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Understanding change in international politics: the Soviet empire's demise and the international system

Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil

This article sets out a conceptual framework for understanding change in international politics by analyzing the fundamental transformation of the international system occasioned by perestroika and the revolutions in Eastern Europe. We argue that the international system was transformed by the rapid succession of mostly nonviolent revolutions that replaced Eastern European communist governments in 1989 and by the lack of any action by the Soviet Union to stop these changes. The revolutions of 1989 transformed the international system by changing the rules governing superpower conflict and, thereby, the norms underpinning the international system. Practically speaking, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe hollowed the Warsaw Pact and led to its disintegration. Revolution also spread from Eastern Europe to the Soviet republics, resulting in the collapse of the formal Soviet empire, whose demise confirmed the transformation of the international system.

At first blush the transformation concerned only a limited area of the international system. Given the centrality of the cold war to the international system's bipolar configuration, however, the transformation of one of its blocs, even if geographically circumscribed, had system-wide implications. Hence, the changes of 1989 present a crucial test case for neorealism and its "systemic" approach to international politics.[1] Since we believe the dominant school of international politics, structural neorealism, does not provide a coherent

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1. See John Lewis Gaddis, "International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War," *International Security* 17 (Winter 1992/93), pp. 5–58.

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explanation for these transformations, the development of an alternative theoretical framework becomes necessary.[2]

Taking a constructivist approach, we argue that in all politics, domestic and international, actors reproduce or alter systems through their actions.[3] Any given international system does not exist because of immutable structures, but rather the very structures are dependent for their reproduction on the practices of the actors. Fundamental change of the international system occurs when actors, through their practices, change the rules and norms constitutive of international interaction. Moreover, reproduction of the practice of international actors (i.e., states) depends on the reproduction of practices of domestic actors (i.e., individuals and groups). Therefore, fundamental changes in international politics occur when beliefs and identities of domestic actors are altered thereby also altering the rules and norms that are constitutive of their political practices. To the extent that patterns emerge in this process, they can be traced and explained, but they are unlikely to exhibit predetermined trajectories to be captured by general historical laws, be they cyclical or evolutionary.

To develop our argument further, we take the following steps. First, we criticize neorealism's theoretical treatment of change by showing that the changes of the recent past did not occur in accordance with its propositions and that the assumptions of neorealism are significantly at odds with the actual practice of states. Then, we develop a constructivist approach to change that emphasizes the institutional nature of social systems, domestic as well as international. In the next section, utilizing the constructivist approach, we analyze the transformation within the Soviet bloc and treat it as a case study of international system change. We argue that Mikhail Gorbachev's decision to end the Brezhnev doctrine reversed the tactics of communist conquest of domestic politics. This change in the practice of one of the major actors in the international system led to the development of certain conventions similar to those of the classical European state system, which were in turn rapidly surpassed by the generation of new ones.[4] In the article's conclusion, we recapitulate the main steps of our discussion.

2. On structural neorealism, see Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979); and Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For a good review of the problems realism encounters when explaining change, see R.B.J. Walker, "Realism, Change, and International Political Theory," *International Studies Quarterly* 31 (March 1987), pp. 65–86.

3. We use the term "constructivist" in the sense elaborated by Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), especially part 1. See also Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46 (Spring 1992), pp. 391–425. For a further discussion see Alexander Wendt, "The Agent–Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 41 (Summer 1987), pp. 335–70; and David Dessler, "What's at Stake in the Agent–Structure Debate?" *International Organization* 43 (Summer 1989), pp. 441–73.

4. By "conventions," we mean all types of norms and rules which constitute and regulate practices rather than only those norms which alleviate problems of coordination. For an extensive discussion see Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Neorealism and change

Three things are taken for granted by the neorealist orthodoxy. The first is that international politics is an autonomous realm following its own logic; the second is that the international system is only a shorthand for the organization of force; and the third is that the dynamics of the "anarchical" system are determined by the distribution of capabilities. Given these assumptions, neorealists took it for granted that the Soviet Union and the United States would remain in a bipolar world by virtue of their capabilities, regardless of any changes in domestic politics. Therefore, it is not surprising that many neorealists continued to maintain that the international system had not changed even after Gorbachev introduced perestroika and the "new thinking." Focusing solely on capabilities, this argument could even be "proved" by pointing to the continuation of the Soviet arms buildup under Gorbachev.[5]

The end of the cold war, however, undermined neorealist theory in two ways. First, contrary to the expectations of the persistence of bipolarity, the Soviet bloc disintegrated. Second, and even more damaging to this approach, change did not follow a path derived from any of the neorealism's theoretical propositions. The change in question was not the result of a "hegemonic" or system-wide war. It was not the result of different alliance patterns or the emergence of another "superpower," as in the case of China in the 1970s. It was not the outcome of a sudden gap in military capabilities, or of U.S. compellence as envisaged by John Foster Dulles's "rollback."

Gorbachev's actions confounded neorealist expectations when he discarded the Brezhnev Doctrine, allowed revolutions overthrowing Eastern European communist regimes, and accepted the demise of the Warsaw Pact. Neorealism failed to explain these unilateral concessions and conciliatory policies of the Soviet Union because this approach concerns itself with neither internal structures of the "units" nor questions of legitimacy. Below we show not only that domestic politics matters but also that Gorbachev's strategy was to counteract the loss of legitimacy of the Communist Party in the Eastern Bloc as well as the Soviet Union. As opposed to Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, and Yuri Andropov before him, Gorbachev realized that reform could only succeed if both domestic and external actors could be motivated to collaborate in the political and economic arenas without threats of repression and force. The (neo)realist tenet of force being, in Kenneth Waltz's words, the "ultima ratio" in domestic politics and "in international politics . . . the first and

5. Until 1988, the conceptualization of perestroika as peredyshka (a "breathing spell") in which to recharge for more of the same competition with the United States was very popular. See Ernest W. Lefever and Robert D. Vander Lugt, eds., *Perestroika: How New is Gorbachev's New Thinking* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1989), especially Richard Nixon, "Challenge and Response," Henry Kissinger, "A Threat to Global Balance," and Jeane Kirkpatrick, "A Return to Leninist Orthodoxy." Also see Simon Serfaty, ed., "Symposium: Old Adversaries, New Ground," *SAIS Review* 8 (Summer–Fall 1988), pp. 1–40, and especially the contributions by Zbigniew Brzezinski and William Hyland, pp. 10–11 and 20–22, respectively.

constant one" had lost its utility for guiding policy.[6] Maintaining Soviet predominance in Eastern Europe through military intervention was counterproductive because the growth of civil society and organized resistance made such a course of action exceedingly costly and threatened the very continuation of perestroika at home. Seen from this perspective, the concessions that are unexplainable or irrational within the realist framework become deliberate, though risky rational policy moves, even though they ultimately failed. Once communism collapsed in Eastern Europe, it was generally accepted that the cold war was over, but many neorealists still denied that a fundamental transformation of the international system had occurred.

Since the end of the cold war had the potential of representing a crucial case for the corroboration or refutation of the structural realist research program, its exponents have resorted to various gambits to shelter neorealism's theoretical core. Thus, the recent transformation is treated as an anomaly, while it is suggested that the international system is, according to John Mearsheimer, on its way "back to the future."[7] Second, it is asserted that the changes are indeed the results of shifts in military capabilities.[8] Third, there remains the epistemological excuse of arguing that single cases cannot prove general theories wrong.[9] This argument is dubious, however, because one must implausibly aggregate all events of a period comprising several years into one "data point." A fourth fallback position is that no fundamental change has occurred since international politics is still characterized by anarchy and bipolarity.[10] Finally, though theoretically inconsistent with the notion of the persistence of anarchy, there is the argument that the present system is unipolar, but will "inevitably" evolve toward multipolarity.[11]

Such neorealist theoretical gambits have been further refuted by events since the collapse of Eastern European communism in 1989. France, Germany, the Soviet Union, and the United States behaved contrary to neorealist expecta-

6. The quotations are from Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* p. 113.

7. See John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990), pp. 5–56.

8. For a critical discussion of this argument and a statistical analysis demonstrating that Soviet behavior was unaffected by increased U.S. spending, see Fred Chernoff, "Ending the Cold War: The Soviet Retreat and the U.S. Military Buildup," *International Affairs* 67 (January 1991), pp. 111–26. Furthermore, for an argument that increased U.S. arms spending did not lead to major concessions in the periphery, see Richard K. Herrmann, "Soviet Behavior in Regional Conflicts: Old Questions, New Strategies, and Important Lessons," *World Politics* 44 (April 1992), pp. 432–65. Similarly, Garthoff credits a new generation of Soviet leaders rather that the Reagan military buildup for the end of the cold war. See Raymond L. Garthoff, "Why Did the Cold War Arise, and Why Did It End?" in Michael J. Hogan, ed., *The End of the Cold War: Its Meaning and Implications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chap. 11.

9. This was the argument made by Robert Keohane at a conference on multilateralism in La Jolla, California, 6 December 1990. The same point was reiterated by Steve Walt and Kenneth Waltz, among others, at a conference at Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., in October 1991.

10. Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18 (Fall 1993), pp. 44–79.

11. Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17 (Spring 1993), pp. 6–51.

tions by reaffirming the norms of multilateralism through their actions.[12] Such actions demonstrate that the classic imagery of the international system characterized by poles and shifting alliances is not very useful in understanding contemporary international politics.

