Political Science Review, No.4, December 31, 1992, p.179~224

THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION: A CRISES AND SEQUENCES APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses the crises and sequences approach to analyze the collapse of the Soviet Union. It has three parts. The first part reviews the literatures in the field and finds that the modernization theories provide a valuable background analysis, but fail to capture the timing, the process, and the complex roots of the revolutionary changes in the Soviet Union. The political transition literature, on the other hand, is less deterministic, but overly process-oriented. It is even less capable to integrate wide contextual variables into its framework. The original crises and sequences model as proposed by Binder et al. in 1971 has the merit of combining elements of both preconditions and process, but needs refining to suit the Soviet case. In the second part, a modified crises and sequences model is proposed that redefines crises, more clearly spells out externalities and spillovers, and stresses the importance of the nationality problems. The third part of the paper tests the modified model against the Soviet case.

Seven stages are identified to facilitate the analysis: the Brezhnevian prelude (early 1980's), early perestroika (1985-1986), glasnost' (1986-1988), demokratizatsia (1988-1989), nationality eruption (1989-1990), conservative comeback (1990-1991), and final collapse (end of 1991). Through this analysis, we find that the Soviet collapse is primarily the result of elite miscalculation. Gorbachev's inital strategy to whip up popular demand in the economic area ended up creating negative externalities in the problem areas of participation (demand for multi-party democracy) and nationality (demand for national independence by the non-Russian republics). The result was a multi-crisis situation that overloaded the Soviet system and caused its disintegration.

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When discussing the great escape from socialism-cum-totalitarianism to capitalism and democracy, Jagdish Bhagwati made a familiar distinction between the strategy taken by the former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and the one by the Chinese Communist patriarch Deng Xiaoping. Gorbachev was said to push for *glasnost'* (i.e. political reform) more rapidly than *perestroika* (economic reform), while Deng was said to choose the opposite sequence (Bhagwati 1992, 43). At the time when the pro-democracy movement was ruthlessly put down at Tiananmen Square and great disturbances were reported throughout the cities in mainland China, the Gorbachev strategy received wide support. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 turned the tide. The widespread ethnic violence and the possibility (in some cases, the actuality) of wars among the former Soviet republics seems to preclude the Gorbachev strategy as the optimal sequence for transition from state socialism. Now Deng's sequence appears more rational, not only in terms of the gains from his economic-reform-first strategy vis-a-vis the opposite sequence, but also in terms of the costs associated with the politics-first alternative. Obviously one can argue that no reform sequence has ever been in Deng's mind, that his intention is to use economic reform to thwart political liberalization and democratization (Deng 1992). Thus the gains of Deng's strategy are actually purely economic, and not economic benefits *plus* political gains for the society sometime in the future, as the sequence model would suggest.

No mater how one calculates the costs and benefits of different reform sequences, the focus on the temporal ordering of reforms and the assertion that sequences have great impact on outcomes readily remind those studying political development of the "crises and sequences" model developed in the 1960's and 1970's. This model was presented in *Crises and Sequences in Political Development* (Binder et al. 1971), particularly in the concluding chapter by Sidney Verba

who developed several propositions concerning the relations between sequences of crises and the resultant political outcomes (Verba 1971). It would be very interesting if one could reformulate the "crises and sequences" model and apply it to the current cases of socialist transition. In this way, not only will the cases be analyzed in a more theoretical way, the toeory can also benefit from the testing against the new cases.

This paper has three parts. The first part reviews the literature in comparative communism and democratic transition. The second part reformulates the traditional "crises and sequences" model to make its assumptions more explicit, reduce the number of key variables, and operationalize the main concepts. The third part applies the modified version of the framework to the empirical cases of the Soviet Union. In conclusion, I will evaluate the gains for both theory and cases from such an application.

Literature Review

In explaining developments in communist systems. there are two literatures that deserve our attention. The first one is the huge body of theories under the rubric of comparative communism. This group of theories actually developed against the Soviet experience, and then expanded to other cases of political development under state socialism. The other group of theories is about democratic transition. It first emerged as a theoretical reflection on the widespread phenomenon of democratization in Latin America and Southern Europe. With the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, this literature expanded to the Communist cases, and claims to explain the abrupt demise of state socialism in the former Soviet bloc totally unexpected in the comparative communism literature. Both approaches, however, fall short of providing a wide perspective in understanding the unique case of multiple transitions in the Soviet Union, and the inherent linkages among the nationality problems, political democratization, and economic reform. The narrow political focus actually blinds the researchers and prevents

them from taking into consideration critical elements for explaining the Soviet experience.

In the comparative communism literature both static and dynamic models can be found. The static models do not provide theoretical mechanism to explain change, and tend to suffer from radical shifts in the political system. The most famous victim is the totalitarian model proposed by C. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1956). Even though the totalitarian syndrome they describe is a good characterization of the high phase of Stalinism, the dictator's death dilutes the model's empirical validity. Static models proliferate in the post-totalitarian era. Among them are the mono-organizational model (Kassof 1964; Rigby 1976), the monocratic-monistic model (Fleron 1969; Fischer 1968), and the group conflict model (Skilling 1966; Skilling and Griffiths 1971). From the totalitarian syndrome to the group approach an increasingly fragmented society is presented, and the possibilities of various kinds of authoritarianism are recognized (Skilling 1966). But the picture provided is still a static one, and the mechanism of change is left undefined. It is thus very hard to generate developmental hypotheses based on this approach.

There are dynamic models in the study of comparative communism. The revolution-betrayed model deals with the transformation of the revolutionaries from dutiful vanguards to the ruling circle (Trotsky 1970), new class (Djilas 1953), or red capitalists (Chiang 1982) through a process of bureaucratic degeneration (Trotsky 1970), oligarchic petrification (Hough 1974), or socialist alienation (Wang 1983). This approach sheds light on an extremely important issue in the post-revolutionary communist societies: the change of elite values. But it is more normative than descriptive or predictive. ① Another dynamic model is the Weberian tradition and the emphasis is put on the three principles of legitimation–legal domination, traditional domination, and charismatic domination (Rigby 1964; Huntington

① A more non-normative version can be found in Tucker 1969; Brzezinski 1967.

