



Directorate of Intelligence  
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## Gorbachev's Future

### *Summary*

Gorbachev remains an important player on the Soviet political scene, especially in foreign and defense policy, but his domination of it has ended and will not be restored. Whether or not he is still in office a year from now, a major shift of power to the republics will have occurred unless it has been blocked by a traditionalist coup. Gorbachev can play a decisive role in determining which way things go, and his cooperation is critical to a smooth transition of power to the republics.

In order to survive politically, Gorbachev has recently been trying to shift his political base, which has been steadily eroding over the past year. He has been unwilling to go as far as the hardliners have been demanding in using force to restore the center's power, so his alliance with them is foundering. He has now signed an agreement with Yel'tsin and eight other republic leaders that improved the political atmosphere and gained him some breathing space from the recent drive to remove him by promising to shift considerable power to the republics. For the accord to hold up, however, Gorbachev will need to preside over the demise of the political system he now heads. If Gorbachev backs away from the accord, the drive by reformers to remove him will again pick up steam.

Should he be forced out in the near term, it most likely would be by hardliners who would rule through a weak front man or some sort of National Salvation Committee. Without any action by the traditionalists, however, the political reliability of the security services will continue to deteriorate and the influence of reformers will continue to grow, so as time goes on the odds

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increase that the democrats will come to power. Any succession to Gorbachev is not likely to be smooth, however, and there could be a period of transition with an intense power struggle and no one clearly in charge. [REDACTED]

The fate of the political system is directly linked to the current struggle for power. If traditionalists prevail they would seek to preserve the empire and autocratic rule through tougher means. They would move quickly to suppress the opposition, arresting or conceivably even executing its leaders starting with Yel'tsin, and to roll back newly won freedoms. They would adopt a more truculent public posture toward the United States and seek opportunities to assert their influence abroad. Even if they were willing to rely on a massive use of force and repression, traditionalists would have difficulty maintaining power because they lack a credible program to address the country's mounting problems and would have difficulty overcoming internal divisions. Under such a regime the economy would continue to deteriorate and social alienation would increase sharply, ensuring that eventually democratic and nationalist movements would reemerge. [REDACTED]

If reformers gain the upper hand, they would devolve power to the republics and allow them to pursue more independent paths even if they remained in a reconstituted union. Many republics, including Russia, would move quickly ahead with democratic and market reforms, but some would likely be subject to some new forms of authoritarianism. Although the much weaker center that remained would retain authority over the military and could probably meet most of the Soviet Union's current international commitments, each republic would quickly develop its own independent foreign policy and take over internal security responsibilities from the KGB. [REDACTED]

In short, the Soviet Union is now in a revolutionary situation in the sense that it is in a transition from the old order to an as yet undefined new order. Although the transition might occur peaceably, the current center-dominated political system is doomed. As happened in Eastern Europe over the past two years, the ingredients are now present in the USSR that could lead not only to a rapid change in the regime, but in the political system as well. [REDACTED]

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### Moving Toward a Transition

The political crisis building in the USSR in recent months was defused, at least temporarily, by President Gorbachev's April accord with Yel'tsin and eight other republic leaders. Gorbachev agreed to this political detente because he realized that he was rapidly losing control of events and could not regain it without the support of republic leaders. Reformers went along out of fear that hardliners would use the growing crisis and the threat of social explosion to seize power. With the agreement Gorbachev has bought a political respite, but it will soon run out unless he is willing to cede to the republics much more of the center's and his own authority than he has shown any inclination to do so far. Already, Gorbachev and Yel'tsin have voiced sharply different interpretations of the accord--the President has been touting it primarily as an effort to help stabilize the economy, while the Russian leader claims it signifies a cession of major power by the center to the republics.

The traditionalists on whom Gorbachev has been politically dependent--primarily the security services and the government bureaucracy--are alarmed at the prospect of a transfer of power to the republics and are bewildered and angered by Gorbachev's policies. The leadership of the KGB, the military, and the CPSU blame Gorbachev for the current crisis as well as for undermining their institutions.

