

Chapter 2

The Politics of Economy

Abstract This chapter sheds light on ‘sea changes’ in the international security system in the late 1980s and asks why policies persist even when the conditions that the international system used to be based upon have completely transformed. The Soviet policy towards the GDR was determined by domestic Soviet policy and its achievements in terms of the German question as well as by the structures of the international system. This chapter examines the political and economic aspect of the Soviet GDR policy, which tied the hierarchical relationship between the two countries, especially in the light of developments in international political practices.

The GDR was believed to be the linchpin of the Eastern Soviet security system. For three decades this structure remained a considerable factor in European stability and influence against any shift that might have occurred. In the 1980s a remarkable transformation occurred to the position of the GDR within Soviet politics. Even though it was no less than paradoxical at the beginning, when the second Cold War started and the INF deployments occurred, the GDR argued for ‘limiting damage’ to inter-German relations. It was astonishing in the period of reforms that the GDR should make a definite move away from the Soviet Union’s openness. On the one hand, a certain level of economic and technological cooperation between the USSR and the GDR remained unchangeable, as it was a vital interest for the GDR’s survival. On the other hand, the GDR had been quasi-incorporated into the FRG, since the new realities of the European and international systems had destroyed any structural stereotype of inter-German détente that the GDR’s leadership had used to be based upon.

2.1 Politics

The Soviet policy towards the GDR had its own rationality. The Soviet GDR policy was derived from the monolithic quality of the Soviet political system. The ruling party elite and the intellectual services nomenclature¹ controlled not only the

¹ Nomenclature is a Russian term, derives from the Latin term *nomenclatura* that includes a small, even elite list of names, subset of the general population of party members, specially composed of

governmental structures and the outcome of policy but also the whole scope of social life including professional organisations, the Russian Orthodox Church, peace movement organisations and trade unions. In general the mechanism of the totalitarian political system controlled all the fundamental aspects of political and social life.

The state was represented by its political leadership, controlled by the one-party mechanism, which was merely implemented in the political sphere of the principles of the Communist Party. In the international sphere important aspects of politics were conveyed by the ruling elite of the CPSU in which party-to-party relations signified the highest degree of cooperation for understanding and estimating the international situation.

In this context diplomacy was not a fundamental aspect of the Soviet state's international relations, but just one of the ways in which Soviet influence could be brought to bear. Soviet external policy was not conducted diplomatically, and its rationality was based on the CPSU's decisions shared between communist countries.

The first feature of the Soviet policy abroad is reflected in the universal vision of the principle of 'limited autonomy' against the pursuit of national interests. Mutual interests were determined by the relationships between communist countries (Petrenko and Popov 1986; Dunlop 1993; Gorodetsky 1994). The totalitarian-inspired domestic policy of controlling all the aspects of political life was extended into open-ended goals in the international arena.

The second feature of the Soviet policy projections into the international system was the effectiveness of the ruling Communist Party to achieve its goals by using all means at its disposal, even including aggressive force, deception and terrorism. Whilst Western pluralist political culture was using much more modest ways to achieve its goals, the Soviet totalitarian approach towards international relations used manipulative techniques and demonstrated a form of 'political warfare', deceptive in its rationality and playing all the political cards and techniques both internally and externally.

Soviet foreign policy aimed to consolidate its socialist position in world affairs, preventing wars of aggression and co-existence of states with different socio-economical systems. The CPSU was strongly centralised and played a key role in foreign policy decisions (Petrenko and Popov 1986). The primary decision-making mechanism in the CPSU was the Politburo, which contained the Defence Council and the Secretariat.

blue-collar workers. The nomenclature includes all kinds of jobs, technical staff, managers and teachers formed a system of people able to run state's administration. A state-owned factory, could be directed by top managers belonged to nomenclature but not necessary belonged to the Party. Party members that worked in the factory were separately from nomenclature, they simply formed workers within the apparatchiks of the Party. Even though nomenclature did not always need to be members of the Communist Party, the Party involved to the decisions about who will belong to nomenclature and should have been convinced that they were reliable and trustworthy.

The Soviet decision-making approach applies the two-level game of the international and the domestic levels (Putnam 1988).² The political leadership provided a centrifugal force that explains political developments. Although what the leaders did might correspond with the documentary analysis, very often their motivations and their political sources are subject to different interpretations (Kramer 1999: 539–576). Each leader had a different system of beliefs and perceptions, which led to different actions (Jervis 1976; Goldstein and Keohane 1993).