1970; Jowitt 1975, 1983). The post-Stalinist period is described as a natural process toward a more formalized, institutionalized, and routinized political existence (Janos 1986). When viewed against the political processes of de-Stalinization and de-Maoization of the two major Leninist regimes, this approach appears insightful. However, nothing can be said about the ultimate fate of the Leninist regimes. The possibilities for them to be revolutionarily transformed are denied in this approach. Its inadequacy in explaining the post-1989 development is thus obvious. ②

The various modernization theories constitute another dynamic approach in the study of comparative communism. Generally speaking, they all focus on the correspondence between underlying economic structure and socio-political institutions. It is emphasized that the more advanced industrial technology becomes, the stronger becomes the pressure to conform to the functional exigences of this technology, and that complex, modern, industrialized societies would inevitably bring about pluralistic, democratic systems. The technological-economic determinism thus leads to a convergence of communist and Western societies (Meyer 1970; Parsons 1964). ③ The most famous theme in the modernization theories is Richard Lowenthal's

② For a recent discussion of Weber's theories as applied to the comparative communism studies and their shortcomings, see Janos (1991).

③ Specifically, there are three types of modernization theories. The first one is an economic argument that asserts that highly concentrated political and economic institutions are needed to collect the scarce and diffuse capital for primitive accumulation (Hough and Fainsod 1979, 136-38; Gerschenkron 1966, 5-30). But once a country has been industrialized, the rationale and utility of the totalitarian system are exhausted. The requirements of economic efficiency then push for a relaxation of the rigid system, to make room for initative and competition (McNeal 1977, 48-50). The second argument applies macrosociological terms to describe an inevitable process towards political liberalization. It is argued that the high degree of differentiation and specialization characteristic of an industrial society has created complex social interests that can be integrated only through electoral democracy (Parsons 1964). The third argument puts emphasis on regime legitimation. Since "for modern societies there is no long-run alternative to legitimacy

"development vs. utopia" in which the long-term goal of national development is said to ultimately overwhelm the insistence on revolutionary idealism, and modernization along the Western line is an inevitability (Lowenthal 1970). The overdue Chinese reform in the late 1970's seems to vindicate the modernization predictions (Lowenthal 1983), and the revolutionary changes in the Soviet Union a decade later prompted modernization scholars to once again uphold their traditional paradigm, as Moshe Lewin's *The Grobachev Phenomenon* brilliantly did (Lewin 1991). This approach, however, totally fails to say anything about the timing of the revolutionary changes in the Soviet bloc. This is the case because inspirations and demands for democracy brought about by rapid industrialization only provides a background for the change of the system. Elite strategic thinking is totally overlooked here (Wu 1990). The other major drawback of this approach is its neglect of crises other than participation. In the Soviet Union, the lack of understanding of the nationality issue dooms any theory offering explanations for the final collapse of the Union. Modernization theories thus provides an important factor in accounting for the Soviet political development. However, that factor has to be integrated into a more general framework.

If the modernization theories in comparative communism sound deterministic, the new literature on democratic transition verges on excessive voluntarism. Beginning with the fourvolume collection on democratization co-edited by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Lawrence Whitehead (1986), the political transition literature emphasizes actors, stages, strategic choices, and contingent outcomes. Socio-economic determinism is rejected in favor of process-oriented theories (Chu 1992). A formalistic approach is adopted.

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based on institutional procedures," it is predicted that modern Communist-ruled societies will either evolve in the direction of pluralistic democracy, or pay the price of stagnation (Lowenthal 1974). Richard Lowenthal offers an excellent review of the various brands of modernization theories in comparative communism in his 1974 discussion of "established Communist party regimes."

Game-theoretic framework and path-dependent analysis are popular among scholars studying political transitions (Przeworski 1991). Very much like the comparative communism literature that is embedded in the Soviet experience, but cast in a format claiming general applicability, this transition literature is intrinsically an intellectual reflection on the experiences of political democratization in Latin America and Southern Europe, but claiming applicability beyond these areas. The empirical base of the literature orients it towards studying democratic transitions of authoritarian regimes more or less initiated by the ruling elite in a non-socialist economic environment. ④ It is only natural that application of such an approach to the Soviet case would encounter great difficulties. ⑤ Besides narrow empirical base, the transition literature appears too voluntarist, and too political. Since

④ Thus, for example, the typical situation of political transition studied by scholars in this approach is one in which "the authoritarian regime more or less determines the timing, pace, and structure of its own exit, and in which a puritanical insistence by democratic forces on immediate and humiliating abdication will likely abort the prospective transition." (Diamond 1990, 230) This is a far cry from the revolutionary changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The bloody revolution in Romania, for instance, is beyond the scope of explanation of the political transition literature rooted in Latin American and South European experiences.

⑤ Russell Bova, in his "Political Dynamics of the Post-Communist Transition," insists that the transition from communism should be viewed as a "subcategory of a more generic phenomenon of transition from authoritarian rule, and that students of communist and post-communist regimes can learn a great deal from the Latin American and South European cases and from the efforts that have been made to generalize about the transition process and the dilemmas and choices to which it gives rise." (Bova 1991, 113). However, Bova acknowledges some methodological difficulties inherent in this theoretical extension, the problems of "conceptual stretching." Among them is the differences between totalitarianism and traditional authoritarianism and the question of comparability. Though Bova did his best to dilute the differences between the two systems, his final point in the section of methodology is that "there is a case to be made for maximizing diversity insofar as clamis to the universality of common patterns of political behavior are thereby strengthened." Besides this recognition of systemic differences, Bova also limits his

the theoretical emphasis is right now cast on political process, and not on conditions leading to such process, it is even more difficult to widen the perspective of the scholars working in this paradigm than those modernizationists to take into consideration nonpolitical factors, such as the nationality issue, which is overwhelmingly important in the Soviet case. ⑥

In sum, there are very few theories in the comparative communism literature that can be salvaged after the 1989 revolutions. The modernization theories are an exception, but it suffers from a serious neglect of state autonomy and preoccupation with narrowly construed social demands (i.e. limiting its concern to demands for democracy). The new literature on political democratization redresses the deterministic excesses of the modernization theories, but goes too far in emphasizing voluntarism. Also, the transition literature fails to investigate into the genuine roots of system change in a multi-ethnic

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interest to "efforts at nonrevolutionary transitions from authoritarian rule in which elements of the old regime play an important role in the initiation and/or direction of political change." (Bova 1991, 116) This means, in order to apply the political transition approach to the Soviet and East European cases, revolutionary changes which are such a dominant pattern of political transition from Communist rule have to be excluded from purview of the study. The limits of the political transition analysis in the field are only obvious here.