In addition, the "black colonels" who have been leading the drive to replace Gorbachev with a more hardline regime claim they have tacit approval for their tough line from Yazov. Although Gorbachev turned back a drive to unseat him as General Secretary at the April Central Committee plenum, he still faces a growing and increasingly threatening rebellion in the party and can no longer rely on it to implement his policies.

Gorbachev's political position deteriorated so sharply over the past year because his policies were generally blamed for the disaster in the country:

- Most Soviets hold him responsible for the country's rapidly mounting economic problems and not offering a credible way out. His new "anti-crisis program" is a hybrid of old methods of top down control and some market oriented reforms that is unlikely to halt the current economic slide.
- Traditionalists criticize him for destroying the old Leninist political system and not creating viable new political structures to replace it.
- The workers no longer trust his government because it has not lived up to past promises.

- Reformers see his determination to hold a center-dominated union together as a principal factor leading to the current political crisis.

Gorbachev agreed to the April accord in part to try to stem his political decline, but it will not bring about a reversal of his political fortunes. Popularly elected republic leaders and legislatures enjoy much greater legitimacy than the central leadership and have made implementation of Gorbachev's policies almost impossible without their cooperation. (S NF)

The key to resolving the current crisis lies with Russia and Yel'tsin. He seems almost certain to succeed in his effort to create a strong popularly elected Russian presidency and win the election planned for June. This will strengthen his hand in challenging the center, while underscoring the illegitimacy of Gorbachev's position.

While Gorbachev will continue to have his political ups and downs and could survive for some time, it is highly unlikely that he will be able to recoup his declining political influence and regain the political initiative. Even with the accord, he appears to be primarily reacting to events without any longterm gameplan. Last fall he willingly entered into alliance with leaders of the KGB, the military, and the CPSU, but he has been unwilling to go as far as the hardliners have been demanding in using force to restore the center's power, so his alliance with them is foundering. But, as a result of his turn to the traditionalists, most reformers no longer trust Gorbachev. Yel'tsin for now is still willing to work with him for tactical reasons, but many other reformers refuse to cooperate with Gorbachev and are criticizing Yel'tsin for doing so. Their cooperation will only last if Gorbachev is prepared to dismantle the political system he now heads.

#### No Muddling Through

The essence of the current crisis is that neither the existing political system Gorbachev is attempting to preserve nor the partially emerging new system is able to cope effectively with newly mobilized popular demands and the deepening economic crisis. In short, the Soviet Union is now in a revolutionary situation, in the sense that it is in a transition from the old order to an as yet undefined new order. As happened in Eastern Europe over the past two years, the ingredients are now present in the USSR--hatred of the old political order, divisions in the political elite and its lack of firm resolve, uncertainty over the reliability of the security services, an increasingly mobilized and organized political opposition--that could quickly sweep away the current political system and leadership.

The reformers' and traditionalists' basic goals for the future of the union are diametrically opposed, so there is little prospect that Gorbachev's so called centrist course can defuse the crisis. For the reformers, especially in Russia, power resides with the people, who can freely chose to participate in a new union, and on what terms. To traditionalists such thinking is revolutionary

[REDACTED]

and they continue to insist that the center dominated system be basically preserved. Although some moderates on each side are willing to compromise on this fundamental issue, those with the political clout to make it work--the security services and the CPSU for the traditionalists, popularly elected leaders and legislators for the pluralists--are not willing to share real power with the other side. [REDACTED]

There can be no muddling through on this fundamental question because in the absence of the use of broad coercion by the hardliners, power will continue shifting toward the republics. Tactical compromises between both sides could make the shift evolutionary, however, preventing a zero-sum crisis or the ouster of Gorbachev. [REDACTED]

