



What Was Communism:

A Retrospective in Comparative Analysis

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The purpose of this article is to take advantage of historical hindsight in bringing into sharper focus similarities and differences among communist regimes in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The framework for this exercise recognizes several dimensions in three interrelated categories: the political formula, the political culture, and the structure, scope, and exercise of public authority. The questions that these categories suggest allow us to compare the Leninist, Stalinist, and post-Stalin regimes in the Soviet Union with the diverse communist regimes that evolved in East Europe in the more recent period. The contrasts established are not merely of historical relevance. They will also permit the student of contemporary Russia and China to engage in meaningful discourse about these countries' prospects. Elsevier Science Ltd. Copyright © 1996 The Regents of the University of California.

For much of the past 50 years, scholarly debates in the field of communist studies too often revolved around definitional problems, the resolution of which were thought to provide the discipline with an appropriate paradigm for explaining the mutations and dynamics of communist political systems. Alas, during all these decades the discipline failed to establish broad consensus as to the essence of communism, either as a political movement, or as a regime type associated with the Soviet Union and its East European client states. In a seminal review article, written in 1958, Daniel Bell found ten competing definitions and corresponding "theories" of Soviet communism (Bell, 1958). Partly inspired by Bell's survey, the next decade saw the rise of a new subdiscipline of "comparative communism," practiced mainly by political economists and sociologists. This development resulted in a great number of empirical studies and typologies, but not in any substantial change in the degree of professional consensus about the quintessential features, and hence the laws of motion, of communist political movements and regimes. Indeed, as we survey the contributions of social scientists to the field of comparative communism, we find at least five competing paradigms of communist

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behavior. These are (1) the paradigm of totalitarianism that saw communism as a drive for total domination in response to social marginality and psychological strain (Arendt, 1951); (2) the paradigm of charismatic salvationism that presented communism as a movement in pursuit of utopian objectives forced to adapt over time to "hard" economic and political realities (Cohn, 1957; Moore, 1958, 1965; Brzezinski, 1967; Tucker 1970); (3) the paradigm of modernization that saw communism as a radical strategy of industrialization and economic development (Kautsky, 1970);¹ (4) a paradigm of political development in which the party appears as the agent for creating a viable political community in a competitive system of states (Black, 1966; Jowitt, 1971, 1978); and finally, (5) the bureaucratic paradigm that sought to define communism as an alternative model of economic allocation and social redistribution, competing with systems of allocation based on the market and traditional cultural norms (Rigby, 1964; Hough, 1969; Konrad and Szelenyi, 1979).

Without trying to reject the validity of the above five paradigms, this essay will take up the case of a sixth paradigm that emerged slowly and remained largely outside the social science mainstream until the twilight years of communism (Lasswell, 1954; Colton, 1984; Fish, 1990). We may refer to it as the paradigm of the "externally oriented state" based on the principle of the primacy of foreign policy (*Primat der auswärtigen Politik*)² that a generation of German scholars juxtaposed to the developmental state and the primacy of internal economics (Fichte, 1818/1964; Apter, 1963). This paradigm may be labeled as "reconstructionist," in deference to Karl Mannheim who in 1935 described the age of modern ideology as one of designs for reconstructing the world (Mannheim, 1940). We may also refer to it as the paradigm of a "militarized society," following Herbert Spencer's classical juxtaposition between the organizational principles of militancy and industrialism (Spencer, 1972).

In pursuing this theme, the article will follow certain epistemological assumptions that are familiar to the practitioners of political sociology. These assumptions go back to such classical writers as Vilfredo Pareto and Max Weber who in turn speak of the "fundamental purpose"³ and "ultimate ends" (Weber, 1947, pp. 91, 185, 324-325) of political regimes as the appropriate points of departure for their systematic analysis. What these writers tell us, implicitly or explicitly, is that these purposes and principles can provide legitimacy and cohesion to the political order, but in order to be credible, they must be operationalized by the appropriate choice of means. These ends and means together represent, in Gaetano Mosca's term, the "political formula" (Mosca, 1939, pp. 70-72, 106-107, 134) of a regime, and this formula will shape the structure and scope of public authority and, at the same time, provide a logic for a political culture of norms and symbolic expressions that facilitate interaction among political actors as well as between the individual and the state. Altogether the political formula—a combination of ultimate ends and operational principles—tells us a great deal about political reality, and as such permits us to follow the golden rule of parsimony. To the extent that this is true, the resulting typologies will provide us with an appropriate historical perspective. They may also allow us to take the first tentative steps

1. For a critical survey, see Jones (1976).

2. For an extensive survey of this literature, see Czempel (1963). For more recent formulations of the concept, see Rosecrance (1986) and Gourevitch (1978). One should also note that the notion of militancy is implicit in much of the neo-Marxist literature condemning the viability of "development" on the peripheries (Frank, 1969; Wallerstein, 1974).

3. On Pareto see Parsons (1965, esp. p. 79).

toward formulating generalizations about the potentially analogous cases that we encounter in the modern world.

Background to Revolution

Few historians would disagree with the proposition that the central fact in the history of modern Russia was the country's relative backwardness and its progressive economic marginalization by the successful industrial revolutions of the West. The recurrent crises that plagued the country from the middle of the 19th century onward can certainly be easily explained by this fact. With its inadequate economic base, the Russian state found it increasingly difficult to interact effectively with more advanced states in international affairs. More specifically, the relative costs of the effective functioning of the state required the extraction of ever larger revenues from a relatively stationary economic base.⁴ And if such extractions created a growing sense of absolute deprivation among the peasantry, the rising industrial working class, while its wages were advancing compared to the peasantry, suffered a deep sense of relative deprivation by measuring its condition, via a radical intelligentsia, against the much higher living standards of the West.⁵ Not surprisingly, therefore, much of the political discourse in the country around the turn of the past century revolved around the issue of economic backwardness and its possible remedies. The Tsarist governments had experimented with a variety of developmental measures ever since the 1860s, without actually transforming Russia into a modern developmental state by abandoning the traditional principle of divine right. In contrast, their populist opponents, whose movement had grown out of the Slavophile movement, took an anti-developmental stance, hoping to save Russia from the "agonies" of modern industrialism (Yarmolinski, 1962, pp. 168–185; Ulam, 1965, pp. 29–46; Venturi, 1966). The socialists in turn first favored an autocratic state in the hope that by modernizing society from above it would create conditions for the rise of a democratic and socialist state. However, after fiercely fighting the populists on this issue, in 1903 the socialists experienced their historical split, and while the Mensheviks bet on a bourgeois democratic state as the likely motor force of industrial development, the Bolsheviks became advocates of a political revolution independent from the stage of socio-economic development.

As is well known, the theoretical underpinnings of the Bolshevik position developed in the course of a prolonged political debate. There were powerful arguments against the Bolshevik position, and they could be expressed within the categories of classical Marxist theory. Specifically, as Plekhanov, Martov, and others close to Menshevism could argue, the exigencies of primary accumulation and industrial development would force socialists to antagonize their popular constituency and to end up presiding over "a political monstrosity, such as the ancient Chinese or Peruvian empires."⁶ It is true testimonial to the theoretical acumen of Trotsky and Lenin that they were able to find an appropriate counter-argument, and one that

4. For this anomaly, see Trotsky (1969, pp. 41–42). Trotsky's observations on Russia seem to find general proof in Anderson (1974), a work which relates the progressivity of authoritarianism on the European continent to the regressivity of levels of economic development.