First, the Soviet Union persisted in its aberrant behavior when viewed through the lens of neorealism. The Soviet Union, and then its successors, wished to join the "community of nations" and, more particularly, what Gorbachev termed the "common European home." The community of nations was, for him—and that is significant—not simply the sum of states recognized in accordance with international law, but rather a collection of states that participated in the multilateral institutions of the postwar era.[13] As Coit Blaker points out,

> For Gorbachev and those closest to him, the game in world politics had changed profoundly in the four years that separated his elections as CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] general secretary and the collapse of Soviet power in Europe; if prior to 1985 the overarching object of Soviet foreign policy had been to strengthen the "positions of socialism" at the expense of the West, by 1989 a new goal—to secure Soviet admission to the elaborate collection of institutions that constituted the Western economic and political system—had arisen to take its place.[14]

As we explain below, the Soviet embrace of multilateralism became most obvious in the acceptance of a multilateral framework for the solution of the German problem.[15] We also demonstrate below that France rejected balancing alliances against a reunified Germany and that Germany opted for a deepening European integration instead of neutrality.

Second, events since German reunification have demonstrated that the present cannot be understood in terms of a trend back to the future as Mearsheimer has suggested.[16] Germany has neither developed an independent nuclear force nor pursued an assertive foreign policy, and there are no indications that these trends are about to change in the foreseeable future. Indeed, several empirical indicators suggest otherwise. Germany possesses the strongest antinuclear movement in Europe and no significant segment of the German polity has suggested that Germany develop a nuclear capability. A

12. For a discussion and conceptual clarification of multilateralism as an organizational form, see John Ruggie, ed., *Multilateralism Matters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

13. Robert Legvold was one of the first to argue that Gorbachev's commitment to multilateralism was genuine and should not be dismissed by the West. See "The Revolution in Soviet Foreign Policy," special issue, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 68, no. 1, 1988/89, pp. 82–98 and particularly pp. 97–98.

14. Coit Blaker, *Hostage to Revolution: Gorbachev and Soviet Security Policy, 1985–1991* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993), p. 188.

15. A Bush administration analyst with major responsibility for U.S. policy on German unification, Condoleezza Rice, has come to a similar conclusion in an unpublished work entitled, "Soviet Policy Toward German Unification: Implications for Theories of International Negotiation." See Blaker, *Hostage to Revolution*, p. 188, note 3.

16. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future."

similar broad consensus exists against the use of force. The established parties, as well as the public at large, have been very reluctant to deploy German troops for other than defensive purposes within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or even for peacekeeping operations under United Nations (UN) auspices.

While Germany's stance is certainly at variance with neorealist prescriptions and historical antecedents, a policy-relevant speculation about future trends has to take note of the present political realities, irrespective of whether those realities are in accordance with the traditional models of politics. The fatal flaw of Mearsheimer's analogy consists in the systematic elimination of domestic politics that historically had led to expansionist foreign policies. Given the entirely different domestic political realities of the Federal Republic of Germany, the neorealist prediction of a resurgent Germany asserting its hegemony on the European continent is hardly plausible. A much more realistic scenario seems to be that of an internally preoccupied Germany. Unable to "digest" the acquisition of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and hampered by the structural problem of its economy, Germany is prevented from playing the role of the engine of the European integration process or of an ascending hegemonic power.[17]

Finally, according to neorealist assumptions, the United States should have taken advantage of Soviet weakness with an aggressive foreign policy and efforts to compound Soviet difficulties so as to make the Soviet Union as weak as possible. Instead, the United States extended to the Soviet Union an invitation to join multilateral institutions, offered large-scale financial aid for economic reform, and even supported Gorbachev's efforts to hold the Soviet Union together. It stretches the imagination to explain the supportive behavior of the United States toward the Soviet Union as one of "balancing" in neorealist terms.

Realists may argue that the United States' supportive behavior does not contradict their theory because great powers try to prevent the opening of power vacuums that might lead to the emergence of small, aggressive states and try to preserve essential actors in the balance of power. This line of argument, however, contradicts the neorealist postulate of power maximization and that of relative gains concerns. Moreover, at what point would the United States determine that the Soviet Union was no longer a threat and was to be preserved for balance-of-power reasons? The Soviet Union was the only other country that presented a serious threat to U.S. security when the United States began its supportive moves and, with its intercontinental nuclear missiles, the Commonwealth of Independent States is still the only power that could present a threat to the United States.

17. For an early recognition of these facts, see Eckart Arnold, "German Foreign Policy and Unification," *International Affairs* 67 (July 1991), pp. 453–71.

Even after the Soviet Union's collapse, the United States did not deviate from its multilateral course. While the initial draft of the Defense Planning Guidance for the 1994–99 fiscal years had advocated that the United States should "prevent the emergence of a new rival" and convince "potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests" the revised draft states:

> It is not in our interest or those of the other democracies to return to earlier periods in which multiple military powers balanced one another off in what passed for security structures, while regional, or even global peace hung in the balance. . . . One of the primary tasks we face today in shaping the future is carrying long standing alliances into the new era, and turning old enmities into new cooperative relationships. If we and the other leading democracies continue to build a democratic security community, a much safer world is likely to emerge. If we act separately, many other problems could result.[18]

U.S. actions in response to Soviet collapse and declared foreign policy objectives demonstrate that even actors with the greatest potential for relative gains in the reconstituted international system are not following the neorealist logic. Rather, the United States and other actors in the international system are assessing security threats in a way that goes far beyond the distribution of capabilities and reaches deeper into the domestic politics of all the actors in the system. One thing seems to be clear: the United States is not responding to these new forms of security threats by balancing through internal arms production or by forming external alliances against potential opponents.

Indeed, the U.S. response to the collapse of Soviet communism has been motivated primarily by the potential consequences of civil war within the Soviet Union. In response to Lithuania's August 1989 declaration that Soviet annexation was illegal, the Bush administration reemphasized that the United States never recognized incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, President Bush, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, and other officials worried about civil war within the Soviet Union and its potential effect on the control of nuclear weapons. As Scowcroft put it, "It is not necessarily in the interest of the United States to encourage the breakup of the Soviet Union. . . . It's in our interest that the nationalist debate be tempered. Perhaps some kind of federation would be better than having all these republics arc off and go their own ways."[19] The perceived security threat to NATO of such a civil war includes political destabilization of neighboring Eastern European countries, mass migration of refugees to Western Europe,

18. This document is quoted in Patrick E. Tyler, "Pentagon Drops Goal of Blocking New Superpowers: Policy Document Revised," *The New York Times*, 24 May 1992, p. A14.

19. Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company), pp. 102 and 109.

and most dramatically, the possible loss of central control over strategic nuclear weapons.

In light of standard realist theory, these are indeed startling developments: virtually all actors rejected the generative logic of the system that made a balance-of-power policy with shifting alliances the paramount political maxim. Instead all states, whether great, middle-sized, or small, opted for some form of multilateralism. They also have preferred solutions predicated on a certain type of integration—both in the areas of low politics (economics) and in the vital area of security—to solutions based on "internal balancing." Finally, states have responded to nontraditional security threats arising from other states' domestic politics rather than from their foreign policies.

Whatever the merits of neorealist theory might be in illuminating the periods before World War I or during the cold war, most of its tenets and theoretical terms do not seem to correspond to present state practice. Preoccupied with a largely misguided epistemological ideal of parsimony and elegance, structural realists have neglected the examination of actual practice as well as a critical appraisal of the fit between their model's theoretical assumptions and the actual international game.[20] Ironically, in the attempt to meet the ideal of "science," neorealists have cut themselves off from some of the important insights of George Kennan and other realist practitioners who had shaped nineteenth- and twentieth-century politics.[21]

The constructivist approach to system change

Instead of conceiving the international system in terms of distributions of tangible resources and of "invisible" structures working behind the backs of the actors, constructivism views this system as an artifice of man-made institutions, such as, but not limited to states. In general, institutions are settled or routinized practices established and regulated by norms.[22]

As to the problem of change, it is useful to distinguish among different types of processes characterized as change. On the one hand, we can think of changes within the framework of well-established conventions. Thus, the availability of and differential access to new resources will create new distributional patterns without necessarily changing the parameters of the system. Reproduction of systemic structures is not affected. Changes in the balance of power would be the typical example of this process. On the other hand, a more fundamental

20. See David Dessler, "What's at Stake in the Agent–Structure Debate?"

21. For a further elaboration on this point, see Friedrich Kratochwil, "The Embarrassment of Changes: Neo-realism as the Science of Realpolitik Without Politics," *Review of International Studies,* vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 63–80.

22. For a further discussion of institutions and the importance of the norms constituting them, see Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions,* chaps. 3 and 4.

type of change occurs when the practices and constitutive conventions of a social system are altered.

The second process of change is central to our analysis because it shows how actors can fundamentally transform the international system. Since the international system is an ensemble of institutions and since institutions are practices constituted by norms, the analogy of a game that is determined by its rules proves helpful for understanding the system's persistence and changes. In other words, fundamental change in the international system occurs when some (or all) of its constitutive norms are altered.

Below, we argue that the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin changed a constitutive rule of the classical European states system and that the origins of the cold war lie in the fact that Stalin was unwilling to accept the previous norms of great power interaction. Similarly, U.S. universalism and the emphasis on liberal openness violated the exclusivity associated with the traditional notion of sovereignty in important respects. The result of both of these changes in the constitutive norms led to the emergence of the bloc politics that dominated three decades of postwar history. It was only with Gorbachev's initiatives at the end of the 1980s that the temporary détente between the blocs was overcome by a more fundamental transformation.

So far we have discussed actors whose interactions make up the international system, that is, states. However, states are themselves institutions whose existence and characteristics are dependent on the reproduction of particular sets of practices. The state is not just a legal entity or a formal organization. Rather, it must be understood as an ensemble of normatively constituted practices by which a group of individuals forms a special type of political association.

If one understands both the international system and the state in terms of normatively constituted practices, international and domestic politics are not hermetically sealed within their own spheres. Given that political practice is divided into these two realms only by the historical fact of the state as the institutional setup that organizes politics, it becomes clear why change in domestic politics can transform the international system.

