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Gorbachev's Foreign Policy Team: Implications for the US

Summary

By transferring Gromyko to the Presidency last July, Gorbachev boldly demonstrated his intention to take control of foreign policy. The General Secretary has begun to surround himself with individuals willing to re-examine past policies and project an innovative and forward looking stance. In contrast to Gromyko-- whose fixation on US-Soviet relations and reputation for inflexibility led to his removal-- Foreign Minister Snevaronaeze appears more willing to support regional initiatives, not only for their own sake but in order to gain the Soviet Union added leverage vis-a-vis the US. While the Soviets have not made any dramatic policy departures, we have already seen a revitalized foreign policy effort, with new overtures to the US, West Europe and Asia.

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Despite Gorbachev's desire to pursue a more "balanced" foreign policy, managing relations with the US continues to be the leadership's first priority. Gorbachev's initial foreign policy actions appear designed to strengthen pressures for change in US policy by creating the impression of a more flexible Soviet diplomacy and forging closer relations with key US allies in Europe and Asia.

This paper was prepared by [redacted] the Domestic Policy Division, Office of Soviet Analysis with a contribution from USSR/EE Division/OCR. Comments and questions may be directed to [redacted] the Chief, Domestic Policy Division [redacted].

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Gorbachev has begun to assemble a foreign policy team whose training, career experiences and knowledge of the US political scene should enable them to react more quickly to US moves and maneuver with more skill to exploit perceived weaknesses. Several personnel changes Gorbachev desires have yet to materialize, and we could see a pick-up in the pace of turnover after his meeting with President Reagan. [redacted]

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Taking Control of Foreign Policy

With the replacement of Andrey Gromyko as foreign minister, Gorbachev signaled his intent to control the foreign as well as the domestic policy process. [redacted]

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Gromyko's activities since assuming the Presidency confirm a loss of political influence and a move to the policy sidelines. Although he accompanied Gorbachev to the Warsaw Pact meetings in

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October, Gromyko's substantive responsibilities as President have been limited and his public appearances largely confined to routine ceremonial occasions.

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Gromyko failed to head the Soviet delegation to the UN's 40th anniversary ceremonies in New York--a tailor-made opportunity to demonstrate continued visibility as a foreign policy spokesman. He did not participate in substantive discussions when the President of Finland visited the Soviet Union in September, something Nikolay Podgorny--the last President who was not also General Secretary--had routinely done.

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Shevardnadze's Impact at the MFA

From the vantage point of establishing political control and signaling a new era in Soviet diplomatic relations, Shevardnadze's appointment as Foreign Minister may prove to be a masterstroke.

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Shevardnadze can be expected to conduct foreign policy in accordance with Gorbachev's wishes. The two men apparently have close personal ties--Shevardnadze

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has known the General Secretary for a long time.

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he holds Gorbachev in very high esteem and looks to him for policy direction. Unlike Gromyko, who under a series of ailing General Secretaries greatly expanded his foreign policy decision making role,

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Shevardnadze will adhere strictly to policy guidelines laid down by the General Secretary.

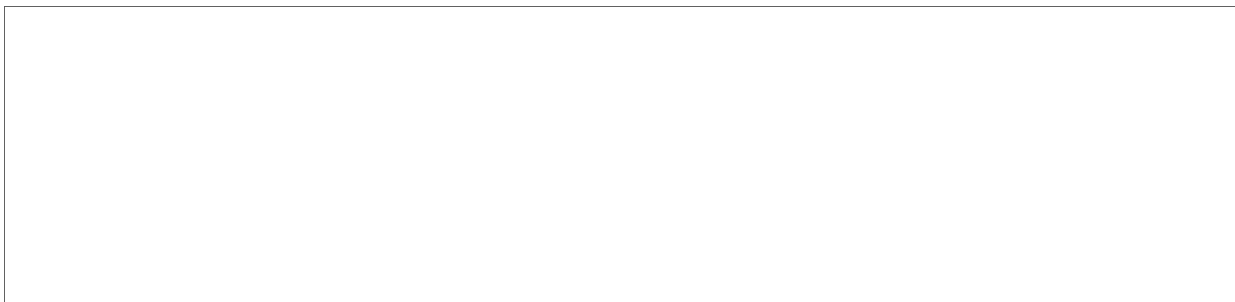
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Shevardnadze also appears better suited than Gromyko--both by background and training--to support Gorbachev's regional initiatives. In contrast to Gromyko, Shevardnadze's career involvement has been primarily with the Third world. He has served on the presidium of the Soviet Committee for solidarity with Asian and African countries since 1958 and visited Algeria, Brazil, India and Tunisia.

