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# Gorbachev's November Maneuver

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An Intelligence Assessment

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December 1990

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# Gorbachev's November Maneuver

*An Intelligence Assessment*

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of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are  
welcome and may be directed to the Chief,  
\_\_\_\_\_, SOVA.

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## Gorbachev's November Maneuver

### Key Judgments

*Information available  
as of 30 November 1990  
was used in this report.*

On 17 November the Supreme Soviet gave preliminary approval in principle to a proposed reorganization of the USSR presidency hurriedly presented by Gorbachev. Some elements of the proposal are subject to confirmation by the Congress of People's Deputies when it reassembles in mid-December. Gorbachev's initiative probably marks a significant turning point in Soviet domestic politics. What is happening is more than a rationalizing of executive power at the top of the Soviet system, or just another augmentation of Gorbachev's formal authority. Rather, the issue at stake is the whole approach to be taken to solving the country's critical problems.

Gorbachev's call for an expansion in the authority of the presidency points toward a more authoritarian, centralizing, and autocratic approach to coping with the country's problems. The steps he proposes suggest a hardening of his determination to preserve the union and reflect a judgment that strong measures are required to counter secessionism and maintain his own control over an increasingly chaotic situation. This move represents a direct extension of a policy line of "stabilization" Gorbachev has pursued since the 28th CPSU Congress in July. His strategy here has involved tenacious defense of the union, in which strong central power is to be maintained in a more federally configured association of republics; assignment of high priority to short-term pacification of consumer demands at the expense of real marketization; expansion of presidential authority and hierarchical control; enhancement of the state's law enforcement capabilities; and co-option and constraint of political opposition.

The institutional structures Gorbachev advocates will make it easier for him to exercise a graduated scale of coercive options, up to the introduction of various forms of emergency rule (state of emergency, direct presidential rule, martial law). The logic of the path on which he has embarked increasingly imposes a choice between use of force, which he fears, or display of fecklessness, which further undermines his already low public esteem. He may have concluded that the time to invoke emergency powers has now arrived J

Gorbachev's changes in the presidency (and the policies associated with this move), if approved by the Congress of People's Deputies, may with luck contribute to a short-term (up to six months) stabilization of the Soviet

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domestic scene—at least in some parts of the Russian Republic. But the longer term success of a stabilization strategy based on constraining democracy and frustrating national self-determination depends upon achieving a degree of coercive control over events that the state of real dispersion of power in the country probably puts beyond Gorbachev's reach. This strategy is unlikely to strengthen the day-to-day exercise of government in the USSR. It will probably make nonviolent resolution of secessionism less likely, weaken the existing democratic institutions, and impede marketization.

Gorbachev's more authoritarian approach is likely to confront the United States with a less stable USSR. Pursuit of the "stabilization" strategy will not significantly prolong Gorbachev's tenure of office and may shorten it. It will not reduce Western uncertainty about the long-term prospects of marketizing the Soviet economy. While it may make Gorbachev more vulnerable to pressures from the right on Middle East policy and arms reductions, it will not alter his fundamental need for cooperation with the United States.

Implementation of Gorbachev's design will probably face Washington with new violations of human rights by both the center and the republics. Gorbachev probably believes that Western leaders—including President Bush and Chancellor Kohl—basically support the concept of a unified Soviet state, and he must calculate that Washington would be loath to place in jeopardy Soviet solidarity with the West against Iraq. For these reasons, he probably would not be deterred by fear of losing credits and food aid from imposing harsh emergency measures if he felt this was required to maintain control. In the meantime, if Gorbachev were contemplating a large-scale imposition of such measures, he would almost certainly seek to build centrally controlled stocks of food and consumer goods with which to pacify possible public resistance.

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**Scope Note**

This paper explores, in a question-and-answer format, the broad meaning of the governmental changes proposed by Gorbachev on 17 November 1990 and suggests some possible implications for the United States. It does not consider in detail the parallel process of Gorbachev's struggle to push through a union treaty formally codifying the federal nature of the future USSR—a strategy fully consistent with the expansion of the presidency. The treaty process will be examined in greater depth separately.

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## Gorbachev's November Maneuver

### What Did Gorbachev Actually Propose?

*What did he say?* Gorbachev's proposals and commentary in his speech of 17 November and in his "state of the union" speech the day before covered both institutional and policy matters—the latter encompassing executive power, law and order, food supply, the union treaty, military questions, and political opposition. The main institutional innovations Gorbachev proposed were creation of a:

- *Cabinet of Ministers.* Representing a reorganized and reshuffled Council of Ministers, this body—the draft union treaty indicated—would be headed by a chairman directly responsible to the president and not to the Supreme Soviet.
- *Vice President.* No specifics were offered.
- *Federation Council.* This existing body, composed of republic heads of state, would be upgraded and assisted by a new "Interrepublican Committee"—a working organ composed of "highly qualified experts and specialists" empowered to represent the republics.
- *National Monitoring Chamber.* Created under the president to oversee nationwide implementation of laws and decrees, this body would have plenipotentiary representatives in all republics and regions.
- *National Security Council.* Leaders of the KGB and Ministries of Defense, Internal Affairs, and Foreign Affairs reportedly will sit on this body, which Gorbachev seemed to suggest was a successor to the Presidential Council—his quasi-cabinet set up in March 1990, which included these four officials plus other members.
- *Law Enforcement Coordination Body.* Tasked to "combat organized crime, the shadow economy, speculation, and other manifestations of criminal

activity that have beset the country," this body would somehow incorporate a "special service under the President."