### The Key Players

*Gorbachev.* Gorbachev is not likely to regain his former position of power, but he still has an important role to play. Most importantly, his cooperation with the pluralists will be essential to a smooth transition of power to the republics and minimizing the possibility of a violent effort to reverse that process by the hardliners. If he participates in the transfer of power, he should be able to help protect some key concerns of the traditionalists--such as preserving the military and insuring their pensions. In addition, during the transition period Gorbachev would still play a leading role in shaping the center's policies, especially on foreign and defense issues. If he does not cooperate, the political situation will continue to deteriorate and Gorbachev will become even more politically isolated and vulnerable to the political forces demanding his ouster. He would have little recourse but to step down or rely on the traditionalists to use coercive measures to try to stabilize the situation, becoming even more politically dependent on them. [REDACTED]

Despite this danger, Gorbachev's past record suggests that he will again shy away from decisive action and try to get as much authority for the center as possible. His inability to break away mentally from the old order--paternalistic rather than repressive in his mindset--has been a major factor contributing to the current crisis because it has prevented realistic actions from being taken to address the country's mounting problems. If he equivocates in an attempt to preserve the essence of the old system, the political and economic situation will only deteriorate and the longer this goes on, the greater the chances are that the current political system will be suddenly swept away. [REDACTED]

Gorbachev's recent statements and actions suggest that he desperately wants to hold on to power and will be extremely reluctant to step aside voluntarily. He and his advisors appear to be minimizing his problems and he may still believe he can turn things around soon. It cannot be ruled out, however, that as his frustrations continue to grow Gorbachev would voluntarily step aside if he believed his position was irrevocably weakened. Recent interlocutors who have seen him over the years find him increasingly

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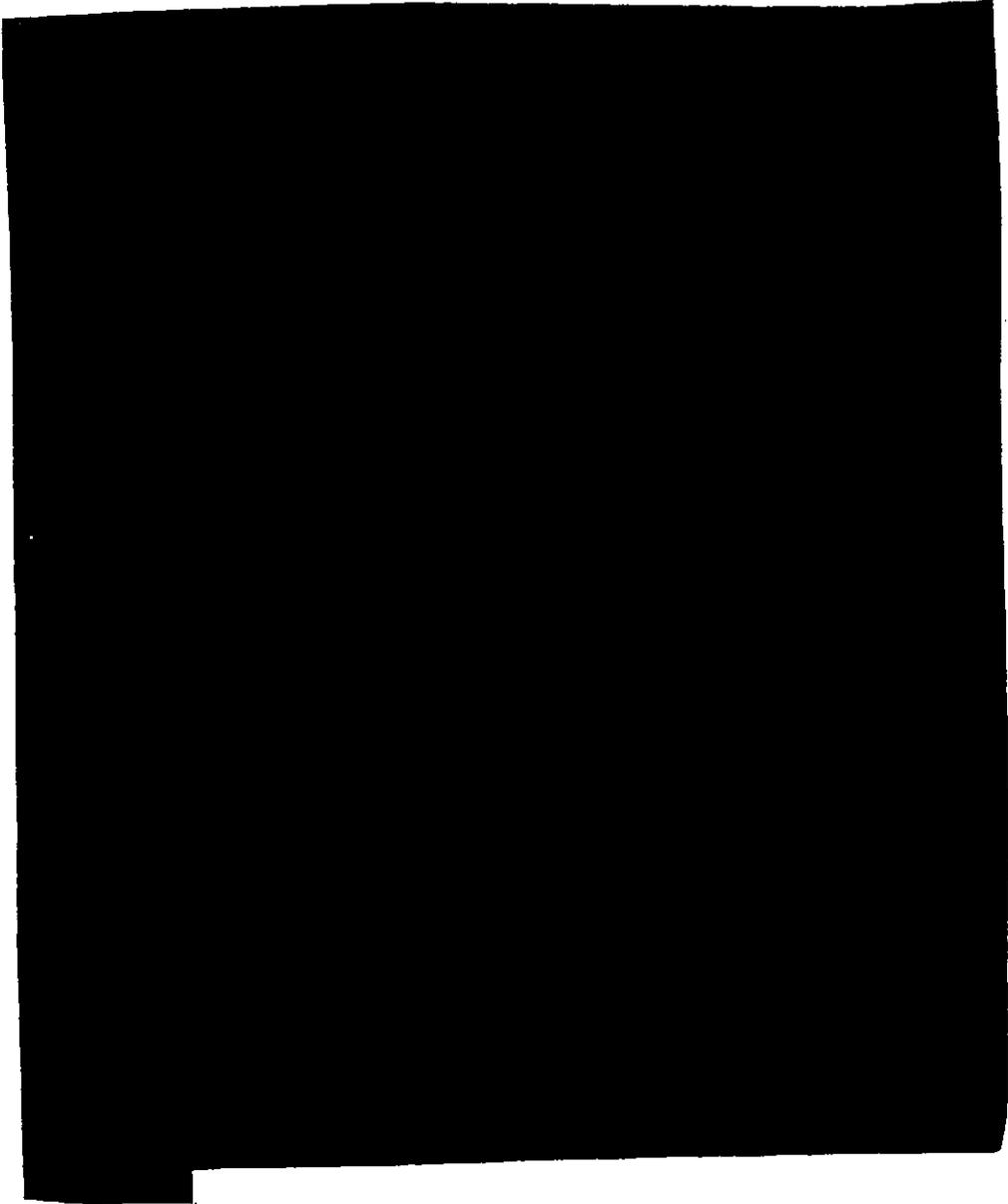
discouraged and despondent and it is possible he may be beginning to lose his political will. His continuing health problems might also influence his thinking on retirement. [REDACTED]

