Soviet and Post Soviet/Russian Foreign Policy – the Cold War and Beyond

(1) The Ideological Roots of Soviet Foreign Policy – Marxist-Leninism

(A) Marx’s Dialectical Materialism

17 Dialectic: A debate, or dialogue, on ideas
18 Ideas lead to events occurring; these events dictate the way society, the economy, govt., the culture, etc. is run
19 These initial set of ideas lead to a reaction to these ideas and events (i.e., how can society, govt., etc., improve upon these ideas and events and make life better?)
20 This leads to a new set of events and ideas; this new social modality is then challenged with new ideas and events and more questions on how society can be improved upon
21 Lead to, yet, a new modality of ideas and events
22 Thesis>Antithesis>Synthesis>New Antithesis>New Synthesis>New Antithesis (idea) (reaction) (new idea) (new reaction) (another new idea) (reaction)

23 The Dialectic traces the progress of human development, evolution and history
24 Marx applied the concept of the dialectic to economic/material themes, due to Marx’s belief that economic and material relationships were the essence and basis of society
25 Thus, Marx tried to trace human economic history and development, as well as make predictions for future economic evolution:
26 Primitive economic state (hunting, fishing, primitive agriculture)>Domestic economic trade (early bartering)>World economic trade (more widespread bartering)>Feudalism>Pre-Industrial (Early) Capitalism>Industrial Capitalism> Proletariat uprising and revolutionary overthrow of the Bourgeoisie (Capitalist) class>”Temporary Dictatorship” of the Proletariat
(Socialism)->"Withering away" of the state>Communalistic Paradise
(Communism): The end of the dialectic

27 Implications: (1) Believed that all these “stages” of the dialectic were
historically inevitable based on what was the pace of capitalist-labor
relations and behavior
28 (2) Believed that especially the capitalist “stages” were inevitable and
necessary for the dialectic and ultimate end result of Communism to
be successful
29 (3) Marx made his dialectic prophecies with the Western, industrial
societies in mind (Western Europe, North America); these societies
were ripe for Socialist revolutionary overthrow of Capitalism

(B) Leninism

30 Tried to explain Marxist prophecies failing to come true
31 Leninism is Marxism with a Russian perspective
32 Accepts and supports the essential themes and ideas of Marxism with
some variation
33 These variations on Marxism were meant to, again, explain how
Marx’s prophecies did not come true and also meant to have Marxism
apply to the Russian experience
34 (1) Imperial Capitalism, not industrial capitalism, was the ultimate
and worst “stage” of capitalism
35 Imperial Capitalism: Colonization, acquisition and conquering of land
and territory beyond national boundaries
36 19th Century industrial capitalist powers used their wealth to build and
develop great power, military capability
37 Used this military capability to then conquer land and exploit labor
and materials abroad at very little cost
38 This overseas exploitation of labor and resources made capitalists
even wealthier
39 (2) The working classes were too ignorant to realize their own
exploitation
40 Therefore, revolution initiated by a proletariat uprising was
impossible
41 (3) Working classes had to have a revolutionary movement organized
for them
42 This was to be done by a highly disciplined, highly organized
revolutionary “vanguard”
43 This “vanguard” organization was to be centralized decision making, led by elites and Socialist intellectuals loyal to Lenin and Leninist theory
44 These were known as the Bolsheviks
45 (4) Because the labor class was ignorant to its own exploitation, and, thus, the class inequality of capitalism would not be apparent to the proletariat, capitalism was not needed as an antecedent (or a dialectical cause) to Socialism
46 Thus, the Bolsheviks intended to “skip” the stages of Capitalism and get straight to the Socialist stage
47 One very important premise of Leninism; State Socialism and Capitalism could not co-exist on the same planet
48 The USSR must be the leading Socialist state in the global struggle against Imperial Capitalism
49 Therefore, the USSR must promote and support world-wide movements of “national liberation” of enslaved working classes against Capitalist oppressors supported and legitimized by the United States and the West
50 This would consist of economic, military aid, cultural development, training and defensive capabilities
51 The Soviet union should work for greater political and economic ties with all anti-imperial, progressive states (aka, Socialist states)

©Central Economic Planning of the Soviet Union (USSR)

47 The Soviet economy (after the NEP period) was a complete and total Socialist economic order; economic planning and decision making come from the top of the govt. hierarchy and filtered down to the various state/party agencies and state-owned factories
48 All planning was made and carried out by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)