*What did he not say?* There was much unclear, or left unsaid, in Gorbachev's presentation. He did not clarify how much power would be assigned to the Federation Council. He did not specify which "outdated links and structures" would be dissolved in the Council of Ministers. He did not say how much authority would be given to the plenipotentiary representatives of the Monitoring Chamber and what kind of power would back them up. He did not specify the role of the National Security Council. Nor did he clarify what the functions of his proposed "special service" would be, even though he indicated it would begin operations in "10-12 days."

### What Is the Thrust of Gorbachev's Proposal?

*How should the proposal be characterized?* Gorbachev rejects charges that his proposals subvert democracy and justifies what he is doing as simply improving the capability of the Soviet state to deal with chaos. While he is sometimes accused of hyping the problems of the USSR in order to gain acceptance of his policies, he obviously now confronts staggering economic difficulties, mounting social unrest, and potential collapse of the multinational Soviet state. Reflecting on these cruel dilemmas, some reformers have praised Gorbachev's initiative. Nevertheless, the thrust of his recommendations—in the policy context that he elaborates—is authoritarian, centralizing, and autocratic. They tilt the system away from democratic means of dealing with problems and toward the old "administrative-command" methods. They also refine the president's capacity to institute martial law or "presidential rule."



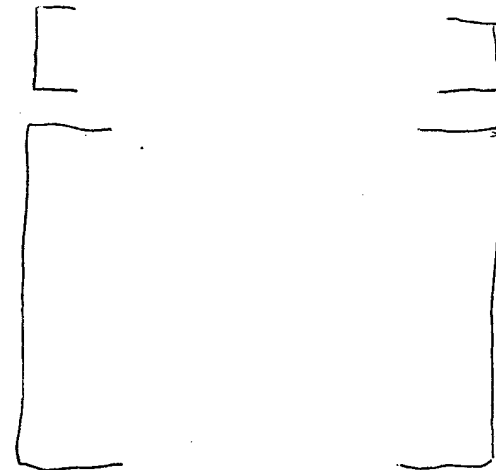
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### What Were the Political Pressures on Gorbachev To Make This Move?

*Was it a snap reaction to the failure of his 16 November speech?* There were claims that Gorbachev sat up all night devising specific proposals following the resounding criticism of his "state of the union" speech to the Supreme Soviet on 16 November. No doubt the timing of the proposals was affected by this failure, unless one assumes that the speech of the 16th was a deliberate setup designed precisely to evoke a call for strong measures such as those laid out by Gorbachev on 17 November. But, as an aide of Gorbachev has since acknowledged, these changes had been under consideration for some time. They were not a spontaneous improvisation; in fact, they were broadly suggested in Gorbachev's own economic "Guidelines" published in *Pravda* on 18 October.

*Was Gorbachev pushed into his move by the right?* For over a year there has been a growing sense on the right that, under cover of *perestroika*, nationalists and liberals have been seeking not to "reform" the Soviet system, but actively conspiring to overthrow it—to "restore capitalism." What is at stake in the resurrection of the "subversion" issue is partly values and symbolism, but—more important—the jobs, functions, power, income, and social status of millions of party, governmental, and economic bureaucrats. Gorbachev has countered this criticism—insofar as it is addressed to him—by asserting that the kind of marketization he seeks to implement is "socialist," while publicly acknowledging that there are some "extremists" among reformers, just as there are opponents of his own touchstone of legitimacy, *perestroika*, on the right.

In September and October, when world attention was focused on alarm among reformers over the possibilities of a military coup, a provocative media campaign was unleashed implicitly charging the main reformist forces—including Boris Yel'tsin by implication—with seeking to overthrow the Soviet state.



At this time there may well have been a true shock of recognition within the political-military establishment that the time had come to man the barricades. Indeed, the Shatalin Plan *did* imply the "restoration of capitalism"; Yel'tsin's call for the resignation of the entire Council of Ministers could be viewed as striking at the core of "Soviet state power"; the RSFSR "war of laws" with Gorbachev, the cascade of republic sovereignty declarations, and the dramatic assertion of nationalist power in the Ukraine and elsewhere suggested a potentially fatal weakening of the union; there was the prospect of liberal party organizing taking place soon that might create a more serious reformist opposition; and there were increasingly troublesome displays of militant anti-Communism everywhere.