*The Traditionalists.* The kinds of steps Gorbachev will need to take to make the April accord work are anathema to most traditionalists. Mindful of the fate of their counterparts in Eastern Europe--the execution of Ceausescu in Romania, Zhivkov's trial in Bulgaria, and Honecker's similar fate if he had not been smuggled out by the Soviets--they are no doubt aware of the deep hatred of the CPSU and KGB in the USSR and some have privately indicated they fear for their lives. While they want to return to a center dominated system, at least some of them--particularly those near retirement age--may be willing to settle for a solution that protects their lives and pensions. [REDACTED]

The traditionalists who now dominate the top level leadership have been trying to get Gorbachev to go along on the issues they consider most critical. Having him as president, actively or tacitly leading a creeping crackdown, avoids the risks that an outright play for power would entail. There is no love lost between Gorbachev and his traditionalists allies and they could still try to dump him if they believe he is selling out their interests to the republics. Although all share common goals, the traditionalists are divided on the critical question of making broad use of force to achieve them, and many share Gorbachev's aversion to using widespread violence and bloodshed. [REDACTED]

With the changes that have taken place in the top Soviet leadership in recent months, traditionalists hold all of the key positions of power and repression:

[REDACTED]

*The Pluralists.* The primary goal of most pluralists is not to replace Gorbachev, but to transfer power to the republics. Beyond this, however, many of them have sharply different goals. Russia's leaders, who will be the key to shaping a new political system, want a weak center and would transfer power to the republics in a European Community type arrangement dominated by Russia. Central Asian leaders would prefer a stronger center that would allow their republics to continue to receive subsidies from more affluent regions. Most Russian and Ukrainian reformers have genuinely

democratic goals, but in Georgia and Central Asia indigenous forms of authoritarianism are already replacing communist totalitarianism. [REDACTED]

With the recent miners strikes, Soviet workers have emerged as a powerful independent political force pushing the country in a democratic direction. They have only weak ties to the newly emerging political parties, and many no longer trust Yel'tsin because he is cooperating with Gorbachev. Soviet labor is becoming increasingly restive and as the wave of strikes in sympathy with the miners demonstrated, unrest can spread quickly throughout the country. Although these strikes were brought to an end by the joint efforts of Yel'tsin and the center, the promises they made are unlikely to be fulfilled. This will only further fuel workers' growing alienation and frustration, increasing the prospects that the next round of strikes could paralyze the country and create a political crisis. [REDACTED]

