

## GORBACHEV'S NEW THINKING: ITS IMPACT ON DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY OF SOVIET UNION

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Present paper deals with the New Thinking policy adopted during Mikhail Gorbachev's presidency in USSR. The paper contextualizes the reforms under this policy in the contemporary internal economic crisis and strategic dilemmas of USSR. While describing the main features of Gorbachev's New Thinking and its components, the paper attempts at evaluating its implications on USSR's domestic social, politico-economic conditions, and the dynamics of international relations in the times of Second Cold War. This paper also highlights the importance of perestroika and glasnost which was introduced by Gorbachev for a change in the domestic economic situation and to reform the political system of the Soviet Union.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Mikhail Gorbachev, New Thinking, Perestroika, Glasnost, De-Stalinisation, Cold War, Disintegration*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Soviet statesman, Mikhail Gorbachev had served as General Secretary of the communist party of Soviet Union from 1985-1991 before becoming the eighth president of the state in 1988. During his incumbency as the General Secretary and presidency, the Second Cold War was on its height and concomitant aid obligations and revolutionary commitments throughout the globe, from Vietnam and Afghanistan to Cuba and Nicaragua, had been causing a great burden on the Soviet economy. Facing internal economic crisis and threats to the security interests, Gorbachev realized the need of reducing the confrontation with Western capitalist powers to lower the heavy defense expenditures of the Union. This imperative of relieving the pressure on the Soviet economy was the foundation of the New Thinking policy which was characterized by a wide range of reforms on the levels of foreign policy and internal restructuring of the economy.

New Thinking was meant to re-examine the actions, methods, and principles of leadership on the scientific basis. It had given priority to the interests of all humanity over individuals, and even national interests of the Soviet Union (Gorbachev, 2000). In the early 1980s, without knowing the international environment and the external situations, Gorbachev had taken a shift towards moderation of the USSR's behavior on an international level (Checkel, 1993).

Beginning in March 1985, the domestic situation of the Soviet Union started to change as Gorbachev introduced a new policy of Perestroika, Glasnost, and Demokratizatsiya. The Soviet approach to foreign policy was also changed dramatically when the New Thinking was introduced on the basis of 'global interdependence' and 'mutuality of security'. Gorbachev emphasized on the resolution of conflicts through negotiation or mediation by the concerned parties for greater

international security, recognizing the fact that legitimate interests of each nation ought to be respected by all international actors including Soviet Union (Gorbachev, 2000; Smolansky, 1988; Holloway, 1989).

Initially, the major shifts in Soviet policy at home and abroad aroused a suspicion in the West and the United States. But later on, the changes in Moscow's policy, particularly New Thinking, received a wide appreciation in the West. It was the period of historical change in international politics when one camp (i.e. the Soviet Union) initiated for peace and mutual cooperation to ease the decade's long tensions between the East and the West (Holloway, 1989). The collapse of USSR finally marked the end of the Cold War and the confrontation between two different camps of different ideologies.

## **GORBACHEV AND THE NEW THINKING**

Mikhail Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' slogan for a foreign policy based on shared moral and ethical principles to solve the global problems rather than on Marxist-Leninist concepts of irreconcilable conflict between capitalism and communism. The Stalinism, which dominated the USSR for more than half a century was also radically rejected by Gorbachev's New Thinking. On the other hand, Gorbachev also acknowledged that the Communist Party has no "monopoly of truth" in the USSR (Allison, 1988). Rather than flaunting military power, he chose to exercise political influence and economic cooperation. He used the world media skilfully and made previously unimaginable concessions in the resolution of regional conflict and arms negotiation (Gorbachev, 2000). The New Thinking's conciliatory politics towards the west and the loosening of Soviet control over Eastern Europe ultimately led to the collapse of communism and the end of the cold war.

In December 1984, Gorbachev headed the Soviet parliamentary delegation's visit to the United Kingdom and announced the 'New Political Thinking' which proved crucial for giving a framework in solving the international problems and reaching an agreement for greater peace and trust among different countries. The New Thinking was not predefined and constantly evolved over the period of time. In the first phase of the New Thinking, the emphasis was given to the theoretical and political analysis of changes in international politics to formulate a new Soviet foreign policy to end the Cold War and environment of hostility, mistrust and confrontation. The second phase got manifested in, Gorbachev's speech at United Nations General Assembly on December 7, 1988, when the changes in Soviet foreign policy were becoming evident to the international community and more importance was given to universal interests of humanity, co-development of all nations and principles of a new world order. In the third or final phase of the New Thinking, it acknowledged the emergence of a new form of human civilization, premised upon the increasing commitment to disarmament and enhanced interdependence between the nations (Gorbachev, 2000; Kumar, 2018; Holloway, 1989).