5. One should remember here the so-called Fisher principle, named after Professor A. G. B. Fisher, that points to the apparent anomaly that the ratio of industrial wages to national income tends to be inversely related to the level of GNP per capita (see Clark 1940, p. 225).

6. This quote from Plekhanov's *Izbrannie filozofskie proizvedeniia* appears in Medvedev (1972, p. 359). See also Wittfogel (1957, pp. 391–395).

was equally well-grounded in the Marxist frame of reference. According to them, the capitalist world economy was a single, interdependent system that like a chain would break if and when one of its links was exceedingly weak (Trotsky, 1969, p. 129). Russia, with its overburdened state, apathetic peasants, and rebellious workers, was such a weak link in the system, which made it an ideal, and inevitable, choice for beginning the grand historical project of revolutionizing the world. The idea, first floated by Lenin in the "Two Tactics" of 1905 (Tucker, 1975, p. 130) and "On the Slogan for a United States of Europe" of 1914 (Tucker, 1975, p. 202), was further elaborated by Trotsky in his *Results and Prospects* (Trotsky, 1969, pp. 31, 129–133) and then refined again in Lenin's *Imperialism* (Lenin, 1970), to the point that it became the dominant theme of Russian socialism which was reiterated by others, including Stalin in his *Foundations of Leninism* (Stalin, 1972, pp. 92–98).⁷ All of these works, like dozens of others, revolve around one central theme, that the Russian revolution was not about revolution in Russia, but about carrying "the revolutionary conflagration to Europe" (Tucker, 1975, p. 130) and the "establishment of socialist organizations in all countries of the world."⁸ To put this formula another way, the Bolsheviks rejected the idea of an internal design for reform and development for an externally oriented strategy of reconstructing the existing world order by means of revolutionary violence.

The Leninist State

However, the idea of a world revolution, which was to become the fundamental purpose of the Leninist state, was not to come about mechanically by the sheer force of example. This, the Bolsheviks agreed, would be nothing but "petty bourgeois Blanquism" and *putschism* worthy of their populist opponents but not of themselves. The Bolshevik version of world revolution, formulated by Trotsky and Lenin, required an operational plan of fomenting insurrections among the proletariat of the most advanced European societies. Once these insurrections succeeded, the Bolsheviks believed, the center of revolution might shift westward, and Russian socialists might even surrender their leading role to more experienced comrades. It was also believed that such victory in the capitalist metropole would lead to a more equitable distribution of global resources, thus salvaging Russia from the burdens of forced draft accumulation for industrial development.

The operational principles of the political formula were institutionalized in the shape of the Comintern set up in Moscow, but run largely by foreign communists in tandem with, yet in organizational separation from, the Soviet state. The activities of the Comintern have been well recorded (Fischer, 1930; Borkenau, 1962; James, 1993). They included the sponsoring of insurrections in Hungary, Finland, Estonia, Bavaria, Hamburg, and Bulgaria, mutinies in the French navy, and waves of strikes in England and the United States. The existence of the Comintern was thus real and not symbolic, so much so that around its activities there emerged a genuine "transfer culture"⁹ of the Leninist period. The elements of this "culture of insurrectionism" are well-known to historians of Leninism. They include an exuberant anarchism, and iconoclastic anti-traditionalism manifest in the artistic modernism of the 1920s in poetry, music, theater, and film-making, in Mme.

7. For a commentary on the evolution of Stalin's rhetoric, see Deutscher (1984).

8. This quote of Stalin appears in Trotsky (1970, p. 291).

9. The terms "transfer" and "goal" culture have been borrowed from Johnson (1970, pp. 7–8). Johnson's own reference is to Wallace (1961, p. 148). The terms indicate norms and symbolic expressions related to the fundamental purpose and operational design respectively of a revolutionary system.

Kollontai's panegyrics to "free love" and feminism, in denunciations of the traditional family, and in fostering an atmosphere of universalism within which ethnic cultures could flourish at the expense of the culture of the Russian majority (Kollontai, 1963).

Rebellion abroad, however, was only one side of the coin, for its counterpart at home was an autocratic state in which the exercise of freedoms was restricted to those in agreement with the political formula of the regime. This new autocracy, described meticulously by historians (Schapiro, 1965), was to be a temporary phenomenon, until the victory of the revolution abroad. But the Bolsheviks also had arguments that went beyond the Jacobin *cri de coeur* about a revolution endangered, or the higher purpose taking precedence over the principle of rule by majority, for they were aided by the scientific presumptions of Marxism that provided them with a methodology to discern historically correct political positions. It was by reaching out for the scientific argument that the party became the modern counterpart of a traditional priesthood, and that its ideology became the functional equivalent of the doctrine of divine right. For the first time in modern history a movement of the radical left could claim to have the key to absolute wisdom in overriding the principles of popular government.

One should hasten to add that this was not the conventional authoritarianism or traditional autocracy known from the annals of history. This authoritarianism was that of a revolutionary state, because its fundamental purpose was cast in chiliastic-salvationist terms that endowed it "with transcendental significance" and infused it "with all the mystery and majesty of a final eschatological drama" (Cohn, 1961, p. 308). The essence of this chiliasm is the idea of terrestrial perfection in harmony. In the case of Marxism, this chiliasm, articulated in the Communist Manifesto, refers to a condition in which humanity would not only be free from material deprivation, but also from the boredom and frustrations generated by the division of labor and the production process. So described, as a form of social organization socialism would not only be better than any other known form of society, but would be free from conflict, and as such represent a "terminal stage" in history. The tenets of this creed, enunciated by Marx and Engels, were fully embraced by the leaders of the Bolsheviks. This proposition may strain the credulity of a skeptical posterity, but only a true believer could spend, as did Lenin, the pre-revolutionary months in drafting a vast essay on the withering away of the state, or, like Trotsky, make "red paradise" a standard phrase of his vocabulary (Cohn, 1961, p. 312) and embellish on Marx by proclaiming that under socialism the intelligence of the average person would soar to that of a Michelangelo, Marx, or Aristotle (Kernig, 1969, p. 746).

The validity of the proposition about the true believer is corroborated by the fact that this chiliasm provided the logic for the political structure of the Leninist state. In the first place, this logic called for charismatic imagery. Where the task is extraordinary, the leader and his following are bound to see themselves as a "special breed of men... cut out of a particular stuff,"¹⁰ and attribute to themselves extraordinary qualities. The logic of charismatic salvationism, in turn, is the logic of total devotion (rather than of mechanical obedience), in the name of which the cadre can supersede the narrow mandates of law and even the broader mandates of traditional morality. They can demand sacrifices of themselves and impose it on others with total disregard to cost: where paradise is the reward, the price in human life and suffering is too easily paid. Last but not

10. From Stalin's "Oath to Lenin," in Deutscher (1960, p. 270).

least, the logic of charisma itself is the logic of perfectionism. Charismatics do not make mistakes. Thus when mistakes occur, they will be attributed not to statistical probability, but to treason or to the infiltration of the organization by enemies.