Aside from Yel'tsin, there is no other figure among the reformers who is currently in a position to assume a broad leadership role. People like Shevardnadze and Yakovlev are too closely associated with Gorbachev, although they could emerge as important figures if there were a search for compromise candidates for leadership positions acceptable to both reformers and traditionalists. If the reformers prevail, republic leaders will have become the key players:

- Yel'tsin has said he does not want to become USSR president and given the weakness of the office and the unsolvable problems that go with it, he would be unlikely to change his mind unless he saw it as the only way to prevent it from falling into the hands of someone who might be able to use the office against him. In that case he would probably also hold on to the Russian presidency. Yel'tsin has talked about the need for a well organized opposition party, but so far he has not taken steps to join forces with other reformers, some of whom distrust him and see him as an opportunist.
- The other leading republic-level players are Presidents Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Kravchuk of the Ukraine. Both want a new type of union, but are concerned that their interests not be overwhelmed by those of Russia and Yel'tsin. Nazarbayev appears to aspire to a national level role and could be a candidate for a weakened technocratic presidency. [REDACTED]

### The Reliability of the Instruments of Repression

The ability of the traditionalists to act will depend largely on the reliability of their instruments of repression—the KGB, the military, and the MVD Internal Troops. Although the security services certainly have enough loyal troops to execute a coup, imposing martial law throughout the country would be difficult. To undermine this ability further, the opposition has been working with some success to deepen fissures in the military and to a lesser extent in the KGB. There are reports that some soldiers or military

[REDACTED]

units balked at orders to use force in the Baltic republics and Caucasus. [REDACTED]

The reliability of military forces for internal use is a critical and growing concern for the leadership and it is taking steps to address it:

- The CPSU has launched a new drive to reassert its influence in the military and propagandize traditionalist values.
  - A campaign is under way to purge the armed forces of reformist officers or at least move them out of sensitive positions.
- [REDACTED]

The central leadership already has doubts about the reliability of the security services and the democrats are becoming more confident that they will not be used against them. If the opposition can be sure that the center would not make broad use of force against it, the breakdown of the center dominated union and the demise of the regime would accelerate. [REDACTED]

#### Gorbachev's Fate

At the moment Gorbachev's current terms as president and general secretary do not expire until 1995. As a result of changes he initiated in the Constitution and the party rules, he can no longer easily be dumped by other members of the leadership the way Khrushchev was in 1964. Legally removing Gorbachev against his will would be a difficult and cumbersome process:

- He can only be removed as president if he is impeached for violating the Constitution by a two-thirds vote of the Congress of Peoples Deputies.
- Only a CPSU Congress can replace him as party leader, and that would require a long process of electing about 6,000 delegates. [REDACTED]

*A Transition Based on the April Accord.* The April accord could pave the way for Gorbachev's removal within about a year and for a smooth transition of power to the republics. If the serious obstacles that lie ahead can be overcome, the accord would lead to a reconstituted union more or less along the following lines:

- The USSR presidency would be eliminated or stripped of most authority, in effect becoming little more than the coordinator of the

[REDACTED]

republics' policies. If the presidency continued to exist it would either be an appointed position or there would be a popular election. For Gorbachev to have any chance of winning an election he would need the support of key republic leaders.

- The executive authority of the center would be exercised collectively by the republics. The center would probably have control of foreign, defense, and some areas of broad economic policy. If the republics participate in all key decisions by the center, there is a danger that central decisionmaking could become an extremely complex and difficult process, similar to that in Yugoslavia.
- The Supreme Soviet and Congress of Peoples Deputies would be abolished and possibly replaced by a new legislature, elected on a regional basis.
- The current ministerial system, along with much of the central bureaucracy, would be drastically reduced and reorganized, with many of its functions transferred to the republics. [REDACTED]

*If the Accord Fails.* As Gorbachev and the nine republic leaders try to negotiate the details of a new union treaty over the next several months and then a new constitution, this coalition could easily break down. The accord leaves most issues very vague and Gorbachev has yet to demonstrate he is ready to make the kinds of concessions that will be needed to make it work. It may be another case of him offering too little too late. Moreover, there are significant reservations about the accord in some republics, including the Ukraine, because it does not go far enough. [REDACTED]