(A)Political/Governing System

1. Politiburo – Chief governing and policy making body of the USSR; All policy and decision making started with this executive governing body; the head of the Politburo was also the CPSU General Secretary, who, in turn, was also the Premier (or leader) of the Soviet
Union
2. Party Central Committee
3. Party Congress
3. Supreme Soviet – The USSR’s national legislature
49 However, this natl. legislature was more of a “window dressing” body that merely “rubber-stamped” the laws and decisions of the Politburo
50 Elected and appointed Presidium and the Council of Ministers:
51 There were bodies that were extended parts of the Supreme Soviet that served as an “executive branch cabinet govt.” within the legislature (i.e., a Prime Minster and his cabinet of ministers)
52 Many times, the Chairman of the Presidium, in fact were also the CPSU General Secretaries (hence, the Soviet Leaders)
53 This implied a fusion of powers; those who controlled and led the party apparatus often controlled the Presidium and, thus led the Council of Ministers
54 This is evidence that the Supreme Soviet was manipulated and dictated by the CPSU party leadership from up above

(B) Economic Central Planning System

1. Politburo – Established broad “Five Year Plans”; these plans created “targets” for production, industrial/economic growth, GNP. etc.
2. Gosplan – Took the broad “Five Year Plans” and created specific production goals and targets for specific industries and enterprises; established quotas for each enterprise
3. Enterprise Managers – These were the heads who ran the state-run enterprises, businesses and factories
51 Appointed by the CPSU/Politburo
52 Took the quotas handed down to them by Gosplan and directed factory workers to fulfill the monthly quotas
53 Enterprise managers would then receive bonuses from the state upon fulfilling of the quotas
54 There tended to be a lot of political deal making between Gosplan and the enterprise managers’ this often led to artificially small quotas for the factories and enterprises to fulfill
55 Remember, all these industries and enterprises were state owned and controlled; there was no worry of competition from private alternatives
56 Thus, quotas were given on the basis of political deal making, not market competition or consumer demand or other market-driven factors.

57 This led to: (a) scarcity of goods
(b) low-quality of goods
© under-employment

Once managers and workers met their monthly quota, there was no further incentive to work and produce more. Why bother?

Soviet Post-War, Cold War Policy

1 Transition from the Grand Alliance:
2 After the USSR’s alliance with the West against the Axis ended with the end of WWII, the USSR began to establish policies countering the U.S. and Britain.
3 The Yalta Summit – February, 1945: Marked the “dividing” of post-war part of Europe in the wake of Germany’s (near) defeat.
4 The U.S., Britain and France would control and administer over West Germany, while the Soviets would do the same under East Germany (this was the partition of Germany by the “Four Powers Conference”)
5 Stalin received the support of the U.S. and Britain to annex virtually of Eastern Europe, in exchange for a Soviet pledge to hold elections in these countries (which never happened).
6 Led to the “Sovietization” of Eastern Europe; the Marxist-Leninist model of State Socialism being implemented in these countries, under the control and supervision of Soviet military forces.
7 1947, the Soviets form the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform); The Cominform was designed to coordinate and establish Soviet-led policy in Europe as a reaction to U.S. “Containment” policy.
8 1955, Soviet formation of the Warsaw Pact; a Soviet-led
military alliance based in Eastern Europe to counter the U.S.-led formation of NATO

9 Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 "Secret Speech", aka, "De-Stalinization" Speech takes place; Condemns the practices of Stalin as ruthless, careless and undermining of Leninist principles; Stalin had put himself above the party, party principles and collective leadership

10 Also challenges Leninist notion of inevitable warfare between Socialist and Capitalist states; peaceful co-existence could be achieved, along with an international Socialist order – due to the danger of nuclear war

11 This "secret speech", along with the previous 1955 withdrawal from Austria and Soviet participation in a Geneva Summit with Western leaders, gave many in Eastern Europe the impression that perhaps the Soviet Union was willing to allow democratic reform and liberalization away from a "hard-line" Leninist order

12 Growing anti-Communist, pro-Democracy movements in Poland and Hungary were inspired by Khrushchev's "Secret Speech"; led to a worker's riot which divided the Polish Communist Party between reformers and "hard-liners"

13 The rise to power in a Polish Communist reformer was met with Soviet diplomacy; Soviet cancellation of Polish debt in exchange for Polish assurances to not split with the USSR and to support Soviet foreign policy

14 However, pro-Democracy, anti-Communist demonstrations and student/labor revolts in Hungary were met with Soviet military force; After, Hungarian pro-reform premier (Imre Nagy) called for end to one-party, Communist rule and Hungarian withdrawal from Warsaw Pact, Soviets invaded country and struck and major cities and govt. installations

15 Led to a new, pro-Soviet hardline govt. in Budapest

16 1961, Soviet attempt to sign peace treaty with East German, as a way to maneuver Western powers out of West Berlin; led to U.S. build-up of American and NATO military forces