The book studies the Soviet policy through the decision-making process involving the Soviet leaders and the Soviet party organs. The Central Committee of the CPSU was strongly involved in the foreign policy process (Ulunian 2003: 35–52). Party organisations were embedded in the state apparatus, and its nomenclature controlled all aspects of Soviet policy. The party's views determined Soviet perceptions of the international situation. The CPSU provided strict guidelines for the elaboration and implementation of foreign policy decisions. The Politburo was the CPSU's key decision-making organ. The Secretariat wrote the agenda for policy making in the Politburo, supervised the decision-making process and appointed Politburo members.

From the early years of the Cold War, the Foreign Policy Department (FPD) of the Central Committee of the CPSU also played an important role in foreign policy activity. Mikhail Suslov planned Soviet foreign policy on the basis of strengthening the FPD in its ability to provide information.³ In July 1988, at a speech at a special

² The three-level literature comprises studies from the following areas. Theory, Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War. A theoretical analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, (1959), David J. Singer, 'The level of Analysis Problem in International Relations' in *The International System: Theoretical Essays*, ed. Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba, 77–92 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Nicolas Onuf, 'Levels', *European Journal of International Relations*, 1, 1, (1995): 35–58. In foreign policy analysis, Valerie M. Hudson 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 1, (2005): 1–30, argues that the FPA multilevel analysis offers substantial contribution to IR, theoretical, substantive and methodological in understanding state behaviour. The three-level analysis in foreign policy is used by Daniel S. Papp, Loch K. Johnson and John E. Endicott, *American Foreign Policy: History, Politics, and Policy* (New York: Longman, 2005), 1–37. Sara B. Hobolt and Robert Klemmensen, 'Follow the Leader? Divergent positions on Iraq in Denmark and Ireland', *European Consortium for Political Research*, (2003): 1–6. Particularly in European studies and the relations of European Commission with third-type countries, M. F. Larsen, *Power and Pressure in EU Agenda-Setting. Theoretical Framework for the Agenda-Setting in Negotiations Between the EU and South Africa*, paper prepared for the European Foreign Policy Conference LSE, (June 2004):1–12.3. In development diplomacy and Private Business Sector, Mikoto Usui, 'Sustainable Development Diplomacy in the Private Business Sector: An Integrative Perspective on Game Change Strategies at Multiple Levels', *International Negotiations*, 8, (2003), 267–310. Lawrence E. Susskind, *Environmental Diplomacy: Negotiating More Effective Global Agreements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³ Mikhail Suslov was a member of the Central Committee from 1941 until his death in 1982. He strongly defended the Stalinist school and became a ruthless, strongly doctrinaire administrator. He was very far from Khrushchev's political temperament, opposed 'destabilisation' measures, economic reforms and foreign policy and was instrumental in unseating Khrushchev in 1964.

scientific and practical conference of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Eduard Shevardnadze declared that ‘the achievements of recent years are the fruit of well-coordinated actions by general foreign policy departments functioning under the guidance of the party’ (Shumaker 1995).

The Soviet Union exercised considerable influence over the continued existence of the GDR and over its domestic political structures, strategy and security. In the early Cold War period, the Soviet Union was driven by power considerations, and the Soviets tended to behave coercively towards Eastern European countries. In this period, the relationship between the USSR and the GDR was based on power capabilities, which also determined Soviet policy. Towards the end of the Soviet Union’s existence, its political behaviour shifted irrevocably and became irreversibly catastrophic for the sovereignty of the GDR.

Whilst for decades the GDR remained a symbol of the separation between East and West, the post-WWII order affected the Soviet Union strongly and uniquely. The legacy of WWII was impressed indelibly upon the citizens and politicians of the Soviet Union and its satellite states. Whole generations of Soviet politicians, from Stalin to Brezhnev, witnessed the disproportionate cost of WWII, and to a certain extent this justified the agendas of Soviet security. The alignment of the countries of Eastern Europe with Soviet interests and the decision to make Eastern Europe the centre of the Soviet bloc was the Soviet response to the trauma of WWII.

Ultimately, Soviet arrangements following the end of WWII clearly reflected Stalin’s model of socio-political organisation, which also resulted in a mechanism of control based on military force to maintain order. The Brezhnev doctrine justified using military intervention in political situations in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Afghanistan in 1979. Although initially the unveiling of the new political approach was decried publicly and was clearly an example of Soviet ‘offensive defence’, in a later phase, external Soviet behaviour made it clear that the rapprochement with the West and the USA would lead to unilateral troop cuts in Eastern Europe. Control over Eastern Europe was no longer necessary; influence was enough (Kearns 1996: 55–89). Therefore, there is no doubt that the division of Germany in 1949 and the creation of the GDR strongly influenced Soviet policy towards the USA and Western Europe.