If the April accord falls apart, particularly if it is because Gorbachev continues to jealously guard the center's prerogatives, the pre-April struggle for power would intensify and lead to a new crisis. Political and economic deterioration would accelerate, with the almost certain resumption of strikes and massive political protest and as the war of laws between the center and the republics resumed. Gorbachev would be even more discredited in the eyes of the reformers and would have no choice but to try to rely on the traditionalists, who would no doubt press him to crack down on the opposition and the republics. With Yel'tsin's election as Russian president and the continued shift in power to the republics, the pluralists would be in a stronger position. The political situation would be highly volatile and could quickly move in a number of different directions. [REDACTED]

Reformers would renew their drive to force Gorbachev from office and take power themselves. They could succeed in a number of ways, which are not mutually exclusive:

- Gorbachev could be forced out by an ultimatum from the unified leadership of the key republics. For such a move to succeed, it would be important to gain the support of the security forces, probably by

[REDACTED]

offering assurances that the military would remain intact and there would not be any retribution against the KGB. Some military leaders might even welcome a reduced union built around the Slavic core because it would keep the bulk of Soviet forces intact, while helping defuse some of its key problems, such as ethnic tensions.

- Gorbachev might also be forced out through a roundtable process. In a desperate effort to try to defuse rising tensions, Gorbachev could agree to roundtable talks being demanded by the opposition. Such a move would probably be a miscalculation, and Gorbachev would likely find himself confronted with an opposition united in its demands that he step down or effectively give up power. Having agreed to share power, he might not be able to ignore such demands without provoking massive national unrest and strikes.
- Massive ongoing national strikes and demonstrations could topple the government. Reformers have demonstrated the ability to mobilize the population and call out huge crowds in their support in Moscow and other major cities. Despite an official ban and threats of police actions, over 200,000 people turned out in a pro-Yel'tsin demonstration in March. Yel'tsin could hasten this process if he began to encourage such actions actively. [REDACTED]

The failure of the accord could also lead to a situation of dual power, with neither the traditionalists nor the reformers firmly in control. This would be most likely to come about if both sides are unsure of their strength and are therefore willing to compromise. Such a situation could unfold along the following lines, but it would be highly unstable and would not last long:

- Frustrated by Gorbachev's intransigence, key republics could go ahead and form a reconstituted union without him--based either on the accord or the negotiations taking place independently of the center among Russia, the Ukraine, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan--and claim the authority now exercised by the center.
- Under intense political pressure, Gorbachev could agree to a transition that leaves him in office for a specified period, perhaps playing for time and still hoping to stay.
- Gorbachev could remain as General Secretary but be forced out as president by the democrats. Even then he might retain the loyalty of the leadership of the KGB, military, and MVD. [REDACTED]

*A Hardline Coup.* To take the tough steps they believe are necessary to forestall a reformist victory, at any point hardliners may try to remove Gorbachev and install their own regime. The danger would be greatest if they believe Gorbachev is selling out their interests to the republics. A move by hardliners would be conspiratorial and could unfold in several ways:

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- They would prefer to oust Gorbachev with a legal veneer by getting him to agree to step down and installing their own candidate. Most likely they would present Gorbachev with an ultimatum to comply or face arrest or death. Yanayev would initially take over as president and Ivashko as general secretary. The traditionalist Congress of Peoples Deputies would then be used to install the hardliners' preferred candidate--this was the way Gorbachev was elected to the post--using the vagueness of the Constitution to postpone a popular election until 1995.
  - They could bypass established procedures and use the crisis situation to justify the Congress of Peoples Deputies and Central Committee removing Gorbachev and installing hardline leaders previously agreed on. Given the traditionalist majority in both institutions, they would almost certainly endorse the choice of a united leadership, although there would be loud protests from the reformers in those bodies.
  - They could move decisively to regain control by declaring a state of emergency throughout the country, installing some sort of National Salvation Committee, likely dominated by security officials, and moving forcefully against the opposition.
  - They could arrange an accident for Gorbachev and replace him by one of the procedures above. 