The rise of modern nationalism provides an example of such a fundamental system transformation through a change in norms of both domestic and international politics. Nationalism denotes a change in the way in which people thought of themselves and their relationship with existing institutions. With the emergence of nationalism, people stopped defining themselves primarily as members of a certain religious belief or of a familial lineage but rather as a distinctive group that spoke a particular language, practiced certain customs, and possessed a history of its own. This intangible change in identification induced a shift in normative conceptions of allegiance. People no longer paid allegiance to the local noble or family elder but to an entity based on language and cultural distinctions. Such a new identity constituted and regulated very

real practices, as the French Revolution and the concomitant emergence of the nation-state demonstrate. The change in identification introduced new conventions for the legitimization of state authority.

The reconstitution of domestic politics in France in turn radically altered practices *among* states. For example, with the *levée en masse,* the conventions engendered by nationalism reconstituted the practice of war. It created new conceptions of rights and duties of the population by transforming subjects into "citizens." Regardless of whether or not other states in the international system underwent nationalist transformations of their domestic politics, the *levée en masse* immediately changed the way in which international politics was conducted. The new conception of war prompted other states to adopt the practice of conscription based on new norms of national security and citizen obligation. Thus, a change in the conventions of politics within one state changed the conventions of both domestic and international politics throughout the system.

This example has several important implications for a theory of international change. One, the principles according to which units are differentiated are of extreme importance for the characterization of the system. Nationalism, for example, not only changed the tone of politics as Fürst von Metternich and Lord Acton perceived but also made it increasingly impossible to resort to territorial concession as a means of maintaining the balance of power. As soon as the inhabitants cared whether or not they were French, German, or Austrian, their sovereigns could no longer manage the balance by simply transferring territory.[23]

Two, it demonstrates that international change is a multilevel phenomenon in which precedence cannot be accorded a priori to either domestic or international structures. Rather, what is important is the way in which changed practices arising from new conceptions of identity and political community are adopted by individuals and the way in which the interactions among states are thereby altered or vice versa. "Second image reversed" interpretations, which are often tendered against structuralist (that is, third image) approaches, point to an important neglect of systemic theory.[24] But the point is not simply to assert the importance of international structures for domestic change but to examine systematically the interaction of international and domestic structures within a conceptually developed framework. The fact that "causal arrows" can go both ways might make for a more complicated analysis, but this is disturbing

23. See Friedrich Kratochwil, "On the Notion of Interest," *International Organization* 36 (Winter 1982), pp. 1–30.

24. On second image reversed interpretations, see Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32 (Autumn 1978), pp. 881–911. For an example of a structuralist analysis, see Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, "The International Sources of Soviet Change," *International Security* 16 (Winter 1991/92), pp. 74–118.

only to analysts who have already opted for the primacy of one or another level of analysis and who are wedded to a particular and mostly inappropriate concept of causality. Instead of reifying one type of structure, we should be making political practice and the reproduction of the system our central focus.

Three, the relevance of norms for the constitution of political action and its appraisal becomes visible. Constructivists and rationalists share, therefore, the focus on choice. Constructivists, however, insist not only that choices must be meaningful in terms of the actors' preferences but also that intersubjective standards must serve an important function by providing yardsticks for the classification and appraisal of action. What qualifies as self-determination rather than sedition? What is a case of intervention rather than lawful assistance? What is a case of self-defense rather than an unauthorized resort to force? These are all highly contested issues in international and domestic politics. It is not possible to reduce this problem of appraisal to merely a question of pure description or of an empirical fit between a phenomenon and a theoretical term.[25] It is equally not advisable simply to accept the actors' own characterization (precisely because of the incentives for deception and strategic behavior). Rather, it is the contested, but nevertheless partially shared, understandings that illuminate these interactions and help us in our analysis.

For some this constructivist argument might not seem controversial, but others may contend that such an approach cannot demonstrate what caused the constitutive rules themselves to change. Consequently, one could further argue that an adequate explanation necessitates the reduction of these rules to some incontrovertible last fundament that serves as their "cause."

Before we are ready to dismiss the constructivist approach as pure idealism, we had better remember that rational choice theory and economic reasoning start precisely with this conception of the autonomous actor and his or her conceptions and/or preferences. In this way, all other further events can be shown to be caused by the actor even if his or her choice is made under constraints. In other words, there is no reason automatically to defer to some material factors that can serve as ultimate foundations for our explanations. Nevertheless, giving an account of preference formation through the analysis of the process of interaction in which identities are formed and interests emerge is part of the constructivist research program.[26] What constructivism, and for that matter any theory of social action, is unable to deliver is a consistent and coherent reduction of action to some ultimate foundation that supposedly causes everything else.

Attempts to demonstrate the superiority of material or structural causes result largely from clever historiography rather than from causal determinism.

25. For a further explanation of essentially contested concepts, see William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1974).

26. See Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It."

Of course ex post facto, every action can be shown to have been determined, and the observer of complex patterns might be able to impute functional or evolutionary significance to certain events. For instance, in contrast to our constructivist account of systemic change concomitant to the rise of nationalism, functional and evolutionary arguments compatible with a realist perspective are usually advanced. Thus, it has been argued that security imperatives caused the changes in domestic structures particularly in the aftermath of the French Revolution.[27]

Providing such a functional account, however, does not explain the original shift in the self-identification of the inhabitants of France from the king's subjects to citizens during the revolution. It also does not tell us why this particular form of organization was adopted by other states given that alternatives were available and given that citizen armies were against the interests of the military elites of absolutism, as Austria and Prussia quickly realized after 1815. Although Napoleon discovered the military potential of citizen armies for warfare, the changes in identification of the French revolutionaries who brought down the ancien régime did not occur *because* of a functional imperative of "security." As a matter of fact, one of the decisive repercussions of this revolution was that the concept of security itself was fundamentally altered. Instead of the security of the king and his dynasty (God save the king, the king is dead, long live the king), "national" security emerged. Only after we observe, historically, that nationalist politics was victorious, do functionalist arguments concerning security imperatives make sense.

Evolutionary arguments implicitly contain the belief that surviving institutions and organizational forms are successful answers to some optimization problem.[28] But institutions do not exist in fixed environments, since institutions often can change environments. Consequently, no equilibrium in rational choice terms might exist; if it exists, it might not be achievable; or the availability of multiple equilibria makes the evolutionary path argument indeterminate.[29] Constructivism therefore focuses on practices informed by rules and norms. As James March and Johan Olsen point out:

> the advantage of treating behavior as rule driven is not that it is possible to "save" thereby a belief in historical efficiency. Rather that it leads more naturally than does treating behavior as optimization to an examination of the specific ways in which history is encoded into institutions . . . and more

27. See Otto Hintze, "The Formation of States and Constitutional Development: A Study in History and Politics" and Otto Hintze, "Military Organization and the Organization of the State," both in Felix Gilbert, ed., *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

28. See, for example, Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

29. This point is eloquently made by Jon Elster in *Ulysses and the Sirens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), part 1.

> likely to generate interesting predictions about multiple equilibria or long time paths. In fact, the assumption of historical efficiency becomes mostly a matter of faith . . . if it is impossible to identify the precise mechanisms by which historical experience is transformed into current action.[30]

Thus, history and political choices enter as important factors for theorizing. Neither can be understood in terms of functional necessity or instrumental relationships in an overarching system or historical whole. Precisely because political action can transcend prevailing practices and establish new beginnings, it cannot be reduced to functional logic or historical laws, as even Karl Popper has never tired of pointing out.[31]

Large-scale historical change cannot be explained in terms of one or even several causal factors but through an analysis of conjunctures. Although a covering law for this historical process is unlikely to be found, elements within that process do form patterns that can be perceived and analyzed, since even overall chaotic processes are not simply random. While this last point has been made by constructivist and nonconstructivist scholars alike,[32] the constructivist research program identifies institutions as both elements of stability and as strategic variables for the analysis of change. Institutional underpinnings help in the reproduction of systems (i.e., stability) and become the parameters for routine (i.e., non–system-transforming) choices. For example, markets could not function unless property rights have been assigned and the property system remains stable during transactions. But even the scope and direction of radical change depends to a large extent on the existence of an institutional structure. Thus, the classical revolutions would not have been possible if there had been no state to be captured.[33] An explanation of change will have to blend conjunctive analysis with an understanding of rule-governed activity and the various processes by which institutions are continually reproduced and modified through the actors' practices.

In the following case study, we demonstrate how a new international system is being constituted by the changed practices of one of the major actors and their system-wide repercussions. By focusing on normative changes in the legitimacy and the constitution of international politics within the Soviet bloc, we explain why and how the conventions of international politics changed much more rapidly than the distribution of capabilities. While the relative capabilities of the European Community, the Soviet Union, and the United States did not change very much during the years leading up to 1989, international politics was fundamentally transformed in just that one year.

30. James March and Johan Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions* (New York: Free Press, 1989), p. 56.

31. Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957).

32. See for example, Gabriel Almond and Stephen J. Genco, "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics," *World Politics* 20 (July 1977), pp. 489–522.

33. J.P. Nettl, "The State as a Conceptual Variable," *World Politics* 20 (July 1968), pp. 559–92.

Reconstituting the international system

Just as the cold war began over Eastern Europe, it ended there. Stalin's rejection of free elections for Eastern European countries started the process whereby they became an informal part of the Soviet empire. Gorbachev ended this informal empire with the revocation of the Brezhnev doctrine. Contrary to neorealist theory, this decision was not driven by systemic constraints. Rather, it was a foreign policy choice made in the context of crucial developments in the domestic politics of both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The result was that Gorbachev's decision to end the Brezhnev doctrine reconstituted the international system by changing the constitutive norms of bloc politics and thereby the rules governing superpower relations.

