

## **Gorbachev's Reform Policy and the Collapse of the Soviet Union**

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By the early 1980s the economic growth rate in Soviet Union had virtually come to stagnation. The country faced new economic challenges provoked by advanced modernization and political challenges stimulated by the effective extended political exclusion of mass of the people. Thus trends from the late Brezhnev period pointed to economic stagnation, falling growth rates and increasing technological gaps vis-à-vis the West.

The Soviet system was running into problems in meeting the requirements of a modern industrial state with superpower status. Gorbachev was installed in power by Central Committee to stop the soviet decline. After coming to power, Gorbachev had assumed a style considerably different from that of his predecessors. Internally, Gorbachev inherited a Soviet- Society. Which had been beset with numerous problems. At that time economic growth was continuously declining and stagnating, resulting in acute shortage, and belying the rising hopes and aspirations of a workers paradise”.

Gorbachev initiated a series of economic and political reforms widely known as ‘Perestroika’ and ‘Glasnost’ meaning restructuring and openness’ respectively which meant that transformation of the Soviet society. Perestroika and Glasnost were designed to restructure revitalized and rejuvenate the Soviet economic and political system to maintain USSR’S super power status. Perestroika and its parallel glasnost was the brainchild of Mikhail Gorbachev, the former President of U.S.S.R who through restructuring of the entire administrative set up as well as the socio-economic setup of the erstwhile Soviet Union hoped to bring about a major revolution in the country. Perestroika also implied all round intensification of the soviet economic reform process, revival of the principles of democratic

centralism in running the economy introduction of universal economic methods and encouragement to innovation and enterprise.

Glasnost played a critical role in breaking the iron curtain and bringing out from the pages of history facts and information inaccessible earlier. Freedom of press, recognition of independent ideology are primarily attached to the concept of Glasnost which was a complementary concept of Perestroika.

In the realm of international relations, the new political thinking a direct offshoot of domestic Perestroika. Influenced a number of new foreign policy approaches. In fact new political thinking'. Championing the deideologisation of the international was the first manifestation of the ideology of deideologisation which perestroika symbolized. The foreign policy initiatives of Gorbachev, Justified as manifestations of the "New Political Thinking" ushered a number of important changes in such crucial areas, as East-West relations arms control Europe, Asia pacific and regional conflict etc.

Through on the one hand Gorbachev was struggling in his domestic affairs on the other he was successful in establishing good relations with the west particularly with the U.S. Hence, the final unintended outcome of the revolutionary transformation was the end of communist party rule in the Soviet Union, the abolition of socialist system and the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. A Multi-ethnic, multi-lingual entity composed of fifteen 'Autonomous' republics and numerous subunits within them, the Soviet Union was held together by powerful control institutions pressure for ideological conformity and the threat of force. The communist party played a key role in each of these areas and the erosion of the party's power released aspirations for freedom which had been suppressed but not destroyed by seventy years of Soviet rule the demand from the Baltics for independence was the most serious issues promising to put an early end to reform. Lithuania declared independence in March 1990, Estonia and from Georgia, but the power of example supplied by these movements affected virtually all the Soviet republics. A more tangled and bloody conflict arose in Azerbaijan resulting

from the desire of Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh for incorporation into the Soviet Republic of Armenia. This was followed up by popular movement and election of leaders proposing this issue. In June 1990, the first Russian Congress of people's deputies adopted a declaration on state sovereignty that in effect declared Russia's laws superiors to those of the U.S.S.R provoking a war of the law's that finally ended with the disintegration of the U.S.S.R.

During 1990 and 1991 Gorbachev oscillated between trying to satisfy conservatives and liberals. To the former he promised suppression of nationalism by force. Swinging to the latter in the early months of 1991 he announced a proposal for a new 'Union treaty' which would devolve power substantially to the Soviet Republics.

It was this move which provoked conservatives to mount the coup of August 1991 during which Gorbachev was held for several days in the Crimea. However, an event that took place on the night of 19-20 August 1991 changed the course of history and accelerated the demise of U.S.S.R. Some of the top leaders of Party and the military industrial Complex formed an Emergency Committee, deposed Gorbachev, when he was in faros on holiday and prevented the five Republic from signing the new union Treaty on 20 August. Within two days the coup fizzled out and Gorbachev was restored as the President of U.S.S.R.

From August to December 1991, vain efforts were made to work out more drafts of the new union treaty. However the Republics continued to declare themselves Independent in quick succession.

Referendum was held in UK rain on 1 December in which an overwhelming population voted in favor of independence. On 8 December 1991, the three Slav Republics met to announce the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent

States (CIS). The Central Asian and Caucasian Republics, after some initial hesitation, joined the CIS and 21 December. On 25 December 1991 Gorbachev resigned as the President of USSR. Russia emerged as a successor state of Soviet Union and yeltsin as successor of Gorbachev. The policy makers in the fifteen newly independent states most of whom had been leading members of the CPSU, explicitly rejected the communist legacy and overtly followed policies in which nationalism played a key role.

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