⑥ The process-oriented, voluntarist approach in the study of democratic transitions of course does not cover all major studies in democracy. An ambitious four volume, twenty-six-country study was launched in the late 1980's which focuses on democracy in developing countries. The methodological emphasis is put on an "exhaustive examination of all the historical, cultural, social, economic, political, and international factors that might affect the chances for stable democracy; how they interact; and the conditions that might mediate their salience or their effects." (Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1989, xiii) This is basically a revival of the grand modernization tradition that dominated the field of comparative politics and political development in the 1950's and 1960's. However, the focus of the Diamond, et al. volume is the entire history of a country's experience with democracy. This would certainly dilute the attention on transitions which are our major concern here.

country such as the Soviet Union by limiting its focus on process. In order to understand the Soviet experience, we need a framework that takes into consideration of both elite strategic thinking and multiple crises situations. This leads us to the "crises and sequences" model proposed by Binder et al. in 1971.

The Original Model

In the 1960's, the system-functional approach reigned supreme in the study of political development. This approach was rooted in the modernization paradigm, which in turn was a natural extension of the pragmatic-pluralist self image of the United States at the time. The modernization paradigm sharply separated tradition and modernity, and defined the latter primarily in terms of an ideal portrait of the American society. Obviously, the traditional-modern dichotomy was of the 19th century European origins. However, the operationalization of the concept of modernity in political science was by and large a post-WWII American product. Embedded in this context, political development was conceived as a process of political change toward greater differentiation (separation and specialization of roles, institutions and associations), equality (of political rights before the law, of opportunity, etc.) and systemic capacity (the ability of a government to respond to or to suppress the demands emanating from groups in society). These three constituted the "development syndrome," against which the degree of political development of any society was to be ascertained (Binder et al. 1971).

One could find major proponents of the system-functional approach in the Committee on Comparative Politics of the American Social Science Research Council. Between 1963 and 1971, there were seven volumes published in Princeton University Press' *Studies in*

Political Development under the sponsorship of the SSRC's Comparative Politics Committee. ⑦ These works, together with a number of theoretical and country studies issued by Little, Brown and Company, were the fruits of the labor of the system-functional theorists (Sandbrook 1971). This trend culminated in Binder el at., *Crises and Sequences in Political Development*, which provides a comprehensive framework for the whole field. The "crises and sequences model" accepts the basic assumptions of the modernization paradigm and defines political development in terms of the "equality, differentiation and capacity syndrome." The authors then identifies five crises as resulting from the inherent tensions in a modern society characterized by the development syndrome. These five crises are in the fields of *identity, legitimacy, penetration, participation* and *distribution*. Political development is thus construed as a process through which problems and crises from the five areas prompts responese that result in greater equality, differentiation, and systemic capacity. Here the explanans are crisis patterns. The explananda are development outcomes.

One particularly fruitful way to theorize about the relations between crisis patterns and development outcomes was proposed by Sidney Verba in his sequencing model, though he did a better job in defining crisis patterns as sequences than in identifying the development outcomes that were to be explained (i.e. he handled his explanans better than his explananda). For Verba, whether an identity crisis precedes, or forllows, a participation crisis, for example, is of paramount importance in deciding the resulting political system.

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⑦ For a survey of the work by the SSRC's Committee on comparative politics, see Gabriel Almond, "The Development of Political Developemnt," in Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington, eds., *Understanding Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1987), pp.437-490. For a review of the general history of the study of democracy, see Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Preface," in Larry Diamond, et al., ed., *Democracy in Development Countries, Vol.4* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), pp.ix-xxvii.

This is the case because crisis solution requires new institutions, which then have certain impact on problem areas other than where the crisis originally emerged. Here Verba talks about two types of impact: *facilitative inputs* and *secondary demands.* The former strengthens the system's capacity to cope with crises from other areas, whereas the latter whips up demands in these areas. Any sequence, by putting emerging crises in a particular temporal order, thus produces certain amount of facilitative inputs and/or secondary demands. These "by-products" then have great impact on the survivability of the ruling elites and/or the system. A crisis sequence that continuously produces facilitative inputs along the way would contribute to system stability. On the other hand, a crisis sequence that generates secondary demands at each step would seriously destablize the system by overloading it with multiple crises.

The Modified Model

The depenent variable in the original "crises and sequences" model was never clearly identified. However, one can easily detect the emphasis on systemic stability. This concern should be explicitly proclaimed the major dependent variable. This would further subject the model to criticism from radicals who already attacked the original version for its "conservative" ideological position. ⑧ However, our

⑧ For example, Marx Kesselman criticized Binder et al. for maintaining that scholars should devise ways (through a kind of political technology) to buttress the dominance of established authorities, and that order is the highest political good (Kesselman 1973). This criticism has its validity in view of the strong policy implications of the "crises and sequences" approach, as witness Sidney Verba's concluding remarks: "Furthermore, such an approach might produce findings of great relevance to those interested in applying the findings of developmental studies to policy choice situations. It might not be in the power of developmental planners to schedule developmental problems or crises (though under certain circumstances that might not be impossible), but the planner would be armed with important information if he knew something of the consequences of various orderings of the problems or crises." (Verba 1971, 316) However, this policy orientation is not inherent in the "crises and sequences" approach and can be easily separated from the main body of the literature.

approach is defendable in that studying stability does not imply a political commitment to sustaining the status quo, just like studying revolution does not suggest the researcher's desire to promote revolutionary change.

