Norms, Heresthetics, and the End of the Cold War

✣ Matthew Evangelista

> Although the external pressures were strong, the decisive factors were domestic. . . . I don't think there was any objective necessity to destroy the Soviet Union.
>
> *Vladimir Kryuchkov, head of the Soviet KGB, 1988–1991, and leader of the August 1991 coup plot.*[1]

The academic debate about the end of the Cold War has reached an impasse. Scholars in the realist tradition find enough evidence in the Soviet Union's retrenchment in the late 1980s to support some of the key tenets of at least one branch of realist theory. Critics of realism argue that the end of the Cold War largely undermines and perhaps even decisively refutes the theory. Still others aver that the end of the Cold War constitutes a "mere data point," not significant enough to evaluate any major theoretical orientation.[2] The first two views, contradictory as they may seem, both have much to recommend them. Few scholars seem eager to embrace the third view—that the end of the Cold War is theoretically uninteresting—at least judging by the large number who adhere to one of the first two views.

Yet a sharp difference of opinion does not necessarily make for an enlightening exchange. A number of observers have pointed out how little progress has been made in this debate, especially if we measure progress by how often the adherents of one theoretical orientation have persuaded their oppo-

1. Quoted in David Remnick, *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 321.

2. Richard Ned Lebow, "The Long Peace, the End of the Cold War, and the Failure of Realism," *International Organization,* Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring 1994), pp. 249–277. Lebow is quoting a "prominent participant" at a conference on the end of the Cold War, held at Cornell University in October 1991.

Journal of Cold War Studies
Vol. 3, No. 1, Winter 2001, pp. 5–35

nents of the merits of their case.[3] The problem is not lack of empirical evidence. Plenty of evidence is now available in the form of memoirs, possibilities for interviews, oral-history conferences, and archival documents. The problem, instead, is that scholars from a range of competing orientations can find ample documentation supporting their views. The resulting debate has become, in the words of two participants, "a pseudo-competition among complementary minimal causal claims."[4]

Some realists have argued that material constraints led to Soviet retrenchment as a rational response to decline. Constructivists have maintained that material forces, such as shifts in the distribution of power or relative economic decline, produce indeterminate outcomes if they are considered in the absence of prevailing norms and ideas. For constructivists, the ideas embodied in the "new thinking" of Mikhail Gorbachev motivated the change in Soviet foreign policy toward restraint and accommodation.[5] An alternative interpretation has emerged that rejects both the seeming determinism of the materialist approaches and the notion implicit in the ideational approaches that Gorbachev's ideas represented a kind of consensual knowledge. This new interpretation emphasizes the contingent nature of many of the changes in Soviet foreign policy and the role of domestic political competition in producing new policy decisions.[6] The political-competition approach makes two main points: First, the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) in the 1980s diverged widely in their perceptions of the USSR's economic and military status and in their proposals for foreign policy; hence there was no straightforward material impetus for change. Second, many strong institutional actors found that their interests were not well served by the "new thinking," and they never sincerely embraced it.

Analyses that focus on domestic political competition offer useful insights, but they are not without their own problems. If it is true, for example, that Gorbachev's policies were not automatically accepted as the obvious solution to the Soviet predicament, how do we account for the fact that many of the most dramatic initiatives—unilateral measures of disarmament, withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, and the unification of Germany within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—were adopted

3. William C. Wohlforth, "Reality Check: Revising Theories of International Politics in Response to the End of the Cold War," *World Politics,* Vol. 50, No. 4 (July 1998), pp. 650–680.

4. Randall Schweller and William C. Wohlforth, "Power Test: Updating Realism in Response to the End of the Cold War," Paper presented at a conference at Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, October 1997, p. 23.

5. Jeffrey Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

6. See, in particular, Sarah Mendelson, *Changing Course: Ideas, Politics, and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

rather quickly and without fatal opposition? It seems evident from the material that has become available since the end of the Cold War that there was no consensus within the Soviet leadership of the 1980s about how to cope with a declining economy and an assertive United States. There is also little doubt that Gorbachev's reforms in foreign policy and domestic affairs threatened powerful, vested interests. Thus we are left with a puzzle: How did Gorbachev manage to persuade colleagues with very different views and interests to support his accommodationist foreign policy to such an extent that many outside observers have come to view the dramatic Soviet changes of the Gorbachev era as the inevitable outcome of either material forces or ideational consensus? I argue that the keys to Gorbachev's success were his skillful manipulation of the political agenda, his appeal to broad norms that meant different things to different audiences, and his mastery of the main features of the Soviet political system, particularly the office of the CPSU General Secretary and the strength of Communist Party discipline.[7] In many instances, in fact, it was not primarily a question of persuading skeptics and opponents, but of outmaneuvering them. Some of the ideas advanced by William Riker's notion of "heresthetics" shed considerable light on Gorbachev's approach and help resolve the puzzle of how the Cold War ended.

Realism and Constructivism on the End of the Cold War

The branch of realism that seems to have fared best in the wake of the end of the Cold War is the one associated with Robert Gilpin's work on hegemonic decline. Gilpin's theory was, however, designed to account for the behavior of hegemonic states facing a rising challenger—rather than the behavior of a declining challenger, such as the Soviet Union, which eventually withdrew from the competition. Moreover, Gilpin believed that such hegemonic transitions would be fraught with the danger of war.[8] Nevertheless, the theory at least provided for the possibility of retrenchment or appeasement as a rational response to decline. Some scholars have seized upon this aspect of Gilpin's theory to suggest that the end of the Cold War, and Soviet behavior in particular, are consistent with realism.[9] In this view, the Soviet Union's relative economic

7. For a related discussion that focuses on Gorbachev's use of language and his appeals to concepts that resonated with the traditional Leninist heritage, see George W. Breslauer, "How Do You Sell a Concessionary Foreign Policy?" *Post-Soviet Affairs,* Vol. 10, No. 3 (July 1994), pp. 277–290.

8. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

9. Kenneth A. Oye, "Explaining the End of the Cold War: Morphological and Behavioral Adaptations to the Nuclear Peace?" in Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, eds., *International Relations*

decline, and especially the economic liability that the allied countries of Eastern Europe came to represent, made Soviet retrenchment not only understandable but inevitable.[10] This was particularly evident in the Soviet withdrawal from the German Democratic Republic and acquiescence in its unification with West Germany: "In truth, there was little that the Soviets could have done to prevent the GDR's demise," write two prominent realist scholars.[11]

Other scholars, mainly in the constructivist school, argue that such changes as Soviet acceptance of a unified German state as a member of NATO could not have come about without significant ideational transformation. New thinking about Soviet interests and new definitions of security, they contend, were prerequisites for changes in foreign policy.[12] Inspired by new ideas, Soviet leaders were willing to abandon long-held positions on the German question, such as the proposal for a unified, but neutral and disarmed, Germany as an alternative to a Germany divided between two antagonistic military blocs. Thus, in contrast to realists who argue that the Soviet Union was forced to accept Western terms for German unification, constructivist scholars suggest that "by opting for a united Germany within Western European structures, the Soviet leadership decided that such a solution was likely to serve Soviet security interests better than a neutral Germany."[13]

Curiously, some realist and constructivist explanations for Soviet policy appear to converge on the issue of Soviet interests. For the realists, Soviet national security interests required retrenchment and appeasement of the West for the sake of gaining a "breathing space" until economic resources could again match foreign policy ambitions. For the constructivists such policies served Soviet security interests because "security" had been redefined in accordance with "universal norms." In a similar vein, some defenders of realism have argued that the Soviet Union willingly gave up its "buffer zone" in Eastern Europe because nuclear weapons provided adequate deterrence of inva-

Theory and the End of the Cold War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 57–83; William C. Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War," *International Security,* Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 91–129; and Schweller and Wohlforth, "Power Test."

10. For a prescient, but not deterministic, account of the Soviet "burden of empire," see Valerie Bunce, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Transformation of the Eastern Bloc from a Soviet Asset to a Soviet Liability," *International Organization,* Vol. 39, No. 1 (Winter 1985), pp. 1–46.

11. Schweller and Wohlforth, "Power Test," pp. 35.

12. Robert G. Herman, "Identity, Norms, and National Security: The Soviet Foreign Policy Revolution and the End of the Cold War," in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 271–316; and Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and The International System," *International Organization,* Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring 1994), pp. 215–248.

13. Koslowski and Kratochwil, "Understanding Change," p. 245.

sion.[14] This interpretation would presumably be congenial to some constructivists as well. If in fact the Soviet Union came to accept nuclear weapons as providing stable deterrence (rather than increasing the risk of war), that would have marked a major intellectual revolution for Soviet military thought.[15]

The main point at which these variants of realism and constructivism converge is their assumption that Soviet behavior can be depicted as that of a unitary actor. For most realists, this is a standard simplifying assumption. For constructivists who adopt such a view (not all of them do so), it seems to stem from a sense that enough of the core Soviet foreign policy establishment and political leadership came to adopt the "new thinking" that it can be largely accepted as the consensus position. Thus neither the realists nor the constructivists expect to find much evidence of opposition even to such dramatic Soviet initiatives as the withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Eastern Europe, substantial reductions in nuclear forces, and reunification of Germany.[16]

But, in fact, opposition to the initiatives pursued by the main foreign policy reformers—particularly Gorbachev, his adviser and colleague Aleksandr Yakovlev, and his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze—was present all along. As Gorbachev's liberalizing domestic reforms, especially *glasnost',* opened up space for public debate, not even security policy remained off limits. Gorbachev's concessions on arms control and proposals for cutting the armed forces to levels of "sufficiency" rather than maintaining parity with the United States came in for particularly harsh criticism. At the highest level, however, especially within the CPSU Politburo, such criticism was generally muted, as the declassified transcripts of many of the meetings from the late 1980s suggest. Proponents of a unitary-actor or an ideational-consensus model would appear to find support in such evidence.