Some of the restorationist ire was openly directed at Gorbachev. At a meeting of military deputies to soviets held several days before Gorbachev unveiled his presidential reorganization plans, the leader of the conservative Soyuz (Union) group in the USSR Supreme Soviet, Lieutenant Colonel Alksnis, implying that he spoke for "the military," issued a direct ultimatum to Gorbachev. And following Gorbachev's

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announcement of his plans, Alksnis gave an interview to the rightwing newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya* in which he reasserted that Soyuz would seek Gorbachev's removal in 30 days if he failed to crack down—including instituting direct presidential rule in the Baltic republics. Equally ominously, Marshal Akhromeyev—hardly a rightwing radical—publicly accused the liberals on 14 November in this same newspaper of seeking the “liquidation of the socialist system in our country and its replacement by a capitalist system.” He warned that, if separatists or “antisocialists” were to “try to use force or any other anticonstitutional actions to dismember our society or change its social system,” the Armed Forces could act—“by decision of the Supreme Soviet and the USSR President.”<sup>1</sup>

But it is unclear how much this pressure from the right and center has had a determining influence on Gorbachev's behavior. Others have also been urging Gorbachev to take a more decisive stand. To preempt a rightwing national-socialist takeover, or maintain public order, or—particularly—force the adoption and implementation of unpopular economic reform measures, some liberals were urging Gorbachev this fall to institute some sort of emergency rule. Shatalin himself, who has been having frequent and very close contact with Gorbachev, publicly urged the establishment in the provinces of proconsuls from Moscow.

<sup>1</sup> Akhromeyev firmly concluded: “The attacks on generals and even the anti-Army campaign as a whole might seem to be tangential questions of our life. But in fact they have ceased to be tangential since mid-1990. Since then the separatists' and antisocialist forces' policy of discrediting the Armed Forces has merged with the discrediting of the Communist Party and attempts to force it onto the margins of society. Starting at the same time there has been the mass campaign against the USSR Government in the press and demands at meetings, in television broadcasts, and in the press for its resignation. The summer of 1990 saw the start of a unified offensive by destructive forces against nationwide state and social structures. This also signaled the start of an offensive against our federative state, with a view to dismembering it, and against our socialist system, with a view to eliminating it. The only people who cannot see this today are people who do not wish to. The time has come for our federative socialist state, the cause of our life, and the future of our children to be actively and resolutely defended within the framework of our constitution.”

*Was Gorbachev moving in this direction anyway?*  
Since the beginning of 1990, Gorbachev himself has been drifting in an authoritarian direction. [

It is unclear how tight a leash Gorbachev keeps on Kryuchkov. But there have been public signs that Gorbachev has increasingly accepted the notion that the left is engaged in a calculated, illegitimate struggle to seize power and dismember the Soviet state. In his speech on 16 November, in language smacking of intelligence reporting, Gorbachev ominously attacked “those who want to unsettle the basic forces in the leadership of the country and the republics. I can see this at the republic level, at the local level, and at the union level. It is being done consistently, as if in accordance with a program, a calculated schedule in the construction business. I believe even that it comes from some committee or group. . . .”

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**Was Gorbachev's Proposal Tailored To Achieve a Policy Line He Had Already Been Pursuing?**

*Has there been any coherent policy line?* The answer here is an unequivocal yes. Gorbachev's reach for expanded presidential power is a logical extension of a strategy of political, economic, ethnic, and social "stabilization" that he has been pursuing since at least the 28th party congress. This strategy has been driven by a judgment that the Soviet Union faces a clear and present danger of catastrophic systemic collapse. Gorbachev has issued a number of dramatic public warnings on this score—intended, to be sure, to rally support for what he defines as his own "centrist" position.<sup>1</sup> [

An examination of Gorbachev's pronouncements over the past six months indicates he perceives at least five major sources of potential anarchy:

- Fragmentation of the multinational state, produced by nationalism and secessionism.
- Uncontrollable strike activity, resulting from a failure to integrate the new "workers' movement" into the existing political process.<sup>2</sup>
- Violent popular unrest, sparked by food and consumer goods shortages.<sup>3</sup>
- Collapse of established authority, provoked by "extremist" political activity.
- Breakdown of "executive authority," caused by the removal of Communist Party control and the recalcitrance of local officials.

<sup>1</sup> On 1 November 1990 he stated: "To restrain the situation, to ensure that it does not go out of control and does not become chaotic, and that destabilization does not reach dangerous proportions—and we are already facing this danger in the economy, comrades, and with regard to the law, and with regard to the multinational state and everywhere—there must be no further retreat. If this goes any further, there will be the collapse of the economy, the collapse of the state, the collapse of political structures."

This is a fairly traditionalist assessment of the problem. Others, like Yel'tsin, would agree that these are potentially critical conditions but would disagree on their causes and—by implication—their cures. They would argue that the true sources of the present crisis lie in the repression of national self-determination, the absence of an independent labor movement, the persistence of privilege and injustice as well as material shortages, and the lack of public trust in established authority. Only by dealing with *these* causes, so the argument would go, can the possibility of anarchy be reduced

Operationally, pursuit of "stabilization" has led Gorbachev to:

- Tenaciously defend the existing national-territorial boundaries of the USSR.
  - Assign top priority in economic policy to short-run pacification of the population, phasing marketization in afterward rather than as part of a parallel process.
  - Seek to expand presidential power.
  - Strengthen law enforcement and the capability to maintain public order.
  - Attempt to co-opt and constrain political opposition.
- These objectives have frequently clashed with forces released by Gorbachev's own policies of *glasnost* and *demokratizatsiya* and have run at cross-purposes with other current goals he has pursued, but they have been the dominant impulse. And they are clearly reflected in Gorbachev's presentation of the expanded presidency

*How has Gorbachev sought to maintain the union?* [ Gorbachev might be prepared to settle eventually—if he has to—for a Soviet Union smaller than it is today.<sup>4</sup> And

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Gorbachev himself has publicly alluded to the differentiated status of parts of the Russian Empire as a conceivable model of a future Soviet federation. Nevertheless, his activity operationally has in no way been premised on any tacit assumption of a breakup of the union. To strengthen his bargaining position, keep the traditionalists in line, and—probably most important—seek to realize his own strongly held convictions, Gorbachev has tirelessly propounded the cultural, security, humanitarian, and above all economic rationales for maintaining the existing union and has asserted his intention of fighting secessionism.