The original "crises and sequences" model has been attacked on the ground that the selection of the five crises is arbitrary. Actually, there are inherent connections among them that can be revealed only by organizing the crises in a more meaningful way. For this, Amitai Etzioni's classification of means of organizational control provides a very useful analytical framework. In *Modern Organizations*, Etzioni discusses means of organizational control in terms of three categories: physical, material, and symbolic. Control based on application of physical means is coercive power. The use of material means for control purposes constitutes utilitarian power. The use of symbols for control purposes is referred to as normative, normative-soical, or social power. Any organization can be characterized in terms of the control mechanisms it applies to direct the behaviors of its members (Etzioni 1964). Following this logic, the state, as the paramount political organization, also exercises coercive, utilitarian, and normative power to assure compliance from its members. State coercion is based on the specialized organizations that monopolize violence, such as police and army. State utilitarian power is achieved mainly through the economic performance of the governemnt, and the implicit or explicit (such as corporatist) pacts. State normative power (or state legitimacy) in modern times largely depends on the satisfaction of the principles of democracy and nationalism, with the former requiring popular political participation while the latter demanding the congruence of political community and national community. Political stability then depends on whether the state possesses sufficient control powers and whether it successfully exercise these powers to bring about compliance among its members. At times problems or crises may develop in any of these control areas. State coercion may lose its credibility. State utilitarian power may dissipate after a great depression. State normative power may totally disappear after a military

coup or when a foreign occupying army erects a puppet regime. Here we have found four crises that derive from state failure in exercising its coercive, utilitarian, or normative power. These are the coercion crisis, economic crisis, participation crisis, and nationality crisis.

If we compare the four crises derived from state control failures here and the five crises discussed in the Binder et al. volume, we can find both similarities and differences. According to Binder, the *crisis of political identity* derives from "the tension between the culturally and psychologically determined sense of personal-group identity and the political definition of the community." (Binder 1971, 53) This is roughly the same as our understanding of the nationality crisis. Binder refers to the crisis *of legitimacy* as deriving from "the change in the nature of the ultimate authority to which political obligation is owed." (Binder 1971, 56) He then discusses two modern theories of legitimacy: the contractual and the nationalist. The first theory actually brings us to the area of political paricipation, which will be discussed below. ⑨ The second theory is a repetition of the principle of nationalism, and has been dealt with in the identity (or in our terms, the nationality) area. The category of legitimacy crisis can thus be absorbed into the nationality crisis and the participation crisis, as Binder's mention of the two legitimacy theories clearly shows.

Binder's *participation crisis* refers to popular demand to be included into the political process. This conforms to our notion of participation crisis. The *crisis of distribution* is associated with the "rapid increase in the popular demand for material benefits from the government and with the contemporary belief that governments are responsible for the level of living in any given country." (Binder 1971, 60) If we take a careful look at the actual content of the issues involved in the distribution area as discussed by Binder et al., we know that not only distribution of material goods, but the very production of such goods, i.e. economic growth, are included. This means the

⑨ For democracy as a principle of legitimacy, see Sartori 1968.

crisis of distribution is acually the economic crisis that has two major components: economic growth and equitable distribution, hence our more inclusive category–the economic crisis. Finally, the Binder version of the *penetration crisis* emphasizes the central government's administrative capacity in all fields, while our coercion crisis refers to state power to coerce population into compliance. Our focus here is obviously only one aspect of the more general notion of penetration as presented by Binder et al. This analytical concentration is to bring about a correspondence between the state control mechanisms and the crises owing to control failures. Put together, Binder's five crises are a group of individual challenges to the political system that are selected because they appear to be most generally relveant in political development (Binder 1971, 53). One cannot find inherent connections among the crises, or integrate the crises with an overall analytical framework. On the other hand, our four crises correspond to state control failures in exercising its coercive, utilitarian, or normative power. The crises are derived from a general theory of organizational control and its application to the sate-society relations. They are thus not arbitrarily selected. They also constitute an integral part of an analytical framework. Based on this framework, political stability is the aggregate of state performances in the four problem areas. One has to rveiew the situation of each of these categories in order to arrive at an overall assessment of political stability in a particular country.

In our modified model the central theme of the original version is upheld: alternative sequences of crises have profound impact on the pattern of political development. Verba's notions of facilitative inputs and secondary demands are also emphasized in the modified framework. Facilitative inputs refer to increased state capabilities, while secondary demands refer to whipped-up demands, both in a secondary area as a result of the state's institutional response to a crisis in the main area. Besides facilitative inputs and secondary demands, one can easily imagine externalities that reduce state capabilities, or that dampen demands, in a secondary area. These important cases of externalities are generally overlooked in the Binder volume. We

shall thus use the term "positive externalities" for cases of increased state capabilities (i.e. facilitative inputs) and reduced demands in a secondary area. On the other hand, "negative externalities" are those cases where secondary demands are whipped up and state capabilities have declined. In the Binder et al. volume, Verba propses that "the establishment of institutions to further a sense of identity faciliates performance in other areas," and puts identity on top of all the other problem areas in generating facilitative inputs (positive externalities) (Verba 1971, 311). This means solving the nationality crisis (making political and national communities congruent) will greatly facilitate the solution of other crises. On the other hand, secondary demands (negative externalities) are expected especially from distribution and participation. This means the institutional solutions to an economic, or participation, crisis will bring about demands in other problem areas, probably creating a multi-crisis situation. From the above two propositions, one can easily reach the conclusion that a nationality-then-participation crisis sequence is more manageable than a participation-then-nationality sequence, since the former generates positive externalities, while the latter generates negative externalities. This observation is particularly relevant in the cases of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In short, the original version puts great emphasis on sequences, facilitative inputs, and secondary demands, which will be followed in the refined model. In table 1, one can clearly see the externalities connected with the five performance areas as presented in the original model.

In table 2, the refined model is presented which includes elements not specified in the original model. State control failures, corresponding crises, negative externalities, and positive externalities have been discussed. They are different from the original version in that they derive from a general theory of organizational control and that a new set of crises have been defined. The externalities idenified in table 2 are naturally different from the ones in table 1. The institutional reforms are responses to the crises. Positive or negative externalities may derive from such responese. Finally, the spillover areas refer to

the locations directly receiving impact from emerging crises without the institutional responese from the state. Thus nationality crisis arising from democratization is put under negative externalities of participation crises; while the same crisis caused by direct spilling over from paticipation is put in the spillover area of the participation crisis. Externalities are generated by institutions, which may result from responding to crises. Spilling over is caused directly by crises. These cases of side effect are important, because they determine the total number of cirses that the system has to deal with when one particular crisis erupts. The number of crises, as well as their intensity, then decides whether the system is overloaded, i.e. whether state control failures have reached a critical point. If so, a collapse is expected. This reasoning also leads us to the notion of optimal sequence. A crisis with only positive externalities, or no externalities, offers the ruling elite an opportunity to manage it as the only problem on the agenda. On the other hand, a crisis with negative externalities and/or spillover effects would force the system to handle a multi-crisis sitution. Assuming crises can be solved for the period of our concern, then a crisis sequence that puts simple crises prior to complicating crises would make the situation more manageable, since simple crises can be handled one by one, while complicating crises would be reduced to simple crises when finally they are put on the agenda. A reversed sequence that puts complicationg crises prior to simple crises would strain the system by confronting it with a multi-crisis situation at the beginning. From the ruling elite's point of view, the former sequence is obviously much more desirable than the latter sequence.