2.2 Economics

The Soviet policy towards GDR and the German question demonstrate its own economic context. The economic problem of the GDR reveals the false understanding of its collective leadership to adjust their decision towards shifting constant economic and political structures of the administrative command system of governance. The inability of the collective leadership to capture the necessary compromises on decision of common values of governance founded a problematic establishment of this leadership when domestic economic factors did not extend into the level of decisions.

The economic understanding of the German question was a fundamental condition in the process of German unification in which the GDR formed the ‘bargaining chip’ in decisions between the West and the USSR.

In the early years of the Cold War and the late 1980s, the East German economy deteriorated rapidly. The deteriorating economic structures of the East Germany economy became a destabilising factor for the whole of East German society (Childs 1991; Ian 1987: 10). The main industries of East Germany faced a structural problem, and many of them depended on raw materials imported from the USSR and financial assistance from West German banks.

Consequently, the economic understanding of the German question, in combination with poor decisions taken by the East German government, had a negative impact on the state’s social conditions. This problem remained unresolved for years. On the one hand, the economic difficulties led to the social uprising in East Berlin and in whole regions of East Germany in the spring of 1953, and on the other hand, an external administrative military intervention undermined East German sovereignty itself.

In the domestic sphere of the socio-economic structure, in the 1980s, the political leadership was influenced by socio-economic factors that were also determined by the achievements of national policy. Then, if the political leadership did only represent diversities in beliefs, opinions and clashes of interests, the socio-economic restructuring of the USSR sustained a new model of socio-economic governance: the East German state confirmed and strengthened technological and economic ties with the Soviet great power machine, whilst on the other hand, the East German leadership wanted to limit impacts on its socio-economic restructuring of the status of the USSR. The GDR’s leadership became highly suspicious amongst its people for its cooperation with West German banks to serve its political status.

2.3 Interpreting Soviet Policy in the Context of the German Question

The examination of the phenomenon of the German question is embedded in the Cold War rivalry of a bipolar structural confrontation that represented groups of nations practising different ‘systems of governance’ and political principles. The analysis of the two interactive structures demonstrates the ontological implications of the German question for the international system. The German question in Soviet policy strongly reflected the Soviet leadership’s perceptions. The attitudes of the Soviet leadership demonstrated two main characteristics: first, that the socio-political order in the GDR was conditioned by the successful evolution of the Soviet model of governance and, second, that the German question was a European security question.

The German question shaped important moments of the Cold War. It formed part of the Cold War bipolar structures of offensive realism. The Berlin blockade of 1948, 'Stalin's note' of 1952 and the rise of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 contributed to the argument that great powers exploit opportunities to gain power at each other's expense (Mearsheimer 2001). The GDR constituted a primary target for Soviet ambitions in Europe and was considered the lynchpin of Soviet security. The stable existence of the two German states and the establishment of socio-political order in the 'Soviet occupation zone' had resolved the German question from the perspective of the Soviet Union.

Considerable problems developed over the course of various stages of Soviet–German policy and represented a clash of interests and divergence of approaches to security policy. With Gorbachev's advent these divergent approaches made the countries more politically distinct, as the GDR refused to imitate the internal reforms of the Soviet Union. Documents from the late 1980s illustrate the division between Honecker and Gorbachev as far back as 1985, as Honecker defied changes within the socialist structure (Küchenmeister 1993). During the Gorbachev era, the Soviet leadership gained a better understanding of the international system, both externally through personal and political relationships between Gorbachev and Western leaders and internally through the rise of Soviet intellectuals who strongly opposed the long-standing Soviet policy on Germany.

In essence, the GDR was a constant concern for the Soviets from the early years of the Cold War to late January 1990, when they finally decided on the resolution of the German question. The German question had been considered a critical issue in Soviet policy towards Eastern Europe in terms of international stability. Given past Soviet policy, the highly centralised and authoritarian Soviet state had been expected to defend the GDR's sovereignty even in 1989.

Soviet conceptions of the German question were reflected in a flexible Soviet–German policy, based on the idea that a divided Germany would serve the Soviet Union's long-term strategic aims. The main lesson to be learnt from studying the years between the establishment of the GDR and *Ostpolitik* was that the USSR considered the survival of the GDR a 'vital necessity'. In the 1980s, there was no evidence that Gorbachev disagreed with the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*) leaders' recognition of Germany as two fully fledged nations. In October 1988 Gorbachev declared to the West Germans that the 'two Germanies represent the realities which WWII created' (Gorbachev 1997).

The German question had been resolved due to the existence of the GDR. Over time its existence had been transformed from an international issue to a bilateral one between the USSR and the GDR. Although the Soviet Union might have been expected to preserve the GDR's status at any price, in a broad context, it became part of the Soviet reformers' vision for the end of the division between East and West. In a narrow context, the Soviet reformers handled the German question following a step-by-step process whereby policymakers first defined the problem and then acted to choose the best solution under the constraints of the 'new' international system.

