

Abstract

Ole Nørgaard

New Foreign Policy Thinking in the Soviet Union: Content, Origin and Perspectives

Since Gorbachev in 1985 was elected political leader of the Soviet Union, all aspects of foreign policy have passed through a fundamental process of change. Those changes in foreign behavior have been accompanied by profound conceptual changes. The traditional bipolar view of the international system has been substituted by a perception where common interests and a common responsibility for international problems are recognized. To what extent the new Soviet foreign policy is reversible is decided by an analysis of its origins. The genesis of the new policy must be examined at three different levels of analysis: the level of structure, the level of political actors, and the level of triggering events. Factors which can be identified as well in the Soviet Union itself as in the international system. While domestic developments in the short term will determine the outcome of the new policy, no Soviet leadership can - in the long run - ignore the structural changes which have severely weakened Soviet capabilities in the international system.

Per Birk Mønsted and Bjarne Rom

»The New Political Thinking« - a Product of Foreign Policy Experts?

The academic experts from the Academy of Science; the so-called »Mezhdunarodniki« have until recently been an unnoticed actor in the foreign policy-making process of the USSR. Western analyses have neglected the growing impact of these Mezhdunarodniki on the foreign policy-making in the Gorbachev-era, and their contributions to the concept of the »New Political Thinking«. These »new« actors, whom the article identifies as foreign policy experts within the Academy of Science (especially the »Institute of World Economy and International Relations« (IMEMO), the »Institute of USA and CANADA« (ISKAN) and to some extent the »Institute of European Studies« (IES), have achieved an increasing influence in the development of new political strategies and doctrines, both in the political-security and in the military dimension of the present foreign policy-setting. This involvement has caused substantial changes in the foreign policy decision-making process of the USSR. It is possible to draw some structural parallels to the involvement of foreign policy experts in the United States during the Kennedy-administration in the early 1960s.

Mette Skak

Sovjet Policy towards Eastern Europe

Soviet policy towards the small Warsaw Pact countries is analysed in the light of the schism between providing for both cohesion and viability. Beginning in 1986, the Soviet Union has been adjusting its policy towards the small Warsaw Pact countries in an attempt to turn the region into an asset for the Soviet Union; an adjustment which also affects instruments and formulating bodies. The cautious Soviet behaviour in recent months shows that the Soviets are ready to sacrifice the leading role of the party for the establishment of viable governments in Eastern Europe. In so doing they give up their exclusive influence in the region, and presently a stabilization of the situation seems to be crucial for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union wants to reform the existing formal, multilateral organs of collaboration (i.e. The Warsaw Pact and COMECON), but a lot depends on whether the East Europeans feel inclined to maintain these structures in the future. Furthermore the delicate question of German reunification has surfaced, but now the Western powers show concern on behalf of the Soviet Union as demonstrated at the Malta Summit.

Knud Erik Jørgensen

The West European Reactions to the Soviet Foreign Policy under Gorbachev

The West European perceptions of the Soviet »New political Thinking« has changed dramatically during the last five years.

The element of threat was dominating in the mid 1980s, but has gradually been replaced by the element of possibility. This is a general tendency, although the speed and timing differs. The responses to the Gorbachev challenge has been changing from a basically »wait and see« policy towards an »engage and see« policy. Moving gradually from a situation of »diplomatic isolation«, the West German government has been among the first to test an »engage and see« policy. In France, the domestic political configuration from 1986-1988, produced a delay of a similar response. The United Kingdom has experienced certain difficulties to adapt to the systemic changes and has mainly responded through multilateral atlantic fora.