In 1985, after Gorbachev came into power, a greater change in foreign policy of Soviet Union was introduced for greater peace and progress of the world. Under New Thinking, the Soviet foreign policy was more active, more pragmatic and quite flexible compared to its predecessors. For instance, the USSR had been trying to improve relations with the Western powers, China, and with the prominent countries in the Third World (Smolansky, 1988). The foreign policy reforms by Gorbachev were quite different from Brezhnev and Khrushchev eras; according to the Western analysts, he was not just bringing in new people (i.e. Eduard Shevardnadze as foreign minister) but new ideas and concepts as well (Checkel, 1993). In 1985, Gorbachev tried to convince the West and United States in the United Nations for reducing of arms and proposed the basic principles and directions of international peace through cooperation and non-militarisation of the outer space (Gorbachev, 2000).

Because of the entrenched dogmatic ideas of Stalin's period in the Russian society, the reforms introduced during New Thinking (as it remains true for the whole process of 'de-Stalinization') faced many challenges in the beginning years (Kumar, 2018). Similarly, Nikita Khrushchev had also failed to bring the changes in the direction of de-Stalinization of the society and also faced the protest by people of the Soviet Union (Mandel, 1989; Holloway, 1989). It was too difficult for the Soviets to overcome their old thinking and adopt a new one, and that too in a short period of time. The world was engaged in the rapid progress of science and technology, while Soviets still had their misconception about the outside world which they perceived as a threat since Second World War. In his report, Gorbachev as general secretary advocated for political solutions of disputed questions and conflicts; and the need to extend the unilateral support for the right of self-determination, freedom to decide own socioeconomic conditions and non-interference from outside world (Gorbachev, 2000).

Gorbachev was a rare character who combined the pragmatic realism with creative policy-making and public relations at the same time. His well-known 'Perestroika' (restructuring) programme initiated fundamental changes in the economic, political, strategic and even ideological and cultural spheres.(Wallace et. al., 1996). Gorbachev called Perestroika an urgent necessity in the face of stagnation and decline if the USSR's economic and technological development and the gradual erosion of ideology and moral values of the Soviet people, while he himself called it a revolution.

In 1986, two major issues dominated the Soviet policies- 'restructuring' of the society and 'acceleration' the economy of the Soviet Union.

While in April the Chernobyl disaster shook the country and a major setback to Soviet industrial reliability in the nuclear sector. In the backdrop of the Chernobyl tragedy, Gorbachev took the initiative and in October 1986, the Reykjavik summit was almost succeeded in convincing both superpowers for arms control (Wallace et. al., 1996). Gorbachev's foreign policy was based on a new world in which 'new economic, political, scientific, technical, social and international factors were beginning to operate. In consonance with these changes, he accommodated the new concerns of nuclear disaster, ecological threat and the problem of the developing states in his policy for international relations. The Soviet Union was engaged to advance a program for creating a universal system of international security which intended to combine military, political, economic, and humanitarian crisis (Gorbachev, 2000).

In his New Thinking on foreign policy Gorbachev stressed the need for a more secure and reliable world, where 'war is not a mean of achieving political, economic, ideological or any other goals'. He recognized the right of every nation to choose its own path of social development and maintained that ideological differences should not be transferred to the sphere of interstate relations. He found a direct link between disarmament and development and above all, emphasized the priority of common human interest over class interest. Gorbachev was in support of the proper treatment of 'prisoners of war', ban the chemical weapons, and limiting the nuclear arms race or non-proliferation of conventional weapons (Gorbachev, 2000). Ironically these were the times when other countries saw weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as a token of their security from outside aggression and to achieve and maintain their hegemony over other nations.