The behaviour of both the USA and the USSR in international politics (IP) sustained the bipolar structure as each maximised its military capabilities (Waltz 1979). As a result of their behaviour, the balance of power gained great importance. In this environment, the GDR perpetuated the Soviet calculation of power, not because Ulbricht and Honecker's theoretical concept motivated Soviet policy and maintained the Soviet position in the international system, but because perpetuating the division of Germany at all costs guaranteed Soviet security. The doctrine of 'limited sovereignty' towards the Central and East European countries drove the Soviet Union's principal objective interests and resulted in the conclusion of the German question.

The German question was an important actor in the relationship between the great power rivals and formed state interests. During the period of de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union, the collective leadership initially thought that German reunification was possible. Khrushchev declared in 1959 that 'I am convinced that Germany will be united sooner or later' (Khrushchev 1959: 1–18). This statement, indeed, remained a declared policy in the framework of peaceful co-existence with the capitalist Western states.

The division of Germany and the establishment of the East German socialist state made it unthinkable for the Soviets to reopen the issue. In the epoch of détente, the treaties of détente put the German question into a legal framework which acted as an institution of Soviet foreign policy.

The concept of peaceful co-existence had underlined the Soviet shifts in policy towards détente. In August 1970, the Soviets signed a treaty with the West Germans normalising relations, even though the Federal Republic would not recognise the GDR. The significance of Moscow's signature in the treaty was that it would lead to an improvement in bilateral relations between the FRG and its immediate Eastern neighbours (Pulzer 1995). With the Four-Power agreement of September 1971, the four victorious powers of World War II agreed to the joint control of Berlin, including unrestricted contact between West Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany. The delegation of the GDR had negotiated with the FRG to allow transit traffic and visits of relatives from West Germany. In these developments the Soviets recognised the outcome of its European détente in both Germanies. With their signature the Soviets declared that West Berlin would be economically integrated with the FRG and that West German diplomatic representatives in West Berlin would be recognised by the Soviets.

The Basic Treaty was a turning point for the German question (Marsh 1979: 100). The treaty officially acknowledged both German states. The two Germanies signed the Basic Treaty in 1972, and the treaty sought to improve relations between the two countries. The treaty could have sustained the Soviet détente, if it had not been interpreted differently by the two Germanies. The GDR claimed that the treaty formally recognised the GDR as a separate socialist state, recognised by international law, and prepared the country for admission to the UN. Honecker's strategy was anchored to the legalisation of the two Germanies by treaty, the creation of the socialist East Germany being firmly dependent on the Soviet Union. On the other

hand, Bonn insisted that the treaty meant that the Federal Republic represented both Germanies as a single nation.

After the Basic Treaty, the GDR's achievements in foreign policy demonstrated its increasing self-confidence, as shown by the IX Party Congress in May 1976. By this time, Honecker and the SED were categorically declaring that, and acting as if, the German question was closed forever. The GDR represented a socialist German state that encompassed all of the progressive political movements of German history and culture and was a completely different state from the FRG (Marsh 1979). They considered that the independent development of the socialist GDR and its integration into the socialist bloc closed the German question. The treaty of Friendship Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the GDR and the USSR in 1975 further bolstered the friendship between the socialist GDR and the USSR.

The eastward policy orientation of Willy Brandt's leadership, and the openness towards Eastern Europe, had underlined the desperate attempts of both Germanies to engage in cooperation.⁴ Under such conditions the German question was transformed (Lowenthal 1984/1985: 303–316; McAdams 1985, 1986: 136–153). Both Germanies showed a particular interest in preserving the inter-German détente.⁵ In the early 1980s the German question was transformed into a European question which influenced the common destiny of all European states in avoiding confrontational superpower conflict (Lowenthal 1984/1985: 314–315). McAdams agrees that German realism in the early 1980s represented a new attitude towards the German question (McAdams 1986: 136–153). On the one hand, the inter-German détente was more robust than ever before and had become the normal political condition for inter-German contacts, whilst on the other hand, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, NATO's Double-Track decision, the Euromissiles deployment and the arrival of Reagan's administration did not prevent the Bonn government from negotiating two enormous bank loans to the East Berlin government in 1983 and 1984 and the reduction of travel restrictions to the FRG.

⁴ *Ostpolitik*: This was Bahr and Brandt's idea to achieve collective European security by reuniting the Germans. Then, when Willy Brandt became Chancellor of the FRG, *Ostpolitik* became West Germany's eastward policy. It both recognised the GDR and promoted a series of political measures for improvements of relations between the East and West.