Nevertheless, critics of those approaches could point to other evidence suggesting a greater degree of opposition to Gorbachev's policies. In December 1988, for example, following Gorbachev's speech to the United Nations

14. Oye, "Explaining the End of the Cold War."

15. Emanuel Adler, "The Emergence of Cooperation: National Epistemic Communities and the International Evolution of the Idea of Nuclear Arms Control," *International Organization,* Vol. 46, No.1 (Winter 1992), pp. 101–145; and Herman, "Identity, Norms, and National Security."

16. A prominent constructivist acknowledged at the time that there were "important domestic, bureaucratic, and cognitive-ideological sources of resistance in both East and West" to Soviet new thinking, "not the least of which is the shakiness of the democratic forces' domestic position," but he never pursued the implications of such resistance for his theory. See Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization,* Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 391–426, esp. p. 422. In his later book, Wendt explicitly defended the heuristic use of the unitary-actor assumption and the neglect of domestic politics. See his *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

(UN) in which he announced a unilateral reduction of a half million Soviet troops, Marshal Sergei Akhromeev resigned as chief of the Soviet General Staff. Although his resignation may not have been an overt gesture of protest, it was at least a sign that he did not want to oversee the withdrawal of Soviet power from Eastern Europe. He also spared himself the responsibility of commanding the retreat of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and abandoning the unpopular Communist regime there before the process of "national reconciliation" had borne fruit (it never did).[17] Higher-level officials later began to express alarm about the course of Soviet foreign policy. In February 1990 Politburo member Egor' Ligachev warned that Soviet concessions were leading to a "new Munich."[18] The following month, he wrote Gorbachev a letter complaining that "the socialist community is falling apart and NATO is growing stronger." Ligachev foresaw the "possible breakup of our federation" and warned that "the Party and the Motherland are in danger, I would say in great danger."[19]

In some respects, Gorbachev responded to the criticisms from his more conservative colleagues, especially in domestic policy, by equivocating on economic reform and adopting a tougher stance against nationalist and separatist movements. By the spring of 1990 it was apparent that Gorbachev had lost the confidence of his erstwhile supporters in the liberal *intelligentsiya* and the "informal" popular movements; they were increasingly looking to Boris Yeltsin to carry the banner of democracy and reform. At this point Gorbachev began thinking of the democratic reformers as the "opposition" and the Communist Party establishment as his allies.[20] In November 1990 Gorbachev summoned his top military officers to a meeting and sought to rally their support.[21] Among the casualties of Gorbachev's "turn to the right," as it was viewed at the time, was Eduard Shevardnadze. Under pressure from hardline critics and feeling inadequately supported by Gorbachev, Shevardnadze re-

17. Akhromeev actually resigned in November 1988, but the announcement was made only after Gorbachev's speech the following month. Georgii Kornienko, his Foreign Ministry colleague, resigned at the same time; he implies that the decisions were influenced by their shared concern about undermining the Afghan regime by meeting Gorbachev's February 1989 deadline for complete withdrawal from the country. Shevardnadze considered such doubts evidence of potential insubordination. Georgii Kornienko, *Kholodnaya voina: Svidetel'stvo ee uchastnika* [The Cold War: Testimony of Its Participant] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1994), p. 207.

18. *Pravda* (Moscow), 7 February 1990.

19. Letter of 17 March 1990 reprinted in Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin,* trans. by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, Michele A. Berdy, and Dobrochna Dyrcz-Freeman (New York: Pantheon, 1993), p. 117.

20. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy* [Life and Reforms], Vol. 1(Moscow: Novosti, 1995), pp. 412, 514.

21. "Sud'ba naroda—sud'ba armii: Vystuplenie M.S. Gorbacheva" [The Fate of the People is the Fate of the Army: M.S. Gorbachev's speech], *Pravda,* 16 November 1990, p. 1; and Aleksei Gorokhov, "A vy potryasite svoego generala!" [And You Shake Your General!], *Pravda,* 19 November 1990, p. 3.

signed as foreign minister in December 1990, offering a prescient warning of an impending dictatorship. The coup attempt came eight months later, in August 1991, when a group of Soviet officials staged an unsuccessful attempt to impose a crackdown.[22]

Although the coup leaders' primary concern was to maintain the integrity of the Soviet Union (and their own personal power) in the face of secessionist challenges, the foreign policy views espoused by the putschists were at odds with the "new thinking" that helped end the Cold War. Vladimir Kryuchkov, the head of the Committee for State Security (KGB) from 1988 and a leading coup plotter, never reconciled himself to the foreign policy initiatives of the new thinkers. He claimed to have lost faith in Gorbachev well before the General Secretary appointed him head of the KGB, and, in memoirs published in 1996, Kryuchkov was extremely critical of Foreign Minister Shevardnzadze.[23] Similar views were expressed by Oleg Baklanov, a CPSU Secretary who was head of the CPSU Central Committee's Commission on Military Policy. In late 1990 and early 1991, he emerged as a strong critic of the entire course of Soviet security policy. He and his fellow commission members expressed "alarm" and "anxiety" about the state of Soviet defenses, criticized disarmament agreements for destroying parity between U.S. and Soviet forces, and urged the Foreign Ministry's arms control negotiators to show more "responsibility" for "maintaining the defense capability of the country."[24] In retrospect—given how much "Big Oleg," as he was known in military-industrial circles, had to lose from the Gorbachev reforms—it is not surprising that he became a major figure behind the August 1991 coup.

22. Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 267–285.

23. Vladimir Kryuchkov, *Lichnoe delo* [A Personal Matter], Vol. 1 (Moscow: Olimp, TKO AKT, 1996). At an oral-history conference in Moscow in June 1999, when Kryuchkov was asked about when he first became disillusioned with Gorbachev, he answered by saying that he distrusted Gorbachev's "populism and demagogy" from 1985. In contrast to his opposition to most of Gorbachev's foreign policy, however, Kryuchkov claimed that he supported the goal of withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan, but only because the KGB believed that the Communist regime there would do better without the "Soviet factor" than with the presence of Soviet military forces. Other hardliners at the conference disagreed. Former Politburo member Oleg Shenin, for example, called the withdrawal from Afghanistan "not just a mistake, but treason." From my notes from the conference, 21–22 June 1999.

24. Oleg Baklanov, "Ob itogakh obsuzhdeniya v komissii TsK KPSS po voennoi politiki partii khoda razrabotki kontseptsii voennoi reformy i perspektiv razvitiya Vooruzhennykh Sil SSSR [On the results of a discussion in the commission of the CC CPSU on military policy of the party in the course of elaboration of the conception of military reform and the future of development of the Armed Forces of the USSR]," 8 January 1991, reporting on a meeting of 12 December 1990; and "Ob itogakh obsuzhdeniya v komissii TsK KPSS po voennoi politiki khoda peregovorov po sokrashcheniyu vooruzhenii [On the results of a discussion in the commission of the CC CPSU on military policy in the course of negotiations on arms reductions]," 6 February 1991, both in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), Fond (F.) 89, Opis' (Op.) 21, Delo (D.) 63. A major factor contributing to Baklanov's ultimate failure was undoubtedly his extremely stilted and bureaucratic language.

Contrary to both the realist and the constructivist views described here, hardliners in the KGB and the military-industrial sector denied to the end that any concessions were necessary in negotiations with the West or that military spending placed an excessive burden on the Soviet economy.[25] Yet it is easy to see why many observers still assume that Gorbachev's major initiatives went uncontested. His critics waited until it was too late to express their opposition to the course of Soviet foreign policy. Soviet foreign policy and the end of the Cold War thus pose an intriguing puzzle for theories of international relations. A number of high-ranking Soviet officials who had endorsed some modest changes in Soviet foreign policy were ultimately shocked and dismayed by the extent of Soviet unilateral concessions and what they saw as the result: the loss of the external Soviet empire and the disintegration of the USSR itself. The hardliners who attempted to overthrow Gorbachev in 1991 in retrospect blame him, Yakovlev, and Shevardnadze "for betraying the people and for treason against the motherland and for the criminal destruction of the Soviet Union."[26] Such extreme views are not limited to extremists, however. The same charges have been leveled against Gorbachev by moderate reformers, such as Egor' Ligachev and Nikolai Ryzhkov, who did not join the coup, despite their many disagreements with the course of Gorbachev's policies. Yet when these officials—both the extremists and the moderate reformers—were in office, none of them made a concerted effort to change Soviet foreign and military policies, thereby giving some outside observers the impression of general agreement within the leadership.