*Spontaneous Uprisings.* Even if progress is made on the basis of the accord, deteriorating economic and social conditions could lead to sudden outbursts of popular discontent that rapidly grow in intensity and spread throughout the country. The increasingly politicized workforce has become a wildcard in Soviet politics that neither the traditionalists nor reformers might be able to control. Although the miners strike has been suspended, the Soviet labor movement is emerging from the strikes stronger, better organized, and increasingly politicized, and has become a major independent political force. The recent strikes in the Belorussian capital of Minsk demonstrated that even normally quiescent areas can suddenly explode. Although workers view Yel'tsin much more favorably than Gorbachev, the most radical workers do not trust him either. Now that Russia has assumed responsibility for the mines, Yel'tsin will increasingly become a target if the miners' economic demands are not met. The first test is likely to come in July, when miners are threatening a broader general strike if promises made by the center and republics are not fulfilled. 

As economic conditions further deteriorate and workers increasingly feel the effect of recent price increases, Soviet labor is almost certain to be an increasing challenge for the regime as well as republic leaders. If coercive steps are not taken against them, it appears to be only a matter of time before Soviet workers will be able to paralyze the country and force major political concessions, possibly including Gorbachev's resignation. They would be particularly threatening to the regime if they continue to gain force

[REDACTED]

in major urban areas. Widespread workers strikes and protests, independent of Yel'tsin and other political leaders, could lead to a highly unstable situation--not unlike that at the time of the 1917 Revolution--that could sweep away the current political leadership at all levels. [REDACTED]

For a popular upheaval to sweep the regime away, it would have to develop and spread in Russia. While outbursts and major strikes have occurred there, such an upheaval has not taken place to date probably because popular reformist leaders have not sought it and have acted to contain local actions having explosive potential, and the security forces have refrained from major use of brutal force in Slavic areas. Yel'tsin and other reformist leaders have not been physically harmed by the regime, and food shortages in critical areas have been only temporary so far. [REDACTED]

### Indicators and Triggers

The current political situation is highly volatile and could quickly unravel and throw the country into a succession crisis with little warning. The security services are feeling increasingly desperate and there is a possibility that they could act against Gorbachev at any time. It is also possible that a spark could ignited massive protests and strikes by an increasingly frustrated Soviet population that could topple the government. While the reformers' drive for power will continue to be fairly public, a traditionalist initiative would be a secret conspiracy executed suddenly. Military activity would no doubt be associated with it, and while preparations for a nationwide state of emergency could probably be detected, the moves preceding a coup probably would not and even if they were their intent would not be clear. [REDACTED]

Any of the following developments could precipitate a crisis that could bring the leadership situation to an immediate head:

- Gorbachev's death or sudden incapacitation would give the traditionalists some advantages if they were able to keep the information secret and then tried to present the succession as a fait accompli.
- Labor unrest could quickly escalate into a national general strike aimed at bringing down the government.
- The death of Yel'tsin, whether or not by natural causes, would spark massive demonstrations against the regime if it is attributed to the KGB, as it most likely would.
- The belief by traditionalists that their days are quickly coming to an end could prompt them to make a preemptive move.
- After he wins the Russian presidency, Yel'tsin and reformers could mobilize the populace to press for the removal of Gorbachev.

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- Another confrontation between security forces and civilians resulting in civilian deaths, especially if it is much more violent and in a Slavic region, could spark widespread protests. 

### Implications for Soviet Policy

No matter what type of transition takes place, initially the new political arrangements will not be stable. At a minimum, elements of the losing side are unlikely to relinquish power smoothly, so there could be a period of intensified struggle that could escalate into widespread upheaval. Under such unstable conditions, a reformist or traditionalist regime would focus on consolidating power and put other issues on the back burner. Nevertheless, there would quickly be some distinct differences between how each would deal with the most pressing domestic and foreign policy issues. 