These operational principles were perhaps most conspicuous in the operation of the Leninist judicial system. Revolutionary tribunals were constantly exhorted not to be guided by the dead letter of the law but by revolutionary conscience and instincts. "Don't tell me," Lenin's chief prosecutor is quoted as saying, "that our criminal courts ought to act exclusively on the basis of written norm. We live in the process of revolution. A tribunal is not the kind of court in which fine points of jurisprudence and clever stratagems are to be restored."¹¹ In this system of "revolutionary justice" the "proof of guilt [was] relative and approximate" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974, p. 101). An interrogator or judge was to base his conclusions on "intellect, party sensitivity, and moral character" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974, p. 101). But these same principles also applied to the operational code of the rising party apparatus and administrative system. As in any large-scale organization geared toward a multiplicity of complex tasks, the performance of administrative and political functions was subject to certain rules and routinization. But these rules served only as guidelines of limited relevance, for unlike the ideal typical bureaucrat, the communist functionary was called upon to make critical judgments, above all the judgment whether a given case should be handled "by the book" or in terms of political expediency expressed in an always changing party line. The cadre who was seen to "cling slavishly" to the book, and refused to make critical political judgments, was as liable to be purged from the organization. While its quantities would vary over time, qualitatively, culturally, and "in spirit" the Leninist system was as terroristic as its successor.

Although time and again attempts have been made both inside and outside the Soviet Union to draw clear dividing lines between Leninism and Stalinism, the above elements of Leninist authority have been well documented by the historiography of the early period. What has been less often, if ever, realized by the historians of the period is the duality of Leninist political culture, and the tension between the political culture of charismatic salvationism and the exuberant anarchism of the political culture of insurrectionism. In the terms of Chalmers A. Johnson, this was a conflict between the "goal culture" and the "transfer culture" of the early Bolshevik regime, between the logic of total and single-minded devotion and the intuitive irreverence of rebels ready to storm the bastions of traditionalism, capitalism, and philistinism. Lenin, deadly serious and obsessed with discipline, was definitely on one side of the cultural divide. But weakened by illness after 1922, he did little more than grumble occasionally about Kollontai's antics and her exuberant advocacy of sexual license and artistic anarchism. A synthesis of the two cultures was impossible, and in time one was to perish.

From Lenin to Stalin

Troublesome as these cultural tensions were, even before Lenin's death in 1924 other issues came to the fore to act as the propellents of political change. Between 1919 and 1923 the operational principles of Leninism-Trotskyism were put into effect via the Comintern but failed to produce the anticipated overthrow of governments of advanced capitalist states. Thus as capitalism and "bourgeois

11. From Public Prosecutor Krylenko's *Za pyat let* [in five years], quoted in Solzhenitsyn (1974, p. 308).

democracy" were consolidating themselves, twenty years after 1903 the Bolsheviks had again to raise the old question of "what is to be done?" The answer would emerge from several years of acrimonious debate (1922–1927) in which the competition for Lenin's mantle became intertwined with three competing political visions for the Soviet state.

The first of these visions was Trotsky's permanent revolution, although it seems that his personal commitment to the idea was faltering after 1924 (Deutscher, 1960, pp. 294–312; Carr, 1970, pp. 185–189). The second formula, associated with the name of Nikolai Bukharin, emerged from the chaotic experiments of the NEP period and amounted to nothing less than the abandonment, of the very idea of world revolution in favor of socialist development. The gist of this design was a project of capital accumulation via the still existing private sector of small enterprise in Soviet agriculture, and a developmental state that would extract surplus by means of taxation and convert it into investment in light industrial enterprise. The intermediate purpose of this strategy was to raise the standard of living of the Soviet working class progressively and above the standards prevailing in the advanced capitalist countries. In the long run, Bukharin argued, the economic success of the design would create its own international demonstration effect that, by the force of example, would persuade the working classes of the superiority of socialism and lead to the progressive liquidation of capitalism in the advanced countries of the world (Cohen, 1975, pp. 161–201). Had Bukharin had his way, and had it been successful, one could envision a flow of refugees from West to East, and sweeping majorities for the communist parties in England, France, and the United States.

For the majority of the Bolsheviks, however, such a vision had little attraction and many faults in its logic and fundamental premises. On purely doctrinal grounds, there were legitimate objections to a design that, even if only temporarily, would have altered the internal terms of trade in favor of the peasantry and against the urban population, an almost inevitable concomitant of a policy that would have freed markets at a time of substantial shortages in comestibles and other primary products. But objections could be raised also on grounds of purely historical experience, since Russian politicians and economists were fully cognizant of the difficulties involved in developmental strategies and of the experience of the previous century during which few if any of the peripheral economies managed to improve their relative position toward the economically better placed core economies of the world. Yet what gave Bukharin's design the *coup de grâce* in this debate was political and not economic realism—the quite reasonable assumption that while Soviet society would enrich itself peacefully, it might leave itself vulnerable to political aggression in the highly ruthless game of great power politics. It was from this assumption that Stalin proceeded to develop his own political position that eventually won the debate.

Like that of Bukharin, Stalin's vision pivoted around the notion of industrialization. But this design rested on the notions of the rapid and enforced mobilization of economic resources and their investment in heavy industries that would be able to sustain a powerful military establishment with both defensive and offensive capabilities. We need not dwell here on the details of a design that included the forceful collectivization of agriculture, the introduction of draconian labor discipline, and forced labor to enhance the planners' economic flexibility. Suffice it to say that the process bore little resemblance to its counterpart either in Bukharin's design or in the western historical experience on which much of the

sociology of modern industrialism is based. What we dealt with in Russia was not only industrialization by, but also for, and almost exclusively for, the state, a process in which the economy became a "mere commissariat" of a militarized society (Spencer, 1972, p. 154) totally subordinated to collective goals and purposes, including the purpose of promoting socialism on a world scale. True, the purposes of Stalin's position were carefully obfuscated for public consumption at home and abroad by appropriating Bukharin's slogan of "building socialism in one country." But the truth of the matter, revealed by Stalin's subsequent actions, was that socialism was first built "in one country, but then in another, and then in yet another" (Faeges, 1994, Part II, Ch. 2). Much like the rulers of Prussia, from the Grand Elector to Wilhelm I, Stalin built for himself an eastern base of power that he was expanding westward in several drives that took him ever closer to the heartland of industrial capitalism. Thus in his first major geopolitical thrust in 1939-1940 he moved against Finland, Poland, Bessarabia, and the Baltic states. In the process, in 1939 he allied himself with Hitler's Germany. In the autumn of 1940, through Molotov, Stalin pressed the Germans for further concessions in Southeastern Europe and Turkey (Shirer, 1941, pp. 565-566, 1967, pp. 1049, 1053-1061), a gambit that most likely convinced Hitler to betray his momentary ally. After the war, another westward thrust yielded the seven countries of East Central Europe and the East Elbian regions of the former German Reich. This was accompanied by maneuverings to move in the direction of the Dardanelles, and was followed by a new geopolitical design to expand into West Europe, indicated in part by the inclusion of Italy and France into the new Cominform and, more directly, by materials that are currently emerging from Soviet archives (Aga-Rossi and Zaslavsky, 1994). This concerted thrust toward the heartlands of capitalism, so much within the spirit of German military, economic, and geopolitical thinkers who affected Bolshevik operational principles,¹² was halted only in the post-Stalin years, and mainly because of the rise of new military technologies and of a credible commitment to use them in the defense of Europe by the United States. While detractors of Stalin hold that he betrayed both the revolution and the ideals of classical Marxism, a strong argument can be made that Stalin merely adapted the Leninist idea of world revolution to new, unforeseen, circumstances, and rather than abandoning the classical tenets of Marxism, he merely made them compatible with new operational principles. Put differently, it may be said that he put these classical principles through the filter of the *étatisme* that now came to occupy a pivotal position in his system of thinking. Using the metaphor of the filter, we then can say that whatever element of classical Marxism was congruous with the idea of maintaining a strong state was kept in, and that whatever seemed to undermine the authority of an all-powerful state, was ruthlessly eliminated. For example, on the one hand, the public ownership of the means of production enhanced the flexibility of the state in mobilizing and allocating resources, so any vestige of private property was eliminated and state socialism was born. Likewise, public education, the spread of literacy, and improvements in the system of health services meshed with the *étatiste* design: any militarized society, from Prussia onward, needs healthy and literate recruits and workers in the armament industries. These priorities of early socialism therefore became the keystones of Stalinist social policy and perennial proof of its progressiveness to sympathetic outside