In November 1987, an international conference of political parties and movement in Moscow concluded with the understanding that international relation had been freed from ideologies and clashes between two social systems. This was continued in United Nations General Assembly in December 1988 where the necessity for co-operation to

develop 'co-creation' and 'co-development' was highlighted. Gorbachev was in favor of diversity among nations as well as in support of interdependence and common interests. Two interlinked concepts were central to his New Thinking- Freedom of choice and nature of modern weaponry, and entry of human civilization into the nuclear world (Gorbachev, 2000). New Thinking was based on the concept that the Soviet security is no longer threatened by the outside forces and it should focus on domestic problems, for the same reason the defence share in the budget was reduced and more importance was given to attract the financial and technological assistance from outside world, particularly from the Western powers. This assistance was also crucial for the Soviet Union in order to proceed with *Perestroika* (Smolansky, 1988).

Under the New Thinking, resolution of conflicts was not only confined to political means and also included negotiations, mutually accepted compromises, tolerance, and patience, instead of using military means to find the solution of a political problem. Humanity had already experienced the disaster caused by the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which can extinguish all human life on earth. "*The day of judgement, instead of being a Biblical allegory, could become a reality, a tragedy made by human hands*" (Gorbachev, 2000; Mandel, 1989).

History has also justified 'warfare' as a rational instrument to achieve political means but the nuclear war or war with conventional weapons can only be assumed as irrational in the present scenario of international politics, where the consequences of war is not limited to the country involved in the conflict but also to the countries remain neutral. Since World War II not a single example is there to prove that the use of strength succeeds in bringing peace and stability to a country. It can be assumed as a failure of New Thinking that the closest allies of Gorbachev, Alexander Yakovlev, and Eduard Shevardnadze also turned against him and criticised the New Thinking for failing to produce the least expected outcomes (Fein, 1991).

## **PERESTROIKA**

Gorbachev's policy of Perestroika (restructuring), which was applied primarily to the economy, but it was meant to refer to society in general. Perestroika was an idea of the economy meant to be decided by all-knowing authorities of the country for greater local sovereignty and driven by the market forces. Gorbachev emphasized more on internal problems (economic condition) rather than the competition with the Western powers and USA, for the same reason defense expenditure was decreased (Allison, 1988; Holloway, 1989). Ideas of scientists, politicians, writers, and poets were gradually resorted, which were denounced during Stalin era, and a link was also established with the international culture, thoughts and science (Gorbachev, 2000).

Gorbachev in his statement clearly and openly acknowledged the fact that the present system of the USSR is failing: "*The economy is in a mess; we're behind in every area...The closer you look, the worse it is.*" He also notes: "*Society is ripe for a change. If we back off now, society will not agree to a return. We have to make this process irreversible. If we do not do it, who will? If not now, when?*" (Allison, 1988).

Abel Aganbegyan was the chief economic advisor to Gorbachev and helped him to introduce perestroika and other reforms in social policy, which included housing, food and agriculture, pricing of the products, and health sector. Flats were built for residential purpose and health services were upgraded with the increase in salary of doctors, and 'polyclinic' was also developed for local people. With the help of modern technology and science, the production of the food and agriculture was increased, and the government also offered a subsidy on food products (Aganbegyan, 1988).

The main objectives of Perestroika were modernization (i.e. economic use of equipment, raw materials, and energy) and to increase the use of modern technologies including robotics. Autonomy of enterprises was increased and worker's incomes got related to their performance, while Soviet integration into the world market and problems related to grain, meat, and housing were meant to be resolved through implementation of Perestroika (Mandel, 1989). Perestroika was introduced to remove the dogmas of the past and stereotypical ideological thinking of the leadership to create a fresh view of the world. It was ensured that the means should also be democratic to bring out the democratic change in the society by Perestroika. It was difficult to change the system (bureaucracy, leadership) while being a part of the system, even for Gorbachev. All aspects of human life were super centralized and controlled by the leadership above while subordinate follow the orders (Gorbachev, 2000).

During the early years of Perestroika, Gorbachev did not want to change the existing federal structure of the Soviet Union, but later he realized that the economic problem of USSR was linked with it. Gorbachev realized the fact that revitalizing Soviet socialism was less significant for the nationalist sentiments. Instead of changing all the rules, his government just focused on the rules related to the center and the republics. He realized the importance of federal reforms as a requirement for his economic reforms. Perestroika reforms were started from below and not above, republics took the advantage at first and initiated the decentralization process until the Soviet Union disintegrated and collapsed (Gleason, 1992).