*The Reformers.* The exact course of events if reformers gain the upper hand, whether or not Gorbachev is still in office, would depend on circumstances and who the new leaders would be. With the myriad of problems they will inherit, their internal divisions, and the initial need to rely on elements of the old power structure, at first they will find it difficult to govern and implement sweeping new policies. Nonetheless, there would be a more or less rapid devolution of power to the republics:

- For at least a transition period a reconstituted center would exist, but its policies would be set by collective decisions of the participating republics. This would likely be an unwieldy arrangement, dominated by Russia. They would insist on dismantling the repressive capabilities of the KGB and MVD.
- The military would be under the joint control of a weak center in which Russia would have the predominant role. While the Slavic core might agree to support a common military effort, each republic would probably develop some of its own forces, possibly allowing for some centralized command. Most importantly, Soviet nuclear capabilities would remain under a single command.
- Although a reconstituted center would probably retain an overall coordinating role in foreign policy, it would be difficult for it to conclude international negotiations without active republic participation. The republics would probably uphold existing international obligations and treaties, although the dispersion of authority could make implementation and enforcement difficult. The republics would also quickly begin to pursue independent foreign policies and would be particularly anxious to move ahead in establishing foreign economic relations as well as in some cases defense agreements with their neighbors.

- Authority over most domestic matters would be transferred to the republics and different policies would quickly emerge. In most of the European parts of the USSR, including Russia, democratic institutions would develop and there would be new impetus for economic reforms in a market direction, but progress on both fronts would be slow. In Central Asia and parts of the Caucasus authoritarian regimes would likely emerge.
- The republics not wanting to be part of a reconstituted union would be able to leave much more easily than under the current secession law, but they would still need to negotiate an exit that takes account of the other republics' concerns about their defense requirements, financial obligations, minorities (especially Russians), and border issues. Of the six republics not participating in the union treaty negotiations, Moldova and Armenia might be induced to stay in a reconstituted union, but the Baltics and Georgia almost certainly would not. Republics not participating in a new union would raise their own small armies with small conventional arms, but some might maintain some sort of bilateral defense arrangements with the Slavic core that could allow bases to continue to operate on their soil.

*The Traditionalists.* Traditionalists would try to move quickly to clamp down on the opposition:

- They would arrest and conceivably even execute key leaders of the opposition, including Yel'tsin; reimpose strict media censorship; ban activities by opposition political groups; and revert to tight central control over the economy.
- Although there would be severe economic constraints, there would be less of a decline in defense spending.
- While the main focus would be on reestablishing control at home, foreign policy would become less flexible. Progress on arms control would be extremely difficult, but existing agreements probably would be observed. Soviet active measures would increase and if the domestic situation were temporarily stabilized the leadership would probably look for targets of opportunity to reassert Soviet influence abroad, provided the political and economic costs were not too high.
- The regime would adopt a much more truculent public posture toward the West and there would be an internal campaign blaming the country's problems on Western subversion. Although the regime would still be interested in pursuing economic cooperation, its policies would create a very unfavorable climate for joint economic ventures and other cooperative efforts.

**Prospects: A Messy Transition**

No matter what happens, the current political system in the Soviet Union is doomed. If traditionalists seize power, with massive use of force and repression they might temporarily reestablish control of most of the country, but they would not provide a longterm solution, particularly for the economy. Under such a regime political and social alienation would increase sharply; almost certainly democratic and nationalist movements would reemerge. [REDACTED]

Time is working against the traditionalists, however. The longer force is not used, the weaker their position will become. The security services are continuing to fracture, while democratic and republic forces continue to gain strength and organize. Moreover, as the economy continues its downward spiral, labor unrest is almost certain to become more serious, fueling pressures for systemic change. [REDACTED]

Even if Gorbachev manages to remain, his domination of the Soviet political system has ended and will not be resurrected. The sharp decline in his power will be almost impossible to reverse. If he is still in office a year from now a de facto transfer of power will likely have taken place to the traditionalists or more likely to the reformers. The longer the transition is delayed, the more difficult the political and economic situation will become, and the greater the danger of violent upheavals and the harder it will be for anyone to rule effectively. [REDACTED]