura, 1994); idem, *Kremlevskaia khronika* [A Kremlin Chronicle] (Moscow: EKSMO, 1994); Pavel Palashchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze: The Memoir of a Soviet Interpreter* (University Part, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). In addition to these sources, 'oral history conferences' on the end of the Cold. See Nina Tannenwald (ed.), *Understanding the End of the Cold War, 1980–87* (Oral History Conference, Brown University, 7–10 May 1998, translated and transcribed by Jeffrey W. Dillon, May 1999); and *The End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989: 'New Thinking' and New Evidence* (Transcript of the Proceedings of the Musgrove Conference on the Openness in Russia and Eastern Europe Project, Musgrove Plantation, St. Simon's Island, GA, 1–3 May 1998, prepared by Svetlana Savranskaya under the auspices of the National Security Archive, George Washington University).

29. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Zhizn I reformi*, [My Life and My Reforms] 2 vols. (Moscow: Novosti, 1996); idem, *Avgustovskii putch: Prichiny I Sledstviya* [The August Coup: Causes and Consequences] (Moscow: Novosti, 1991); idem, *Dekabr-91: Moya pozitsiia* [December 1991: My Position] (Moscow: Novosti, 1992). See also his conversation with Russian intellectuals in *Perestroika desiat let spustia (april 1985 – april 1995)* [Perestroika – Ten Years After (April 1985–April 1995] (Moscow: April-85 Publishing House, 1995).

30. N.N. Kozlova, *Gorizonti povsednevnosti Sovetskoi epokhi. Golosa iz khora* [Horizons of Everyday Life of Soviet Era: Voices from the Chorus] (Moscow: Institute of Philosophy, 1996).
31. Record of conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and R.M.Gorbachev with F. Mitterand and D. Mitterand, 4 July 1989, Gorbachev Archive, fond 1, opis 1.
32. Chernyaev's notes at Politburo conversations, 1986–88, Gorbachev Foundation, fond 2. opis 1.
33. Chernyaev, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva', p.52.
34. Ibid.
35. Shakhnazarov, *Tsena Svobody*, p.47.
36. Conference on ending nuclear moratorium, 24 March 1986, Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, Materials of A.S. Chernyaev, opis 1.
37. Notes of Politburo meeting, 24 March 1988 and 6 June 1988, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Materials of A.S. Chernyaev, opis 1.
38. Politburo meeting, 11 May 1989, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, fond 2, opis 2; 9 Nov. 1989, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Materials of A.S. Chernyaev, opis 1.
39. Furman, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva', p.66; also, Vladimir Shemyatenkov, deputy head of the Cadre Department of the CC CPSU in 1985–88 implied that Gorbachev was too good for the Soviet society. Interview with him by Oleg Skvortsov, head of the Oral History Project on the End of the Cold War, Moscow, 18 Nov. 1998.
40. Mikhail Gorbachev, *On my Country and the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
41. Chernyaev, *Shest Let*, pp.278, 280.
42. Interview with Ligachev by Oleg Skvortsov, databank of the Oral History Project on the End of the Cold War, Institute of General History of Academy of Science, Moscow.
43. Medvedev, 'Chelovek za spinoi', pp.214–15, 225; interview with Valery Boldin by Oleg Skvortsov, Moscow, 24 Feb. 1999; Yeltsin, *Ispoved na zadannuiu temu*, p.125.
44. Chernyaev, 'Fenomen Gorbachev', p.59
45. Furman, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva'.
46. Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Materials of A.S. Chernyaev, opis 1.
47. See, for example, *Shest Let*, p.343.
48. Chernyaev, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva', p.56; *Shest Let s Gorbachevim,* p.241
49. Furman, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva', p. 67.
50 . *Perestroika desiat let spustia*, pp.102–3; Gorbachev's last words give credibility to the version of Ligachev and Bolding about the post-1986 political confrontation between Gorbachev and the party cadres *as the first result* of political liberalization and 'democratization' of the Soviet regime.
51. This important debate cannot be resolved on the basis of today's scholarship. It is true, that, when Gorbachev introduced of 'elements of democracy' into the party, he made it possible for the CC Plenums to oust him from power. But Gorbachev then and much later (even in 1990) was able to prevail quite decisively in party 'politics'.
52. *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin*, p.128.
53. From the interview with Ligachev with Oleg Skvortsov, Moscow, 17 Dec. 1998.
54. From the interview with Kryuchkov with Oleg Skvortsov, Moscow, 13 Oct. and 7 Dec. 1998.
55. Chernyaev's notes, 31 Oct. 1988. The Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation; also see Pavel Palazchenko, *Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. The Memoir of a Soviet Interpreter* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp.103–4.
56. See ample illustrations of this attitude in Pecharnov, working paper.
57. For this I am thankful to criticism of Jack Matlock.
58 . On Stalin's features as a statesman, see Vladislav Zubok and Constantin Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), Ch. 1; Vladimir O. Pechatnov, 'The Allies are pressing on you to break your will'. Foreign policy correspondence between Stalin and Molotov and other members of the Politburo, Sept. 1945 – Dec. 1946, Working Paper No. 26,

Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, Sept. 1999, pp.10–11.

59. He told the Politburo on 21 Jan. 1989 that Kissinger 'hinted at the idea of a USSR–USA condominium over Europe. He was hinting that Japan, Germany, Spain, and South Korea were on the rise, and so, let us make an agreement so that the 'Europeans do not misbehave'. 'We should work on this range of issues also', Gorbachev concluded, ' but in such a way that it would not leak', so that Europeans would not see it as 'an effort at conspiracy between the USS and the USA over Europe'. Chernyaev's notes, Archive of Gorbachev Foundation; according to Anatoly Chernyaev, Gorbachev in effect was not interested in Kissinger's proposal, *The End of the Cold War in Europe*, pp.158–9.
60. Ibid.
61. Roald Sagdeev, *The Making of a Soviet Scientist* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), pp.268–9.
62. Furman, 'Fenomen Gorbacheva', pp.68, 70–71.
63. E.g. the notes of the Politburo meetings, 29 Jan. and 12 Feb. 1987, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Materials of A.S. Chernyaev, opis 2.
64. Chernyaev, *1991*, pp.11–12.
65. Interview with Valery Boldin, Moscow, 24 Feb. 1999, courtesy of Oleg Skvortsov, head of the Oral History Project on the End of the Cold War. See also Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin*, pp.126, 127.
66. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp. 624–7.
67. Ibid., p.627.
68. Kornienko's personal communication to the author, Moscow, Oct. 1996.
69. Furman believes that 'the West' was one of the two (another was 'intelligentsia') crucial reference groups for Gorbachev. In his opinion, they diverted Gorbachev from his 'reformist course', 'Fenomen Gorbacheva', pp.71–2
70. For another study that also gives the reluctance to use force the credit it is due, see Jacques Levesque, *The Enigma of 1989. The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), esp, p.252.
71. Gromyko, *Andrei Gromyko v labirintakh Kremlia*, pp.182, 184.
72. Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p.204.
73. Interviews with Alexander Yakovlev and Andrei Grachev cited by Archie Brown in *Gorbachev Factor*, pp.383–4; Vladimir Yegorov, *Out of a Dead End into the Unknown: Notes on Gorbachev's Perestroika* (Chicago, 1993); Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody*, p.147.
74. *Perestroika*, pp.29–30, 60.
75. Chernyaev's and Medvedev's notes at the Politburo, 11 May 1989. Discussion of the Memorandum of six Politburo members on the situation in the Baltic Republics, Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, fond 4, opis 1 and fond 2, opis 3; published in *The Union Could Be Preserved: The White Book: Documents and Facts about Policy of M.S. Gorbachev to Reform and Preserve the Multi-National State* (Moscow: April Publishers, 1995), pp.52, 55.
76. Soviet record at Malta; Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed. A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p.129.
77. *Perestroika*, p.19.
78. Interview with Yegor Ligachev, 17 Dec. 1998, courtesy of Oleg Skvortsov.
79. See Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Army.*
80. Lévesque, *Enigma of 1989,* p. 2.
81. Interview with Ligachev; on the evidence on the process of cutting off 'conservative' elements, party structures and other bureaucratic players from the foreign policy field see, Carolyn McGiffert Ekedahl and Melvin A. Goodman, *The Wars of Eduard Shevardnadze* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp.71–98.
82. Record of conferstaion between M.S. Gorbachev and the member of the CC of the

Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, chairman of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Hungary Miklos Nemeth, 23 March 1989, Chernyaev's notes, the Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation.