The question, then, is how did Gorbachev persuade influential people who disagreed with him to accept his controversial policy proposals?

Norms, Heresthetics, and Politics

William Riker devoted much of the latter part of his extremely productive scholarly career to the study and explication of what he called *heresthetic*.[27] He derived the word from the Greek root meaning choosing and electing. Like rhetoric, heresthetic depends on the use of language to manipulate people.

25. In retrospect, the hardliners emphasize these points even more strongly. Typical were the remarks at the June 1999 oral history conference by leading coup plotters Kryuchkov, Baklanov, Shenin, and Gennadii Yanaev (Gorbachev's vice president).

26. Oleg Baklanov *et al.* to Thomas Biersteker, 28 April 1998, declining an invitation to attend a conference on the end of the Cold War. Among other things, the letter writers insisted that the Cold War had not ended and was still being waged by the United States against Russia.

27. In his various works on the subject, Riker appears to have used "heresthetic" and "heresthetics" interchangeably. I follow his practice here.

But unlike rhetoric, it does not require persuasion. "With heresthetic," according to Riker, "conviction is at best secondary and often not even involved at all. The point of an heresthetical act is to structure the situation so that the actor wins, regardless of whether or not the other participants are persuaded."[28] Riker sought to capture a range of behavior under the rubric of heresthetic, including strategic voting, manipulation of agendas, and adding new dimensions to a debate. Some of his examples resemble what students of social movements have called "framing": that is, "defining reality" by placing issues into a context that will favor certain interpretations and promote particular actions.[29]

Of the many entertaining examples Riker described, the case of Tisias and Korax is especially revealing of the use of language to manipulate a situation to one's advantage. It is the story of Korax, an early fifth-century Greek teacher of rhetoric, and his student Tisias. Korax (whose name means the "crow") had offered to teach Tisias rhetoric if he promised to pay the tuition when he won his first case. But after studying with Korax, Tisias never practiced his profession, so he never paid his tuition. Korax sued him. Tisias responded with this dilemma:

> If I win the case, then I need not pay because I am freed by the judgment of the court. If I lose the case, then I need not pay because the terms of the contract will not have been satisfied. Since I must either win or lose, I need not pay.

Korax answered:

> If I win the case, then I must be paid because of the judgment of the court. If I lose the case, then I must be paid because the terms of the contract will have been satisfied. Since I must either win or lose, I must be paid.

The judge dismissed the case, saying that Tisias was a bad egg from a bad crow. As Riker comments: "although Korax lost, the advertisement was so good that people still repeat it 2500 years later."[30]

28. William H. Riker, "Political Theory and the Art of Heresthetics," in Ada W. Finifter, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (Washington, DC: The American Political Science Association, 1983), pp. 47–65, esp. p. 60.

29. The expression "defining reality" is used by Paolo R. Donati, "Political Discourse Analysis," in Mario Diani and Ron Eyerman, eds., *Studying Collective Action* (London: Sage, 1992), pp. 111–112; other aspects of the definition draw on the notion of "master frames," from David Snow and Robert Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest," in Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 133–155. For an overview of the literature, see Kimberly Fisher, "Locating Frames in the Discursive Universe," *Sociological Research Online,* Vol. 2, No. 3 (September 1997) http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/2/3/4.html; and Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics,* 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. ch. 7.

30. Riker, "Political Theory," p. 60.

The Intellectual Status of Heresthetics

A number of students of international relations have recently characterized the debate between realists and constructivists as part of a larger intellectual divide between rationalism or materialism (which includes most variants of realism, liberalism, and Marxism, as well as game-theoretic approaches) on the one hand, and constructivism or idealism, on the other.[31] How does Riker's notion of heresthetic fit into this debate?

Riker never managed to complete his work on heresthetics, so we cannot know for sure how he would choose to place it in the current debate. His final work, a study of the use of rhetoric and heresthetic in the campaigns for adoption of the U.S. Constitution, was published after his death in June 1993 and was edited and prepared for publication by three of his colleagues.[32] We do know, however, that throughout his life Riker was committed to the study of politics as a science. He always sought to produce systematic knowledge and to generalize. His last book, although a detailed, historical study, deliberately sought to fill a gap in the study of campaigns in general. To understand the role of rhetoric, for example, he wrote:

> We need a set of tested generalizations about the process itself and about the content of rhetorical appeals. Given such generalizations we could develop a science of rhetoric by which, perhaps, we might predict the course of campaigns and explain what kind of rhetoric works and why.[33]

Riker's pioneering work in rational-choice approaches to politics, combined with his stated intentions in writing about rhetoric and heresthetic, would seem to place him squarely in the rationalist camp. Indeed, his work on heresthetic bears much in common with what leading purveyors of rational-choice approaches call "analytic narratives"—studies that combine "analytic tools that are commonly employed in economics and political science with the narrative form, which is more commonly employed in history."[34]

Yet we should not be so quick to pin the rationalist label on Riker's study of heresthetic, especially if it leads us to underestimate the relevance of his

31. Peter Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner, eds., "*International Organization* and the Study of World Politics," *International Organization,* Vol. 52, No. 4 (Autumn 1998), pp. 645–685. Jeffrey T. Checkel, "International Norms and Domestic Politics: Bridging the Rationalist-Constructivist Divide," *European Journal of International Relations,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (December 1997), pp. 473–495; and Ngaire Woods, "The Uses of Theory in the Study of International Relations," in Ngaire Woods, ed., *Explaining International Relations since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), ch. 1.

32. William H. Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution,* ed. by Randall L. Calvert, John Mueller, and Rick K. Wilson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

34. Robert Bates *et al.*, *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 10.

work for some of the key issues that interest students of international politics and the end of the Cold War—particularly the role of norms and discourse. First, Riker acknowledged the critique of rationalist assumptions inherent in the findings of psychologists, such as Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, who emphasized the influence of "framing" decisions on the process of choice.[35] Second, Riker himself typically referred to heresthetics as an "art."[36] He stressed that the success of heresthetic depended very much on the skill and ingenuity of individual politicians, and that the outcome was highly contingent and difficult—often impossible—to predict. Thus, his historical narratives were good at making the reader understand why certain outcomes came about, but they never fully provided the foundations for a theory with predictive power. Riker's cases from the ratification of the U.S. Constitution illustrate how chance, context, misunderstanding, and skill all influence the success or failure of heresthetic techniques.[37]

The art of heresthetic, as Riker illustrated it, puts strategies compatible with rational-choice approaches into a context in which norms and ideas, as well as idiosyncrasy and chance, play important roles. Thus, in its application to international relations, heresthetics rests, perhaps uneasily, between rationalist and constructivist approaches—or, more optimistically, helps to bridge the gap.

Gorbachev as Heresthetician

Riker's emphasis on chance and contingency should make his heresthetic approach particularly appealing to those students of the end of the Cold War who are skeptical of the seeming determinism of some of the materialist as well as ideational accounts. One key to reconciling these competing explanations may be to focus on Mikhail Gorbachev's skills as a politician and "heresthetician."

Although Gorbachev was probably not in the same league as Korax and Tisias, he was, in the accounts of his colleagues (friends and foes), a master at

35. Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "The Framing of Decisions and the Rationality of Choice," *Science,* Vol. 211, No. 30 (January 1981), pp. 453–458. This and other related works are cited in Riker, *Strategy of Rhetoric,* pp. 8–9.

36. William H. Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); and Riker, "Political Theory and the Art of Heresthetics."

37. In one example, an otherwise clever attempt at strategic voting failed because a key player misunderstood the preferences of the other players. Riker offered a "Moral: It is not safe to try heresthetical maneuvers when you have poor information about others' tastes." Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric,* pp. 150–155. In another example, concerns of the moment, which made military assistance from a national government seem especially valuable, induced the Georgia State legislature to ratify the Constitution despite serious objections to many constitutional provisions. If Georgia had not been at war with native tribes, ratification would have failed. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

manipulating people with language. He often concealed his own views, allowing his interlocutor to express an opinion and then seeming to agree with it, but in such a way as to deny it later ("No, you didn't quite understand me").[38] Gorbachev was not an eloquent or even proper speaker of Russian, contrary to a view widely held in the United States. But that was his strength as a heresthetician. "He had a unique ability," according to a former Politburo colleague, "in a stream of words, complicated, intricate phrases, constructed on any kind of basis, with appeals to authorities and to his own experience, to make his interlocutors into his allies. And in the end all that verbiage so confused the issue that each of the opposing sides began to think that the General Secretary actually supported its position.[39]

This description seems to correspond to one of Riker's definitions of a skilled heresthetician: "the creativity itself seems to consist of recombining the world . . . , making an alliance of exceedingly strange bedfellows, searching for statements that lead to incoherence and thus delay, and attaching new meanings to old ideas."[40]

In the sections that follow, I explore how Gorbachev managed to gain acceptance for some of the key initiatives he promoted by employing some of the heresthetic devices Riker has described. I do not account for the sources of those initiatives, although that topic has received considerable treatment elsewhere.[41]

Norms and Discourse as Heresthetic

Gorbachev and his fellow reformers were often able to win over skeptics by appealing to norms that resonated in the Soviet political culture, which they invested with new content.[42] Whether this practice of "attaching new meanings to old ideas" qualifies Gorbachev's use of norms as a heresthetical tech-

38. V. I. Vorotnikov, *A bylo eto tak . . . iz dnevnik chlena Politbyuro TsK KPSS* [That's How It Really Was . . . From the Diary of a Member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] (Moscow: Si-Mar, 1995), p. 41.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 261. For a similar account from a more sympathetic colleague, see Vadim Medvedev, *V komande Gorbacheva: vzglyad iznutri* [On Gorbachev's Team: A View from Within] (Moscow: Bylina, 1994), p. 72.