17 Building of Berlin Wall as symbol of Soviet sphere of influence in East Germany and Eastern Europe

18 1968, Soviets invade Czechoslovakia in reaction to pro-democracy, anti-Communist demonstrations and revolts in Prague
19 Stemmed from Czech govt.'s more progressive, liberal reforms – signing of trade agreement with West Germany, rise of Alexander Dubcek, a pro-Democracy reformer within the Czech. Communist party
20 When this new govt. tried to move toward “Democratic Socialism”, and away from State Socialism (“Prague Spring”), Soviet forces invaded and put down the “Counter-revolution”
21 Dubcek and rest of govt. was arrested, and subsequently agreed to crack down on the liberalization movement as a result from Soviet pressure
22 This invasion led to the Brezhnev Doctrine: A Threat to Socialism in one country was a threat to Socialism everywhere; Thus, such threats to Socialism must be met with military force; talk of the right of self-determination is actually a cover up to withdraw from Socialism – this then presents a threat to the interests and security of the Socialist states
23 Even in the era of Détente (1970’s), the Soviets still supported movements of national liberation and Socialist-based civil warfare in Angola, Ethiopia, Nicaragua and El Salvador, to name a few
24 1979, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was also an extension of Brezhnev Doctrine
25 In retrospect, Brezhnev saw Détente as a “green light” from the U.S. for the USSR to proceed as it wished; build up of Soviet defense expenditures, expansion of Leninist ideas and Brezhnev Doctrine with regard to Third World “national liberation” struggles (as mentioned above)
26 Alternative explanation of expansionistic Soviet policy: The Revisionist Thesis: The Soviets were not trying to expand military power and political influence as a way to spread Leninist doctrine globally in an effort to ultimately defeat Capitalist West
27 Instead, Soviet military policy was based on a defensive reaction to perception that the West was planning a preemptive first strike and invasion of the USSR
28 Soviet policy makers believed in Leninist idea that the Imperial Capitalist West had militarily built-up in Western Europe and established the NATO alliance as a means to
prepare for a conventional/military attack on the USSR – this was due to imperial capitalism’s need to expand militarily

29 Thus, the Soviets had to create a defensive buffer in Eastern Europe to guard against such Western aggression, as well as a counter in the other regions of the globe

30 Based on Russian/Soviet history of invasion, attacks and aggression from others states; helped create a “strategic paranoia” felt by Soviet leaders, with regard to the U.S. and its Western allies

Sino-Soviet Relations (Relations with China)

31 Initially, the Soviet Union was the leading state recognizing and legitimizing the Maoist-Communist Govt. in China in 1949

32 The USSR tried to balance against a perceived U.S. attempt to surround Communist China with military and political support for anti-Communist, Nationalist forces in Taiwan, as well as Japan, the Phillipines, and in South Korea

33 Thus, the USSR tried to counter this with a Communist bloc in Asia, led by Moscow and Maoist China; the Soviets promised aid and nuclear protection for China

34 However, China wanted to rely on its own nuclear power and pressed Moscow to supply them with the necessary technology to produce nuclear weapons

35 However, the Soviets refused this, fearing a nuclear confrontation with the U.S.; this enabled the Chinese to see Moscow as unreliable

36 This, along with China’s ideological opposition to Khrushchev’s “De-Stalinization” policies, led China to challenge the Soviets – ideologically, politically, militarily

37 Mao had personality conflicts with Khrushchev and saw himself and China as the true model of State Socialism – not the USSR

38 All this led to a mini-cold war between Moscow and Beijing that would last through 1989

39 Example: Three wars between Indiana and Pakistan were an example of Sino-Soviet “proxy warfare”, with the Soviets supporting India and China supporting Pakistan
40 The Soviets perceived U.S. full diplomatic relations with China in 1972 as an American attempt to form an anti-Soviet, Sino-U.S. bloc against Moscow.

The Gorbachev Era and the End of the Cold War (1985-1991)

41 The Advent of “New Thinking”

42 A new approach to foreign policy and Soviet interests, 1987-1988

43 Contained the following features:

44 (a) Rejection of notion that Capitalism and Socialism could not co-exist; Indeed, both systems could and must peacefully co-exist

45 (b) Called for the end to the aiding of “national liberation” struggles and revolutionary Socialist movements in the Third World

46 © The West did not pose a dire military threat to the USSR and was not intent on launching pre-empive invasion and attack against Soviet Union

47 (d) Encouraged the USSR to participate in the international community and be a part of more multi-lateral political and economic institutions

48 The USSR did not have to match the U.S. military program for program

49 Rejected the procurement (deployment) of offensive nuclear weapons, in favor of less threatening defensive weapons – as a way to put an end to the “Security Dilemma”

50 Stressed a commitment to abide by legal, international norms and human rights, as well as the exploration of both East and West for common human interests

51 In essence, Gorbachev’s “New Thinking” did away with the Brezhnev Doctrine

Applications of “New Thinking”