12. Apart from the well-known influence of Karl von Clausewitz, we may take cognizance here of the influence of German theorists of mobilization and of the centralized economy (see Raupach, 1961; Neurath, 1919; and Jaffe, 1915).

observers. The same holds true for the celebration of certain aspects of high culture—the cultivation of classical novels, opera, and ballet—which would serve as functional substitutes for scarce material goods and as a means to identify Stalinist society as a representative of a superior civilization. On the other hand, those elements of the Marxist (and enlightenment) tradition that were seen to undermine the authority of an all-powerful state—abortion, easy divorce, feminism, sexual license, assaults on the integrity of the traditional family, experimental and modernist art, and the egalitarianism of the 1920s, now denounced as a form of left-wing infantilism—were filtered out of the definition of state socialism.

Out of this Stalinist filter there emerged a new political culture, the political culture of étatism, more in harmony with the chiliastic-salvationism that Stalin inherited from Lenin than with the libertinism and anarchism of the 1920s. Indeed, that culture of irreverence vanished—some of its practitioners were killed, others driven into exile or suicide—and was replaced by a strange mixture of socialist philistinism (*meshchanstvo*) and Prussian military discipline. Military officers were now given back their insignia, including golden braids for generals, together with their manservants. In civilian lives managers now had cars and chauffeurs, and functionaries gradually shed their workman's tunics for dark suits and neckties. In social relations, the emphasis now was on the respectability of rank. At the same time, gender relations, too, became more differentiated to conform to traditional social patterns. In artistic renderings, “the stiff leather jackets, black tobacco, straight bobbed hair and bi-sexual boots” of the 1920s were out of favor, “coiffeurs, cosmetics, clothes the [traditional] trappings of femininity gained social significance and made the classical theme of the Bolshevik amazon singularly obsolete” (Dunham, 1990, pp. 41 and 43). Public pageantry became increasingly masculinized and militarized, and—to add insult to this injury of egalitarian socialism—hunting, that ultimate symbol of hierarchy which was anathema to the classical Marxist, became one of the principal symbols of power and rank across the communist world, more *de rigeur* for the high apparatchik than it was for the continental aristocrat.

To be sure, in spite of the offhanded dismissals of “egalitarian gamesmanship” (*uravnilovka*), an element of tension among ranks inevitably crept into this militarized society, and Stalin attempted to resolve it, not altogether without success, by routinizing and theatricalizing the purge. In this scheme of affairs terror was not only an instrument of intimidation, it also became proof for the existence of a rough-and-ready system of social justice that set Stalinism apart from its Tsarist predecessor. Both of these regimes exacted respect for rank. But under the Tsar, the high and the mighty were born in their rank and died in it, whereas in the new order even the mightiest official could fall overnight from the top to the bottomless pit of concentration camps, or to a fate even worse. The purge was thus an integral part of Soviet socialism. It was the price that Stalin paid for militarizing it. Indeed, when the purge was at last eliminated by his successors, rank became entrenched, and hence more resented by the population, by staunch allies, and by fellow travelers. It is well to remember that all told it was not Stalinist terror but Brezhnevite entrenchment that turned Mao against the Soviet Union and was responsible for the rise of the “new left.”

Needless to say, the shift from Leninism to Stalinism was not merely a matter of symbolism, but a matter of restructuring certain aspects of public authority. Much of this change, though, was a matter of quantity rather than of quality. Thus Leninist rule in the 1920s was authoritarian by any standard, and its charismatic-salvationist elements represented an implicit rejection of self-imposed

restraint or of firm boundary lines between civil society and the state. Thus the new purge, like the old, was inflicted for violating the spirit, and not the letter, of the law. But as the scope of social mobilization increased, so did the scope of the purge and the boundaries of public authority. The petty terror of Leninism became the mass terror of Stalinism, and its totalitarian claims became totalitarian practices as the state penetrated increasingly large areas of what was left of civil society, eliminated autonomous organizations, and, in the standard phrase of the literature on totalitarianism, penetrated "every nook and cranny" of the physical environment. Where tens of thousands had perished in the 1920s, in the 1930s and thereafter the victims would be counted in the millions.

The Post-Stalin Period

For at least three decades, the changes triggered by Stalin's death and the balance between political continuity and change represented pivotal issues around which the now emerging subdiscipline of comparative politics was built. In examining this balance, the vast majority of the scholarly community agreed that the Soviet, and Soviet-type, political systems retained their authoritarian character. That is, popular, and even party rank-and-file, participation in politics remained devoid of meaningful institutional forms, and popular inputs into policy-making were carefully filtered through the councils of the top echelons of a leadership whose members were selected by cooptation from above, rather than by delegation from below. It was also clear that, as a corollary to the above, the process of cooptation and the mode of decision-making continued to be legitimated by a historical project, though it was less clear whether this project, "the building of socialism," was to be interpreted to apply globally, or locally, to the societies of the Soviet Bloc. In retrospect, it seems that only a few observers of the Soviet scene recognized the critical, external dimensions of the Brezhnevite project, perhaps none of them more clearly than Seweryn Bialer who recognized that the "future expansion of Soviet rule and that of communism" (Bialer, 1986, p. 191)¹³ and the "continuation of the historical trend toward the inevitable victory of socialism over capitalism" (Bialer, 1986, p. 6) were not only rhetorical devices, but genuinely shared objectives that shaped both the structure and the exercise of public authority. Accordingly, Bialer writes, public policy was "dictated not by the invisible hand of the market but by the very visible hand of the state" (Bialer, 1986, p. 7) and produced a pattern of "development" that was substantially different from patterns familiar from the history of western industrialism. "The rise of labor productivity, innovations, and the diffusion of technology, that is to say, intensive development which has been crucial to the West... has been definitely of secondary importance in expanding the command economy" (Bialer, 1986, p. 7). Throughout the Brezhnev years the top priority of public policy thus was to supply the military with the necessary resources. Just as in Spencer's 19th century characterization of a "military society," the "production and distribution of consumer goods [had to] make do with leftovers" (Bialer, 1986, p. 7).

What changed, however, were the operational principles used to attain these universalistic, supra-regional objectives. Under the reign of Stalin the logic of nuclear war and of the principle of mutually assured destruction penetrated Soviet strategic thinking only slowly, but they became fully appreciated by the great dictator's successors. While Soviet leaders continued to insist on "burying" capitalism

13. For others with similar views see Pipes (1990), Feher *et al.* (1983, p. 21), and Odom (1976).

and on surpassing the West both economically and politically, they adapted their geopolitical design to the realities of the nuclear age. This meant a significant shift away from Europe as an immediate target and towards the Third World, and a shift from the doctrine of hitting the heartland in a *coup de main* (a doctrine that Lenin and his successors had learned from Clausewitz and other Prussian military thinkers) to a new doctrine of “nibbling around the peripheries,” expressed in a seemingly conflicting commitment to strategic arms limitation and to the support of wars of national liberation and other forms of anti-imperialist struggle likely to take place outside the core regions of the capitalist world system. This last obligation was not undertaken lightly and as a matter of rhetoric, but was lent credence by the support that the Soviet Bloc gave to North Vietnam, Cuba, Angola, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, the rebels of El Salvador, Yemen, for a while Somalia, and to non-Marxist “national progressives” across the world. There were no doubt extensive debates, yet unknown to the external world, about where and how this support should be used. In 1962 Khrushchev attempted to gain geopolitical advantage in the Third World by injecting nuclear weapons into the political game, a maneuver that may have given him tactical advantage (by extorting a tacit recognition of the Cuban communist regime by the United States), but also led to his eventual ouster as a “hare-brained schemer” two years later, and to a return to the use of more conventional military aid in the struggle for supremacy in the non-western world.