On the practical plane, Gorbachev has sought to accelerate the process of drafting a union treaty that would devolve some real authority to the republics but lock in strong federal powers before the ongoing disintegration of the union makes this politically impossible. Meanwhile, he has tried to put the brakes on republic assertiveness. He has impeded serious negotiations on Baltic independence, emphasized human and small-nationality rights to block national self-determination by republics, insisted on federal oversight of minority issues, used the security services to run covert political influence operations against the nationalist opposition, employed his presidential decree powers to preempt the republics in economic policy and to nullify attempts to implement republic sovereignty declarations, and rejected the Shatalin Plan (which had amazingly secured the agreement of all but one of the republics) because—among other reasons—it was premised on republic independence and confederal association.

In his speeches on 16 and 17 November, Gorbachev reasserted once again a firm determination to preserve the union and a desire to accelerate the process of drafting and signing a union treaty as the means of holding the union together. (The draft of the treaty was published in *Pravda* on 24 November.) The strategy implied by the speeches is to:

- Obtain affirmation by the Supreme Soviet of the supremacy of the USSR Constitution and union laws and decrees and of the need for a "moratorium" on disputes over jurisdiction and powers

[ ]

between the center and the republics, *until the union treaty is signed*—as a means of leveraging the republics to agree to the center's treaty terms.

- Reach agreement on the treaty *before* working out the details of dividing property and power between the center and the republics.
- Move ahead with central restructuring, personnel changes, and legislation to create *faits accomplis* before the treaty is signed.
- Employ law enforcement mechanisms, administrative controls, and personnel changes to exert central control over the republics.
- Seek to manipulate the political equation through cooption in the Federation Council and other union organs, insistence on nondemocratically determined representation of prounion forces in the republic power structures, and delegitimization of the electoral basis of ethnic representation (see below).

*How has pacifying consumer demands affected marketization?* Concern with a hostile, possibly violent, public reaction has for several years been a constant consideration constraining Gorbachev's acceptance of marketization. Even before the battle over the Shatalin Plan was joined, Gorbachev had effectively put serious marketization on hold until at least 1992 by signing decrees on 27 September and 4 October that mandated maintenance of existing supply relationships and fixed prices for a number of key industrial goods. Whereas the Shatalin Plan visualized stabilization and marketization as parallel and interactive processes, Gorbachev's own economic "Guidelines" view the two as sequentially staged. Correspondingly, Gorbachev's speeches on the presidency focus heavily on the food supply issue.

*How has Gorbachev sought to expand presidential power?* One strand in the expansion of presidential power has been an increase in the president's authority. Thus, in addition to normal powers assigned to the president, the original law of 14 March 1990 establishing the presidency allowed the president to

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declare martial law, introduce a state of emergency, or introduce provisional presidential rule in localities and republics, and to issue mandatory decrees about almost anything. The 24 September law fine-tuned the decree authority, giving the president the right—until 31 March 1992—of issuing decrees covering all key economic issues, the establishment of new state economic structures, and "law and order" matters, unless the USSR Supreme Soviet objected. And the restructuring of the presidency in November essentially expands the president's personal authority by strengthening his *direct* control over the central bureaucracy and security services.

The other main strand of expansion of presidential power that Gorbachev has sought has been an increase in ~~hierarchical-bureaucratic control~~. Like Ryzhkov, Gorbachev has defined the present "power vacuum" problem as a breakdown in "executive authority" produced by the failure of new institutional mechanisms to perform the vertical integrating function formerly performed by the party apparatus. In Gorbachev's view, there has also been willful failure of "lower" officials—who have been guided by illegitimate "localistic" or "nationalist" motives—to implement USSR laws. Thus, from the very outset of his presidency, Gorbachev sought to mobilize the governmental structures—the soviets and their executive committees—at all "subordinate" administrative levels as links in a chain of power stretching down from the Kremlin to the localities.<sup>4</sup>

All the elements of this approach to the executive power vacuum and how to solve it appear in Gorbachev's speeches of 16 and 17 November. "Where is

<sup>4</sup> In his inaugural presidential address of 15 March 1990, Gorbachev enthused: "Precisely as a result of the new system of local soviets, a mechanism is arising on which the president can rely when carrying out his functions." Days later he stated to the Presidential Council: "No mechanism of implementing presidential decisions is more comprehensive and reliable than the soviets, their chairmen, and executive committees." His 15 October economic "Guidelines" openly stated: "The vertical chain of joint subordination of executive organs must be immediately restored so that governments and soviet executive committees at various levels are in a state of dual subordination—to the relevant Soviets of people's deputies and to superior organs of executive power. Decisions adopted by superior organs within the limits of their competence are binding on inferior organs." Later in October, in the "war of laws" with the RSFSR, Gorbachev issued directives requiring lower-level Soviets to execute the orders of higher-level Soviets, and all lower-level authorities to implement his own decrees.

the mechanism," he asked, that can perform the role once handled by the party? The answer, he indicated, was the subordination of executive power at the national level to the president (that is, not to the Supreme Soviet), the subordination of all lower executive bodies to higher ones, and the combination at all levels of the posts of chairman of the soviet and chairman of its executive committee. The hoped-for effect of the latter move, apparently, would be not only to eliminate "paralyzing competition," as Gorbachev emphasized, but also to reduce the "horizontal" influence of elected soviets on the administrative process.