TABLE 1

Performance Area	*Facilitative Inputs to Government*	*Secondary Demands for Performance Triggered*
Identity	Legitimacy Participation	Participation (Distribution?)
Legitimacy	Extraction Penetration	
Penetration	Legitimacy Extraction	Distribution (Participation?)
Participation	Legitimacy	Distribution (Identity?)
Distribution	Legitimacy	Participation Penetration (Identity?)

Source: Verba 1971, 311.

TABLE 2

State Control Failure	*Corresponding Crisis*	*Spillover Areas*	*Institutional Reforms*	*Negative Externalities*	*Positive Externalities*
Coercive Power	Coercion Crisis	Economy Participation Nationality	Rebuilding the state		Economic Participation Nationality
Utilitarian Power	Economic Crisis	Coercion Participation Nationality	Marketization and Privatization	Participation	Coercion Participation Nationality
Normative Power	Participation Crisis	Economy Nationality	Liberalization and Democratization	Coercion Economy Nationality	
	Nationality Crisis	Participation	National Self-determination		Coercion Economy Participation

The relations among the critical variables in the refined model can be demonstrated in the following table:

TABLE 3

	Original Area	Secondary Area
Elite Supply	A	B
Social Demand	C	D

*crises: C–A
*institutional reforms: A–C
*positive externalities
facilitative inputs: A–B
decreased social demands: A–D
*negative externalities
decreased state capabilites: A–B
secondary demands: A–D
*spillovers: C–D

One final point that has to be stressed here is institutional reforms may originate in the elite's own initiative, and the purpose may be quite far away from area of the reform. This is what I would like to call "elite strategic thinking."A typical example is the reforming elite deliberately manipulates externalities and spillovers to create an environment in the targeted area favorable to institutional reform. In the Soviet case, it was the lack of control over the externalities and spillovers created for a strategic purpose that ultimately doomed the Union. We shall now turn to this case to test our refined model.

The Soviet Experience

The collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 is a direct result of the multiple crises that plagued the country and overloaded its political system. Among the crises, the one that directly broke the Union was the nationality crisis. A full explanation of the Soviet disintegration thus requires an analysis of the crisis situtation of the Union at the turn of the decade, the interactions among the crises

and institutional reforms, and the impact of the eruption of the nationality crisis. In the following pages, seven stages are identified to facilitate our analysis. They are the Brezhnevian prelude, early perestroika, glasnost', demokratizatsia, nationality eruption, conservative comeback, and final collapse. During the first four stages, Gorbachev directed the course of the country by consciously manipulating inter-crisis externalities and spillovers, to create a compelling situation in the area of economic reform, and to push for a major breakthrough in perestroika. From the fifth stage on, however, the course had slipped out of Gorbachev's control, and fed on its own momentum. The grand reform strategy backfired, and ultimately cost Gorbachev his political life. In a nutshell, the Soviet Union collapsed because of the miscalculations of the reforming elite.

The Brezhnevian Prelude (Early 1980's)

The Brezhnevian period (1964-1982) was characterized by external expansion and internal stability. The Soviet Union finally achieved superpower parity with the United States, and Moscow's sphere of influence extended to areas traditionally closed to the Soviet power. The eighteen-year internal stability was also unprecedented. Although political corruption and life-time cadre tenure reached their climax under Brezhnev's rule (Jowitt 1983), the conservative elite managed to stabilize the volatile situation after Stalin's revolutionary upheavals and Khrushchev's harebrained reforms. The system demonstrated every symptom of what Lowenthal called an "established communist party regime."(Lowenthal 1974) It seemed that the requirements of economic development had ultimately overwhelmed the urges of revolutionary idealism, and that the Soviet Union had learned to adjust to the needs of a mature industrial society. Technocrats dominated the political scene. A mild economic growth rate was achieved which successfully satisfied the material needs of the population with relatively low expectations. Rapid development brought about great social mobility. A secure life free from capricious harassment is appreciated by even the often critical intelligentsia. Otherwise, there was a

sense of resignation, of political inertia, and habituation (Bialer 1987). Even the most explosive nationality question was considered partially solved. Typically, the republics' indigenous leaders were promised security of tenure and a substantial degree of political and cultural autonomy in exchange for supporting the general secretary and his policies (Rakowska-Harmstone 1992, 530). This strategy of cooptation and concessions, together with the everpresent threat of coercion, succeeded in keeping the nationality tension under control. Finally, the internal cohesion and homogeneity of the ruling elite (Stalin's successors were installed while the dictator was still alive, and were in power until their physical lives ended in the early 1980's) contributed to the conservative and stable rule under Brezhnev. In sum, the Brezhnevian regime demonstrated great capacity in exercising utilitarian power, which was sufficiently buttressed by an impressive presence of coercive power, together with a residual normative power (Soviet patriotism), and habituation (the longevity of the regime).

What went wrong towards the end of the Brezhnev period was decline of the economic growth rate. Material improvements arguably constitute the core of the stability under Brezhnev. An economy that is less and less able to satisfy the material needs of the population runs the risk of provoking strong opposition from an otherwise docile society. A second risk is the failure of an ailing economy to buttress a spiraling arms race with the United States. It was realized that international competition boils down to a productivity contest and that the old economic system is not geared to that contest (Goldman 1987). Reasonable growth constituted the base for the Soviet external expansion and internal stability. Now that base had been eroded.

Nothing of this is new for a Soviet-type economy. The rigidities of the Stalinist command system were well-known among the economists and political leaders in the Soviet Union, a country that heralded the first socialist economic reform under Kosygin in the mid 1960's. ⑩

⑩ For an overall review of the history of economic reforms in the Soviet Union, see Hewett (1988).