A second, and perhaps more dramatic, set of changes in Soviet politics has been well recognized by Sovietology and has served as the mainstay of theories of political change in communist societies throughout the latter part of the Cold War period. These changes took place in the realm of political culture and belief. They were not the result of a rational calculation of costs and benefits, but of a slow and probably painful process of learning that most likely began under Stalin’s reign, but could not be articulated before his death. While Stalin may well have been insulated from the outside world and remained engrossed in his chiliastic phantasies behind the Kremlin walls, as Djilas’ experiences with him seem to suggest (Djilas, 1962, p. 103), his lieutenants and the lower echelons of his party apparatus had to encounter and endure some of the hard realities of Soviet life and the intractabilities of human nature and social existence. Carefully, hiding their experiences behind fulsome praise for the salvationist design, these apparatchiki, hardened in the trenches of economic mobilization and rural class struggle, began to resign themselves to human folly, and the inevitable imperfections of any social mechanism. When Stalin died, this new “pragmatism” quickly bubbled up to the surface, and resulted in what diverse observers in the West described as the “de-radicalization” (Tucker, 1970, pp. 172–214) or “rationalization” (Brzezinski, 1967, pp. 53–64) of Soviet ideology. Less convincingly at times, there was also talk of the “de-ideologization” of the Soviet regime. However, the fact is that ideology, the fundamental purpose of “building socialism” or of “full communism,” remained crucial to the legitimacy of the Soviet regime, except that some of the key terms—including socialism and communism—had acquired new meanings. Thus communist (or Soviet-style socialist) society was still regarded as the best conceivable form of social organization, one in which, according to one Soviet academician, the educational system, health care, recreation, transportation, and housing would be better than in any other society in the history of humanity.¹⁴ But despite all the things that this form of collective existence might provide, it still

14. Academician S. G. Strumilin, quoted in Brzezinski (1967, p. 90).

would not have that quality of perfection that would bring the forces of history to a sharp halt. Neither society, nor international affairs, would in the new Soviet mind conform to the utopian vision of Marx and Engels that Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin proclaimed to be in sight. In the words of another Soviet scholar specializing in the art of communist futurology:

You rise in the morning and you begin to reflect: where shall I go today—to the factory as the chief engineer, or shall I gather and lead a fishing brigade, or perhaps fly to Moscow to conduct an urgent session of the academy. . . . Thus, comrades, it will not be.¹⁵

or, to quote Nikita Khrushchev on the subject:

Will there be criminals in Communist society? I personally, as a Communist, cannot vouch that there will not be any. A crime is a deviation from the generally recognized standards of behavior in society, frequently caused by mental disorders. Can there be any diseases, any mental disorders in Communist society? Evidently there can be. (Goldhagen, 1963, p. 629)

Post-Stalin political authority, and the political culture surrounding it, reflect this new, “incrementalist” view of social engineering (Hough, 1972, p. 29). By the standards of this culture, the leader is no longer required to perform miracles or superhuman deeds, hence he is no longer under subtle pressure to vest himself in the garb of scientific omniscience or charismatic heroism. Indeed, rather than cultivating the imagery of miracle men and scientific geniuses, the post-Stalin leaders of the Soviet Union, and most of their counterparts in eastern Europe, attempted to establish the legitimacy of self and party on skills in the more mundane arts of administration and management. Among them, Khrushchev delighted in being the *kukuruznik* and in dispensing practical advice as to the milking of cows, the transport of coal, or the proper use of chemical fertilizers. Brezhnev, and later Andropov and Chernenko, were properly described as “clerks”¹⁶ who prided themselves on their attention to petty, bureaucratic detail. Some of their East European counterparts—Honecker, Husak, and Gierek—took after this bureaucratic model, while some of them, like the Hungarian Kádár, also thrived on an image of exaggerated modesty, hard work, and meticulousness. The most flamboyant of them, Romania’s Ceaușescu, clearly engaged in cultivating his personality, but he combined the sublime with the trivial promoted by front-page photographs that showed him daily examining foundries, assembly lines, mine-shafts, vegetable markets, and other venues where a Stalin or Mao would never have been caught by the public eye.

This political culture and imagery of leadership does not in and by itself generate a legal-rational form of political expectations nor a stable, truly bureaucratic, environment, but leaders whose legitimacy derives from the “incremental” and mundane will find it very difficult to exact total commitments from their subordinates, or to blithely disregard rules and regulations that have been issued to ensure the efficient functioning of the political system. In this kind of political culture leaders can penalize subordinates and citizens for violating the letter but not the spirit of the law. Rules and regulations may be broken in the name of terrestrial salvation, but hardly in the name of incremental improvements in the quality of life, whether inside or outside one’s own country. It was thus that subjectivism was

15. Quoted in Goldhagen (1963, p. 623).

16. Zbigniew Brzezinski, quoted in Hough (1972, p. 26).

replaced by "socialist legality" (Lipson, 1962), an operational principle that expressed the desirability of stable expectations and predictability in the system, though in the Soviet-East European case without also providing appropriate procedural safeguards, which made the bureaucratic label less than fully descriptive of Soviet Bloc reality in the post-Stalin years (Pakulski, 1986, pp. 3-4).

Indeed, these changes in the political culture of Soviet communism were accompanied by surprisingly few institutional reforms. The edifices of the Soviet, and—with the Yugoslav exception—East European states, remained much the same as they had been crafted in the earlier, Stalin period. But in its substance, Soviet (and East European) political life had undergone significant change. Once the political culture of chiliastic-salvationism devolved into incrementalism, terror also ceased to be the mainstay of regimes. With the new rhetorical commitment to rules, and even in the absence of strict proceduralism, it became easier for citizens and subordinates to engage in "crypto-politics," the wresting of personal or group advantages by bickering about the meaning of commands, by feigned compliance with them, or by the implicit threat to subvert the leaders' will by mere footdragging and lack of enthusiasm. These means of crypto-politicking and the presence of a feeble legalism were certainly sufficient for the political class of managers and apparat people to extract a degree of immunity, particularly immunity in their pursuit of social reward and privilege. Unlike the days of Stalin there was, whether in legal or extra-legal ways, a steady flow of benefits from the population at large to the political elite, adding domestic social inequalities to the sources of dissatisfaction created by the vision of the material superiority of the capitalist world. It was in this manner that, long before its demise, the Soviet state and its clients acquired third, rather than second, world characteristics, even though their status in the international arena was still enhanced by their military capabilities. As to the state, its totalitarian forms remained unchanged. But behind the totalitarian facade, the effective scope of political authority began to shrink, as people began to reclaim a small private domain in which they could breathe and speak more freely in the circle of friends and family.