We develop this case study in three subsections below. We begin by sketching the constitutive norms of bloc politics that emerged in the early postwar era and underpinned superpower relations from the late 1940s to the end of the 1980s. We then analyze Gorbachev's revocation of the Brezhnev doctrine and explain how it transformed the patterns of domestic and international political practice within the Warsaw Pact as well as relations among the superpowers. Finally, we examine the rapid and unexpected spread of revolution within Eastern Europe that led to the end of the Communist Party's monopoly on power, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, German reunification, and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself. These unexpected changes confirmed the transformation of the international system, since a return to bloc politics became increasingly difficult and a new set of norms governing superpower and great power relations had emerged.

The emergence of the postwar international system: the constitution of bloc politics

To understand the crucial nature of the Brezhnev doctrine, it is necessary to examine the development of the constitutive norms of postwar international politics. Here, contrary to neorealist analysis, the close connection between domestic and international institutions was particularly important. This fact was recognized by Kennan in his "Long Telegram," as it was by Stalin. Both were aware that fundamentally different conceptions of domestic politics had dramatic consequences for international politics. Stalin told Milovan Djilas in spring 1945, "This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise."[34]

Typically, Stalin could imagine the propagation of the socialist system only by force, opting for imperial expansion rather than hegemonic leadership, or an

34. Stalin is quoted by Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II: Imperial and Global,* 3d. ed. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1989), p. 73.

even more limited "sphere of influence." After World War II, when Britain, France, and the United States attempted to return to previous conventions of state-to-state relations and were prepared to discuss spheres of influence, they soon realized that Stalin's conceptions of such a sphere in Eastern Europe entailed total control of domestic political processes and the radical elimination of civil society. While Stalin certainly was aware of the traditional form of a sphere of influence, as the Finnish arrangement demonstrated, he did not choose that option for Eastern Europe.

In considering the imposition of the Soviet model on Eastern European societies, one has to understand the dramatic implications of this new form of domination.[35] It radically broke with the traditions of nineteenth-century European empires, including the czarist one. As John Gray noted in 1987:

> The conventional wisdom among Western scholars in seeking to explain away the horrors of the Soviet system as inheritances from a barbarous Russian political tradition, neglects the role of Marxian theory in constituting and reproducing the Soviet system and the relentless hostility of both to the traditions and achievements of the Russian people. The so-called Russian empire of our time has, in truth, few points of similarity with the empires of nineteenth-century Europe. . . . In projecting into Soviet reality the concepts and images of the past, western observers fail to grasp the radical modernity of the Soviet totalitarian system.[36]

In contrast to the attempts of the Holy Alliance, which was designed to deny the population an influence on politics but which left civil society intact, the Soviet transformation made people, willy-nilly, participants in the reproduction of the totalitarian system. Adam Michnik even noted a distinction between Nazi and Soviet occupation of Poland. The Nazi occupiers

> could not be bothered to create political organizations for the conquered people, whom they wanted to transform into a race of slaves. . . . Their execution squads were accompanied neither by dreams of a better tomorrow nor by servile declarations from Hitler's Polish fans. The Soviet conquistadores were different. They systematically destroyed all social ties, political and cultural organizations, sports associations, and professional guilds, and abrogated civil rights and confiscated private property. In contrast to the Nazis, the Soviets imposed their own organizational structures on the Poles. . . . Imitating the spirit of the Crusades, they came to spread the New Faith. They left the door open by allowing everyone—in principle—to choose to convert to the religion of the Progressive System.[37]

35. This point was eloquently made by Hannah Arendt in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973). A similar distinction is drawn between traditional dictatorship and the Soviet case in Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in John Keane, ed., *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (London: Hutchison, 1985).

36. John Gray, "The Politics of Cultural Diversity," *Postliberalism* (New York: Routledge, 1993) chap. 18; the quotation is from p. 257.

37. See pp. 43–44 of Adam Michnik, "On Resistance," in Adam Michnik, *Letters From Prison and Other Essays,* trans. Maya Liatynski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) pp. 41–63.

This form of participation, however, left the population without any influence on policy while at the same time depriving them the protection of law.[38] Similarly, as the controversy surrounding the STASI files of the former GDR indicate, every tenth person was, in one way or the other, working for state security. This "security" apparatus not only operated totally outside of any legal accountability, its very goal was the disruption of the trust that allows members of civil society to go on with their lives, form friendships, and engage in cooperative enterprises. The problem with the Soviet model was that—and this demonstrates the inadequacies of the realist paradigm that identifies social order with the existence of hierarchy—it produced Hobbesian "diffidence" and a state of nature among the members of society precisely because a central government existed.

Although there is some debate as to the roots of Soviet policy in the czarist imperial tradition, the analogy with previous occupied societies within the European state system quickly loses its persuasiveness. Two further examples drive this point home more clearly. While by the turn of the century the czarist secret police had some 160 full-time personnel supported by a corp of gendarmes of about ten thousand men, its successor, the Checka, amounted in 1921 to 262,400 men, not counting the NKVD and militia.[39] Similarly, no traditional European empire found it necessary to resort to large-scale murder of an officer corps as Stalin did in the case of Poland (the Katyn massacre). It is important to realize that the radical transformation of domestic structures and the international system resulted not just from Stalin's pathologies but from the very extension of the Soviet model. Consequently, the caution of Stalin vis-à-vis the West, seemingly in accordance with prudential realism, cannot be used as proof for the traditional nature of Soviet security interests.

Although attempts to exert influence beyond the generally accepted norms of the European state system were not without precedent, they were usually checked by the other powers, if not by the limited means of coercion available to governments. Both factors fostered the pursuit of more moderate security interests and of consensual procedures within a concert framework. For example, Henry Kissinger demonstrated that Metternich wanted "security" to include control over domestic politics but failed in his efforts because Britain resisted that interpretation. Metternich relented and compromised on a more moderate version, which then allowed the Concert of Europe to function during most of the nineteenth century.[40]

38. For a depiction of the perversion of law in totalitarian systems, see The Experience and the Future Discussion Group, *Poland Today: The State of the Republic* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1981), pp. 18–43. This report was based on an independent survey of prominent professionals, scholars, and writers from a broad range of political views conducted to make policy recommendations to the Polish Communist government in 1979 and 1980.

39. On the czarist secret police, see Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (London: Widenfeld Nicolson, 1974), p. 301. On the Checka, see John J. Dziak, *Chekisty: A History of the KGB* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1988).

40. Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored* (New York: Gosset and Dunlap, 1964), chap. 5.

However, when a similar issue arose after World War II concerning Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland, Stalin did not moderate his position. Thus, irrespective of whether Stalin's actions were a reaction to Western initiatives, as revisionists have claimed, the question of legitimacy cannot be reduced to the observation of who acted first and who reacted later without addressing the issue of the quality of the acts in question.[41] The fact remains that the imposition of the Soviet model on Eastern Europe was illegitimate not only in the eyes of the Soviet Union's wartime allies but also in those of the so-called liberated Eastern European populations.[42] The Czech coup removed all doubt that Eastern Europe would become part of the Soviet informal empire. Consequently, Stalin's intransigence meant that the classical state system could not be restored. Communist tactics of conquest changed the rules of the international game by subverting the European state system's conventions very much in the same way that the *levée en masse* had changed international politics in the nineteenth century.

When the West had been convinced by Kennan's long telegram that Stalin was unlikely to play by the rules, it took countermeasures—first with containment expressed in the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan and then with the founding of NATO. As Waltz described it, this action–reaction process institutionalized the bipolar world:

> Communist guerrillas operating in Greece prompted the Truman Doctrine. The tightening of the Soviet Union's control over the states of Eastern Europe led to the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Defense Treaty, and these in turn gave rise to the Cominform and the Warsaw Pact. The plan to form a West German government produced the Berlin blockade. And so on through the 1950's, 60's and 70's. Our responses are geared to the Soviet Union's actions, and theirs to ours, which has produced an increasingly solid bipolar balance.[43]

Ironically, Waltz's historical account challenges the logic of his argument, which holds that the bipolar world is a function of the distribution of capabilities in the international system rather than the outcome of a succession of choices on the part of the actors. According to Waltz, the overwhelming capabilities of the superpowers entail a competitive relationship of the type that emerged in the postwar period:

> In a bipolar world there are no peripheries. With only two great powers capable of acting on a world scale, anything that happens is potentially of concern to both of them. Bipolarity extends the geographic scope of both

41. For a good review of more recent (revisionist) cold war history, see Lynn Eden, "The End of U.S. Cold War History? A Review Essay," *International Security* 18 (Summer 1993), pp. 174–207.

42. For an elaboration on this point, see John Lewis Gaddis, "The Cold War, the Long Peace, and the Future," in Hogan, *The End of the Cold War,* pp. 21–38.

43. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* p. 171.

> powers' concern. It broadens the range of factors included in the competition between them.[44]

The problem with Waltz's conception of bipolarity is that the nature of U.S.–Soviet competition is not a general characteristic of any bipolar configuration but rather the result of a certain set of practices. It was precisely Stalin's preoccupation with controlling domestic politics that "broadened the range of factors" and was later geographically expanded and projected onto global politics.

Hence, the distribution of capabilities seems to matter less than the incompatibility of particular conceptions of political community and their concomitant practices. Waltz treats the postwar conventions of superpower interaction as ahistorical givens. But just as these conventions developed after World War II in action–reaction cycles, they are subject to change if these incompatibilities become negotiable. Therefore, old conventions can be resurrected and new conventions can develop. With such changes in conventions the international system is transformed.

East–West tension decreased after Stalin's death, as first Khrushchev and then Brezhnev began to develop more extensive state-to-state relations with the United States. Stalin's subjection of Eastern Europe, however, had become institutionalized. Neither Khrushchev nor Brezhnev was prepared to relinquish the Eastern European empire Stalin had built. Essentially, a two-pronged Soviet foreign policy consisting in subversion of domestic politics paired with state-to-state relations had become so well-established that it seemed impossible to alter.