83. See Medvedev, 'Raspad', pp.171; Chernyaev's Diary, 5 Oct. 1989, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation.
84. Medvedev, *Raspad*, p.191.
85. Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, fond 2, opis 2
86. Ivan N. Kuzmin, *Khrushcnie GDR: Istoria. Posledstviia* [The Collapse of the GDR: History and Consequences] (Moscow: Nauchnaia kniga, 1996), pp.112–13.
87. Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, fond 2, opis 2. This entry was omitted from Chernyaev, *1991 Dnevnik Pomoschnika Prezidenta SSSR.*
88. Vorotnikov, *A bylo eto tak*, pp.301, 304–5.
89. Ibid., p.308.
90. See most comprehensive account in Hertle, *Chronik des Mauerfalls. Die dramatischen Ereignisse um den 9. November 1989* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1996), pp.233–7; also Igor Maksimychev, 'Berlinskaia stena. Eio padeniiae glazami ochevitsa', *Nezavisimaia gazeta* [Independent Gazette], 10 Nov. 1993; Wassily Kochemassow, *Meine letzte Mission* [My Last Mission] (Berlin, Deitz, 1994), p.185; Kuzmin, *Kruscheniie GDR*, p.60.
91. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp.627–8, 630–31; also personal communication with Dobrynin, Moscow, 18 June 1999.
92. Levesque, *The Enigma of 1989*, pp.83, 178–81, 255. I disagree that Gorbachev was misinformed about the seriousness of the brewing crisis in Eastern Europe. On the contrary, Soviet ambassadors and intelligence chiefs in Eastern European capitals, as well as some 'roving' Soviet ambassadors (for example, Vadim Zagladin who travelled to Czechoslovakia in July 1989) warned Moscow repeatedly of the grave situation. At the same time, few could predict what direction and character the revolutions in Eastern Europe would take.
93. Gorbachev to Richard von Weizsäcker, 7 July 1987, the Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, fond 2, opis 1.
94. Franz-Josef Strauss to Gorbachev, 29 Dec. 1987; also Gorbachev's conversation with H.-J. Vogel, 11 April 1989, Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, fond 2, opis 1.
95. Third conversation of M.S. Gorbachev with chancellor of the FRG H. Kohl (one-to-one), Bonn, 14 June 1989, notes of Chernyaev (provided by Anatoly Chernyaev to the National Security Archive, Washington DC).
96. George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p.135.
97. Quoted by Strobe Talbott and Michael Beschoss, *At the Highest Level: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), pp.73–100.
98. See, e.g., analytical paper of Fritz Ermarth, chairman of the National Intelligence Council, CIA, 'The Russian Revolution and the Future Russian Threat to the West Geostratetgic Woolgathering', 18 May 1990, declassified and posted by the author on the Johnston Reading List, 30 June 1999. Also see 'Rising Political Instability under Gorbachev: Understanding the Problem and Prospects for Resolution, an Intelligence Assessment', Directorate of Intelligence, April 1989; and 'Gorbachev's Domestic Gambles and Instablity in the USSR', An Intelligence Assessment, September 1989, both documents declassified by FOIA request and are on file at the National Security Archive, George Washington University.
99. James A. Baker, III with Thomas M. Defrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy. Revolution, War and Peace, 1989–1992* (New York: Putnam's, 1995), pp.144–52; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p.173.
100. The record of the meeting cited in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed*, pp.398–99.
101. Soviet record of conversation with US President George Bush (one-to-one conversation), 2 Dec. 1989, Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow. On the startled reaction of Gorbachev, personal communication from Pavel Palazhchenko who interpreted this conversation; also Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p.165.

102. Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p.317.
103. Soviet record of conversation with US President George Bush (one-to-one conversation), 2 Dec. 1989, the Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow.
104. This term was born in 1922 when Germany and the Soviet Union struck a bilateral agreement behind the back of other Western countries.
105. Yuli Kwitsinsky, *Vor dem Sturm: Errinerungen eines Diplomaten* [Before the Storm: Memoirs of a Diplomat], trans. Hilde and Helmut Ettinger (Berlin: Siedler, 1993), pp.16–17; Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed*, pp.124–5; record of the meeting on Germany at the CC CPSU, 28 Jan. 1990, from Anatoly Chernyaev's Journal, Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow.
106. Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed*.
107. Sergei E. Trubetskoy, *Minuvshee* [Life in the Past] (Moscow: DEM, 1991), pp.109, 110.
108. Yuri Afanasyev (ed.), *Sovetskoie obschestvo: vozniknoveniie, razvitie, istorichsekii final* [Soviet Society: Emergence, Development, Historical End], vol. 2 (Moscow: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennii gumanitarnii universitet, 1997), pp.560, 562.