Eastern Europe in the Post-Stalin Period

But what about the socialist states of Eastern, or East Central, Europe within the Soviet Bloc and sphere of influence? In the Stalin period their political formulae and institutions closely followed the Soviet model, although there were apparent differences in the extent to which this model was accepted, tolerated, or rejected by the populations of different states. But the post-Stalin period, as Brzezinski (1960, pp. 41-66) reminds us, became a period of greater diversity, and this diversity, up to a point at least, can be related to the degree to which the leaders of the individual regimes remained solidary with the Soviet political elite. This being the case, the once uniformly obedient states could now be grouped into three categories: solidary states, states simulating solidarity but following an independent political formula, and independent states that rejected the idea of Bloc solidarity, even though they retained major elements of the Soviet political formula under the long shadow of Soviet power in international affairs. We may place Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (after 1968), and East Germany in the first category of states; Hungary, Poland, and Romania in the second; Albania and Yugoslavia in the third.

Let us start with the solidary states. The common denominator among them (and the Soviet Union) was a political formula that identified the fundamental

purpose of the state as one of promoting proletarian internationalism and operational codes, reflected in both public policy and the cultural norms fostered by the party leadership. Testimony from official statistics shows that these states devoted the largest percentage of their budgets to military expenditures, and various branches of their political establishment were actively participating in a variety of Soviet projects in the non-western world. The Czech and the East German regimes, for example, were significant weapons suppliers to national liberation movements in the non-western world, and the East Germans maintained the second largest intelligence gathering organization in the Bloc. The Bulgarian security and foreign services combined intelligence and subversive operations, including assassinations, both in and outside the European continent. All three countries were also actively involved in aiding and supplying international terrorist organizations. Each of these countries was also involved in projects to improve the standard of living of their populations, but when it came to identifying their parties' fundamental purpose, this objective was superseded in importance by themes of partnership with the Soviet Union in a grand anti-imperialist project. The official culture retained a militaristic cast. Discipline inside the party and harshness toward adversaries were cultivated most prominently in the case of the East German regime, which was unabashed about arresting the disloyal, or about gunning down citizens attempting to cross boundaries illegally. All three countries cultivated quasi-military leisure activities and athletics on a grand scale, and, next to the Soviet Union, were major successful participants in the Olympics and other international sporting events.

By definition, then, we must search for diversity outside the boundaries of solidary states. If we do so, we will be able to discern characteristics that cut across the cleavage that ran between the independent communist states and those that simulated their solidarity, and distinguish among the "liberal (or reformist) developmental," (Yugoslav, Polish, Hungarian), the "radical developmental," (Romanian), and the "neo-revolutionary" (Albanian) regimes.

Although few, if any, of the communist leaders of eastern Europe would acknowledge it, the inventor of the liberal developmental regime was no other than Bukharin. In essence, his political formula ritualized the combat-oriented revolutionary activism of Bolshevism by relegating the historical task of constructing socialist regimes across the globe to the impersonal forces of history, perhaps aided by the image of Bolshevik economic success. The same formula informed the practical politics of East European liberal communist regimes. To be sure, this was strenuously denied by the Hungarian and Polish leaders who paid rhetorical tributes to the Soviet geopolitical project of anti-imperialism, though without making substantial contributions to it either by defense spending or by the support of wars of liberation on distant continents. In Yugoslavia, however, the thesis was clearly articulated in doctrinal statements that collectively had come to be known under the label of Titoism. According to the tenets of this doctrine, formulated mainly by Edvard Kardelj, the elements of socialism were present in the structure and contradictions of capitalism, and were likely to develop quantitatively to the point where a qualitative leap would become unavoidable, obviating the need for external intervention by socialist states. While thus returning from Leninism to classical Marxism, the doctrine assigned to the socialist state the role of economic development and of defending their past accomplishments (Hoffman and Neal, 1962, pp. 160-167). In the Yugoslav formula, and in Polish-Hungarian practice, this doctrine led to concessions to the market mechanism and to the narrowing of

the scope of public authority, either by institutionalizing elements of social autonomy or by allowing the atrophy of totalitarian institutions.

The case of Romania provides us with another instance of a communist developmental state. As early as 1962, the Romanian leadership resisted Soviet attempts at the integration of the Bloc on the ground that it would compromise their ability to develop the national economy, and with the ascendance of Ceaușescu, "development" (*dezvoltarea*) became one of the sacred shibboleths of the regime. The design called for the "multilateral" development of the economy, targeting a number of industries, including chemical and textile, that promised to give the economy comparative advantage in foreign trade, a strategy that, together with a conspicuous neglect of defense expenditures, were to guarantee a rapidly increasing general standard of living. The objectives were the same as in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Hungary, but while the latter tried to accomplish the goal via market socialism, Ceaușescu's Romania followed closely the political model of Stalinism seemingly oblivious to the fact that this model had originally been designed for cycles of military mobilization rather than for improving the trade balance of a country with the ultimate purpose of creating a mass consuming, welfare society. That the Romanian economy failed as miserably as it did was largely due to this mismatch among its purposes, institutions, and operational principles.

The case of Albania is often mentioned in the same breath as Ceaușescu's Romania. There are indeed some similarities between the two regimes: the maniacal personality cults of Ceaușescu and Enver Hoxha, and the persistence of full-fledged totalitarian institutions at a time when these were in a state of atrophy elsewhere. But key differences between the two states remain. Most significantly, the Albanian regime not only adhered to Stalinist methods of the purge, but pursued genuinely Stalinist goals of revolutionary internationalism, first on the side of Stalin, then as an ally of Mao's China, and finally standing on its own as one of the last bastions of communist orthodoxy. Much like Stalin, Hoxha used nationalist slogans in his design to mobilize Albanian society for combat. But just as Stalin glorified Russia as an instrument of higher purposes, so Hoxha viewed Albanians as instruments of the world revolution. The greatness of the Albanian nation was not the ultimate end of politics, indeed not even an intermediate end, as was the Romanian nation-state in Ceaușescu's design. Thus, while glorifying the military virtue of Albanians, the unification of the country with Kosovo was not the mainstay of Hoxha's rhetoric, not even in the context of his recurrent denunciations of Yugoslav revisionism.

In the long historical run, these differences did not put East European regimes on different trajectories. One by one they fell, following the retreat of the Soviet Union from active participation in East European affairs. However, the circumstances of their collapse, and the pattern of their transition from communism were significantly shaped by their political formulae and the cultures they attempted to spawn. In Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, the transition had its roots in the regimes' failure to deliver the consumer society on which they had staked their legitimacy for nearly three decades. In contrast, the failure of solidary regimes was caused by external events, specifically by Gorbachev's abandonment of the combat principles and global struggle on which their legitimacy hinged. Albania and Romania, whose leaders extolled their independent course, held out longest among these eight regimes, and one may at least speculate that they had the potential to hold out still longer had it not been for the corruption and excess of leaders with whom the parties were for so long identified.

Enter Gorbachev—Exit Communism

In the mid-1980s it was not uncommon for the critics of the Brezhnev decades—most prominent among them Gorbachev—to characterize the previous epoch of Soviet history as one of stagnation and decay. This judgment was one-sided, indeed unjust, for it was between 1965 and 1985 that the Soviet Union had turned from being a regional to a global superpower by acquiring, next to the largest ground army in the world, a “blue-water” navy, an impressive space program and, last but not least, nuclear parity with the United States. By virtue of these accomplishments, the Soviet Union acquired the capacity to project its power into every corner of the globe and to exert its influence on any continent, including those of the western hemisphere.