*What is the thrust of strengthening law enforcement?* Over the past year or so, Gorbachev has persistently backed a policy of strengthening "law and order" in the sense in which this phrase is conventionally understood. There have been significant moves to beef up the MVD, the KGB has been authorized to expand domestically through creation of a major new directorate to fight organized crime, and punitive new economic legislation has been passed—most recently a law signed by Gorbachev on 31 October levying draconian penalties for "speculation" (the purchase of goods at fixed state prices and their resale for a profit)

In both a broad and a narrow sense, much of Gorbachev's proposed reorganization deals with "law enforcement." In the narrow sense, it is aimed at effecting "urgent organizational and personnel changes in the center, republics, and localities"; attempting to insulate law enforcement agencies from pressures brought to bear on them by local and republic authorities (who, Gorbachev notes, are blocking the prosecution of "separatist instigators"); and strengthening Gorbachev's personal control over law enforcement and security services at the top.

*How is Gorbachev attempting to co-opt and constrain political opposition?* In a variety of ways, Gorbachev has been working—not always successfully—to "stabilize" matters politically by co-opting opposition and trying to constrain its development. At the 28th party congress in July, he strongly urged the formation of a

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"coalition," and he has repeated this proposal since. What Gorbachev seems to have in mind is a rallying of individuals and groups prepared to subordinate their own interests to his policy line (*perestroika*). Indicative here has been the recent campaign by Gorbachev's allies, first of all Anatoly Luk'yanov, to promote a ragtag collection of miniorganizations that have been created by the authorities or lack any significant popular base as a multiparty "centrist bloc" supporting Gorbachev. Gorbachev himself has not been talking about a genuine "center-left" formation, but one composed of "healthy," "patriotic" elements committed to the "socialist choice." He has not been talking about the coalition as a means of replacing the existing governmental structure and bridging to a new one, but as a means of "consolidating" what has been achieved under his rule to date. Nor has he been talking about actually sharing power. His objective seems to be to co-opt, subordinate, split off, or isolate *leaders* likely to pose a serious oppositional threat, and to contain the developing party-political process within the existing institutional framework, reducing the likelihood of uncontrollable political movements erupting in society at large. Naturally, events may ultimately compel Gorbachev to accept a true coalition and power sharing

At the same time the Communist Party continues to play a significant role in Gorbachev's calculations. He has taken action to defend the retention of property by the Communist Party apparatus; supported the preservation of Communist Party organizations in the Armed Forces, KGB, and MVD, and staunchly defended the continued presence of party cells in workplaces; appealed for the creation once again of cohesive Communist Party fractions in the soviets as a means of exerting party influence; and urged soviets to respond to initiatives from the party apparatus. He has sided in effect with those who would preserve—albeit in a nonmonopolistic mode—the old "transmission belts" of establishment-favored labor and youth organizations. He has publicly encouraged activity by the party apparatus designed to extend its influence into new political parties and movements.



Finally, he has sought to co-opt and constrain political opposition this year through institutional tinkering that offers the appearance of participation in the exercise of power without providing more than consultation.\*

The proposal to upgrade the Federation Council is the key institutional device employed in Gorbachev's current attempt to control the opposition—in this case, republic independence movements, and first of all that of the RSFSR. If the Federation Council, presumably chaired by Gorbachev and composed of republican heads of state, were in fact vested with serious power and became the genuine top decisionmaking body, this could be a major step toward a democratic and peaceful resolution of center-republic conflict. But this arrangement is almost certainly not what Gorbachev is offering, as long as he can avoid it. What he appears to be angling for is an outcome in which an agreement on a division of jurisdiction between the center and the republics signed by the latter (the union treaty) gives strong "sovereign" powers to the central *federal* authority. Yet a truly empowered Federation Council would be much more compatible with a *confederal* arrangement (leading down the Yugoslav path of federal paralysis) than with this sort of federation. Even assuming agreement were reached on federal powers, it is hard to believe that Gorbachev would be proposing that they actually be exercised by a committee of *republic* leaders.

\* This pseudo-corporatist approach appeared in the nonauthentic "cabinet" role of top government officials appointed to the now defunct Presidential Council; the group "representational" role of the "Russian nationalist," "worker," "Central Asian," "liberal intellectual," and other unattached and nonresponsible appointees to the Presidential Council; and the "representational" role of republic council of ministers chairmen included in the USSR Council of Ministers Presidium, republic Supreme Soviet chiefs included in the Federation Council attached to Gorbachev, and republic party first secretaries incorporated in the party Politburo after the 28th party congress.