The mixed economy was providing the people with equality of rights for all forms of property. The law was made for economic freedom and enterprises system strengthened. Privatisation and joint stock companies were introduced along with new land laws, which had encouraged private farmers (i.e. Kolkhoz (collective farming), and Sovkhoz (State Farms), which contributed for 25 percent of total production in agriculture. The Soviet government also legalized the private activities by law in more than thirty areas of services and small-scale trade and commerce (Mandel, 1989).

For the first time, privately owned banks also marked their appearance and choice of their own course of development was encouraged by the government for different nationalities and people. The recognition of sovereignty for each republic and preservation of common interests i.e. economic, social, legal and even common defense system was the foundation of a union treaty. By July 1991, various republics had agreed to sign the treaty but the coup thwarted the process. In August 1991, the disintegration process gained the pace and central government position was undermined. In December 1991, an agreement took place between Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, which marked the beginning of the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Gorbachev, 2000).

The new Law on State Enterprises was introduced in January 1988, and with that, the enterprises acquired the privilege to decide and set their own prices and wages, while workers demanded wages which were too high to be incorporated. The government decision for printing more money eventually raised the prices of products, even state stores could not meet the demand of Soviet people. The staple foods literally disappeared from the market in September 1988 (Mandel, 1989). During 1988-1989, the official staff (state committees and ministers) linked with the economy was decreased.

Gorbachev tried to control the 'black marketers' (holding large banknotes, control over money circulation), but in reverse, it actually deepened the people's mistrust in the government's policy. The Soviet economy was declining and Gorbachev approached the West for financial aid, which can be marked as the failure of the Soviet government.

Gorbachev had provided the leverage to the East European countries to interpret Perestroika as per their own approaches and Moscow might have tolerated the greater degree of diversity than ever before. While the East European countries were already going through the troubled economy, the introduction of Glasnost and Demokratizatsiya were expected to make it worse for their governments (Smolansky, 1988).

## **GLASNOST**

Glasnost was based on the idea that truth can be found through discussions and debates among many people, where everyone is contributing a piece of reality (Allison, 1988). Gorbachev and his aide Alexander Yakovlev introduced Glasnost, to disclose the corruption and inefficiency of Brezhnev's policies. The Russian public was always aware of this fact but the Kremlin failed to recognize and acknowledge the same. The new information from Gorbachev's government was meant to encourage Soviet public for political participation in support of his socio-economic programs. The foundations of the totalitarian system were dismantled and democratic changes started to take place. The free general election, allowing real choice, freedom of the press and multiparty system were introduced in Glasnost. The separation of power, representative bodies of government was also established along with human rights and freedom of conscience (Gorbachev, 2000).

Glasnost introduced the reforms for liberalization of media, modernization of apparatus, and greater flexibility in the institutions and mechanisms, most appreciated in the West and Eastern Europe. 'Moscow Times' was believed to be a real vanguard of Glasnost that time (Mandel, 1989). Nonofficial advice was also entertained in the formation of foreign policy of Soviet Union (i.e. party leadership, and the foreign ministry), just because of glasnost(Holloway, 1989). In the starting, Glasnost had faced the difficulties because of '*Nomenklatura*', secrecy of authorities and having the protection from criticism from below. Glasnost was dedicated to disclose and examine the 'blank pages' in Soviet history. It revealed the communist party crimes against the Soviet peoples, which included intellectuals, peasants, scientists, workers, poets, leaders of opposition and others. It awakened people of the Soviet Union and what they had on stake for a greater change and implications on their lives. It was realized soon that without Glasnost there would be no Perestroika (Gorbachev, 2000).

Glasnost was the psychological transformation of Soviet society towards democratization and introduction of humanist values of civilization. It was meant for openness, freedom of information and expression of their party, religious views, including the freedom of criticism. Glasnost was the backbone of Perestroika, for without the emancipation of society the economic change was not possible (Gorbachev, 2000; Mandel, 1989). However, Glasnost further undermined Soviet federalism and contributed to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

## **SOVIET UNION AND THE WORLD**

The new thinking of Gorbachev helped the USSR to ease the decades-long confrontation between the East and the West. New thinking made it possible for the Soviet Union to cooperate with other nations for greater interests of all humanity. Mutual respect for rights and interests of one another and acceptable solution of a problem through negotiations was also introduced through new thinking. Even when Gorbachev called for the nuclear-free world (i.e. January 15, 1986), it was considered as a propaganda in the West and even in the Soviet Union to some extent (Gorbachev, 2000).

## THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE

Under Gorbachev's new thinking the Soviet-US relation also began to improve soon after Gorbachev came into power and became the general secretary of the Soviet Union. The improvement of the US-Soviet relation was largely depended on arms control, regional conflicts and taking care of human rights. These three aspects were also crucial for the Soviet Union to ease the pressure of defense expenditure over the Soviet economy (Smolansky, 1988).

The first summit meeting between Regan and Gorbachev took place at Geneva in November 1985. In 1986, Reykjavik summit was the real breakthrough for the beginning of the nuclear disarmament process, though it did not lead to a joint signing of the document at that time (Gorbachev, 2000). In 1986, Gorbachev also agreed to the Western concept of an 'Atlantic-to-the-Urals' arms reduction zone (Allison, 1988; Wallace et. al., 1996). In December 1987 at the Washington summit, Regan and Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) for eliminating (all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons) or destructing all intermediate and shorter range missile from Europe by the year 2000 (Mandel, 1989; Gorbachev, 2000). Reduction or elimination of heavy weapons (i.e. SS-20s, SS-23s, SS-18s, MIRVs) were also included in the proposal made by the Reagan administration and he also dreamt of a 'common European home' (Kumar, 2018). The removal of the SS-20s missile system was expected to help the Soviet Union for improving relationships with Western Europe and China as well (Holloway, 1989).

In April 1988, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed an accord with the United States and the Soviet Union as guarantors, calling for the withdrawal of Soviet Union troops from Afghanistan by February 1989 (Kumar, 2018; Holloway, 1989). The Soviet Union pursued a closer relationship with China and supported the Vietnamese military presence in Cambodia. In May 1988, during the Moscow summit, the negotiation took place but questions related to sea-based missiles and verification of land remained unresolved (Smolansky, 1988; Holloway, 1989).

Relation with the West or Europe improved during the Gorbachev period mainly because of INF treaty and collapse of communism in Eastern Europe during 1989-90. The Communist regime collapsed in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and, finally in East Germany as well, and Brezhnev doctrine was also buried with that without any efforts made by Gorbachev. Gorbachev was convinced that the existing change in Eastern Europe does not threaten the Soviet security. During the period of 1989-1990, a number of treaties (treaties for cooperation) were signed between the Soviet Union and European countries (Gorbachev, 2000).

In August 1990, the Soviet Union joined the United States in condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and supported United Nations resolutions to restore Kuwait's sovereignty. The Soviet government under Gorbachev leadership went on to condemn the aggression of Saddam Hussein and participated nominally in diplomatic and military actions against his regime (Wallace et. al., 1996). In November 1990, the United States, the Soviet Union, and most of the European states signed the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE Treaty), making reductions in battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery, and fighter aircraft from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains.

After the signing of CFE Treaty, disputes arose over Soviet compliance with the treaty and the Soviet military's efforts to redesignate weapons or move them so that they would not be subject to the treaty's terms. The Soviet crackdown on Baltic independence movements in January 1991 also slowed the improvement of relations with the United States. The US pressure led to the resolution of these issues, and the CFE Treaty came into force in 1992.

The treaty was implemented with strict international norms and conditions which included 'open skies' policy, and onsite inspections (Gorbachev, 2000).

The unification of Germany (1989) was also a proof of the productive character of Gorbachev's New Thinking and reform in Soviet foreign policy during Perestroika. In 1990-1991, the Soviet Union started to lose control over the institutions in Eastern Europe. In March 1990, Gorbachev proposed to convert the WARSAW Pact into a political organization, officially disbanded in July 1991, and Soviet troops started to withdraw from Central Europe and other parts of the world. During last year of Gorbachev's period (1991), the US and USSR relation made some progress, when George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev met in Moscow to sign The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-I) with the objective of eliminating the numbers of the intercontinental ballistic missile (Gorbachev, 2000; Holloway, 1989).

### **THIRD WORLD**

Under Gorbachev's foreign policy, the USSR did not abandon its allies in the Third World (Vietnam, South Yemen, and Cuba) for their strategic importance and political prestige (Ethiopia, Angola). The USSR's attempt to improve relationships with some of the major Third World countries i.e. India, Nigeria, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, advanced through bilateral relations and trade, rather than cultivating revolutionary forces in those countries to gain influence. The USSR would also assist to solve the regional conflicts in the Third World, for example, the Cambodian and Angolan crisis, to join hands with other superpowers to find an appropriate solution of the same. The Soviet policy under Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' was to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and Iran-Iraq war (Smolansky, 1988).