But while these impressive gains brought power and prestige to the commonwealth of socialist states, both the Soviet and the East European economies continued to lag behind the West. Indeed, by many calculations, they not only lagged, but continued to fall farther and farther behind the core societies of the modern industrial world. According to the calculations of Colin Clark (1940), in 1910 the per capita income figure for Russia (adjusted to purchasing power parities) was 47 per cent of comparable average figures for six advanced continental countries, 31 per cent of per capita GNP in the United Kingdom, and 27 per cent of the figure for the United States. This gap remained more or less the same for the 1925–1934 period as western economies were mired down in the Great Depression while Soviet industrialization got underway.¹⁷ By most estimates the gap narrowed between 1950 and 1970 in terms of per capita product, though not necessarily in per capita consumption. In the 1970s it was estimated at 42 per cent of American per capita GNP (Block, 1979, pp. 6–12). Thereafter, however, the per capita income gap seems to have opened up again. Soviet per capita GNP was calculated in the 1980s varying at 33 and 37 per cent of respective figures for the United States (Marer, 1985, pp. 104–105; Becker, 1994; Schroeder, 1995). Per capita consumption figures are generally thought to show a less favorable relationship. They were estimated to have been between 22 and 30 per cent of respective figures for the United States (Becker, 1994, pp. 313–314; Schroeder, 1995, p. 216). This is what Seweryn Bialer calls the “Soviet paradox.” In reality, however, far from being paradoxical these figures reflect the very logic of a militarized society and economy. They were the product of an economic system that was not designed to produce long-term popular welfare, but short-term coercive potential and military prowess. In its own terms, as it had been copied from the German model of military mobilization during World War I, the system functioned very well in that it was capable not only of sustaining a given level of military power, but of increasing it at a steady rate of 4 per cent per annum (Bialer, 1986, p. 46), though not without placing ever larger pressures on the Soviet standard of living and on its ability to acquire a capacity for long-term efficiency in its civilian sector.

In retrospect, Soviet military spending in this period is estimated to have been 20–25 per cent of Soviet GNP (Eckhaus, 1990). Apart from the shortages created by military spending in the narrow sense, Soviet standards of living suffered from expenditures associated with the militarized, or reconstructionist, geopolitical posture taken by the Soviet Union in world affairs. After the

17. See Clark (1940, pp. 31, 39, 85–86 and table following p. 148). These calculations are borne out, with minor variations, by the studies of Bairoch (1976, pp. 286 and 297).

first ten or fifteen years of the existence of the Bloc, the Soviet Union reversed its earlier exploitative policies toward eastern Europe and began to subsidize these satellite economies, and especially the economies of the Warsaw Pact countries (minus recalcitrant Romania).¹⁸ After 1960, these expenses were compounded by the outflow of aid, and then subsidy, to Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola, as well as to friendly, but "non-socialist," regimes across the world from South America to the Middle East.

In the last analysis, the "resource squeeze" on the Soviet Union was relative. It was a function of the fact that all these military and imperial expenditures were undertaken from a peripheral economic position in geopolitical competition with the most developed industrial countries of the world. Not only was the American GNP two and a half times that of the Soviet, but it had allies in and outside NATO that included Germany, France, Britain, Canada, and Japan. The gap between the GNP's of the NATO and Warsaw Pact nations was about 3:1, and while not all of these countries spent the same proportions for military purposes as the United States, some of them, including Germany and Japan, lavishly subsidized American military spending by indirect means, such as by purchasing vast quantities of American debt for financing American military preparedness. While the US had Japan and Germany for allies, the Soviet Union had Poland, Hungary, Angola, and Mozambique, to mention but a few for obvious contrast.

Nor did the Soviet Union compete in a static environment. At times, this environment seemed to favor its position, as in the years after 1945 when victory in war gave it considerable momentum, or in the 1960s and 1970s when the West seemed to be divided and the US bogged down in an unpopular war. By the late 1970s, however, the US was shaking off the trauma of a lost war and had begun to respond actively to hostile external stimuli by increasing its own military expenditures. This new round in the armament race coincided with a growing restlessness on the Soviet empire's European periphery.

All this raised serious dilemmas for the Soviet political elite. They now had a series of options, none of them without substantial risks. They could take up the challenge of a new armament race by further diminishing the standard of living of populations at home and in East Europe, thereby raising the risk of popular unrest and of a return to massive terror to pre-empt it or to put it down. Alternatively, they could have acted in 1979 as Hitler had done in 1939 and used their momentary military superiority in some project that would have given them decisive geopolitical advantages in the heartlands of capitalism. This, of course, would have been a high risk option, much riskier than even Hitler's gamble 40 years before. The only other viable alternative was to abandon the Soviet geopolitical design, and with it the political formula and structure of the political system as it had evolved since the days of Lenin.

While a large number of Soviet political actors and observers apparently shared this assessment of options,¹⁹ an aging and ailing leadership was incapable of making a choice among these stark alternatives. Instead, and in likely response to

18. Marrese and Vanous (1983). These authors have their critics, but none of them seems to doubt that Soviet resources were strained by a combination of military spending and geopolitical outlays. See, for example, Desai (1987).

19. See, for instance, statements from Aleksandr Bessmertnykh's Princeton University Lecture of February, 1993, "A Retrospective on the End of the Cold War" and from Marshal Ogarkov, both quoted in Schweizer (1994, pp. 138 and 246); see also Fedorenko (1991, p. 87).

the logic of an anomalous situation in which ever increasing military expenditures yielded ever diminishing returns, they embarked on the Afghani project, a step that allowed them to flex military muscle and engage in self-deception about their willingness to escalate their anti-imperialist strategies. The disastrous consequences of this step are well-known, and by taking it they escalated the crisis rather than alleviating it. The two interim leaders who followed Brezhnev between 1982 and 1985 thus faced still more agonizing dilemmas than their predecessor. It was into this milieu that Mikhail Gorbachev entered in April, 1985, ready to cut the Gordian knot of Soviet politics.

It is not the purpose of this article to review the trials and tribulations of the Gorbachev years. Suffice it to say that, while at the beginning Gorbachev himself might have been satisfied merely to "inject technological dynamism into the Soviet economy" (Schweizer, 1994, p. 247), in time the problems facing his country unfolded in all their painful detail, and he began to urge his subordinates to turn their attention to the nation's domestic development and to re-evaluate foreign policy in order "to create the best possible external conditions for reform."²⁰ More concise and clear-cut formulations were to follow. By 1987 he was ready to accept the "expression of the legitimate interests of all countries" in world politics (Gorbachev, 1987, p. 122), words that translated into the acceptance of the status quo in global politics. Still more explicitly, Gorbachev began to speak of abandoning the "international class struggle" in favor of "international competition" (Kubalkova and Cruickshank, 1989, p. 3), a formula that amounted to nothing less than the abandonment of the old militarized posture of external reconstruction that had sustained Soviet politics from Lenin to Andropov and Chernenko. These elements of a "new thinking" were coupled with an expressed desire for the return of Russia to a "common home" it shared with West Europe (Gorbachev, 1987, pp. 181-182). With these words Soviet policy had come full circle. Lenin, too, wanted such a common home, and wanted to liberate Europe so that the more advanced countries could aid Russia to emerge from its condition of backwardness. Now Gorbachev was ready to accept the reality of capitalism in the hope of accomplishing the same objective.