The impact of a transition from extensive growth to intensive growth on the economy was also widely recognized. What was unique towards the end of the Brezhnev tenure was the accumulative impact of decades of wasteful production, misallocation of resources, and reforms of the limited, "perfecting" type, ⑪ an impact that tended to stall the economy altogether. Also unprecedented was the challenge from a rapidly rearming United States under Ronald Reagan, particularly presented through the "star war" initiative. The combined effect of these two situations created a strong sense of crisis among the elite in the economic problem area. This was the starting point for the radical reforms adopted in the end of the 1980's. Obviously, the timing of the reform had a lot to do with the leadership change that swept away the whole Stalinist generation in a few years. ⑫ This auxiliary factor facilitated the rise of Gorbachev, who, under the pressure of international competition and social material demands, plunged the Soviet Union into perestroika (restructuring the economy)(Wu 1990, 94) once he had secured his power.

Early Perestroika (1985-1986)

Gorbachev's mentor was Yuri Andropov, who assumed the position of general secretary after Brezhnev's death in November 1982. The malaise of the Soviet economy was already quite manifest at this time. A looming economic crisis obviously solicited reform efforts in the economic problem area. Andropov's solution, however, remained insufficient. He emphasized workplace discipline, launched a campaign against alcoholism and absenteeism, and tightened overall state control over the sociey (White 1991). There was a sober, realistic understanding of the problems of the system, in part prompted by

⑪ For a differentiation between "perfecting" and "reforming" the economic mechanism, see Bauer (1987-88).

⑫ Bialer is one of the most forceful proponents of the elitist theme in the Soviet studies. For him, the leadership change brought about by the passing away of the Brezhnevian generation is the most crucial factor in explaining the radical reforms under Gorbachev (Bialer1991, 36).

the Polish experience in the early 1980's. The response nevertheless demonstrated a lack of imagination, as the "social discipline" solution served the Soviet economy very little.

Andropov died in February 1984. After a short Chernenko interlude (from February 1984 to March 1985), the young Gorbachev finally assumed the position of party general secretary. His initial approach to the Soviet system was quite in line with Andropov's policies. Gorbachev reinstituted the crackdown on alcoholism that had been of less concern to Chernenko who was an old-style Brezhnevite. The new leader also talked about the "intensification"(or "acceleration") of industry, which means retooling and better use of existing equipment. No systemic revamping of the economy was propsed initially. The emphasis was rather put on administrative reforms, such as creating superministries and East German-type huge scientific production associations. Only a very small portion of the underground economy was legitimizied, mainly in the areas of cooperatives, and small family enterprises. There was even an anti-trade edict against "unearned income"that might arise from the selling of someone else's products (Goldman 1987).

With Gorbachev's position more secured, a package of economic reform was instituted that called for enterprise financial autonomy, increased manager discretion in buying materials and selling products, less restricted labor policy, worker's brigades contracting for specific jobs, and a mild price reform. This package, however, did not go beyond the scope of previous reforms in the Soviet history, notably the 1965 Kosygin reform inspired by Evsei Liberman. Clearly much more radical measures were in order to salvage the Soviet economy.

Up to this point, it is only natural to predict the final retreat by Gorbachev on the economic front, as all his predecessors did, under great pressure from the bureaucracy and conservative colleagues in the politburo. The logic of reform cycles acted against the general secretary as the system resisted any attempt to change some of its main features. A radical departure from the whole system was thus

required. ⑬ Clearly, political support for reform had to be generated outside the traditional framework. In short, both domestic and international factors militated for a major economic reform, which had to be radical in order to be effective, and this situation pushed Gorbachev into taking a serious look at the society for alternative sources of support (Bialer 1991). This leads us to the next stage: glasnost'.

Glasnost' (1986-1988)

During the stage of early perestroika, a perceived economic crisis prompted Gorbachev to take measures to reform the economy. Here both crisis and reform were in the economic area. ⑭ But since Gorbachev had made up his mind to tap social sources of support, the center of the reform efforts began to migrate to the participation area. This was the background of the glasnost' (openness) campaign, which was launched after the 27th Party Congress held in February 1986. ⑮ On the theoretical level, one can say that elite strategic thinking by Gorbachev shifted the focus of reform from the economic area to

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⑬ According to Richard E. Ericson, there are nine main characteristics of the Soviet-style economic system. These features are interconnected and mutually supporting: altering one or a few is merely disruptive of the stable functioning of the sytem and of its effectiveness. Hence, a meaningful reform must eliminate the whole package of the characteristics (Ericson 1991).

⑭ The crisis was more in the mind of the reforming elite than acutely felt by the population, though the actual economic situation did deteriorate in the early years of Gorbachev's tenure. On the other hand, the reform policies were half measures restricted by the strong bureaucratic resistance, thus mostly of the perfecting type. In this sense, both the crisis and the institutional response were not up to the standard we set for these terms at the beginning of this paper. They can thus be called a quasi-crisis and a quasi-reform. One did not see the launching of a genuine economic reform until 2 January 1992, when Boris Yeltsin took full control over the new Russian state, and the Soviet Union had died of the eruption of the nationality crisis.

⑮ Glasnost' is the "initial decompression," following the terminology of the process theories.

the participation area, since the call for glasnost' directly led to liberalization policies for informational and cultural matters, which then naturally grew into a liberalization in political expressions, and finally to democratization. But all these subsequent developments should not obscure the fact that glasnost', and later on demokratizatsia, was aimed at shocking the masses into action against the conservative forces blocking the way to economic reform. Institutional changes in the participation area were used as instruments, not treated as ends in themselves (Wu 1990). In a diagrammatic way, one can say that elite supply in the participation area was to whip up secondary demands in the economic area, to help the reformers in their struggle against the conservatives. Gorbachev deliberately created negative externalities for the regime (because his move increased loading on the system) to facilitate a major institutional breakthrough in a second area.