⁵ The inter-German détente should be understood in terms of inter-German contacts in the *post-Ostpolitik* period. It defines the period of contacts between the two German nations in complete contrast to the years of non-contact in the 1960s. These contacts included cultural interchanges, restored contact between long-separated families and friends, freedom for journalists, vast improvements of telecommunications and postal services, occasional visits between East and West Germans and meetings for fighting air pollution, water pollution and damage to forests. Security questions were excluded from these meetings. Finally, détente between Germans should be seen as the opposite to the years of non-contact between the two German states. It should not be seen as one state becoming acceptable to the other. It just was the period of decreased international tensions, an awareness of the main partners in the international system that despite separate ideological orders, a significant shift from the Cold War years occurred towards accommodating political and human inter-German contacts.

The new leadership in Moscow in March 1985 had not prepared any new concept for the resolution of the German question. In the context of developments in 1989 between the FRG and the USSR, one might have thought that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze had abandoned the issue of the GDR. However, the Soviet Union pursued a policy of punishment and confrontation against the FRG as its main strategy. Gorbachev's policy was motivated by the main international reality that the two Germanies were expected to continue to be respected. He had nothing to say about German unification. Even in 1987 and 1988 when relations between the FRG and the USSR dramatically improved, Moscow expected more of the 'good of perestroika' to come from a contractual economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation with Bonn. He did not expect a united Germany to appear. Moscow categorically accepted the state of East Germany and rejected any talk of German unification.⁶

A marked softening and alienation of the Soviet view of the German question became apparent in June 1989. This Soviet view materialised as a political behaviour that unintentionally undermined East German sovereignty. Gorbachev arrived for a visit to West Germany on 12 June. In the common declaration between Kohl and Gorbachev, the Soviets underlined the Western conception of human rights and the legacy of international law of people's right to self-determination. There was no direct pronouncement on the German question, but the Soviets' behaviour at that time appeared to be aimed at overcoming the division of the German nation. This behaviour appears paradoxical: whilst Gorbachev affirmed the continuation of the socialist East German state, he did not recognise that the GDR had been destabilised (Genscher 1995: 520–521). The Soviets had not taken any political measures to safeguard the GDR. The FRG was influencing the East German people dramatically, and the Soviets had subconsciously been working towards the abandonment of the GDR.

The rivalry between the USSR and the USA arose out of a disagreement over the political legitimacy of the communist regime: the USA was the USSR's rival because it felt that the USSR lacked political legitimacy. The rivalry between the Soviet Union and the USA did have socio-political roots, but paradoxically this legitimised the political elite in the Soviet Union. This legitimacy created the concept that the interests of the state were inseparable from the interests of the political elite. The divergence of interests between the GDR and the USSR represented the diverging interests of the political elite. The political paradox of 1989 is that the Soviet Union tolerated the persistent failure of the GDR government to fall in line.⁷ Previously, the Soviets would have suppressed any discordant

⁶ Record of conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and SED colleague, *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv* (SAPMO-Barch), DY 30/J1V2/SA/3255 (Cold War International History Project 2001b)

⁷ The word 'paradox' is many times confused with surprising. In our book paradox is used to support the main argument that a policy was being observed which diverted from rational political behaviour. This political behaviour is diverted from conventional behaviour that rational policy used to be based upon.

behaviour, and these circumstances had always strengthened the popular conviction that East Germany was little more than an artificial outpost of Soviet hegemony. Davis Childs considers that the ‘real threat for the GDR stemmed from the Soviet Union and not from the FRG’.⁸

If power calculations were all that mattered, Gorbachev would have acted in an identical manner to his predecessors—towards party-bloc discipline, military involvement and activation of the KGB secrets policy—in order to uphold the communist orthodoxy. In discussions during Politburo meetings from 1981 to 1983, as a non-voting member, Gorbachev initially accepted Andropov’s opposition to the policy of retrenchment.⁹

Paradoxically, Gorbachev’s policy on Eastern Europe demonstrated the implementation of the ‘new ideology’ in the form of controlled expansion of Soviet domestic reforms abroad to prevent violent disruption in the countries of Eastern Europe (Kramer 1999: 539–576). Any intervention by Soviet forces in Central Europe would have dramatically undermined the Soviet image abroad because it would have shown a lack of commitment to the internal programme of democratisation. If a decision had been taken for a ‘military resolution’ in East Berlin in September 1989, firstly, violence would have broken out and, secondly, there would have been a backward movement in the Soviet policy towards Eastern Europe. Contrary to what might have been politically desirable to the SED, Gorbachev sought to preserve the status of the socio-political changes by avoiding any violence towards citizens (Kramer 1999).