We should remember, though, that while Gorbachev was ready to cross the threshold between global reconstruction and internal development, or, in Herbert Spencer's words, from "militancy" to "industrialism," he was not quite ready to cross the one between democratic and authoritarian politics. Instead, his constitutional maneuverings, and the Duma he created, point to a desire to create a softer authoritarianism, an authoritarianism with a democratic facade to reassure the West while maintaining some capability to mobilize and to accomplish the painful task of dismantling a militarized economic regime. This regime would permit a freer flow of information for the benefit of both emerging markets and the government without full accountability to a fickle public in times of anticipated stress. Such a delicate balance between the two has sustained political regimes in many of the developing countries of the periphery, most recently in the "newly industrialized" countries of the Pacific Rim, but none of these have had to contend with the stresses of multinationality and the liquidation of empire while re-entering a competitive world economy. The Soviet Union did have to contend with these, and Gorbachev's attempt at simulated democracy collapsed under their weight.

20. Gorbachev, as quoted in Oberdorfer (1991, p. 162).

Conclusion

From this brief review of the 70 years of Soviet communism, there emerge a number of critical differences among communist regimes that, at the same time, can serve as the basis of a broader typology for purposes of macro-political comparisons. The most important of these are the distinctions between developmental and reconstructionist regimes. Within the former, we have been able to distinguish between reformist (neo-liberal) and radical types. Within the latter we encountered salvationist and incrementalist, and insurrectionist vs. *étatist*, visions and operational principles. These elements of the political formula then tie directly into the political culture—or what should be treated as political culture—with its teleological (goal-oriented) and instrumental (transfer-oriented) elements. These in turn can be linked to variations in the structure, exercise, and scope of public authority as they appear in *Table 1*. The political history of East Europe meanwhile allows us to point to communist variants of the developmental states, both radical and reformist, long ignored as such because of rhetorical and institutional facades carefully designed to conceal their real purposes and the distinctions between them and the Soviet state.

For the student of Russia, the model of externally oriented, reconstructionist politics is significant not only as a category for dealing with the Soviet past, but also as a tool for engaging in intellectual discourse about the country's future prospects. Today, much of the scholarly discourse on the subject revolves around the prospects for democracy and development. On the whole, these writings are pessimistic about outcomes, an attitude that most frequently leads to a prediction of chaos and internal conflict that would lead to a diminished capacity for Russia to act in international affairs. Such a prognosis ignores a whole array of options available to political actors in peripheral states, especially in states of substantial size, population, and resources. One of the options that logically presents itself is that of creating a reconstructionist state with a militarized political culture and structure of authority. The validity of this proposition is sadly apparent in contemporary Russia where the opposition to a developmental regime consists largely of characters like Aleksandr Rutskoï and Aleksandr Lebed, and of political parties like the misleadingly named Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, or the Great Power Party, the program of which is well captured by its name. Although often described as movements of irrationality and cultural despair, these movements are not devoid of an ability to interrelate political ends and means. Those who think otherwise must stop to ponder which scenario is more utopian: Zhirinovskiy's vision of Russian soldiers washing their boots in the Indian Ocean (or plundering a prosperous Germany), or the Yeltsin-Gaidar vision of a democratic and capitalist Russia successfully closing the economic gap between itself and the West or the countries of the Pacific Rim and raising the Russian living standard progressively to the level that would satisfy the population's psychological and material needs. In significant ways, this was the dilemma of Germany between the 1890s and the 1930s, though from a position much more advantageous than that of Russia today. True, the prevalence of nuclear arms may moderate the propensity to take major risks for those who care for the fate of their fellow citizens, but then it may also encourage those who do not yet see the enormous potential of the destructive power that can be used in reckless attempts to extort advantages from more prosperous areas.

A similar case may be made for China, a communist regime that survived its European counterparts without shedding its original label. To be sure, the

Table 1. Patterns of communism

	Political formula		Ultimate end (vision)	Political culture		Political authority		Scope
	Fundamental purpose	Operational principle		Structure	Exercise			
Soviet Union								
<i>Period:</i>								
Lenin	External: Reconstruction	Insurrection	Salvationist (Chiliastic)	Militarized	Authoritarian	Arbitrary	Limited: (Total in principle) Total	
Stalin	External: Reconstruction	Étatism (External War Coercion)	Salvationist (Chiliastic)	Militarized	Authoritarian	Arbitrary	Shrinking (Total in principle)	
Brezhnev ^a	External: Reconstruction	Étatism (National Liberation, Strategic Arms Limit)	Incremental	Militarized	Authoritarian	Quasi-Legal (w/o procedure)	Limited: (Total in principle) Social Autonomy	
Gorbachev	Internal: Development	Market socialism	Incremental	Civic	Simulated democracy Soft authoritarian	Legal (emerging procedure)	Limited: Social Autonomy	
East Europe								
<i>Country:</i>								
Bulgaria	Reconstruction	Étatist	Incremental	Militarized	Authoritarian	Quasi-Legal	Total	
Czechoslovakia								
East Germany	Development	Reformist (Market Socialist)	Incremental	Civic	Authoritarian	Quasi-Legal (Neo-Traditional)	Limited	
Yugoslavia								
Hungary	Development	Radical (Mobilization)	Incremental	Simulated Militarized	Authoritarian	Arbitrary	Total	
Poland								
Romania	Reconstruction	Étatist (Rhetorical)	Salvationist	Militarized	Authoritarian	Arbitrary	Total	
Albania								

^aIncludes Khrushchev, Andropov, and Chernenko periods

changes that this vast country has experienced over the past two decades have been dramatic and may be best described as a transition from a militantly reconstructionist to a reformist developmental regime. More significantly, the experiment has worked beyond the hopes and dreams of its architects. As of today, China is the prime example of successful economic development in a previously revolutionary regime. But the economic accomplishments have exacted a heavy political price: in 1989 China experienced a major upheaval and as the country lurches toward another change in leadership, its rulers may take another look at the costs and benefits of following the capitalist road. While Deng Xiao-ping is still alive as of this writing, American observers of the Chinese scene can already discern rumblings within the power structure which might presage a major policy debate between developmentalists and reconstructionists (Manni, 1995). If Russia's current dilemmas remind one of Germany in defeat, and the rise of Hitler in the interwar period, China's are more reminiscent of an earlier period. Like Germany in the years between 1870 and 1890, China in the last two decades has experienced spectacular growth, which, by conventional reasoning, should make it a saturated power satisfied with its regional influence and the profits of trade. Yet China's saturation, much like German "saturation" of the last century, may be more obvious to outsiders than to insiders because, as in the case of Germany, the price of economic progress has been political turmoil. Moreover, and not unlike Germany of the past, China faces an inhospitable and increasingly competitive international environment in which the economically advanced nations still have disproportionate influence in setting the terms of exchange. Much like Germany in the distant past, China's leaders today will weigh the advantages and perils of different strategies, and may conclude that a militarized society would yield higher benefits to them at a lower cost and risks. They may, of course, conclude otherwise. But the shell of communist institutions, traditions, and political culture would make a militarist regression just as easy for the Chinese as the reorientation of German society in the context of Prussian traditions and Wilhelminian leadership.

It was more than a hundred years ago that Herbert Spencer wrote his classic statement on militancy and industrialism (Spencer, 1972). Looking at Germany and England he understood full well that these represented alternative models for national (class, or individual) aggrandizement with costs and benefits that rational political actors will weigh. As to the future, Spencer seemed ambivalent, but voiced the faint hope that one day industrialism would prevail, and that an interdependent trading system would emerge worldwide in which the use of force would be an anomaly. A century and two World Wars later, American social science revived this Spencerian hope in countless studies of modernization, industrial societies, and economic development. Today, once again, we are less confident about a new era of order and peace. We now believe that militarism assimilated into a larger revolutionary design is a subject that needs to be studied some more. In the most general terms this essay has been an attempt to respond to this need.

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