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Shevardnadze's personal style is also in tune with the new leadership. Gorbachev views Shevardnadze as able to project Soviet policy with more flair and

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polish than Gromyko. Shevardnadze's demonstrated sensitivity to public opinion while serving as party chief in Georgia, and his obvious skill in using the media, will contribute to the effort to repackage Soviet foreign policy initiatives to gain them a more receptive hearing in the West.

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exchanges with the Soviets are more free-flowing than under Gromyko and relatively lacking in ideological harangues--though so far no less inflexible on substance.

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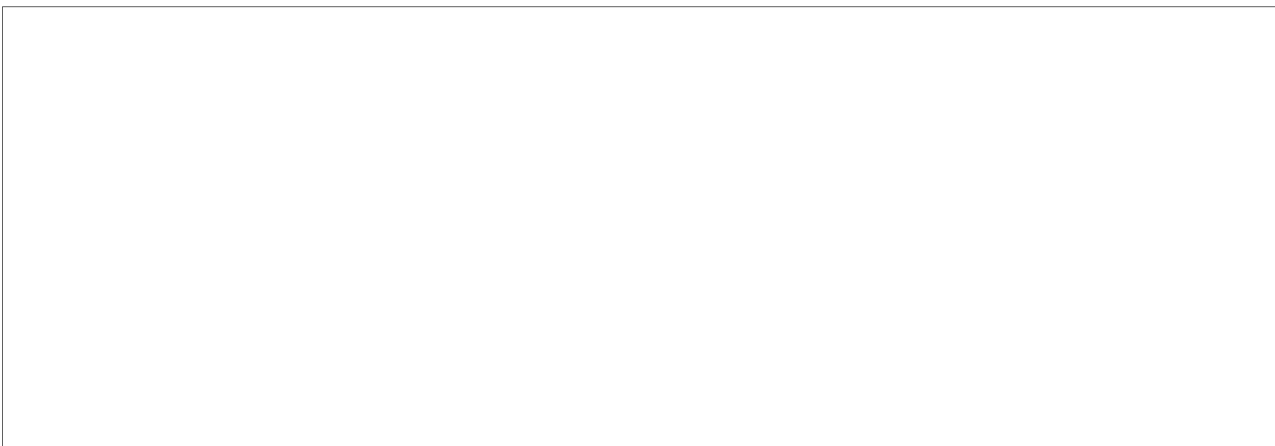
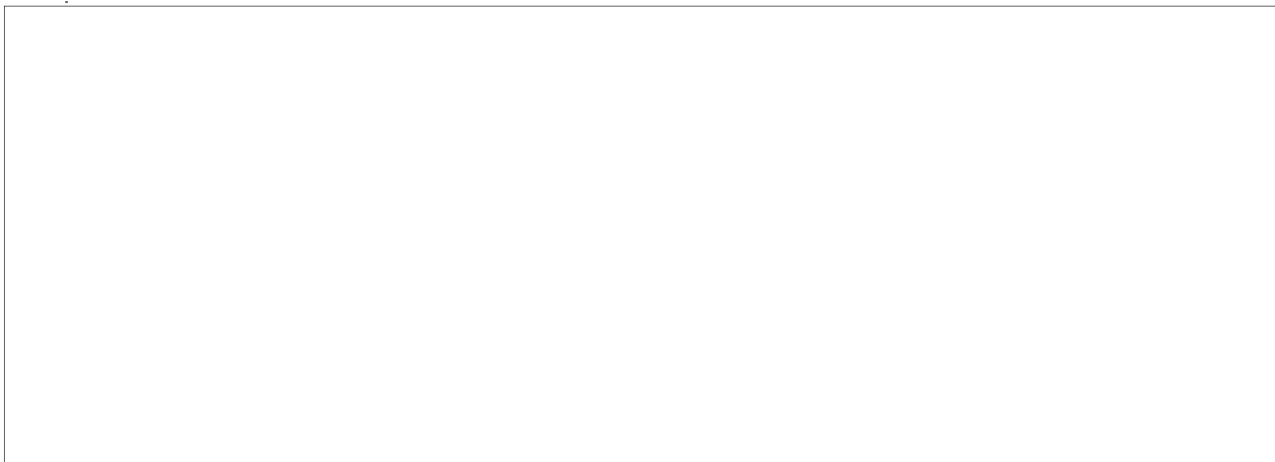
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Institutional Rivalries

Gromyko's removal and the fluid policy situation under Gorbachev have renewed institutional rivalries for influence among the foreign ministry, the Central Committee departments and the academic institutes. Some accounts suggest that the new General Secretary is less concerned with the issue of bureaucratic turf--picking and choosing among individuals regardless of institutional affiliation in order to frame the most effective policy response.