The evidence of the following chapters demonstrates that even if the East German political leaders had behaved in such a way as to enable Soviet political action to preserve the socialist regime in the GDR, and if Moscow had prevented the dissolution of the GDR by taking ‘hard measures’, the form of governance of the Soviet Union and the legitimacy gained by the Soviet political elite through the rivalry with the USA confirmed at an individual level a fundamental disagreement between Gorbachev and Honecker that had started as far back as March 1985. Mindful of that political peculiarity, by the end of 1989, Gorbachev thought that preservation and reform of the socialist GDR could be achieved under the new course of policy in Moscow and that a reformed GDR would underline the achievements of socialism in Europe. If the SED leaders had had permission from Moscow to carry out large-scale military action against the disturbances, backed by the 19 Soviet Army divisions in the GDR, a similar outcome to June 1953 might have occurred. The developments from September to November 1989 in East Germany also showed that Gorbachev had consciously chosen to give priority to Soviet domestic considerations in contrast to Stalinist policy preferences. The radical

⁸ Interview with David Childs, 13 February 2002

⁹ Cold War International History Project (2001a) at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington.

reorientation of Soviet ideology away from the 'Brezhnev doctrine' was the central element of the new ideology that terminated the Stalinist political legacy.¹⁰

2.4 The International System and the Paradoxical GDR Dependency on Soviet Policy

The structural relationship between the USSR and the GDR was defined by the fixed structure of dependence. The dependence of the GDR on the USSR was concentrated on common interests and mutual understanding in all basic questions of foreign policy issues related to security. The influence of the Soviet Union on the SED was fundamental to domestic security and beneficial to the GDR and acknowledges an 'absolute dependence' of the medium-sized East German state on Soviet interest. This claim is constructed around the preservation of the international prestige of the Soviet Union by maintaining control of Eastern Europe through military power.

It seemed that the stable and unequal distribution of material power between the GDR and the USSR created a constant stereotypical hierarchical relationship that simply served the formal dependence of the GDR on the USSR. In the 1950s an 'informal community' between the two states started to take root and this hierarchical relationship was based on formal security and military dependence, whilst at the same time *de facto* control of domestic developments became apparent (Wendt and Friedheim 1995: 689–721). Militarily the Soviets compelled East German forces to develop within the larger framework of the Soviet military establishment rather than as an independent national army (Macgregor 1989).

However, close examination of the GDR's relationship with the Soviet Union from 1965 onwards demonstrates that the two countries' conflicting political and economic interests threatened the Soviet Union alliance with the GDR and led to a 'relative dependence' between the two countries that was described as paradoxical.

In essence, the closeness between the GDR and the USSR and the intimate dependence between the two countries led to a problematic relationship that has been defined as a 'controlled dependence' for various historical, political and cultural reasons.

Martin McCauley's analysis of the GDR in Soviet politics certainly demonstrates a critical understanding of the situation. He assumes that the relationship between the GDR and the USSR was a 'problem for Soviet security that had never been completely resolved by the existence of two German states' (McCauley 1985:

¹⁰ The Brezhnev doctrine is the result of Leonid Brezhnev's speech to the fifth congress of the Polish Communist Party. Brezhnev's speech treated the Eastern European community as a whole and stated that he had the right to intervene in the territory of any one of the socialist states threatened by forces hostile to socialism. The Brezhnev doctrine was used to justify the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Afghanistan in 1979.

148). McCauley's soft analysis of the GDR proves that the Soviet policy towards the GDR was flexible, based on the assumption that a 'divided Germany was not in the USSR's long-term interests' (McCauley 1985: 150). Eventually the Soviets would decide to play the all-German card.

The fact that despite the GDR's conflict with the USSR at the time of the revolt there was no dramatic military involvement as there had been in Hungary and Czechoslovakia might be interpreted as a diplomatic manoeuvre of 'waiting and seeing'. The conflict with the GDR shows that the East German socialist state was pursuing its own national interests for its own benefits.

The events of the early 1980s irreversibly invalidated the intimate political relationship between the GDR and the USSR (Hyde-Price 1992: 151–167). The GDR reconceptualised its security policy at Warsaw Pact meetings and COMECON. In the early 1980s the relationship with the USSR could be called 'controlled independence'. By that time the GDR had seriously challenged the assumption of itself as a pliant satellite state of the USSR. From the period 1979 to 1985, the differences between the two countries deepened (König 2002). These differences represented divergent views on security questions in Europe and on bi- and multilateral economic cooperation between the two countries. The GDR had articulated its own interests in a series of cases: European security and relations with the FRG were at the centre of the disagreement. A 'special relationship' was established by 1983–1984 between the two countries, which made the GDR unafraid to articulate and defend its own vital interests when necessary (Hyde-Price 1992: 164).