Initially glasnost' was not a genuine liberalization following the Western meaning of the term. It was rather a deliberate policy to first arouse, and then to direct public opinion toward a reassessment of the political targets selected by Gorbachev, a move considered necessary for eliminating obstacles to reform. Brezhnev obviously bore the brunt of the new historical critiques, followed by the great dictator, Joseph Stalin. Nikita Khrushchev, on the other hand, was rehabilitated, and so was the NEP hero Nikolai Bukharin. The dark side of the current Soviet society was exposed, so as to agitate the masses against the old system. Beginning with articles on major newspapers such as *Komsomolskaya Pravda, Literaturnaya Gazeta, Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* and *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta* exposing social problems and official corruption, glasnost' gradually spread to other mass media. The common theme was a severe critique of the establishment, and a strong demand for removing incompetent bureaucrats. In short, there was a designated direction for the release of social momentum under glasnost'. In order to institutionalize reform in this area, citizens had to be granted increased access to information, which suggested free mass media, and the rights to express their opinions. The exposure of official incompetence in the past and the report of social problems (such as drugs) easily gave rise to citizens' actions based on the newly acquired information. This then led to genuine liberalization.

Demokratizatsia (1988-1989)

Demokratizatsia (democratization) is a natural extension of liberalization. Although theoretically, it is possible to differentiate between the two, and to talk about democratization without liberalization (limited democracy, or *democraduras*), or liberalization without democratization (liberalized authoritarianism, or *dictablandas*), empirically these two are linked together: liberalization always precedes democratization and provides preconditions as well as pressure for the latter (O'Donnell et al. 1986; Chu 1992). This extension, however, does not have to materialize, as the liberalizing elite in the establishment may wish to strengthen its position by broadening support for their programs from the society without making structural concessions in the form of creating democratic institutions. Nevertheless, the ruling elite's calculations may ultimately prove to be of little consequence (Bova 1991, 115). An initial drive toward directed liberalization may create a civil society that forces the elite to institutionalize democracy to safeguard the extended rights granted during the liberalization period. In short, the two major responese by the regime in the participation area are usually sequentially linked.

In the Soviet case, the initial push for democratization derived from the urges of the general secretary. The liberalizing pressure built under glasnost' was harnessed by the reforming elite to oust incumbent conservatives through competitive elections. This, of course, does not mean that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had forsaken its historical mission and had given up its privileged position as the sole ruling body in the country. It does suggest the adoption of the principle of one-party pluralism as the dominant form of Soviet-style democracy. This means the Communist Party would offer more than one candidate for each seat in the local and national elections. By letting the voters exercise this limited power of choice, it is expected that the opponents to reform will be voted out and the public will be supportive of the reform that is to follow. The purpose of one-party pluralism is to facilitate reform without losing the Party's ultimate control over the society.

The 19th Party Conference held in June 1988 adopted the resolution "On the Democratization of Soviet Society and Reform of the Political System," which embodied the principle of one-party pluralism. The following "Law on Elections of USSR People's Deputies"and the "Law on Amendments and Additions to the USSR Constitution"put the Resolution into practice. Multiple-candidate elections on the national and local levels were stipulated. The powers of the legislative bodies were also significantly expanded. The limitations, however, were quite obvious. First, competing political parties were not legalized. Secondly, a national list of candidates was drawn up for election by pro-regime social organizations as the Communist Party, the trade unions, and the Komsomol, to the effect of guaranteeing the election of high party officials to the legislative posts (Wu 1990; Bova 1991). Gorbachev himself was exempt from electoral competition by having his name put on the national list. ⑯ This is surely not democracy in its Western sense. However, it fit Gorbachev's strategic thinking perfectly. Reforming candidates, i.e. those supporting Gorbachev, had a better chance to be elected than their conservative opponents; while at the same time, the possibility of an opposition party winning the election and kicking the CPSU out of power had been precluded by the rules of the game. In fact, the result of the March 26 national election was most encouraging for Gorbachev, since he had created a power base outside the traditional party and government framework that was strongly supportive of his reform programs. Following this victory, he forcefully retired 110 high party officials from the central organs of the CPSU, clearly demonstrating the meaning of his demokratizatsia program.

Up to this point, Gorbachev was still in full control of the events. He was clearly a master politician. The new secretary general made

⑯ One-party pluralism was a common phenomenon among reforming socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary. In all the three cases, top party officials (such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Wojciech Jaruzelski, and Janos Kadar) were put on the national list to be elceted unopposed.

strategic moves to retire the old Brezhnevites, such as Grigoriii Romanov and Nikolai Tikhonov, after he took office in 1985. At the same time, he promoted Andropov appointees, such as Viktor Chebrikov, Yegor Ligachev, and Nikolai Ryzhkov, to the Politburo. He then hand-picked local cadres as his major lieutenants, such as Boris Yel'tsin and Eduard Shevardnadze. Many reform-minded intellectuals also joined Gorbachev in the new politburo: Alexander Yakovlev, Vadim Medvedev, Anatolii Luk'yanov, and Yevgenii Primakov. This process of purging the Brezhnevites, consolidating the Andropovites, and promoting the Gorbachevites continued after 1986, on all levels of the hierarchy. Finally, most of the old guards were gone, together with some of the Andropovites (most notably Ligachev) whom Gorbachev disliked. Thus after the 1988 conference, 60 percent of the Central committee's full membership had assumed their positions under the Gorbachev leadership. The Politburo was entirely of Gorbachev's choosing. On the local level, some two-thirds of the secretaries of regional, territorial and union-republican party organizations, and about 70 percent of the those at district and city level, had been replaced by late 1988 (White 1991, 21). Up to 1989, skillful maneuvering in intraparty power struggle and bold manipulation of popular mood enabled Gorbachev to achieve what he wanted most: an unchallengeable position in the regime, without which it would be impossible to launch a through economic reform.

This enviable position did not last long, however. Gorbachev was primarily interested in removing conservative resistance to his reform in the economic realm. For this reason he turned loose the control valve. Both glasnost' and demokratizatsia in the participation area were meant to create secondary demand in the economic area, a ngeative externality for sure, but in the interest of the reformers in the regime. Yet once the society has been activated, it is very difficult to guide its direction. Besides mounting pressure for radical economic reform, one finds whipped-up social demands in two "undesirable" areas: participation and nationality. The first

demand called for the establishment of a full democracy, with regularized multi-party electoral competition. The major proponents of such ideas were the Russian liberals and democrats. The second demand called for national self-determination for the republics, which means the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The champions for this cause were the nationalists in the non-Russian republics. These two tendencies were fundamentally incompatible with Gorbachev's grand strategy: while the general secretary tried to reinvigorate the Soviet Union under the new leadership of the CPSU, the radicals aimed at a transformation of the system by either kicking out the Communist Party or destroying the Union.