Although the Soviet policy of "peaceful coexistence" of the late 1950s and early 1960s ostensibly denoted a nonaggressive stance for the sake of establishing agreement on the limitation of conflict, it actually meant the avoidance of nuclear war while continuing class struggle by supporting wars of national liberation.[45] Even during détente, Brezhnev and his successors retained the two-pronged approach of pursuing state-to-state relations with the United States while maintaining the informal empire. Jack Snyder demonstrated that Brezhnev also retained a "correlation-of-forces" theory of détente. In a curious analogy to the Western "peace-through-strength" theory of change in Soviet behavior, Brezhnev's correlation-of-forces theory held that "the West would accept a relaxation of tension only when increases in Soviet power demanded it."[46]

Despite the various episodes of reduced tension, the communist tactic of conquest by subversion had become a constitutive norm of postwar bloc politics

44. Ibid.
45. Adam Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–1967* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 448.
46. See p. 15 of Jack Snyder, "International Leverage on Soviet Domestic Change," *World Politics* (October 1989), pp. 1–30; the quotation is from p. 15.

that bounded the practice of politics throughout the international system. Initiated by Stalin's insistence that countries within the Soviet sphere of influence adopt the Soviet model, the constitutive nature of this norm was reinforced by the Western response of containment and by the acceptance of the division of Europe—most notably by the lack of Western response to the Hungarian revolt in 1956. Finally, this norm was formally reconfirmed by the Brezhnev doctrine, announced on the occasion of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The *Pravda* article justifying that invasion argued that a threat to socialism in one country was a threat to the entire movement.[47] Given the nature of the Soviet empire, subsequent events proved this analysis correct.

System transformation initiated: the end of the Brezhnev doctrine

From the day in January 1989 on which Gorbachev approved of General Vojciech Jaruzelski's plan to lift the ban on Solidarity and ask its leaders to participate in governing Poland to 27 October 1989, when the Soviet Union renounced the invasion of Czechoslovakia in a Warsaw Pact communique, the Brezhnev doctrine was in a process of disintegration.[48] With Gorbachev's revocation of this doctrine and with his acceptance of "reasonable sufficiency" in armaments, a rather different foreign policy emerged.[49] By allowing his clients greater autonomy in the definition of domestic and eventually even of foreign policy, Gorbachev relied on a substantially changed image of the adversary, a considerably narrower conception of the national interest, and a reconceptualization of security itself, which questioned the exclusive reliance on military means and stressed the link between national and mutual security.[50] The end of the Brezhnev doctrine also indicated that Gorbachev had opted for

47. See Rubinstein, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II,* p. 119.
48. The Polish Communist government, the Catholic church, and Solidarity announced the beginning of "roundtable discussions" to negotiate political reform on 27 January 1989. "Jaruzelski told the U.S. ambassador in Warsaw, John Davies, that he was consulting frequently with Gorbachev, who fully supported his policies of conciliation." See Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels,* p. 53.
49. On the importance of reasonable sufficiency, Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures, and the End of the Cold War," in this issue of *International Organization.*
50. For an explanation of Gorbachev's changed image of the adversary in terms of learning theory and cognitive attribution theory, see Ted Hopf, "Peripheral Visions: Brezhnev and Gorbachev Meet the Reagan Doctrine," in George W. Breslauer and Philip E. Tetlock, eds., *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 586–629; for a more organization-based model stressing the impact of academics and policy research institutions, see Jeff Checkel, "Ideas, Institutions, and the Gorbachev Foreign Policy Revolution, *World Politics* 45 (January 1993), pp. 271–300. For an informative discussion of the national interest, see Stephen Sestanovich, "Inventing the Soviet National Interest," *The National Interest* no. 20 (Summer 1990), pp. 3–16. On the reconceptualization of security, see Legvold, "The Revolution in Soviet Foreign Policy," pp. 84–87.

state-to-state relations as the only acceptable mode of operation. This abandonment of the Soviet Union's traditional two-pronged approach to foreign policy meant that the emerging set of rules reconstituting the international system became more like those of the classical European state system than those of the cold war or even of détente.

At this point, a more detailed assessment of perestroika and the "new thinking" in foreign policy becomes necessary. It can be provided by the constructivist approach, which analyzes the links between domestic and international change without subscribing to the idea of the historical inevitability of liberal democracy.[51] Eastern European observers such as Michnik suggested in 1987 that Gorbachev's reforms should not be interpreted as the harbingers of liberal or social democracy; rather, underlying these efforts was the agenda of socialist counterreformation.[52] Essentially, Gorbachev attempted to retain control over Eastern European foreign policy through allowing, and then even encouraging, reform of communism domestically with the expectation that his own model of perestroika would prevail and bring to power similarly minded leaders in the Soviet bloc. The need for Gorbachev's counterreformation was provoked by the legitimization crisis of the Communist Party, which had an internal and bloc dimension. This crisis not only undermined Soviet claims to imperial control in Eastern Europe but also made the leading role of the Communist Party contestable at the center. Gorbachev's Eastern European strategy was to encourage reform of all Communist Parties in order to avert popular revolts in Eastern Europe, which would have repercussions on the Soviet Union itself. Although this was a high-risk strategy, the Soviet leadership recognized that military intervention was hardly possible in any Eastern European country without aborting reforms in the bloc and even threatening perestroika at home.[53] As will be discussed in the next section, Gorbachev's expectations proved to be mistaken, and the process of change he initiated quickly went beyond his ability to control it.

Given that the Brezhnev doctrine had been instrumental in defining the Soviet Union's Eastern European empire, an analysis of empire is useful for

51. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* no. 16 (Summer 1989), pp. 3–18.

52. Counterreformation, for Michnik, characterized glasnost and perestroika as a response to delegitimization of Soviet communism and as an attempt to retain control through reform: "[Counterreformation] is a self-critical show of strength with the aim of incorporating those values created against the will of [the established orthodoxy], and outside the social institutions in order to stop them [from] becoming antagonistic and subversive." See Adam Michnik, "The Great Counter-reformer," *Labor Focus on Eastern Europe* 9 (July–October 1987), p. 23.

53. In resisting military intervention in Eastern Europe, Shevardnadze explicitly rejected the scenarios of 1956 and 1968 by arguing that, "Leaving aside the impossibility of operating in the new conditions with the old methods, we could not sacrifice our own principles regarding the right to peoples to freedom of choice, noninterference in internal affairs, and the common European home." See Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 120. Similarly, when referring to the Baltics, Gorbachev stated that the use of force "would be the end of *Perestroika*"; see Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels,* p. 164.

understanding the transformation of bloc politics.[54] Postwar Soviet control of Eastern Europe can be defined as formal as well as informal imperialism. Formal empire in Michael Doyle's terms is the "annexation and rule by a colonial power," often with the collaboration of local elites.[55] Soviet Republics such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldavia had been part of the Soviet empire in the formal sense. Postwar control over the rest of Eastern Europe had been informal. According to Doyle, "Informal imperialism can . . . effect the same results as formal imperialism; the difference lies in the process of control, which informal imperialism achieves through the collaboration of a legally independent (but actually subordinate) government in the periphery."[56] This characterization of Eastern Europe as part of an informal empire had been accurate since communist regimes first were installed by Stalin. Nevertheless, Soviet control over Eastern Europe underwent a rapid transformation in just a few years. This change can be conceptualized as a process involving the stages of "Ottomanization," "Finlandization," and "Austrianization."

As Timothy Garton Ash initially conceived it, Ottomanization is the slow decay of the Soviet empire enabling "an unplanned, piecemeal, and discontinuous emancipation, both of the constituent states from the imperial center, and of societies from states."[57] Ottomanization suggests a transformation from formal empire to a type of dependency that was formerly called "suzerainty." In Doyle's words, "Having already encountered the form with the reality (in formal empires) and the reality without the form (in informal empires), we should not be surprised to find the form without the reality. In suzerainty the metropole's power lacks weight in much the same way as a feudal sovereign's political power over vassals would often lack effect."[58] A trend toward suzerainty characterized imperial decomposition in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in Hungary and Poland. There, communist governments retained their form while attempting to pursue market-based economic reform and pluralist politics within the Communist Party. As this tactic failed, compromise arrangements, like those made at the Polish roundtable talks in April 1989, left the Communist Party in nominal control and kept the appearance of informal empire so as not to provoke the metropole.

Although gradual Ottomanization best described the initial period from the late 1970s until January 1989, Gorbachev's relinquishing of the Brezhnev doctrine made Finlandization the dominant mode of transformation through

54. Doyle defines empires as "relationships of political control imposed by some political societies over the effective sovereignty of other political societies. They include more than just formally annexed territories, but they encompass less than the sum of all forms of international inequality." See Michael Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 19.

55. The quotation is from ibid., p. 130, Table 3.

56. Ibid., p. 38.

57. Timothy Garton Ash, "The Empire in Decay," *New York Review of Books* 29 September 1988, p. 56.

58. Doyle, *Empires*, p. 42.

the rest of the year.[59] Gorbachev essentially opted for this radical restructuring of Soviet–Eastern European relations over the slow transformation brought about by Ottomanization or military intervention.

Since the Soviet Union had its primary security interests in East Germany, it was this country that provided the hard test for the repeal of the Brezhnev doctrine. If Gorbachev had not wanted popular pressure to be exerted against the Honecker regime he could have intervened long before the East German government became inviable. Instead, he gave implicit approval to the Hungarian opening of the Iron Curtain that started the mass exodus from East Germany and triggered East Germany's political crisis. He also ordered Soviet troops not to intervene to save Honecker. As Michael Beschloss and Strobe Talbott note,

> The Hungarian government had obtained the Kremlin's tacit consent in advance. As the Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, Gennadi Gerasimov, coyly put it, Hungary's action was "very unexpected, but it does not directly affect us. . . . [Gorbachev] privately told his aides that Honecker would have to go, as soon as possible: "The [East German] leadership can't stay in control." He ordered his General Staff to make sure that Soviet troops stationed in East Germany did not get involved in the strife that was sure to envelop the country.[60]

Rather than intervene with force, Gorbachev went to Finland and lauded Soviet–Finnish relations as a model for the Soviet Union's relations with its neighbors. Passing the hard test of East Germany, Finlandization seemed to have been established as the new norm of Soviet–Eastern European relations.