Conflict of interests between the two countries eroded the special relationship of the early 1980s when the SED refused to support the Soviet response to the confrontational policy of the USA (Hyde-Price 1992: 152–153). The Soviets wanted more missiles in East Germany territory to counterbalance NATO missile deployment in the territory of the FRG, whilst East Germany, being on the front line of any potential military conflict, wanted to limit tensions between the West and the East. At the Seventh SED Central Committee Plenum in 1983, the SED leaders spoke about the need for 'damage limitation' in inter-German contacts following the deployment of new missiles. A policy of dialogue and cooperation should be pursued in order to encourage détente and disarmament in Europe rather than the policy of confrontation which was symbolised by missile deployment.¹¹ The Soviet campaign in August 1984 against West German revanchism also concerned the GDR. The SED had minimised the ongoing threat of German militarism against the Soviet Union. The meeting between the German delegation and Chernenko in August 1984 irreversibly eroded the trust between the leaderships of the two countries. Honecker was humiliated and told to keep German–German contacts to a minimum.

Differences were also found in economic cooperation between the two countries. The difficult economic situation in the Soviet Union in the early 1980s made the

¹¹ Interviews with Gerard König and Manfred Shünemann, 13 November 2002

GDR's 'special responsibility' towards the Soviet economy ineffective. The increased price of Soviet goods combined with increased international oil prices formed the main challenge for a GDR economy already dependent on imported fuel. The Soviets were unable to sustain their deliveries of oil and raw materials to the GDR, and the SED turned for financial assistance to the FRG (Childs 2001: 25). The continuation of large expenditures on the armed forces further burdened and undermined the GDR economy.

The underlying trends in the early 1980s simply perpetuated the main dilemma of the GDR's politics: on the one hand, the confidence and self-assurance of the SED had strengthened the position of the GDR vis-à-vis the USSR and became an important factor in Soviet–German relations, whilst on the other hand, the continuation of such a trend necessarily depended on the USSR's defence of East German security. This dependence will be called 'paradoxical', because it proved so decisive for the fall of the GDR.

The discrepancies between the GDR and the USSR led to a paradoxical relationship between the two countries (Hyde-Price 1992: 152). The GDR defended its own interests and formed policy according to its special relationship with the Soviet Union, many times acting against Soviet interests, and on the other hand, the confrontational reaction of the Soviet Union against the NATO missile deployments in Europe needed the GDR's approval.

Current evidence does not adequately explain the shifting nature of the paradoxical relationship between the two countries. Critical understanding is premised on a misunderstanding of the paradoxical relationship between the two countries and that events in the 1980s proved how important the GDR's dependence on the USSR was for the sovereignty of the GDR.

What is missing from the 'dependence' argument of power is the 'two-game' understanding: on the one hand, the GDR constituted a part of an informal empire that had constructed transnational political authority, and on the other hand, the 'special relationship' between the two countries enabled the GDR to follow an independent policy despite the hierarchical principles of *de facto* control and dependence.¹² In the 'two-game' understanding, the GDR might not have been beneficial for the Soviet Union.

In essence the *de facto* authority constructed the identities and interests of the members in this intimate political relationship. The GDR relationship with the Soviet Union reveals the case of an international structure of authority that constructed identities and interests (Wendt and Friedheim 1995: 689–721). This model of explanation questions the standard dependence argument about the Soviets' unchallenged political authority whilst sustaining a relationship.

¹² The term 'informal empire' is used by Wendt and Barnett to demonstrate the type of system that forms the relationship between dominant and subordinate state. An informal empire is a socially structured system of interaction amongst juridically sovereign states in which one, the 'dominant' state, has a significant degree of *de facto* political authority over the security policies of another, 'subordinate', state; see Wendt and Friedheim (1995).

The relationship between the two countries featured an unequal distribution of military power. The Soviet Union used its might to manipulate subordinate states: even military intervention was chosen at times. Institutionally, the hierarchical relationship demonstrated a shared intersubjective understanding in treaties, power and values (Wendt and Friedheim 1995: 697).

The treaties of 1970, 1971 and 1972 legalised the multidimensional relationship between the two countries (Wendt and Friedheim 1995). At that time, the Brezhnev doctrine became the main principle for the hierarchical relationship between the socialist countries in Central Europe. Military, political, economic and cultural ties were central to organising control of the informal empire. The Soviet's coercive policy through military intervention created consenting identities that the GDR should have respected because the Soviet troops on East German territory became a practice so that the GDR would not deviate from 'state socialism'. Soviet power also provided security assistance to the East German client state on resources, arms, technology and training. The 'informal empire' was perpetuated by this security assistance which in the end affected the state's identity in terms of an 'investment in subordination' (Wendt and Friedheim 1995). As has been demonstrated by Wendt and Friedheim, this security assistance affected the dominant state (Wendt and Friedheim 1995). Ulbricht had certainly lobbied the Soviets for a 'wall of protection' that would secure East Berlin (Harrison 1993). Additionally, Khrushchev used Beria's German policy to strengthen his power position in the collective leadership in the first years of the post-Stalin leadership. Consequently, the hierarchical relationship had never remained stable in the context that the SED was simply fed the notion of the GDR's dependence on the USSR. When Ulbricht resisted Soviet European détente, the stronger state asserted *de facto* control by forcing the SED leader's removal. The new East German leadership redefined its security interests by adopting Soviet-driven détente in Europe.