52 1986-1989, USSR began the gradual moves that led to the Soviet withdrawal of Afghanistan
53 Initiated significant cutbacks in defense spending
54 Pursued arms control agreements with the United States; consisted of several arms control summits with U.S. leaders
55 1988-1989, Gorbachev announced that the USSR would not interfere with anti-Communist, pro-Democracy movements in Eastern Europe; significantly reduced the level of military forces stationed in Eastern European “Warsaw Pact” nations
56 The initiative toward the legalization of a pro-Democracy labor union/political party in Poland (“Solidarity”), legislative elections that provided seats to Solidarity candidates, free, fair and competitive multi-party elections in Hungary and Czechoslovakia were not only unopposed by the Soviets, but actually encouraged and supported by Moscow
57 Gorbachev had informed Eastern European Communist leaders that the USSR would not militarily intervene on their behalf and that they should accept the inevitability of democratization removing them from power
58 Gorbachev pledged not to militarily and politically support long time East German leader Erich Honecker; led to collapse of Berlin Wall and the re-unification of Germany, 1990
59 Both U.S. and USSR agreed to have the new, re-united Germany decide its alliance ties; ultimately, Germany decided to remain in NATO and allied to the U.S.; Gorbachev supported this as being in the interest of the USSR

Was Gorbachev’s “New Thinking” a contradiction in realist theory?

60 Realism predicts that a power state will prevent threats against its power base; thus, the Soviets should have taken steps to crack down on the democracy movements in Eastern Europe, stopping the re-unification of Germany (or at least make sure that Germany would be neutral) and continue to challenge the West by way of Leninist theory and the Brezhnev doctrine – this did not happen
61 Also, the United States and the West invited the Soviets to
join multi-lateral, Western IO’s, such as the G7; Also, the U.S. agreed not to press for Eastern European Democratization or Baltic independence, offered economic assistance to the USSR and East Germany and even supported efforts to hold the USSR together and have it not break up.

62 In other words, the U.S. did not take advantage of Soviet weakness by pursuing an aggressive foreign policy against the Soviets; Realism predicts none of this.

63 Realists may counter this by arguing that the U.S. supportive behavior toward the Soviets was a way of one great power trying to prevent the opening of power vacuum, which could have led to the emergence of small, aggressive states that would then balance against the U.S. in the absence of the USSR.

64 Also, realists argue that Gorbachev’s “New Thinking” was a reaction to U.S. military build-up policies in the 1980’s, pushing the Soviets to the wall, until it got to the point where the USSR could no longer afford to compete with the U.S.

65 Thus, the Soviets embarked on reducing military expenditures and undergoing economic and political reforms as a way to preserve and advance Soviet national economic and political interests.

66 Finally, there is a version of realist theory known as “balance of threat” theory; States will only balance against other rival states if there exists a threat against a state.

67 In other words, only when a state is aggressive with regard to a military build-up, expansion of forces on that state’s borders or active military and political support for other states that are hostile to that state, does that state counter with equally aggressive policies.

68 Since the Soviets had engaged in “New Thinking”, the perception was that Moscow had stopped being aggressive and, hence, stopped being a threat to U.S. security interests; That way, the U.S. could afford to help the USSR and not be hostile to it.

69 Other competing explanations: (A) Idealist/Liberal Explanation: Soviet leaders under Gorbachev had different ideas, values and experiences that were different from the
ideas, values and experiences of prior Soviet leaders. There was the realization of Soviet policy makers that liberal ideas about democracy, human rights and a free market economy proved to be successful in meeting human needs.

Also, Gorbachev perhaps felt that the USSR could safely embark on “new thinking” reforms, knowing that the Western Powers would not exploit Soviet weakness with aggressive military policies due to the fact the Western alliance powers were all democracies and democracies are generally peaceful – again, this hypothesis assumes that liberal ideas and morality matter.

(B) Domestic Explanations: The domestic structure of the Politburo, Party Central Committee within the USSR political structure educated Gorbachev and gave him the ideas on foreign policy reform – in other words, the way in which Soviet govt. institutions were organized and Gorbachev’s desire to change and reform these institutions sparked his foreign policy ideas after taking power.

Now What?: Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War and Post 9-11 World

Challenges and issues confronting Russian-U.S. Relations

(1) U.S.-Russian Cooperation (and conflict?) in Limiting Nuclear Proliferation globally and within former Soviet Union

(2) Russian Resentment and Frustration toward U.S. policy in former Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Kosovo, etc.)

(3) Russian Resentment and Frustration toward U.S.-led NATO expansion to include former E. European communist states and former Soviet Baltic Republics

(4) Russian attempts to consolidate control over Muslim rebels in Chenya and appease U.S. over Moscow’s treatment of these rebels – affected after September 11