Finlandization entails autonomous domestic politics in concert with a foreign policy that does not conflict with Soviet interests. Finlandization signified the transformation from informal empire into a more conventional sphere of influence in which only the foreign policy of the subject country is regulated. Practically speaking, Finlandization as applied to the Eastern bloc meant that bloc states would have to stay in the Warsaw Pact until the Soviet leadership felt secure with another security arrangement. Given that Finland was not a member of the Warsaw Pact, however, and that it had no Soviet troops stationed on its soil, Finlandization implied eventual autonomy outside of the Warsaw Pact but with Soviet consent.

To understand the dynamics of this change it is necessary to further consider the "domestic" sources of change in the Eastern bloc. Following the constructivist approach, this entails the explicit theoretical treatment of the interaction effects between internal and external conceptions of order that separate

59. Finlandization originates in Jacek Kuron's 1976 essay, which outlined a program for the newly formed democratic opposition in Poland. He borrowed the term of Western analysts for Soviet objectives in Western Europe and postulated it as an objective for Poland. See Jacek Kuron, "Reflections on a Program of Action," *The Polish Review*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1977, pp. 51–69.

60. Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, pp. 132–33.

domestic and international politics. In this context, the question of the autonomy and the legal nature of the state and its powers becomes a crucial issue. Precisely because the state is the gatekeeper between domestic and international interactions, constructivist analysis stresses the importance of institutions and normative understandings for appraisal. The explanation of change must therefore focus on the state's autonomy vis-à-vis civil society, on its sovereignty vis-à-vis other powers, and on its legality in the exercise of its powers internally.

As argued above, modern nationalism was initially an intangible change in the way people thought and felt, and this in turn undermined the legitimacy of the dynastic order. This change became observable only when the practices of obedience changed. In the same way, the antitotalitarian movements in Eastern Europe changed the way people thought and felt. This new attitude undermined the legitimacy of communism, which had as an observable result new forms of civil disobedience.[61]

Gorbachev had to contend with the opposition's antitotalitarian tactics that developed in the late 1970s. These tactics were aimed at attaining some form of suzerainty, that is, greater domestic and international autonomy but still within socialist parameters. Jacek Kuron's conception of "social self-organization," Michnik's "open but illegal activity," Václav Havel's "living within the truth," and George Konrad's "antipolitics" were designed to develop a sphere of social existence, activity, and initiative independent of the Communist Party state—what was traditionally called "civil society."[62] The idea was to bypass communist social institutions and make them obsolete by robbing them of their functions; as Doyle put it, leave "the form without the reality."

The tactic bore its first fruit in 1980, with the rise of Solidarity and the host of independent associations that developed during the sixteen months of its legal existence. When 90 percent of Polish workers participated in a nonviolent rebellion against the workers' state, formed their own independent trade union, and began to manage production on their own, what little legitimacy communism had quickly evaporated.[63] Even though General Jaruzelski reestablished control over the country through a type of putsch in December 1981, the

61. For discussions of the collapse of legitimacy see George Schoepflin, "The End of Communism in Eastern Europe," *International Affairs* (London) 66 (January 1990), pp. 3–16 and especially pp. 5–7; and Giuseppe Di Palma, "Legitimation from the Top to Civil Society: Politico-cultural Change in Eastern Europe," *World Politics* 44 (October 1991), pp. 49–80.

62. See Kuron, "Reflections on a Program of Action"; Michnik, "On Resistance"; Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," and George Konrad, *Antipolitics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984), respectively. On civil society, see Jacques Rupnik, "Dissent in Poland, 1968–1978: the End of Revisionism and the Rebirth of the Civil Society," in Rudolf Tokes, ed., *Opposition in Eastern Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), pp. 60–112; and Andrew Arato, "Civil Society Against the State: Poland 1980–81," *Telos* 47 (Spring 1981), pp. 23–48.

63. Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Self-Limiting Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

unprecedented necessity for calling on a military leader to head the government demonstrated the collapse of the Communist Party's authority.

Even as Jaruzelski's crackdown ended the legal existence of civil society, the new tactics of civil disobedience spread first through Polish society and then were emulated throughout Eastern Europe. The spread of new tactics consisted of first learning about the successes and failures of opposition activities in other countries from samizdat and foreign radio broadcasts and then adopting the successful models.[64] By the late 1980s, direct international contacts between opposition groups began to flourish.[65]

The growth of civil society presented the Soviet Union with peculiar difficulties. In asking the rhetorical question of whether force effectively would have resolved the Soviet predicament, Eduard Shevardnadze points to the example of Poland. He came to the conclusion that imposition of martial law in 1981 did not end but rather stimulated the internal ferment, "So there is no reason to hiss at Perestroika and cheer for military force. It would not be a bad idea for us to learn the lessons of martial law in Poland ourselves."[66] That this point of view was shared even among more conservative leaders is evidenced by Mikhail Suslov's repeated explicit refusal, "There is no way that we are going to use force in Poland."[67] Instead of dealing with these problems by using force, Gorbachev adopted the counterreformation strategy. Gorbachev's revocation of the Brezhnev doctrine could be understood as a means of retaining at least minimal control over Eastern Europe through reform. By not intervening to save communism, he tried to increase his chances of saving the one structure that seemed most important to the newly circumscribed Soviet security interest: the Warsaw Pact, redefined as a classical (though hegemonic) alliance.

The policy of nonintervention, however, developed a dynamic of its own, particularly in Poland. Seven years of gradually increasing open but illegal social self-organization and a new round of strikes in 1988 finally forced the Polish Communists to compromise with Solidarity in April 1989. By accepting one of Solidarity's first demands, freedom of association, the Jaruzelski regime legalized the latent civil society that had developed over the years. Jaruzelski also agreed to hold partially free elections in June. Solidarity candidates won nearly every seat open to competition. Unable to form a Communist-led government, Jaruzelski asked Solidarity leaders to put together their own coalition government. Communist Party leader Mieczyslaw Rakowski refused to go along with Jaruzelski until Gorbachev telephoned him on 22 August and

64. Hungarian dissident George Konrad made this point in an interview with Rey Koslowski, 14 October 1988, Colorado Springs, Colo.

65. See "Joint East European Statement to Commemorate the Twentieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968," and the "Border Declaration" issued on 10 July 1988 by members of Polish–Czechoslovak Solidarity after a clandestine meeting on the border between the two countries, both in the *East European Reporter* 3 (Autumn 1988), pp. 59–62.

66. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom,* pp. 120–21.

67. Ibid., p. 121.

told him to accept the first non–Communist-led government in the Warsaw Pact.[68]

Gorbachev's move to tolerate this development, however, also meant that the Communist Party's leading role in society could now be challenged. Nevertheless, Solidarity accepted a silent compromise: it maintained a long-standing policy of not threatening Soviet security interests.[69] The Solidarity leadership offered reassurances that Poland would remain in the Warsaw Pact, left the Ministry of Defense under Communist control, and agreed that Jaruzelski should become President and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. By retaining implicit control of Polish defense policy, Gorbachev seemingly maintained Soviet security interests. In this way, he avoided a potentially violent rebellion in the Soviet Union's client states, since popular demands could now be directed at Solidarity rather than at the Communist Party. Originally Poland's economic crisis had threatened to bring down the Communist system and leave a power vacuum forcing Gorbachev's hand. After his move, Poland's economic crisis threatened instead to bring down a Solidarity government.

Whereas the Prague spring was considered heresy in 1968, Gorbachev welcomed the same reforms in 1989 because reforms reduced the chances of popular revolts. Initially, by not intervening to save communism in Poland, Gorbachev accomplished this goal. But by summer 1989 it also became evident that, quite ironically, nonintervention now yielded the goal for which intervention in 1968 had been undertaken—the conformity of domestic systems with the Soviet model. However, the model was now one of perestroika rather than Brezhnev's orthodoxy.

Gorbachev's renunciation of the Brezhnev doctrine changed the practices of the Warsaw Pact, which in turn transformed it into an alliance more like those of the European state system. This transformation was marked by a change in the practice of diplomacy. During the period of what Shevardnadze termed "Party diplomacy," decisions were made (or instructions given) during meetings of Communist Party General Secretaries of Warsaw Pact countries.[70] With the end of the Brezhnev doctrine, intrabloc relations could no longer be conducted within the Communist Party because, beginning with the Mazowiecki government in Poland, non-Communists had real decision-making roles in foreign affairs as prime ministers and foreign ministers. The nominal "sovereignty" that Eastern European states enjoyed during the postwar era was now gradually becoming real.

As Gorbachev ended the imperial relationship with Eastern Europe, new norms of superpower relations emerged. After the Soviet leader tolerated the

68. Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, p. 102.

69. On the opposition's tactics and Soviet security interests, see Adam Michnik, "A New Evolutionism," (originally written in 1976), in Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*, pp. 143–44.