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Gorbachev's Americanists

Americanists are prominent among the handful of foreign policy officials we can so far link to Gorbachev. While they do not appear united in their assessment of the long-term prospects for US-Soviet relations, as a group they appear to share a relatively sophisticated understanding of the US political scene. [redacted]

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-- The only additional personnel move in the foreign ministry announced so far is the September appointment of Sergey Tarasenko as a special advisor to Shevardnadze. In May 1984, Tarasenko [redacted]

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[redacted] made it clear he did not always agree with the foreign minister on superpower relations. [redacted]

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-- After a period of political eclipse during Chernenko's reign, Georgiy Arbatov has reemerged as one of Gorbachev's most important advisers. His appearance next to the General Secretary at the recent Time interview is one indicator of his improved political status. Arbatov's commentaries are appearing with renewed frequency in the Soviet media and [redacted]

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-- Aleksandr Yakovlev (a former ambassador to Canada, now heading the Central Committee Propaganda Department) is reportedly close to Gorbachev and advises him on a range of foreign policy issues. Yakovlev apparently made a favorable impression on Gorbachev while serving as his official host during a 1983 visit to Canada, returning to head the World Economics and International Relations Institute only 2 weeks later. Yakovlev's rising influence was apparent when he subsequently accompanied Gorbachev to England in December 1984. His recent promotion to head the Central Committee Propaganda Department and the fact that he will accompany Gorbachev to Geneva underscore his close professional relationship with the General Secretary. Gorbachev's tough public rhetoric and continuing attacks on the Reagan administration may in part reflect Yakovlev's counsel. Yakovlev has been openly skeptical that US domestic political trends will lead to any moderation of Reagan

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Administration policy toward the USSR in the near future. Yakovlev's new post, moreover, places him in a good position to wage a public relations effort against the US. [redacted]

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In the only other major foreign policy appointment, Yevgeniy Primakov, former director of the Oriental Institute, was named in November to head the senior foreign affairs think tank, the World Economics and International Relations Institute (IMEMO). He reportedly has close professional and personal ties to both Yakovlev and Arbatov. [redacted]

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[redacted] While not an "Americanist"--his area of expertise is the Mid-east--Primakov appears to share the group's extensive knowledge of the West. [redacted] he will follow Gorbachev's lead in pursuing more creative approaches to dealing with the mid-East.

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Anatoliy Gromyko, son of the former Foreign Minister, who now heads the Africa Institute was also rumored to be in the running for the IMEMO post. His failure to get the top spot is yet another indication that the political power of his father has declined.

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Implications for the United States

[redacted] Gorbachev came into office intending to end the MFA's alleged "fixation" on relations with the US and introduce more balance into Soviet foreign diplomacy. The removal of Gromyko--who was associated in Moscow with a US-centric diplomacy--strengthened the impression that Gorbachev intended to shift to a more "balanced" foreign policy. [redacted]

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The regime's first steps suggest that Gorbachev in fact is encouraging an era of renewed diplomatic activity toward Europe, Asia and perhaps other parts of the Third World. But these steps have been accompanied by an apparent re-examination of past approaches towards the United States as well--a more effective public relations toward the US, a renewed effort to engage the US on a range of bilateral issues, and a series of arms control proposals that contain provisions going beyond what his predecessors were prepared to offer. [redacted]

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Even the regime's initiatives toward Europe and Asia may be motivated in part by Gorbachev's desire to move the US-Soviet relationship off dead center. [redacted]

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The foreign policy officials we can identify with Gorbachev, moreover, also point to a continuing focus on the US relationship. They appear uniquely suited by training and career experience to provide the General Secretary with new options for dealing with the US. [redacted]

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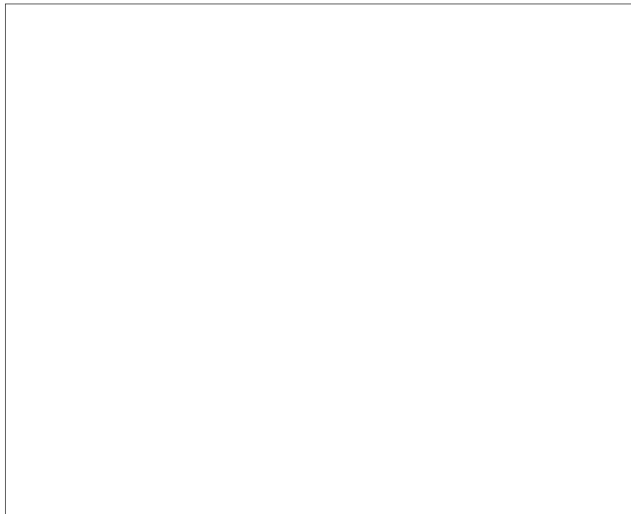
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