40. Riker, *Art of Political Manipulation,* p. 51. See also Riker's example of the use of ambiguous language by Benjamin Franklin and Gouverneur Morris to create the appearance of unanimity in a vote on the Constitution. *Strategy of Rhetoric,* pp. 164–165.

41. Herman, "Identity, Norms, and National Security;" Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change;* Mendelson, *Changing Course;* and Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

42. In the language of social-movement theory, Gorbachev sought to create "frame resonance." See David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization,"

nique is not so important. The practice did depend heavily on the use of language, with seemingly trivial differences in wording taking on great importance in policy debates. In debates over "how much is enough" in military policy, for example, reformers spoke of the goal of "reasonable sufficiency" as a way of establishing a minimum level of forces that did not automatically mimic what they saw as senseless overarming by the United States.[43] More traditional thinkers within the military establishment preferred the term "defense sufficiency," which in their view required the Soviet Union to match any level of U.S. military buildup in order to maintain "parity."[44] Clearly, language mattered a great deal in Soviet debates on security policy.[45]

Norms mattered too. In the realm of security policy, the relevant norms concerned mainly defense and disarmament. In the USSR, the searing memory of World War II spawned a universal normative commitment to both a strong defense and the preservation of peace. Typically, the former was understood to produce the latter. But because of the Soviet leadership's repeated claims that the USSR was forced to develop its own nuclear weapons in the late 1940s in response to a U.S. nuclear threat, there was also a longstanding rhetorical commitment to the goal of nuclear disarmament. Finally, despite the patently offensive capabilities of Soviet conventional and nuclear forces, Soviet officials—civilian and military alike—consistently felt obligated to stress their country's strictly defensive intentions. Soviet reformers took advantage of this normative context to promote their policy reforms, often with the help of transnational links to arms control supporters and peace activists in the West.[46] They sought to persuade Soviet military officials and members of the national security bureaucracy that even major initiatives of Soviet unilateral restraint were consistent with a commitment to nuclear disarmament and peace, a commitment that was part of an unassailable normative consensus in Soviet society.

A review of two examples from Soviet security policy illustrates how Gorbachev and his reformist allies attempted to invoke norms and use other

in Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow, eds., *International Social Movement Research,* Vol. 1 (London: JAI Press, 1988), pp. 197–217.

43. Aleksei Arbatov, "Parity And Reasonable Sufficiency," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 10 (October 1988), pp. 75–87; and Arbatov, "How Much Defence Is Sufficient?" *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 4 (April 1989), pp. 31–44.

44. For representative military critiques, see (Lt. Gen., ret.) E. Volkov, "'Ne raz'yasnyaet, a zatumanivaet," *Krasnaya zvezda,* 28 September 1989, p. 3; (Maj. Gen.) G. Kirilenko, "Legko li byt' oborone dostatochnoi?" *Krasnaya zvezda,* 21 March 1990, p. 2; and (Gen.) M. A. Moiseev, "Eshche raz o prestizhe armii," *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil,* No. 13 (July 1989), pp. 3–14.

45. Plays on words were also common. See, e.g., (Maj. Gen.) Yu. Lyubimov, "O dostatochnosti oborony i nedostatke kompetentnosti [On the Sufficiency of Defense and the Insufficiency of Competence]," *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil,* No. 16 (August 1989), pp. 21–26.

46. Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces.*

heresthetic techniques to influence their opponents. Throughout this discussion I refer to particular realist and constructivist interpretations of the cases to indicate how a heresthetic approach helps reconcile some of the problems in those accounts.

Nuclear Disarmament

Two of the policies advocated by Soviet reformers and their transnational contacts were radical cuts in nuclear arsenals and the defensive restructuring of conventional forces. Some of the reformers favored Soviet initiatives of restraint, such as a nuclear test ban or reductions in forces that would be undertaken unilaterally. They were encouraged when Gorbachev gave a major address in January 1986 proposing a multistage process of nuclear disarmament by the year 2000.[47] In the speech, the Soviet leader announced the extension of a unilateral Soviet nuclear test moratorium that had been in effect since the previous August, despite U.S. refusal to reciprocate by halting its own nuclear tests. Gorbachev's broader disarmament proposal included concessions on a number of issues that had deadlocked negotiations between the Reagan administration and Gorbachev's predecessors and, despite its seemingly utopian goal, provided a kind of blueprint for future arms talks. The first result was the treaty eliminating all intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF), signed in December 1987, followed a few years later by the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START).

At the time, many observers who were convinced that Gorbachev's arms control initiatives were serious interpreted them as representing a consensus of Soviet opinion, including that of the military establishment.[48] In analyzing his January 1986 program, many observers focused on Gorbachev's proposals for nuclear reductions, downplayed his long-term goal of a nuclear-free world, and disregarded his references to the importance of reducing conventional as well as nuclear forces. It seemed natural that Soviet military leaders would support a reduction of nuclear forces, especially if it freed up resources for development of advanced-technology conventional weapons.

Evidence from memoirs of Soviet officials seems at first glance to support the view that Gorbachev's disarmament plans received support from the military establishment. Marshal Sergei Akhromeev, the chief of the Soviet General Staff until late 1988, claimed in his memoir that the fifteen year program for

47. For an analysis of the speech, see Matthew Evangelista, "The New Soviet Approach to Security," *World Policy Journal,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Fall 1986), pp. 561–599.

48. Mary C. FitzGerald, "The Strategic Revolution Behind Soviet Arms Control," *Arms Control Today,* Vol. 17, No. 5 (May 1987), pp. 16–19; and George G. Weickhardt, "The Military Consensus Behind Soviet Arms Control Proposals," *Arms Control Today,* Vol. 17, No. 7 (July 1987), pp. 20–24.

nuclear disarmament resulted from studies he had commissioned in the General Staff. His coauthor, Georgii Kornienko, a stalwart of the old system as first deputy foreign minister under Andrei Gromyko for many years, agreed, as did their colleague from the International Department of the CPSU apparatus, Valentin Falin.[49] In reality, however, Gorbachev's nuclear disarmament program was not at all popular in the military, particularly when it entailed unilateral concessions on nuclear forces in Europe, a willingness to proceed with strategic reductions despite U.S. insistence on pursuing the Strategic Defense Initiative or "Star Wars," and provisions for intrusive verification. Akhromeev's personal opposition to an inspection regime that included overflights of Soviet territory nearly scuttled the 1986 Stockholm accord on confidence-building measures and security in Europe. He was overruled by Gorbachev at a Politburo meeting and sent to Stockholm to present the official Soviet position in favor of overflights—thereby misleading Western observers into believing that he supported a consensus position.[50]

Nor was Akhromeev as enthusiastic a supporter of the INF Treaty as Western analysts believed at the time. At one point during the negotiations he threatened to resign as chief of the General Staff in protest against a concession that Foreign Minister Shevardnadze made.[51] Clearly Akhromeev was skeptical about many of Gorbachev's actual arms control initiatives. Nevertheless, the normative commitment to nuclear disarmament was so strong in Soviet discourse on security policy that even "old thinkers" within the Soviet national security bureaucracy perceived some benefit in associating themselves with Gorbachev's initiatives—at least in their memoirs.

Akhromeev's claim of Soviet military paternity for Gorbachev's disarmament brainchild is about as plausible as that of the Coca-Cola executive who maintained that the popular environmental-movement slogan "'think globally and act locally,' was really created by the Coca-Cola company through our franchises and local bottlers."[52] There is very little evidence to support the

49. Sergei Akhromeev and Georgii Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata* [Through the Eyes of a Marshal and a Diplomat] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1992), pp. 86–90; and Valentin Falin, *Politische erinnerungen* [Political memoirs] (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1993), pp. 469–470.

50. Comments by former Soviet foreign ministry officials Sergei Tarasenko (Shevardnadze's adviser) and Oleg Grinevskii (head of the delegation to the Stockholm talks) at a conference at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 7–10 May 1998.

51. Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata,* p. 109. The concession in retrospect seems rather trivial: it involved accepting the U.S. claim that a certain class of Soviet missiles should be eliminated because U.S. analysts judged it capable of a range of 500 kilometers, even though its Soviet designers insisted that it had never been tested at more than 400 kilometers and would not achieve more than 450 kilometers. But to this day former Soviet officials, such as ex-Defense Minister Dmitrii Yazov, still make a point of raising the issue as a source of anger and humiliation. Comments of Yazov, Oleg Baklanov, and Valerii Kataev at a Moscow oral history conference, June 1999.

