

Abstracts

Ole Nørgaard

Gorbachev's Strategy of Reform

The on-going reforms in the Soviet Union have to be conceptualized on the basis of the problems in the economic, political and social structure which characterized the country from the mid-1970s. To solve these problems Gorbachev has propagated ideological revisions which reflect his basic intentions of reform. These intentions consist of: decentralization, an increased participation in decision-making processes on the local level and a more open information structure (glasnost). The gap which can be observed between the ideological provisions and the initiated reforms has to be perceived in political terms. To fight the opponents and to create a constituency of reform, Gorbachev has formulated a strategy directed against three distinct dimensions of the political systems: the elite, the institutionalized opposition and broad societal groups. An analysis of the relative strength of opponents and proponents of reform shows that reforms have to be incremental and can be implemented only in conjunction with changes in the structure of power and basic changes in the dominant values of major social groups.

Clemens Stubbe Østergaard

The Political Dimensions of the Process of Reform in China

The Chinese reforms have been introduced within a context of administrative decentralization and an internal and external legitimacy crisis of the Communist Party. Many barriers to policy-implementation residing in interests and attitudes of elites, institutions and social groups have been surmounted by means of reform-strategies involving structural and personnel manipulation, conducted by Deng Xiaoping. Chinese media reveal that implementing enterprise autonomy remains a key problem, making local, particularly county, interest - and inertia-based administrative intervention the most important reform barrier at present. Solutions include moderate recentralization to core cities, as well as political reform. The political impact of reform includes extensive institutional change, possible progress towards «civil society», changes in important functions of the political system as well as the central political process being characterized by bureaucratic politics and the local political process moving towards greater variation.

Märta-Lisa Magnusson

The Creative Intelligentsia and the Reform Process

The creative intelligentsia (the artists) do not belong to the central political and economic groups in Soviet society. Nevertheless, Gorbachev has found it very important to activate this group in fight for the reform programme. This stems from the status which the artists have as moral leaders in the public. Gorbachev needs them in his efforts to mobilize the people for «perestrojka». An alliance between the party and critical artists helps to restore the prestige and legitimacy of the party.