70. For Shevardnadze's term, see *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, p. 114.

Hungarian Communist regime's decision to allow the formation of independent political parties (February 1989) as well as the Polish roundtable agreement (April 1989) to hold elections in Poland, President Bush reciprocated in May by stating that it was "time to move beyond containment" and "seek the integration of the Soviet Union in the community of nations."[71] Bush set as a condition for this movement a "significant shift in the Soviet Union," and a "lightening-up on the control in Eastern Europe," which would allow these countries "to move down the democratic path much more." Bush also added it was "part of [his] responsibility" to make sure that the West would not threaten the Soviets.[72]

The U.S. public stance on not exploiting change in Eastern Europe emboldened the Kremlin not only to allow more such changes but also to reconceptualize the U.S.–Soviet relationship. Gorbachev and his advisers decided on "the word *partnership.* This suggested that the two nations were moving from 'negative peace'—that is, the effort to avoid nuclear conflagration—to joint efforts that could make the entire world more secure."[73]

It was on his trip to Hungary and Poland in July 1989 that President Bush made good on his commitment to refrain from taking advantage of the accelerating change in Eastern Europe. He even promoted continuity of leadership over rapid democratization in the wake of the Polish Communists' landslide defeat in elections to freely contested parliamentary seats. Since the Communists' defeat meant that Jaruzelski's election to the presidency, as agreed to by Solidarity, was no longer certain, Jaruzelski decided not to run rather than face a humiliating setback. Bush's public bestowal of respect on Jaruzelski and his private counsel to Jaruzelski that he continue to play a role in Poland's "evolution," however, helped encourage Jaruzelski to change his mind.[74] In Hungary, Bush told Communist Party leaders, "We're with you. . . . We're not going to complicate things for you. We know that the better we get along with the Soviets, the better it is for you."[75]

The trip to Hungary and Poland convinced Bush that he should meet Gorbachev before their tentatively scheduled 1990 full-scale summit. Unbeknownst to the public, on 18 July 1989 he invited Gorbachev to meet with him at what was to become the Malta summit.[76] Setting a precedent for superpower relations, Bush envisioned a meeting with only minimal staffs and a more informal atmosphere for discussions of an open agenda. Gorbachev viewed the invitation as evidence that Bush was finally prepared to engage in serious negotiations on various Soviet arms reduction proposals. In the meantime, Gorbachev accepted the U.S. invitation to "join the community of nations" by

71. Peter Hayes, ed., "Chronology 1989," special issue, *Foreign Affairs* 69 (1990), p. 231.
72. Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels,* pp. 82–83.
73. Ibid., p. 82.
74. Ibid., pp. 88–89.
75. Ibid., p. 90.
76. Ibid., pp. 93–94 and 126–31.

sending a letter to leaders at the Group of 7 summit meeting in Paris stating that the Soviet Union was willing to increase its integration in the world economy.

Thus, fairly early in the process of the Brezhnev doctrine's demise, the changes in Eastern Europe fostered the development of new practices of superpower relations. These new practices included the support of communist leaders by the American President, an understanding of U.S.–Soviet relations in terms of partnership, and less formal and more frequent communications between the two, that is, relations more characteristic within alliances than across blocs.

System transformed: the end of the Communist Party's monopoly of power, German reunification, and the collapse of the Soviet Union

If the Hungarian and Polish revolutions proved to Bush that Gorbachev was serious about change, the Czechoslovakian, East German, and Romanian revolutions proved that the cold war was truly over and that the international system had been transformed. The subsequent rebellions by Soviet republics confirmed this transformation by making a reimposition of external empire extremely difficult if not impossible. Moreover, the new norms of superpower relations reminiscent of those of the European state system were quickly challenged by novel situations, the most incongruous being the essentially nonviolent breakup of a superpower itself. It was clear that Gorbachev had miscalculated the breadth, depth, and speed of the changes he had initiated.

As Fyodor Burlatsky put it, Gorbachev's original hope was to have "mini-Gorbachevs" come to power.[77] As is now clear, he had overestimated the degree of legitimacy of communist reformers in Eastern Europe. While his counterreformation might have worked in 1968, communist revisionism was long dead by 1989. A civil society had developed, and with it legitimate leaders had emerged with their independent political base. They could therefore demand greater concessions from the revisionist communists who were espousing the perestroika line. But beyond the domestic sources of foreign policy arguments, we argue that there was an important contagion effect that explains the dynamics of the Eastern bloc. It is best exemplified by the formal restructuring (new constitutions!) of every political system in the area.[78]

As suggested above, the rapid change of domestic structures through emulation changed the conventions of international politics within the Warsaw Pact, which in turn further changed the rules of the game between the superpowers. When Czechoslovakia and Hungary eliminated the leading role

77. Fyodor Burlatsky, speech at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 28 January 1991.
78. For a discussion of emulation among bloc members, see Schoepflin, "The End of Communism in Eastern Europe," p. 9; and Adam Przeworski, "The East Becomes the South? The Autumn of the People and the Future of Eastern Europe," *PS* 25 (March 1991), pp. 20–24.

of the Communist Party from their constitutions in the fall of 1989, they quickly went beyond the accepted boundaries of perestroika.[79] When Czechoslovakia began to assert an independent foreign policy, Finlandization rapidly disappeared from the Soviet foreign policy agenda. The Polish formula of opposition-led government deferring to Soviet security interests was overtaken by Jiri Dienstbier's announcement on 14 December 1989 that the agreement with the Soviet Union on stationing its troops was invalid.

The accelerating development of civil society across Eastern Europe and the Czechoslovak moves beyond Finlandization both had implications for Gorbachev's reforms. Czechoslovak demands occasioned a new round of debates about Soviet security interests. Here Gorbachev himself opened the discussion of what constituted Soviet security when he agreed to begin negotiations on Soviet troop withdrawal within a week after the Czechoslovak demand. He agreed five weeks later to a withdrawal within the context of overall conventional force reductions in Europe. By allowing the eclipse of the leading role of the Communist Party within the bloc and then at home, Gorbachev, probably unwittingly, not only gave up one of its most powerful means of control but also defeated the rationale for the very existence of the bloc and its domestic institutions. When socialism was not automatically accorded a privileged position in the constitutions of any bloc state, the Warsaw Pact had lost one of its fundamental reasons for existence, making its continuation as an effective alliance less likely.

Also, the contagion of civil society, which spread through the informal empire of Eastern Europe in 1989, repeated itself within the boundaries of the formal empire, the Soviet Union itself, the next year. As Andrei Sahkarov's call for an end to the Communist Party's leading role in Soviet society indicated, Soviet dissenters were inspired by Eastern European examples.[80] Since it had been the Communist Party and not strong autonomous state institutions that had served as the empire's integrative force, the demise of the Soviet Communist Party had two repercussions.[81]

One was that the lack of loyalty of Soviet citizens to the federation had become obvious while bringing to the fore more nationalist identifications. The long-suppressed national identities of the constituent republics quickly emerged among the population as well as the Communist elite and the military. Politics in the Baltics, in which Communists aided and even joined national fronts,

79. The Hungarian National Assembly voted to delete the "leading role" from the Hungarian constitution on 18 October 1989. The Czechoslovak parliament followed suit on 11 November 1989.

80. See the discussion of repealing Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution that appeared in *Pravda,* 8 December 1989, p. 1.

81. On the weakness of state institutions relative to the Communist Party, see Don Van Atta, "The U.S.S.R. as a Weak State: Agrarian Origins of Resistance to Perestroika," *World Politics* 41 (October 1989), pp. 129–49; and Rey Koslowski, "Market Institutions, East European Reforms, and Economic Theory," *Journal of Economic Issues* 26 (September 1992), pp. 673–705. For an argument that the Communist Party was the force that held the republics together, see Jerry Hough, "Gorbachev's Politics," *Foreign Affairs* 68 (Winter 1989–90), pp. 26–41.

suggested that such abrupt turns were not just a function of individual opportunism.[82] In a way, these events showed the same dynamics of "national communism" observed earlier in Eastern Europe with cases ranging from Władysław Gomulka to János Kádár, Alexander Dubchek, and Jaruzelski. Similarly, just as in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, where nationalist Communists espousing the perestroika line became transitional figures, so Communist leaders like Algirdas Brazauskas of Lithuania were bypassed by noncommunists who emerged from civil society.

As self-identification along national lines fundamentally altered practices in postrevolutionary France, so national self-identification among young men in the Soviet Union affected conscription in the Soviet Army. While conscripts were ready to fight for the independence of their republic, they were increasingly unwilling to serve in the Soviet armed forces. This was made clear by large-scale noncompliance with the 1990 draft.[83] Republics enhanced their legitimacy by appealing to their citizens, assuring them that troops would not be used to suppress national movements. This contest for legitimate authority began with Boris Yeltsin's instructions to Russian soldiers not to use force during the Lithuanian crackdown and the movement to establish a Ukrainian army in February 1991.[84]

The second repercussion of the Communist Party's demise also arose out of the issue of self-identification. Given the lack of individual and group rights, serious minority problems emerged within the republics, such as the Gagauz independence movement within Moldavia, the South Ossetians in Georgia, the Tartars in Russia and, perhaps most critically, the twenty-five million Russians outside of Russia. These tensions and centrifugal tendencies are probably manageable only within a complex federal constitutional arrangement. However, such an arrangement presupposes strong state institutions and, above all, the acceptance of a rule of law that would limit the excesses of Communist Party rule *as well as* those of "popular sovereignty." Here the importance of the state as a protector of rights becomes clearly visible.

The end of the Communist Party's monopoly on power in Eastern Europe and then in the Soviet Union rapidly changed the practice of international politics, continuing the transformation of the international system that had begun in spring of 1989. For example, the Bush administration responded to East German, Lithuanian, and Romanian revolutions with further steps to reassure the Soviets. Secretary of State Baker set a precedent by traveling to East Germany to meet with Premier Modrow and offering economic assistance

82. Philip Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," *World Politics* 43 (January 1991), pp. 320–22.

83. On the spring draft, see Andrei Krivov, "Many Young Soviets Bid Earnest Farewell to Arms," *Russian Thought,* 27 July 1990, reprinted in *Glasnost News and Review* (October–December 1990), pp. 14–19. In the fall draft only 78.8 percent of those conscripted reported for service. See Stephen Foye, "Crackdown Ordered to Enforce Military Draft," *Report on the U.S.S.R.* 3 (18 January 1991), p. 7.