Gorbachev requested the United States to recognize the Soviet Union in the Middle East as political equal. The demand for political equal treatment or equal Soviet participation in attempts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Iran-Iraq war was denied by the Regan administration (Smolansky, 1988). In 1991, during the Madrid conference, USA and USSR chaired the conference together to resolve the Middle East problem. During Persian Gulf crisis (Iraqi invasion of Kuwait) the relation between US and USSR got tensed because the US was in favor to use of force and USSR believed in a peaceful political solution of the problem (Gorbachev, 2000).

In 1985, the issue of Afghanistan war was raised in Politburo for the first time, and in 1986 it declared to end the war and withdraw the troops by February 15, 1989. Gorbachev also proposed an idea of regional security in Asia, like the one he had proposed for Europe. During the period of 1986-1989, a system of security and cooperation was initiated by the Soviet Union in the Asia Pacific region. USSR's relations with China, Japan and South Korea were also normalized and disputes were resolved under Gorbachev's regime (Gorbachev, 2000).

The United States and Soviet Union agreement (Nov 1985, Geneva) on 'Joint Action' to resolve local disputes in the Third World was successful in Africa (Namibia, Angola, Mozambique), Asia (Cambodia) and Central America. However, this joint venture failed to deliver the same result in the case of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Serbia because of the dissolution of USSR (Gorbachev, 2000). Gorbachev emphasised on country's adjustment to establish a foreign economic relationship with the Third World countries.

Gorbachev was concerned about the poverty and in human living conditions of the masses in the Third World or developing nations, and also called for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) for the third world. During his presidency period, Third World was also continuously criticised for investing in nuclear and missile potential.



The concern was also expressed about the spread of dirty technologies in the developing countries regarding environmental issues.

## **DISSOLUTION OF USSR**

After the August 1991 coup attempt, Mikhail Gorbachev returned to his office which was widely appreciated by the western powers as a re-establishment of the legal authority. Only after a short period of time, the changing political context in the Soviet Union made Gorbachev powerless and weak. No Western powers questioned the legitimacy of Minsk Declaration, which was signed by Republican leaders, and in which Gorbachev and his representatives were not allowed to participate (Gleason, 1992). On 1 December 1991, the Ukrainian election took place that marked a crucial event in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Soon after the coup took place under Yeltsin's leadership, a chain of reaction of the declaration of independence also began in the Soviet Union by the non-Russian republics. It was in December when the USSR ceased to exist, and on 25 December Gorbachev resigned as the State president and handed over the power to Yeltsin (Wallace et. al., 1996). It remains clear that Gorbachev's federal plan failed to gain political support and to 'rescue' the USSR in 1991. Whereas, later in 1992, Yeltsin's federal plan succeeded into 'rescue' Russian Federation and gained the necessary political support as well (Gleason, 1992).

On 21 December 1991, in the city of Alma-Ata, a meeting took place between eleven political leaders of Communist Party and by the noon they all agreed to the disintegration and end the existence of the USSR. Later, it was decided by the leaders of eleven Soviet Socialist republics to create a CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), which was "neither a government nor a supra-governmental organization" (Gleason, 1992).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Gorbachev tried to stabilize and normalize the domestic conditions of USSR by his policy of Perestroika, and Glasnost under the banner of "New Thinking". His foreign policy under New Thinking won him much praise and admiration all around the world, especially in Europe and the US. New policy proved instrumental in not only reducing the tension among superpowers, but it also decreased the amount of threat perception for the international community which led to the elimination of the constant threat of nuclear war and peaceful solution of disputes by political means or negotiations, and the end of Cold War. Furthermore, Gorbachev emphasized on establishing friendly relations with the third world and maintained good relations with countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Through Perestroika Gorbachev not only reduced the totalitarian operations in the Soviet Union but also executed a successful de-Stalinization of the society. Interdependence of international community and freedom of choice for every country was introduced by Gorbachev to the world. Treaties to eliminate, reduce, and to dismantle the weapons of mass destruction were initiated by the Soviet Union under Gorbachev's regime which had never been conceived by the international community till then.

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