52. Ira Herbert, former president of Coca-Cola North America, quoted in John Palattella, "The Producers," *Lingua Franca,* Vol. 6, No. 7 (November 1996), p. 26.

view that the military was the source of genuine Soviet disarmament initiatives. Gorbachev, in his own memoir, is unequivocal on this point:

> The Ministry of Defense, knowing well how hard it was for the country to endure [the costs of] the arms race, did not once in all the years of my activity in Moscow put forward a proposal to reduce the armed forces or the production of weapons.[53]

Technically, Gorbachev is wrong. There is some truth in the claim by Akhromeev that the General Staff put forward a plan for nuclear disarmament, but it was a specious plan. Riker might have called it a kind of failed heresthetic ploy. According to several former Soviet officials, once Akhromeev became aware of Gorbachev's interest in nuclear disarmament and got wind of the Foreign Ministry's preparations for a major initiative, he rushed through the General Staff's alternative version. By embracing total nuclear disarmament, he hoped to cast doubt on the seriousness of the Soviet initiative, much as earlier Soviet proposals for "general and complete disarmament" were dismissed by the West as propaganda. Thus, as one insider account put it, Akhromeev's people were motivated primarily by fear that "Gorbachev and his 'team' might unilaterally try to change the Soviet position" on arms control. They hurried to put forward their own proposal for complete nuclear disarmament, expecting that "such a declaration hardly could lead to any practical results in the foreseeable future, or affect, in any form, the ongoing negotiations."[54]

Some dozen years after Gorbachev announced his January 1986 plan for nuclear disarmament an American writer asked him whether he had encountered "much resistance to this proposal within your government." "Not to the idea, not to the statement," answered Gorbachev. "But I must admit that most of the military men thought this was just another propaganda bluff, another deception."[55] The General Staff supported the "idea" of nuclear abolition by putting forward its own disarmament plan.

Gorbachev evidently was pleased to get even rhetorical support from the Soviet disarmament skeptics, and he used it to his advantage. In what we might call a reverse heresthetic move, worthy of Tisias and Korax, Gorbachev seized upon Akhromeev's ostensible endorsement of the goal of nuclear disarmament to push forward ever more radical Soviet initiatives. Whenever possible he would enlist Marshal Akhromeev to represent the Soviet position

53. Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy,* Vol. 2, p. 13.

54. Aleksandr G. Savel'yev and Nikolai N. Detinov, *The Big Five: Arms Control Decision-Making in the Soviet Union* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), pp. 92–93; and Nikolai Detinov, interview by author, Providence, RI, May 1998.

55. Gorbachev quoted by Jonathan Schell in *The Nation,* 2/9 February 1998, p. 50.

in a given negotiation, so that the military leader would share responsibility for the concessions made by the Soviet side. Gorbachev often gave Akhromeev the task of defending the resulting agreement in public, including at sessions of the Soviet parliament as that body evolved into an instrument of genuine democratic deliberation.

Aleksei Arbatov, a leading civilian reformer of the Gorbachev era (and later a member of the Russian Duma), once described the difficulty of attempting to find common ground with the military on projects concerning disarmament and military reform: The reformers sometimes risked becoming co-opted. He illustrated the problem they faced in dealing with the military by recalling an old Russian anecdote about the two brothers who went bear-hunting. At one point Dmitrii calls to his brother: "Ivan, Ivan, I've caught the bear!" "Bring him here then," Ivan calls back. "I can't," yells his brother. "He won't let me go." Military conservatives during the *perestroika* era sometimes sought to appropriate the language of reform ("defense sufficiency," for example) to hide their inaction or resistance. More often, though, the language of the reformers, and the normative implications it contained, did seem to pose constraints on what the military was able to do. In the case of the General Staff's nuclear disarmament plan, Akhromeev's heresthetic technique backfired. He was the one who got caught by the bear.

Another classic heresthetic device identified by Riker is manipulation of the agenda. Gorbachev was a master of the technique and used it to good effect in promoting arms control, particularly the nuclear test ban. The Soviet unilateral moratorium was initiated in August 1985, largely as a result of appeals by Western peace groups and their transnational contacts with Soviet reformers.[56] But by the end of the year, it was apparent that the Western activists, despite their promises, had failed to put adequate pressure on their own governments to reciprocate the Soviet gesture. At this point, according to Anatolii Chernyaev, Gorbachev's top aide for foreign policy, the Politburo approved the resumption of Soviet nuclear tests and the drafting of "propaganda provisions" to deal with the consequences.[57] Gorbachev had staked a good deal on the success of the unilateral test ban and was clearly reluctant to end it. A concerted campaign by Western peace groups working with insiders such as Chernyaev managed to convince Gorbachev to extend the moratorium for another three months (it eventually lasted over a year and a half, despite consistent U.S. refusal to go along). But how was Gorbachev to convince the Politburo to agree to reinstate the moratorium?

56. Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces,* ch. 13.

57. Anatolii S. Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym: po dnevnikovym zapisyam* [Six Years with Gorbachev: According to Diary Notes] (Moscow: Progress-Kul'tura, 1993), p. 62.

The Soviet leader secured the approval of the test-ban extension in a characteristically clever way. Instead of making a separate announcement of the continuation of the moratorium, Gorbachev included it in the text of his historic January 1986 disarmament proposal. He ensured that his colleagues acquiesced in a reversal of their previous position by manipulating the Politburo's agenda in classic heresthetic fashion. Rather than conduct a full Politburo discussion of nuclear testing, he asked four of his colleagues (led by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze) to present the overall disarmament plan for approval *the day before it was scheduled to be published.* Moreover, Gorbachev himself did not even attend the meeting—he was on vacation. In the text of Gorbachev's speech, the extension of the unilateral moratorium was folded, hardly noticed, into an ambitious list of bilateral and multilateral measures. According to traditional norms, the Politburo members gave a blanket approval of their leader's proposal.

Nevertheless, two of the more conservative members could not resist some critical remarks, ostensibly about how decisions used to be made "in the past." As Vitalii Vorotnikov reconstructed the discussion from notes he took at the meeting, Andrei Gromyko and Egor' Ligachev complained that "decisions were often taken without agreement by members of the Politburo. There was a lot of voluntarism and posturing. Three or four people plus [Leonid] Brezhnev made the decisions. A range of questions were generally outside the Politburo's control."[58] There is little doubt that these complaints were a thinly veiled criticism of the form and content of Gorbachev's disarmament initiatives. Yet by relying on a combination of heresthetic skills and the strength of the institution of the General Secretary, Gorbachev managed to push through policies that contributed to the end of the nuclear arms race.[59]

Soviet Withdrawal from Eastern Europe

Many historians of the Cold War argue that its main symbol, and perhaps its main cause, was the armed division of Europe that emerged in the wake of the

58. Vorotnikov, *A bylo eto tak,* p. 207.

59. Gorbachev's strategy for pursuing domestic reforms was fairly similar. Jerry Hough describes how "Gorbachev early developed the practice of introducing the politically most sensitive reforms with little prior public discussion." For example, in a bid to open up the Soviet economy to international investment, Gorbachev published a decree in January 1987 that legalized joint ventures with foreigners. Hough writes that "the issue had not even been mentioned beforehand in the press" and that the decree itself "was published during a Central Committee plenary session that distracted attention from it" because of how much else was on the agenda. See Jerry F. Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR, 1985–1991* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1997), p. 119.

Second World War. Efforts at easing East-West tensions through arms control often included schemes for limiting, redeploying, or restructuring the armies that faced each other across the inter-German border. A number of proposals during the 1950s focused on the establishment of nuclear-free zones or inspection zones in central Europe, but they made little headway. The Soviet Union substantially reduced its armed forces in the late 1950s and early 1960s, effectively cutting them in half. But in the late 1960s, the USSR began building up its army and improving its capability for conventional warfare in Europe. During the early 1970s formal East-West negotiations on conventional forces in Europe began, but they had little to show for themselves when they concluded a decade and a half later.

The most dramatic breakthrough in the negotiations on conventional forces in Europe came with Gorbachev's announcement at the UN in December 1988 of a substantial unilateral reduction in the Soviet Army: 500,000 Soviet troops, including 50,000 based in Eastern Europe, were to be unilaterally demobilized, and 10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery pieces, and 800 combat aircraft and other equipment oriented toward offensive action were to be withdrawn from Europe. This initiative was combined with a commitment to a new, defensive orientation of Soviet conventional forces and a tacit repudiation of the erstwhile Soviet practice of military intervention in member-states of the Warsaw Pact. All three actions—the unilateral disarmament initiative, the shift to "nonoffensive defense," and the new policy toward Eastern Europe represented in part by the notion of "common security"—had implications well beyond the sphere of disarmament. By signaling Soviet military restraint in the face of anti-Communist demonstrations in East-Central Europe, Gorbachev in effect gave a green light to the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the peaceful overthrow of Communist regimes, and the unification of Germany. Soviet concessions at the negotiating table, along with the prior unilateral reductions, finally led to the conclusion of equal NATO–Warsaw Pact limits in a major treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). Leaders of the allied member-states and a dozen nonaligned European countries emphasized the direct link between the Cold War and the armed standoff in Europe when they met in Paris in November 1990 to sign the CFE Treaty. They declared a formal end to the Cold War, stated that they were "no longer adversaries," and pledged to "build new partnerships and extend to each other the hand of friendship."[60]

Were Gorbachev's initiatives the natural and inevitable consequence of

60. William Drozdiak, "East and West Declare the End of Cold War at Paris Conference," *International Herald Tribune,* 20 November 1990, p. 1.