84. Kathleen Mihalisko, "Ukrainians Ponder Creation of a National Army," *Report on the U.S.S.R.* 3 (22 February 1991).

to the GDR. In response to the violence in Romania, Baker went beyond respect for Soviet security interests by saying that the United States would not oppose Soviet intervention.[85] Only two years before, Romania had enjoyed preferential U.S. treatment because of its independence from Moscow. In response to the Lithuanian declaration of independence, the U.S. administration refrained from recognizing the new government, even though it had never recognized the Soviet annexation under Stalin. Bush implored Gorbachev not to use force and made clear that doing so would set back U.S.–Soviet relations. At the same time he reassured Gorbachev that the United States would not press the issue of Baltic independence.[86]

Moreover, the acceleration of revolutions across Eastern Europe during the winter of 1989 ushered in Austrianization as a possible mode of transforming the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe.[87] Austrianization originally meant neutrality through great power agreement as exemplified by the 1955 Austrian settlement. Unlike Finlandization, Austrianization could not be a unilateral measure because it required agreement with the West.

Hence, a more complicated transformation toward some form of multilateral arrangement began. This was evidenced by the February 1990 agreement to begin the "two-plus-four talks" on the status of Germany. The introduction of multilateral concerns would have been minimal had the German problem been solved by Austrianization of East Germany. The collapse of East German communism and the 18 March 1990 victory of the electoral coalition Alliance for Germany, however, prompted the acceleration of German reunification. This raised the possibility of Austrianization of *all* of Germany and, in the absence of that option, made it necessary to confront Germany's alignment.

Although the Soviets initially rejected German membership in NATO, NATO's declaration at the London summit that the Soviet Union was no longer an enemy and Secretary Baker's proposal to transform NATO from a primarily military to a primarily political institution prompted the Soviets to change their position.[88] Eventually, in July 1990 Gorbachev officially agreed to Germany remaining within NATO, thereby moving beyond a neutrality analogous to Austria and further establishing Soviet acceptance of the web of Western multilateral institutions. The evolution of the Soviet position on multilateral arrangements as a solution to the German problem and to Soviet security interests in Europe has been detailed in the day-by-day account of Chancellor Kohl's foreign policy adviser, Horst Teltschik,[89] and consequently only its implications need some further discussion.

85. Interview with James Baker on NBC's *Meet the Press,* 24 December 1989.

86. Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels,* p. 164.

87. Austrianization was advocated in the early 1960s by the editors and contributors of the emigré journal *Studies for a New Central Europe* and developed by Hungarian dissident, George Konrad in *Antipolitics.*

88. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom,* pp. 138–41.

89. Horst Telschik, *329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin: Goldmann, 1993).

By accepting reunified Germany's integration within NATO, the Soviet Union abandoned its old dream of separating America from its allies and eliminating the United States as a political and military force from the Continent. The Soviets also abandoned their policy of giving the Germans the choice between national independence and neutrality, on the one hand, and division and Western integration on the other.

Having failed to create within their sphere of influence a viable political order that could instill loyalty and weather changes, Soviet policymakers were not obtuse to the fact that the political and military integration of Western Europe had successfully dealt with important problems of European politics that had eluded previous adherents of realpolitik and peacemakers alike. It had solved the Franco-German problem by making both states part of the Western alliance. It is often forgotten that the stationing of American troops on the European continent was largely designed to reassure the French (and possibly other Europeans) that a rearmed Germany was not going to be a renewed security threat. Gorbachev expressed his desire to see U.S. forces stay in Europe at the 30 May–2 June 1990 Washington summit, saying to Bush, "I want you to know that I regard this as in your interest and in our interest."[90] By the end of the summit, the Soviets offered no objections to an American statement that both leaders were " 'in full agreement' that alliance membership was a 'matter for the Germans to decide.' "[91]

By opting for a united Germany within Western European structures, the Soviet leadership decided that such a solution was likely to serve Soviet security interests better than a neutral Germany. Obviously, such a policy was not unopposed, as the debate within the Soviet leadership indicated.[92] Nevertheless, the fact remains that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze made their definition of Soviet interests stick, thereby contravening the traditional "realist" positions espoused by their opponents.

Western multilateral institutions also had solved the problem of prosperity for which only insufficient provisions had been made at Versailles. This lesson was not lost on Soviet leaders as they actively sought Soviet membership in the very multilateral institutions the Soviet Union had once opposed, not only for ideological reasons, but on the "realist" basis of preserving its autonomy and sovereignty. Soviet foreign policymakers' expressed desire to become part of Europe and, in particular, to profit from the emergence of a single European market suggests that they considered the maintenance and development of the European multilateral institutions preferable to weakening them.[93]

90. Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels,* p. 220.

91. Ibid., p. 227.

92. Ibid., p. 239.

93. See "General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's Address to the Council of Europe" 6 July 1989, in Lawrence Freedman, ed., *Europe Transformed: Documents on the End of the Cold War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 322–32 and especially pp. 327ff. Also see "Eduard Shevardnadze Speaks to the European Parliament Committee," *The Current Digest of The Soviet Press,* vol. 41, no. 51, 1989, p. 11f.

The importance of the existing multilateral institutions in Western Europe is not only evident in the effects it had on Soviet decision making. It also provided Western leaders with a framework within which a reunited Germany could be accepted. This enabled European states to avoid a return to balance-of-power politics, which had served neither their security nor their welfare interests in the interwar period.

French policy planners briefly considered such a return to a balance-of-power policy after both François Mitterand and Margaret Thatcher had privately shared their misgivings about German reunification in December 1989. Despite Thatcher's suggestion of an Anglo–French axis and renewed efforts at reducing Germany's influence in Eastern Europe, France rejected such a course of action by the end of January 1990.[94] This choice was publicly enunciated in March by French Foreign Minister Dumas, who advocated the deepening of European integration in order to restructure relations with Germany. He even suggested on that occasion a continent-wide "European confederation."[95]

Similarly, Germany once more opted against neutralization and against becoming a "wanderer between East and West," a role played with bravado by Bismarck but ultimately ending in disaster. This concern was particularly well-conceptualized in the Genscher plan announced in January 1990, which tried to both assuage Soviet fears of a resurgent Germany by accepting limitations on German forces and by attempting to persuade the Kremlin that a neutral Germany was not in Soviet security interests. At the end of April 1990, East German Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere echoed Genscher's argument against neutralization.[96]

Once Eastern European countries also attempted diplomatic forays toward NATO, the wider implications of going beyond Austrianization became apparent.[97] Justifying its stance in terms of maintaining stability, the West initially rebuffed these advances in deference to the Soviet Union, insisting that transformation outside of East Germany should be limited to Austrianization. In the wake of the failed Soviet coup, however, Germany and the United States proposed in October 1991 that NATO organize the North Atlantic Cooperation Council as a forum to air security issues among officials from Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and the West. The council first met on the day the Soviet Union dissolved and soon included all the Soviet successor states except Georgia.

The rapid transition from Ottomanization to Finlandization to Austrianization and then even beyond Austrianization showed that the process of reform

94. Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), pp. 796–99.

95. See "Article by M. Roland Dumas, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, published in *The New York Times,* March 13 1990," in Freedman, *Europe Transformed,* pp. 508–509.

96. Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels,* p. 207.

97. An example of such a foray was Poland's setting up a liaison office in Brussels in 1990. See Jan B. de Weydenthal, "Rapprochement with the West Continues," *Report on Eastern Europe,* 20 December 1991, p. 23.

had escaped efforts to control its scope, speed, and direction. The consequences of this increasingly broad-based transformation can best be appreciated by its impact on the Soviet political system itself, which made a return to either a Finlandization or even an Austrianization of the Eastern bloc all but impossible. In July 1990, Ukraine declared the supremacy of the republic's law over Soviet law, that is, declared "sovereignty." This meant that the reimposition of Soviet control over the informal empire in Eastern Europe became improbable since Moscow had to contend with maintaining the integrity of the Soviet Union itself. Moreover, once the movement for an independent Ukrainian army began, Moscow could no longer count on participation of "Soviet" armed forces in such intervention.

Conclusion

This article offered a new approach for the analysis of fundamental changes in world politics. It outlined an alternative to neorealism for the conceptualization of system-transforming changes. For these purposes, the revocation of the Brezhnev doctrine and perestroika's domestic and international implications served as a case study. By examining the importance of civil society, nationalism, and self-identification within the processes of glasnost and perestroika we showed that international politics is not an autonomous sphere but always part of a larger endeavor, that is, of institutionalizing both identities and political communities as well as their interactions.

We argued that the rapid and fundamental change of the international system from 1989 to 1991 demonstrates the inadequacy of analyzing present international politics in terms of its anarchical structure and its distribution of capabilities. The recent changes that reconstituted the international system were not the result of a shift in capabilities, even though they have led to such a shift. Roughly speaking, the total numbers of Warsaw Pact weapons and forces did not change much from February 1989 to February 1991—the political context of their potential use did. It was this political change that resulted in the deterioration of Soviet capabilities. To that extent, systemic theories that use balancing as an *explanans* do not explain change; at best, they only describe its outcome.

Rather than deriving political practice from military capabilities, military capabilities themselves must be understood in terms of the political practices and their underlying conventions. In this sense, changes in conventions eventually are reflected in changed capabilities. This has been demonstrated by the rise of nationalism and the *levée en masse* after the French Revolution, by the delegitimization of Eastern European communism in 1989 and the hollowing of the Warsaw Pact, by the subsequent delegitimization of Soviet communism and imperialism, and finally by the rebirth of nationalism and movements of self-determination in the Soviet Union.