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Gorbachev's own language on the Council's power is ambiguous:

*I propose . . . to invest the USSR Federation Council with qualitatively new powers. From a consultative body it must turn into an effective structure for the coordination of the efforts of the center and the republics, I stress, so that everything concerning the entire country is discussed and approved by the Federation Council during adoption both at the center and in the republics. On this basis decisions will be worked out which are acceptable for everyone.*

What is clear from his words is his intention to use the Council to influence policymaking in the republics.

[ ] And one of his close aides has publicly stated already that Gorbachev will maintain control. Given the fact that all the members of the (heretofore not very active) Federation Council work full-time outside Moscow, Gorbachev might well feel confident that—at the very least—he can prevent the Council from damaging his own objectives.

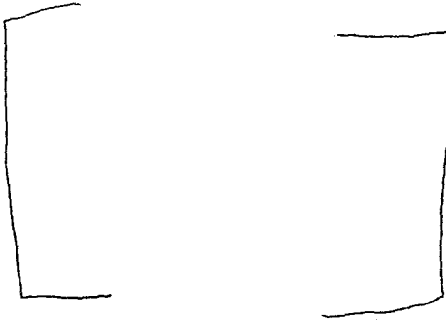
Other signs of intent to co-opt and constrain opposition are apparent in Gorbachev's reorganization talk. In alluding to the "need . . . for present and future power structures to be based on a coalition of the perestroika and democratic forces," Gorbachev emphasized that this principle had to be applied at the republic level as well—meaning, in effect, that nonnative groups excluded by the ballot from power in the republics would have to be cut in. Gorbachev also called for the incorporation of republic representatives in collegial bodies of the central bureaucracy and closer "cooperation" between the USSR Supreme Soviet and republic soviets. He appealed for a personnel shakeup of the central government that would bring to office "the most authoritative political figures and specialists who enjoy the support of broad circles of the public. We need a government with a broad social base." And he demanded that the media "stop sowing dissension and panic."

*Is Gorbachev's proposed expansion of presidential authority the penultimate stage in a planned imposition of emergency rule?* The short answer is that we do not know. It is apparent that the structural changes Gorbachev intends to make will facilitate the adoption of emergency measures, for which there are probably already contingency plans. Leaving aside a priori reasoning about whether he would or would not, there are several ambiguous pieces of evidence indicating that he *might* now be prepared to move to emergency rule, at least on a republic or regional basis, or possibly on an even more limited scale—for example, assumption of control of an industry or transportation system. First, the way in which he has been talking lately suggests he may believe that, facing anarchy and economic cataclysm, public opinion even in the more independently minded republics is swinging toward union preservation and would accept strong medicine. Second, his characterization of the aims of the political opposition and the present danger is now virtually indistinguishable from that of the right.<sup>14</sup> And, third, Gorbachev himself may obliquely have been indicating readiness to introduce presidential rule.<sup>15</sup>

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 "In his 16 November "state of the union" speech, he said: "An extremely real political struggle, a struggle for power, is going on . . . this struggle is acquiring the nature of a confrontation, and in this struggle we can see more frequently that those taking part in it will stop at nothing. Weapons of an anticonstitutionalist nature have been brought into play, laws are openly ignored, tension is exacerbated in society, and in a number of the country's regions political forces with frankly brownshirt tones have appeared. They are also carrying out their activities with their sights set on their own objectives. There is a shameless manipulation of public opinion. The sound of the microphone at rallies is presented as the voice of the people. Frenzied attempts are undertaken to discredit the institutions of state power that embody the idea of a union-federative state and that constitute its backbone—the soviets at all levels, the Army, and law enforcement bodies."

"In his 16 November speech, he said: "The president receives many appeals from citizens and individual public organizations requesting that presidential rule be introduced to prevent a disaster or its spread. But there are virtually no such appeals from the bodies of power. Let us think. What is the matter? Where are they? What is their position? Listen, this way you can turn the president into . . . If it is not introduced, then where is the president and where are his powers? Why did we give him the powers?"

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**Will Gorbachev's Presidential Expansion Gambit Succeed?**

*Will Gorbachev manage to gain approval of the proposal in December from the Congress of People's Deputies?* Opposition in the Supreme Soviet to the proposal has already expressed itself, and Gorbachev will be pressed to answer searching questions about the new institutional arrangements before they receive final approval in principle even from this body, before they are submitted to the Supreme Soviet's parent organization, the Congress. But the Congress will probably confirm them. In the meantime, publication of the draft union treaty on 24 November has fused consideration of the changes in the presidency and the proposed union. Without substantial concessions, Gorbachev is unlikely to get much more than a bare majority of republics agreeing to either the new presidency or the union treaty.

*Assuming for the sake of argument that the expanded presidency is approved without drastic changes, will it work?* The answer to the question obviously depends on the criterion of success.

*Will the projected changes strengthen "executive authority"?* Gorbachev is probably counting on the willingness of a public exhausted by the current chaos to support tough actions, including the sweeping personnel removals he alludes to, and on his ability to reconstitute "administrative-command" control. If he really is prepared to use coercive measures, this might allow him to strengthen his hold in the short run at least over the central bureaucracy, although gaining compliance even here will not be easy. Harsh measures are likely to promote conflict with the new

popularly elected local soviets. The chances are that such measures will sharpen collisions even with those republics that do agree to play by his new rules.