Soviet economic decline and pressure from the West, as some realists would have it? Or did they represent the triumph of the "new thinking" in the Soviet military establishment—the recognition that threatening the other side only undermines one's own security—as constructivists might maintain? Let us examine each argument in turn before considering the role of norms and heresthetics as a way of making sense of otherwise contradictory evidence.

The Brezhnev era witnessed demographic and economic trends that we would most expect to influence the size of the armed forces—decline in the growth of the labor force from 1975 (it began to pick up again in the early 1980s) and a drop in total factor productivity. Yet Brezhnev's major buildup of conventional forces (including an addition of nearly 900,000 soldiers from the Khrushchev-era level) was the opposite of what an emphasis on demographic factors would imply.[61] Realists might be tempted to salvage the economic/demographic explanation for Gorbachev's policies by describing the December 1988 announcement of the troop reduction as a delayed response to the demographic situation. In fact, however, the labor force had resumed growing even before the cuts were being implemented. Moreover, Gorbachev understood that as a consequence of his economic reforms the demobilized soldiers would be entering not a taut, inefficient, full-employment economy, but one characterized by incipient unemployment and a deteriorating social safety net. They would not be the welcome "inputs" for extensive growth that they might have been in past decades under the old Soviet economic order.

There is no doubt that the desire to improve the Soviet economy in the long term lay behind many of Gorbachev's security policy initiatives, including the unilateral reduction in conventional forces. Other leaders, however, including those in the military, were initially more sanguine about the state of the economy and less motivated to challenge existing priorities. It was only after the *perestroika* reforms began undermining the basis for the old command-administrative economy in 1988 that the military leaders and Gorbachev's more conservative political colleagues came around to accepting the necessity of major unilateral cuts in military forces and spending. The weakened economy, they realized, could no longer sustain the burden.[62] Even so, they never signed on to the broader implications of the posture of "nonoffensive defense" and common security, which obliged the Soviet Union to renounce the use of military force in its dealings with the East European countries and to give

61. Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces,* ch. 9.

62. By the beginning of 1988, Akhromeev argues, he and his colleagues in the General Staff "began to realize the necessity and the possibility" of "unilateral reductions of our armed forces"—even though they had not yet received a specific assignment to study them and did not propose any initiatives on their own. Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata,* pp. 72–73.

those countries "freedom of choice," including the choice of disbanding the Warsaw Pact and requesting Soviet troops to leave their territory.

It is clear, then, that by 1988 economic conditions helped convince Soviet hardliners of the need to reduce conventional forces (although the merits of a unilateral reduction remained controversial). Here realists such as Randall Schweller and William Wohlforth have a case. Less plausible, though, are their contentions that demographic constraints dictated the changes or that the "new thinking" was simply the product of the military's advocacy of a breathing space in which the Soviet economy could gear up to develop advanced-technology conventional weapons. Given the range of views on the state of the Soviet economy, the level of Soviet technology, and the nature of the military threat to the USSR, economic conditions did not dictate any particular outcome.[63] Nor do economic factors explain in any way the adoption of "nonoffensive defense" and "reasonable sufficiency" as the new orientation for a reduced Soviet military. Here the constructivists who emphasize the role of ideas and learning are worth heeding.

But if the constructivists assume that these new concepts were widely accepted within the Soviet political and military leadership, they are mistaken. In the early 1980s the United States pursued a military buildup in Europe, including deployment of new nuclear missiles and advanced conventional weaponry. Soviet political and military authorities were undoubtedly concerned about these developments, but retreat was hardly their preferred or only possible response. For the professional military, the status quo was surely a better alternative. Better still would have been to respond in kind with new Soviet military programs. "The Soviet Union could have matched any U.S. challenge, including SDI," asserted Oleg Baklanov, the military-industrial baron, in retrospect. He did not hide his contempt for Gorbachev's unilateral initiatives of restraint: "I don't blame the U.S. for pursuing the policies it did. If the other side gives up, you take everything you can."[64]

Marshal Akhromeev suggested in his memoirs that Gorbachev knew what kind of reaction he would receive from the military if he forthrightly revealed his proposals for reductions, retrenchment, and restructuring, even if he justified them with "new thinking" about the security dilemma. Gorbachev's policy would have been exposed as a radical break with "the entire understanding by the military leadership of the essence of the country's defense capability in Europe." Withdrawal from Eastern Europe meant giving

63. For elaboration of this point see Matthew Evangelista, "Internal and External Constraints on Grand Strategy: The Soviet Case," in Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 154–178.

64. Comments at oral-history conference, Moscow, 21 June 1999, from my notes.

up "that which had been won at a cost of enormous amounts of blood and millions of lives."[65] Akhromeev's widow, Tamara Vasil'evna, recalled in an interview four years after his death why he had been so resistant to Gorbachev's reforms:

> Sergei Fedorovich [Akhromeev] understood that Gorbachev's policy would lead to the breakup of the Warsaw Pact and the whole system of security in Europe. He considered his participation in the creation [of that system] his life's work. . . . Having left the General Staff, he couldn't work as Gorbachev's adviser for very long. He wrote several letters of resignation.[66]

Evidently neither the realists' focus on material factors nor the constructivists' attention to ideas provides an adequate account of how Gorbachev succeeded in launching the initiatives that culminated in the end of the Cold War in Europe. Nor is it merely a question of combining material and ideational factors. Attention should be paid to Gorbachev's strategic use of language, norms, and information to link material and ideational arguments on behalf of his preferred policies.

In the case of the conventional force reductions and defensive restructuring, Gorbachev and his allies began by shaping the normative context of the debate. They sought to portray offensive military strategies—even those pursued on behalf of defensive, status-quo intentions—as destabilizing and dangerous contributors to arms races and the possible outbreak of war. The fact that the Soviet Union had been the victim of a surprise attack by Hitler's armies in 1941 made Soviet military officials somewhat open to critiques of overly offensive postures, but they were far from adopting the views of civilian proponents of military reform and their transnational counterparts.

As with nuclear disarmament, Soviet military commanders sought to embrace "nonoffensive defense" as their own initiative. In 1989 a leading Soviet military journal published newly declassified Soviet war plans from the late 1940s that demonstrated a Soviet intention to go on the defensive, rather than the offensive, in the event of war in central Europe. By ignoring the intervening shift to a highly offensive strategy, the editors sought to imply that defense had always been the main Soviet orientation and therefore reforms were unnecessary.[67] Civilian reformers perceived an opportunity in these rationalizations. They encouraged their military colleagues to resurrect the his-

65. Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata,* pp. 70–71.

66. Tamara Vasil'evna Akhromeeva, "Ya nikogda ne poveryu, chto on ukhodil na smert'," *Sovershenno sekretno,* No. 7 (1995), pp. 16–17.

67. "Plan komandirskikh zanyatii po operativno-takticheskoi podgotovke v polevom upravlenii gruppy Sovetskikh okkupatsionnykh voisk v Germanii na 1948 god," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal,* No. 8 (August 1989), pp. 24–26. For an excellent discussion of these materials, see Gilberto Villahermosa, "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised: Déja Vu All Over Again," *Soviet Observer,* No. 2 (1990), pp. 1–5.

tory of Soviet military strategists who had emphasized defensive operations and to highlight defense as a Soviet military tradition—for example, by publishing studies of the use of defensive strategies at key junctures during World War II.[68]

Despite the military's lip service to the idea of defensive restructuring of forces, the General Staff did not initiate or enthusiastically support Gorbachev's unilateral efforts. Of course Gorbachev needed the General Staff to implement his proposed restructuring and reductions. But, as Akhromeev later explained, the military's proposals came only in response "to concrete decisions already taken" by Gorbachev and his allies.[69] Specifically, on 9 November 1988 the Soviet Defense Council, chaired by Gorbachev, instructed the Defense Ministry to work out a plan for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe.[70] The military's participation in planning the reductions came long after the *institutchiki* from the academic centers and officials in the Foreign Ministry had persuaded Gorbachev of the merits of a large-scale unilateral withdrawal, combined with a shift to a clearly defensive posture. Finally, after securing the Foreign Ministry and academic proposals and the General Staff's implementation plan, Gorbachev was ready to seek formal approval from his fellow political leaders to launch his unilateral initiative, at virtually the last minute. Anatolii Dobrynin captures well the flavor of the decision process: "Before going to the UN General Assembly in New York in 1988, Gorbachev urgently pushed through the Politburo a bold unilateral reduction of our armed forces by half a million men."[71]

Dobrynin's recollection of Gorbachev's method of "pushing through" the unilateral reduction underscores that there was no consensus in the Kremlin on what to do about the burden of military spending, how to carry out military reforms, or what positions to take in disarmament negotiations.[72] Dobrynin had been invited back to Moscow from his position as ambassador

68. Andrei A. Kokoshin, "Razvitie voennogo dela i sokrashchenie vooruzhennykh sil i obychnykh vooruzhenii," *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya,* No. 1 (January 1988), pp. 20–32; Andrei A. Kokoshin and Valentin N. Larionov, "Kurskaya bitva v svete sovremennoi oboronitel'noi doktriny," *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya,* No. 8 (August 1987), pp. 32–40; and Andrei Kokoshin, interview by author, Moscow, November 1990. (I am grateful to Bruce Parrott for allowing me to participate in this interview, which he had arranged for himself).

69. Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata,* pp. 70–71.

70. Minutes of the Politburo meeting, 27 December 1988, located in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 42, D. 24, and published in *Istochnik,* No. 5–6 (1993), pp. 130–147, esp. p. 143.

71. Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Times Books, 1995), p. 626.

72. In the Politburo meeting following Gorbachev's UN speech, a sharp debate broke out between Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and Defense Minister Yazov on the implications of the restructuring of conventional forces that Gorbachev had announced. See the minutes of the Politburo meeting, 27 December 1988 (cited in fn. 70 above).

to the United States in March 1986 and put in charge of the CPSU Central Committee's International Department; but he soon found that he had little to do. Gorbachev was systematically reducing the role of the CPSU in Soviet life and arrogating control of foreign policy to himself and Shevardnadze. As Dobrynin put it, "when Shevardnadze became foreign minister, fewer papers were presented or discussed. Gorbachev clearly strove to avoid Politburo guidelines and directives and sought a free hand in dealing with foreign heads of state. Ultimately, with Shevardnadze's help, Gorbachev reached his goal. In fact if not in form, he single-handedly devised the foreign policy of the country and implemented it as well."[73]

Without such centralization of foreign policy, it is unlikely that Gorbachev's initiatives would have succeeded. The resistance from the military and the conservative politicians was potentially strong, but it emerged only in the wake of Gorbachev's domestic reforms, which were intended to decentralize and liberalize the political system and to weaken the Communist Party's monopoly on power.[74] In 1991 a senior Foreign Ministry official who worked with Shevardnadze in preparing for reductions of conventional forces acknowledged that "the unilateral cutbacks were the most difficult issue the diplomats had ever faced with the military, even more touchy than the problems of nuclear arms reductions." In describing the views of senior military officials, Shevardnadze's aide said that for them "nuclear war was really foreign, and they accepted the logic of the cuts. But tanks were something very real, and that was different."[75]

In December 1988 Gorbachev announced unilateral reductions that only a minority of Soviet civilians had been willing to support publicly, as well as a reorientation of the structure of Soviet military forces to exclude the option of a prompt, large-scale attack—without making these actions contingent on Western reciprocity. The important point is that civilian reformers involved in transnational discussions of alternative security were early advocates of views that eventually became official Soviet policy, whereas military officers on the General Staff came to accept the idea of unilateral initiatives very late and very reluctantly. Gorbachev and his allies succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the military establishment and the more conservative Politburo members by relying on traditional norms of party discipline and the prestige

73. Dobrynin, *In Confidence,* p. 623.

74. This point is developed in Matthew Evangelista, "The Paradox of State Strength: Transnational Relations, Domestic Structures, and Security Policy in Russia and the Soviet Union," *International Organization,* Vol. 49, No. 1 (Winter 1995), pp. 1–38.

75. Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), p. 319.

of the office of General Secretary—and by clever use of a number of basic heresthetic techniques described by William Riker.

Alternative Explanations

Most of this article so far has been devoted to a critique of prevailing realist and constructivist accounts of the end of the Cold War and an attempt to reconcile them somewhat by invoking Riker's notion of heresthetic and illustrating it with evidence from two key cases. But what about other alternative explanations that might be compatible with the same evidence? We should consider, for example, realist and constructivist accounts that relax the unitary-actor or elite-consensus assumptions, as well as other explanations that focus on Gorbachev's central role.

The most promising realist accounts of the end of the Cold War take Soviet domestic politics and the perceptions of decisionmakers seriously. William Wohlforth and his colleagues, unlike many realists, do not assume that there was a consensus on the necessity of Soviet retrenchment in the face of material (mainly military and economic) constraints and relative Soviet decline. Instead they put forward hypotheses concerning such issues as the timing of the availability of information to particular Soviet leaders and the extent to which those leaders came to accept retrenchment once they became aware of the severity of the constraints.[76]

These authors deserve credit for developing genuinely falsifiable, theoretically driven expectations about what the empirical record should contain if some version of a realist account of the end of the Cold War is to find support. However, the emerging record does not sustain many of their key contentions. Numerous officials, including the military industrial leader Baklanov, who had access to extensive information about the burden of military spending on the Soviet economy, still refused to draw the conclusions that Gorbachev or Shevardnadze drew.[77] The likely explanation is that the values and priorities of "Big Oleg" and the other lifelong products of the Soviet

76. Schweller and Wohlforth, "Power Test"; and William Wohlforth and Stephen G. Brooks, "Why Identities Change: Material Forces, Identity Transformation, and the End of the Cold War," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, 1998. I thank Bill Wohlforth for sending me a copy of the text and for discussing it extensively and productively.

77. At the June 1999 oral history conference in Moscow, Valerii Kataev, Baklanov's former assistant, read what he claimed were the detailed figures he had prepared for his boss in the last years of the Soviet regime. Throughout those years, however, Baklanov publicly downplayed the burden of military spending and gave unrealistically low figures, as I witnessed at a meeting in Moscow in November 1990 on economic conversion of military industries.

military-industrial complex were very different from those of the leading reformers, many of whom were accused, not without justification, of having strong antimilitary sentiments.[78]

Gorbachev initially tried to hide his intentions by portraying the military-industrial sector as the source of scientific-technical progress and a great example for the civilian economy. He may have forestalled some opposition to his program early on by making members of the security establishment think that they would benefit from the reforms and perhaps gain additional control over the civilian economy—a real possibility in the first years of Gorbachev's tenure.[79] Ultimately, though, Gorbachev's goal was to demilitarize the Soviet economy—a goal that posed a direct threat to many vested interests. Thus it is not surprising that Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, in his memoir, claims that long before the August 1991 coup attempt he had identified almost all of the conspirators, "from Baklanov to Yazov," as "among the enemies of our policy."[80]

The second weakness in even the most sophisticated of realist accounts is their inability to explain the nature of Gorbachev's security policy innovations, many of which appeared very early. They focus only on the Cold War endgame, when "Soviet relative decline had left Gorbachev with few realistic options other than to make concession after concession to western views."[81] They neglect the many initiatives of restraint that Gorbachev took against the wishes of the Western governments: the unilateral nuclear test moratorium from 1985 to 1987 pursued in the face of the Reagan administration's refusal to negotiate a mutual ban; the commitment to "nonoffensive defense" in conventional forces, despite NATO's indifference to the concept; and Gorbachev's pursuit of complete nuclear disarmament by the year 2000, a goal that no U.S. administration ever embraced, even after the demise of the Soviet Union. As late as 1989 another Soviet leader might well have decided not to withdraw troops from Eastern Europe and not to allow German unification within NATO. We cannot understand Gorbachev's initiatives without taking seriously the normative and ideational context: Gorbachev's antinuclearism,

78. This was Akhromeev's view of Gorbachev, for example: Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata,* pp. 65–67.

79. Clifford G. Gaddy, *The Price of the Past: Russia's Struggle with the Legacy of a Militarized Economy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1998); for a contemporaneous analysis, see Matthew Evangelista, "Economic Reform and Military Technology in Soviet Security Policy," *The Harriman Institute Forum,* Vol. 2, No. 1 (January 1989), pp. 1–8.

80. Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom,* trans. by Catherine Fitzpatrick (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 204. In Russian, most of the alphabet is located between the first letters of these two leaders' surnames.

81. Wohlforth and Brooks, "Why Identities Change," p. 18.

his affinity for West European social democrats and their ideas about common security and nonoffensive defense, and his commitment to "freedom of choice" and nonintervention in Eastern Europe.[82]

The importance of ideational factors, however, does not mean that the constructivists, with their emphasis on ideas and social learning, have gotten the story entirely right. The process of changing Soviet foreign policy was highly contentious, even if bickering did not always become public. Although particular individuals (Gorbachev, most notably) learned by trial and error to adopt new ways of thinking about international relations, one cannot argue that the whole Soviet security policy establishment learned the same lessons.[83] Many of Gorbachev's colleagues were never persuaded of the merits of the "new thinking." On some issues they all were probably convinced that material circumstances dictated particular responses, but on key aspects of Soviet policy—concerning nuclear weapons and European security, for example—Gorbachev misled, manipulated, and outmaneuvered his colleagues to induce them to support positions that they otherwise would have opposed. Many of his techniques fall under the rubric of Riker's heresthetic. If constructivist accounts would include the possibility of domestic contention and strategic interaction as well as social learning, they would provide a more plausible account of the end of the Cold War.