Diversity of opinions, serious differences in policy orientation and clashes of interests resulted from the different interests of the two countries. It has not been demonstrated that it was a 'paradoxical relationship' as Hyde-Price and Peter Marsh might have suggested (Hyde-Price 1992: 151–167; Marsh 1979). Even though facts can be defined as a 'paradoxical relationship', in essence, it was an epiphenomenon of the interests of both countries. The GDR remained a state of limited sovereignty from the years of its establishment to its fall, which made its dependence on the Soviet 'system of governance' of vital importance to the state.

The relationship between the two countries represents a hierarchical relationship of two unequal partners within the world distribution of power. These asymmetric relations permitted the stronger state to impose its will, often in disagreement with the SED's leadership. On the other hand, the Soviet Union created a socialist East German state that developed, strengthened, matured and became stronger in its bilateral and multilateral relations. The Soviets took the GDR's opinions and interests into account for various reasons. The GDR gradually matured and learned to defend itself confidently on matters that were vital for GDR interests, even though they may not have been regarded as such in Moscow. The inter-German

détente might have changed things to such an extent that the Soviets decided to play the all-German card (McCauley 1985: 165).

Despite differences and discrepancies in policy issues, the core of political and economic cooperation was hardly affected (König 2002). The GDR would have assisted at any time independent of the intensity of the superpower confrontation. The GDR implemented its own political interests without its strength increasing or its border being changed. Meetings between the SED and the USSR always underlined a fundamental agreement on all crucial questions on politics and economics (König 2002). Cooperation between the CPSU and the SED strengthened and deepened in all spheres of political activity.

What is missing from the structural hierarchical understanding of the GDR in Soviet politics is a criticism of the view that ‘the fall of the GDR was due to Gorbachev’s leadership and policy’. Interviews with actors played ‘cards’ at that time demonstrate that there were problems between the GDR and the USSR a long time before Gorbachev’s advent.¹³ The accumulation of multidimensional problems between the two countries was subordinate to economic recession in 1989. However, David Childs insists that many people in the SED considered that the Soviet Union was a threat for the East Germans.¹⁴ The SED leadership had thought that socialism would resolve all of the difficulties of the country and would transform the hierarchical structural relationship, in which the GDR was the junior partner with a superpower, into an ‘equal partnership’. However, this ‘equal partnership’, of a ‘Soviet deal with Germany’, left the German question open.

Summary The hierarchical relationship of the GDR and the Soviet Union emerged as a large and richly diverse politico-economic relationship between the two countries. There were steady assurances that the GDR would develop along the lines of the economic and security developments of the Soviet Union.

One central issue in Soviet politics was the GDR commitments to Soviet security–military strategy towards Western capitalist countries. The Soviet Union firmly supported the economic, social and political developments of the Warsaw Pact countries. This raises the issue of the international position towards mutual interdependencies of the two countries that many analysts believed would be safeguarded forever.

The issue of international security hinges on the two interrelated issues. One is the German question and the other the structural restrictions of the international system.

The uncertain aspect of the international structures was anchored to the GDR’s broad dependency on the Soviet Union. The GDR political power was emerged from the Soviet-constructed world in the aftermath of WWII, and the likelihood of

¹³ Interview with Gerard König, 13 November 2002. Interview with David Childs, 13 February 2002

¹⁴ See Footnote 6

its fall eventually would be weighed against the decline of Soviet political power itself.

The broad dependence of the GDR on the Soviet Union was rooted in economic and political factors, as well as military ones. Soviet troops would have defended the GDR's territory and deterred any aggression. This provides a potential source of explanation for the GDR's political actions to confront a problem in the sphere of international affairs that stemmed from a specific international and domestic framework of principles.

Within the international structural restrictions, the policy between the USSR and the GDR increased diversities of interests between the two. The structural problem created a trend that brought about continued tensions between the USSR and the GDR: on the one hand, this trend resulted in the GDR's increasing dependence on financial assistance from West Germany, and on the other hand, the inter-German détente strengthened the GDR's independence from the superpower rivalry.

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