*Will the projected changes promote short-term stability?* There are many "ifs" here. If Gorbachev's proposals are accepted by the Supreme Soviet and by participating republics without too much acrimony and divisiveness, if presidential action actually *does* improve food distribution and fuel and power availability, if presidential crackdown measures are seen by the public to be making a perceptible improvement in law and order, if the confrontation with local and republic governments is not too serious, and if implementation of the measures constrains rather than incites industrial labor action, Gorbachev's gambit could promote short-term stability (that is, over the next three to six months or so). The chance that at least some of these conditions will not be met, however, is high.

*Will the projected changes protect Gorbachev himself?* The proposed arrangements appear to permit Gorbachev to exercise even closer control of the military and security services. He is also talking about a shakeup in the leadership of the armed forces and—it would appear—in the KGB. Both types of action, once carried out, should lessen Gorbachev's vulnerability to a coup. But political passions are now running high, and neither type of action will lessen Gorbachev's vulnerability to overthrow by legitimate parliamentary means. Technically, a two-thirds majority of the Congress finding him in violation of the Constitution—a provision of no fixed meaning—would be required to impeach Gorbachev. But a simple majority vote of no confidence might be sufficiently damaging politically to force his resignation.

*Will the projected changes lead to the sort of federal solution to the nationality problem that Gorbachev wants?* Taking the initiative as he has may strengthen Gorbachev's tactical bargaining position somewhat and perhaps allow him to influence the institutional and constitutional-legal terms of reference of the

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struggle over the future of the union. But he will not get agreement from many republics on the conditions he seeks to impose on this struggle, such as the preeminence now of union law and a "moratorium" on conflict. A good number of the republics are likely to be put off by his pressure tactics and manipulative strategy; this is likely to strengthen their resolve to seek still greater independence.

The key to the outcome of the conflict will continue to be what sort of deal he manages to strike with the Russian Republic on property and powers. Gorbachev's apparent tactic of attempting to mobilize traditionalists at the recently convened Russian Congress of People's Deputies on 27 November to force the union treaty issue onto the agenda demonstrated his resolve to carry the fight to Yel'tsin. Yel'tsin has been seeking to retard consideration of the union treaty while the RSFSR adopts its own constitution and the nature of the future union is shaped from the bottom up through negotiations among the republics themselves. He is likely to continue to apply counterpressures against Gorbachev through "horizontal" interaction with other republics. If Gorbachev had offered to negotiate a year ago on the basis of the recently published draft union treaty, the terms of which are fully consistent with his proposed presidential reorganization, the chances of his getting a strong federal outcome would have been much better than they are today.

*Will the projected changes facilitate marketization of the Soviet economy?* The expanded presidential authority may accelerate the adoption by the center of rules and regulations (for example, dealing with expansion and protection of property rights) that could ultimately facilitate transition to a market economy—although, basically, Gorbachev already had the power to issue the relevant decrees. The system of administrative control that he is attempting to establish is designed, however, precisely to enforce laws that postpone serious marketization to at least the spring of 1992. Whether even rigorous employment of police action and "plenipotentiaries" will stem the growth of regional and interrepublic trade barriers is highly questionable. The acquisition of new coercive capabilities will permit Gorbachev to make progress on

financial stabilization only if he is prepared to risk severe and unpopular budgetary and personnel cuts.

*What are the costs of Gorbachev's gambit?* The costs of Gorbachev's "stabilization" through enhanced presidential authority are likely to be high. Introduction of the changes only seven months after the establishment of the presidency contributes to the very sense of fluidity of governmental power the changes are meant to combat. The attempt to restore a bureaucratic command hierarchy will clash with the newly established responsibility of local government bodies to popularly elected soviets. The activities of punitive/monitoring agencies not accountable to local and republic governments will introduce still more uncertainty.

Gorbachev's maneuver, however "necessary" it is from his standpoint and however benign his intentions may be, is likely to weaken democratic institutions and processes. It is inspired by an authoritarian-corporatist approach to problem solving that now sharply conflicts with trends set in motion by his own earlier espousal of *glasnost* and *demokratizatsiya*. The types of action that will flow from this maneuver are likely to weaken the elected soviets at both the central and local levels, stimulating the mood of pessimism about the future already in evidence among reformers. Gorbachev's approach cannot help but strengthen the social forces and institutions most opposed to democracy. While the expansion of presidential rule is justified in terms of strengthening "law," activities promoted under presidential authority are likely to work against institutionalization of the rule of law. They ease the path to full-blown authoritarianism and make a bid for a traditionalist restoration more likely.

Gorbachev's speech and behavior recently suggest a hardening, even, of his determination to preserve the existing union. His push to expand presidential authority, combined with his effort to force through the adoption of a federalist union treaty, is likely to make

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nonviolent resolution of secessionist and republic sovereignty demands less likely. Verbally, Gorbachev is delegitimizing and—implicitly—recriminalizing the expression of nationalist positions. Enforcement activity to impose presidential decrees that is clearly prefigured in his speeches would appear likely to dangerously inflame relations between the center and the republics.