Conclusions and Implications

The effects of Gorbachev's reforms for Russia and Europe were profound. A leading Soviet diplomat characterized them accurately, if somewhat critically, as follows:

> The Soviet Union that Gorbachev inherited in 1985 was a global power, perhaps somewhat tarnished in that image, but still strong and united and one of the world's two superpowers. But in just three years, from 1989 to 1991, the political frontiers of the European continent were effectively rolled eastward from the center of Europe to the Russian borders of 1653.[84]

82. For elaboration on this point, see Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces,* chs. 12–15. On the influence of social democrats and Eurocommunists, see Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe,* trans. by Keith Martin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Antonio Rubbi, *Incontri con Gorbaciov: I colloqui di Natta e Occhetto con il leader sovietico* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1990).

83. Janice Gross Stein, "Political Learning by Doing: Gorbachev as Uncommitted Thinker and Motivated Learner," *International Organization,* Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring 1994), pp. 155–183.

84. Dobrynin, *In Confidence,* p. 615.

Whether expanding European borders eastward meant welcoming Russia into Europe or pushing it further away is still a matter of dispute. Conflicting evaluations persist among Russians of the wisdom of the Gorbachev-Shevardnadze revolution that ended the Cold War.

The continued dispute within Russia about these matters should make scholars hesitant about adopting a unitary-actor assumption to explain Soviet foreign policy and the end of the Cold War. Instead, as Riker's work suggests, we would do well to focus on the heresthetic techniques that Soviet reformist politicians employed to garner support for policies that could not otherwise have been accepted. Realists have made important contributions to our understanding of the material forces that influenced the end of the Cold War. Constructivists have pointed to the importance of ideas, norms, and identities. But only a skillful heresthetician such as Mikhail Gorbachev could have made controversial accommodations to material forces seem natural; only a skillful heresthetician could have ensured that enlightened ideas held by an elite few would seem universal.

The implications of this discussion of the role of heresthetics in ending the Cold War are necessarily limited by the fact that it addressed only two cases: Gorbachev's nuclear disarmament policies and the withdrawal of Soviet power from Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, those cases are crucial to answering the question of how and why the Cold War ended, a question that has vexed theorists of international relations for more than a decade. Even a modest theoretical contribution seeking to reconcile disagreements between the main contending schools of thought should be welcome.

The question remains, however, what contribution individual cases can make to a broader theory of heresthetics. Riker himself never managed to devise a complete theory specifying the conditions under which heresthetic techniques would work. Indeed, some of his observations about the role of chance and contingency implied that such a theory might not be possible. One point that is evident from the discussion of Gorbachev's use of language, manipulation of agendas, and other heresthetic techniques is that his political victories and defeats were contingent on many seemingly idiosyncratic factors and were not reliably predictable. On some occasions, his opponents, such as Marshal Akhromeev, attempted their own heresthetic ploys, though without success. The institutional advantages of Gorbachev's position as CPSU General Secretary were undoubtedly important in overcoming the resistance of Akhromeev and his allies. This suggests that structural and institutional theories can be usefully combined with the analysis of heresthetic strategies to understand policy change, even such a momentous change as the end of the Cold War.

Some recent work that seeks to bridge the constructivist-rationalist divide provides valuable suggestions for how to combine seemingly incompatible theoretical approaches. Jeffrey Checkel, for example, has argued that two distinct causal mechanisms may be operating simultaneously when actors comply with new norms. One mechanism, premised on the assumption of methodological individualism, views actors' behavior as based on cost-benefit calculations and strategic bargaining. The other focuses on normative change that comes about through learning, socialization, and persuasion at the group or societal level.[85] One should add, as Checkel has in other work, the institutional or domestic-structural context. The success of both mechanisms can vary depending on institutional and structural constraints.[86]

My account of the role of heresthetic techniques in contributing to the end of the Cold War could be understood as a similar juxtaposing of explanatory mechanisms. Gorbachev's manipulation of language, symbols, norms, and agendas—the whole panoply of heresthetic devices—can in one respect be easily understood as strategic behavior in the rationalist mode. But the devices would not have succeeded without a certain normative and institutional context. Gorbachev could hide his unilateral extension of the Soviet test moratorium in a grandiose plan for total nuclear abolition because of the normative significance of nuclear disarmament in the Soviet foreign policy discourse and the institutional prerogatives of his position as General Secretary. Soviet officials reflexively endorsed the goal of nuclear disarmament and simultaneously expected that their government's proposals would be mainly propaganda. They deferred to the General Secretary's initiative even though he gave them only one day's notice. Thus they were surprised to find themselves approving a proposal with real content and a step-by-step plan for disarmament that has in fact been implemented in many of its particulars (e.g., a test ban, the elimination of intermediate nuclear missiles, reductions in strategic nuclear weapons, and the withdrawal of conventional forces in Europe).

Consider a situation in which either the heresthetic/strategic dimension or the normative and institutional context was absent. A careful counterfactual analysis of Gorbachev's role has convincingly demonstrated that the

85. Jeffry T. Checkel, "Why Comply? Constructivism, Social Norms, and the Study of International Institutions," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, 1999.

86. Jeffrey Checkel, "Norms, Institutions, and National Identity in Contemporary Europe," *International Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 43, No. 1 (March 1999), pp. 83–114. See also Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures, and the End of the Cold War," *International Organization,* Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring 1994), pp. 185–214.

end of the Cold War could have turned out very differently if another Soviet leader had come into (or stayed) in office in the mid-1980s.[87] It is not too much of a leap to suggest that a politician less skilled in heresthetic techniques than Gorbachev would have failed to implement the foreign policy reforms that contributed to the end of the Cold War. Indeed, a less clever politician might not have remained in office long enough. The efforts of Gorbachev's reformist predecessor, Nikita Khrushchev, to improve the international atmosphere were cut short when he was deposed by his colleagues—a precedent that weighed heavily on Gorbachev's mind. Alternatively, one could imagine a more successful Gorbachev. A better heresthetician might have achieved what would have been a superior outcome from his perspective: the end of the Cold War, and the survival of the Soviet Union—perhaps in a decentralized, democratized, and confederal form.

Comparing Gorbachev to previous or imagined (counterfactual) Soviet leaders suggests why we cannot understand his success only in terms of the traditional role of the General Secretary in Soviet decisionmaking. We have to consider his use of heresthetic techniques. Other Soviet leaders enjoyed the same institutional perquisites that Gorbachev did, but their policymaking styles and outcomes differed considerably. Brezhnev's style was more consensual and his policy initiatives were rather modest. Khrushchev's initiatives were more radical, but his style alienated opponents rather than co-opting them as Gorbachev's did. By calling attention to the role of individual agency within a fairly constant institutional context, I do not intend to invoke a "great man" theory of history. The heresthetic techniques described by Riker were available to Gorbachev's predecessors, and one could evaluate their relative successes in achieving their policy goals at least in part with reference to their degree of skill in employing such techniques within a system that seemed well suited to heresthetic manipulations.

If strategic skills were important to successful policy initiatives, how necessary was the normative context? Could Gorbachev have talked his colleagues into major arms reductions without the tradition of pro-disarmament propaganda and the normative Soviet bias against nuclear weapons? No Soviet political leader dared to contradict the General Secretary or criticize his disarmament plan as utopian nonsense. Consider the contrast with the United States. When Ronald Reagan declared in March 1983 that a space defense shield might someday render nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete," his advisers genuinely worried that doing away with nuclear weapons would undermine the security of the United States and its allies—and they did not

87. George W. Breslauer and Richard Ned Lebow, "Leadership and the End of the Cold War: A Counterfactual Thought Experiment," unpublished paper, June 1999.

hesitate to say so. Three years later Reagan and Gorbachev, meeting in Reykjavik, nearly agreed to eliminate all nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. Reagan's advisers almost unanimously intervened to criticize the idea, claiming that it "would pose high risks to the security of the nation."[88] In the Soviet context, a taboo against such outspoken criticism of the top leader, combined with the officially promoted consensus view of nuclear disarmament as normatively good, ruled out any such reaction. In the United States, by contrast, nuclear disarmament was always suspect. Nuclear weapons were considered crucial to U.S. security even during the years of the American nuclear monopoly.

It seems clear that one cannot understand the end of the Cold War without incorporating the normative and institutional context as well as the strategic behavior of reformist politicians, most notably Mikhail Gorbachev. William Riker's notion of heresthetics provides a way to do precisely that. The cases reviewed here—of the Soviet military withdrawal from Eastern Europe and Gorbachev's nuclear disarmament policy—illustrate both the problems with realist and constructivist explanations of the end of the Cold War and the promise of a focus on heresthetics for understanding policy change. Moreover, heresthetics could contribute to the important effort under way to bridge the gap between rationalist and constructivist approaches to international relations.

Note

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, September 1998, and at a conference of the Program on New Approaches to Russian Security in May 1999. I am grateful to participants and organizers of both discussions, including Sue Peterson, Andrew Cortell, Stephen Solnick, Vicki Hesli, James Richter, Jeffrey Checkel, and Celeste Wallander, and to Ned Lebow, William Wohlforth, and anonymous reviewers for their comments. I thank James Morrow for first calling my attention to William Riker's work on heresthetics.

88. Oberdorfer, *The Turn,* pp. 26–29, 207–208. The quotation is from Admiral William Crowe, former chair of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. It is found on p. 208.