Finally, the expansion of presidential rule is likely to block, rather than facilitate, marketization. Gorbachev's approach to economic "stabilization" will be impossible to implement without retaining those central economic bureaucracies that are a prime impediment to marketization. The punitive approach he has adopted toward "speculation" will dampen entrepreneurship in the urban economy. Likewise, the coercion he suggests in dealing with food supply delivery problems could, if care is not exercised, involve requisitioning activities that will chill the privatization of agriculture.

*What are the positive aspects of Gorbachev's gambit?* The list of potential positive effects of this latest move by Gorbachev is not a long one. The main one is that—with a great deal of luck—it might in fact promote short-term stabilization and buy him a little more time. "Short-term" here means probably no more than the duration of the winter—at best, six months or so. From the republic perspective, the evidence this move provides of Gorbachev's unwillingness still to accept confederation could help to accelerate "horizontal" resolution of republic independence or autonomy demands. And from the reformist standpoint, the effort to rebuff assertions of central political control conceivably might help to overcome the current fractionation of democratic forces.

#### What Are the Implications for the United States?

*Will the United States face a more stable or unstable USSR?* Gorbachev's "stabilization" formula is badly flawed. It has led him down a path in which his options have been increasingly narrowed to the employment of force, which he shuns as dangerous, or to voicing still more empty threats that further undermine his own authority. The type of "stabilization" to

which he has committed himself depends upon achieving a degree of coercive control over events that is now beyond his reach. Given the decomposition of totalitarian control mechanisms in the USSR and the expansion of pluralism, efforts to assert such control without massive repression—which could fragment the military and security services—are unlikely to work for long except in isolated locales and will probably heighten instability across the board. Massive repression probably could pacify Soviet society for a while, but only at the price of plunging the country later into still greater chaos.

*How will this gambit affect Gorbachev's tenure in office?* It will not significantly prolong Gorbachev's tenure and could hasten his departure from office. The physical strain on Gorbachev imposed by assuming more direct control over the central bureaucracy is likely to increase. His assumption of this role will make it more difficult for him to shift the blame to others, even if he has a "prime minister" beneath him. The increased likelihood of common frustration of both the right and the left with his performance could hasten a parliamentary overthrow of Gorbachev. Negotiations over the union treaty, if more successful than currently seems likely, could force Gorbachev into accepting a presidential election in the near term, which he could very well lose.

*How will Gorbachev's move affect Soviet trade relations with the United States and the West?* By using his decree powers—which he had already—Gorbachev might be able to eliminate some bureaucratic obstacles to trade. Contrary to what he has asserted, the expansion of presidential power is unlikely to ease concerns among Western businessmen about the authority of competing Soviet negotiating partners. The delay of phasing in serious marketization until at least 1992 will prolong uncertainty about the fate of economic reform and postpone the ability of the West to interact with the Soviet Union on a real market basis.

#### *Will Gorbachev's move affect Soviet foreign policy?*

The strategy of attempting to pacify public food and consumer demands implicit in Gorbachev's current

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strategy militates in favor of continuity in Gorbachev's foreign policy line. He needs cooperation with the United States in order to gain maximum economic assistance. But his greater reliance on coercion is likely to make him more vulnerable to pressure from traditionalist elements, who could seek to change the policy inflection on regional issues, especially Iraq, and on future arms negotiations. He may attempt to reduce this vulnerability by shaking up the leadership of the armed forces and the KGB.

*Will Gorbachev's move generate domestic developments that affect US interests?* The employment of coercive measures implied by Gorbachev's move will almost certainly increase human rights violations (by the republics as well as by agencies of the center) to which the United States will have to respond. The scale of such violations will depend greatly on the context in which force is applied and its magnitude. The problem would be greatest if Gorbachev chose, as he may, to introduce broad emergency measures to suppress secessionism or anti-Communism.

Gorbachev would carefully weigh the external price of such measures. But he probably would not be deterred from taking this step by fear of a negative Western reaction (at least after he receives the Nobel Peace Prize on 10 December) if he felt it was necessary to do so in order to retain control. Despite the seeming Western leverage represented by the possibility of preventing the USSR from drawing on the huge volume of credits he has amassed and of withholding food aid, Gorbachev's public comments suggest that he believes Western leaders—including President

Bush and Chancellor Kohl—basically support the concept of a unified Soviet state. Moreover, he must calculate that Washington would be loath to place in jeopardy Soviet solidarity with the West against Iraq, just as Bonn would avoid actions that could interrupt the withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Germany.

If Gorbachev were contemplating a large-scale imposition of emergency measures, he would almost certainly seek to build centrally controlled stocks of food and consumer goods with which to pacify any possible public resistance to such a step—as the Polish authorities backed up martial law in 1981 with Soviet delivery guarantees. Such stockpiling could be explained to Western donor states before the fact as a step required to provide flexibility in response to unpredictable patterns of shortage.

If he does not resort to emergency measures while continuing to press for his union treaty draft, Gorbachev's approach to the nationality issue will probably quickly force a demarcation of those republics that adamantly seek to opt out of the USSR, presenting Washington with heightened demands for diplomatic recognition and other assistance. Even those republics that agree in principle to sign onto a new union treaty will seek to strengthen bilateral contacts with the United States and lobby for US involvement in their cause.

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