The crucial link between glasnost' and demokratizatsia on the one hand, and the multiple social demand on the other hand is the inevitable externality from participation reform to a weakened state coercive capacity, leading to a coercion crisis. Liberalization had expanded the scope of the civil society, while democratization had turned it into a political society (Chu 1992, 10). The channels for expressing political discontent had been created and protected by the regime itself, providing outlets for frustrated expectations in all the problem areas. The other side of the coin was the abolition of the censorship system, the serious curtailment of the powers of the secret police, and an acute demoralization in the military, the KGB, and other state coercive apparatus. In short, the state had lost its capacity to force the Soviet people into subsevience or acquiescence. This situtation had the effect of lowering the costs–real and anticipated–of individual expression and collective action (O'Donnell 1986, 7). An expanding structure of political opportunities had been created, which caused mass outbreaks of social movements (Tarrow 1991). Gorbachev's participation reforms led to a coercion crisis (negative externalities), which aroused demands in both the target area–the economic sphere, and the undesirable areas–participation and nationality (extended negative externalities). Finally, the demonstration effect swiftly created spillovers among the three areas, i.e. social groups

following their predecessors in other problem areas in designing strategies and launching campaigns. The result of this chain-reaction was a multi-crisis situation that overloaded the system.

Nationality Eruption (1989-1990)

Gorbachev had totally underestimated the nationalities question in the Soviet Union (Lapidus 1991). His strategy was to gain unquestionable political supremacy over his conservative opponents and then push for radical reform of the system. Although he was a brilliant Soviet politician who won every major political battle since he became general secretary in 1985, his strategy of mobilizing the society against the old regime was by nature a highly risky one. The fatal flaw was that it took too long before Gorbachev felt secure enough to tighten the control valve, thus letting too much social discontent out, and reducing his ability to maneuver. The major surprise came from the nationalities problems that gradually gained momentum as glasnost' and demokratizatsia proceeded and state coercive capacity declined. However, it was not until the 1989 national election and the 1990 local elections that the nationality issue became the dominant theme in the Soviet politics, totally against the will of the general secretary.

That Czarist Russia was a prison of nations had been widely recognized, both inside and outside the Soviet Union. The seriousness of the nationalities question in the 1980's, however, was subject to varying estimations. Because a federal system had been set up by Lenin that recognized the titular nations as equals, and rapid social mobility had been evident ever since Stalin's collectivization-cum-industrialization drive, it was only reasonable for Gorbachev, a Russian whose political career had not included a stint in a non-Russian republic, to dismiss the seriousness of the nationalities question. However, republic nationalism in the Soviet Union had a root deeper than what the reformers thought, while rapid economic development had effects that were by no means benign on national integration.

Nationalism is based on two groups of factors. One is the primordial differences, such as ethnicity, that generate we-feelings. The other group is the perceived inequities in the distribution of social values. If these two kinds of factors coincide, the frustrated ethnic group will attribute its mistreatment to its ethnic origins, and, depending on feasibility analysis of its leaders, demand autonomy or independence.⑰ In the case of the Soviet Union, the primordial differences were simply too manifest for full assimilation to take place, though modernization did mix the populations of different nationalities to a certain extent, through migrations, intergroup marriages, and the development of Soviet patriotism. On the other hand, rapid economic development brought about not only social mobility, but also distributional inequities, as the poor southern republics (mainly in the Moslem area) that were on the receiving end of state subsidies complaining about lost economic opportunities and inadequate supply, while the rich northern republics on the delivering end (particularly Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) complaining about resources being drained away from their republics. Resistant primordial factors combined with perceived distributional injustices already constituted a perfect background for the eruption of nationality emotions. The federal system that recognized the privileged position of the titular nationalities further offered the necessary territorial base, population concentration, bureaucratic support, national consciousness based in favorable language and cultural policies, and other infrastructural

⑰ For a definition of nation and nationalism, see Gellner (1983); for the develoepemnt of nationalism as a concept in history and its relations with modernity, see Ben-Israel (1992) and Motyl (1992). For an ethnicity-centered interpretation of the origins of nationalism, see Smith (1983), ix-xli; for a distribution-centered interpretation, see Karlovic (1981) (economic relative deprivation–internal colonialism); and Laitin (1991) (elite incorporation model); for the effect of federalism and that territorial base on national integration, see Suny (1991); and Rakowska-Harmstone (1992). For a synthetic model that puts emphasis on both the primordial factors and the distributional factors, see Wu (1992); and Vujacic and Zaslavsky (1991).

conditions for the actual eruption of republic nationalisms (Wu 1992; Brzezinski 1989/90). ⑱ All this was suppressed in the past when the coercive power of the Soviet state remained high. But glasnost' and demokratizatsia brought down the edifice of state coercion. It was only natural for the nationalists in the republics to take advantage of this opportunity and push for national autonomy or outright independence.

The breaking point was the attitude shift of the local elites, and that happened with the institutionalization of the competitive election system. The 18 years of Brezhnevian stability on the nationalities question was to a large extent brought about by Moscow literally providing cadre tenure for native leaders. "Little Brezhnevs" were thus created on the republic level who enjoyed the life tenure as their patrons in Moscow, a policy spreading corruption and stagnation throughout the Union. The stability based on reciprocity made Brezhnev confident enough to proclaim in 1971 that nationalities problems had been solved, and that new "Soviet people" had been created. Gorbachev's reform, however, totally disrupted the established balance. The local elites found that Moscow was forcing

⑱ The federal framework was actually a compromise between the autonomists and the assimilationists when it was set up under Lenin. It was characterized as "national in form, socialist in content," which means titular concessions was made to the nationalities while ultimate control remained in Moscow's hand. This system carried the seeds of its own destruction because it gave the component nations the forms, but not substance of national existence and political power. Thus on the one hand, one finds mass education in indigenous languages and privileged treatment of local elite on the republic level. On the other hand, one also finds that the second party secretaries in the republics, as a rule Russians sent from Moscow, carrying greater power than the native first party secretaries. The effect of such policies was to raise the expectations of the titular nationalities for true nationhood, providing them with the infrastructure to pursue such a goal, while continuously frustrating them with the Soviet state power and the control of the CPSU. For a thorough discussion of the nationalities policies of the Soviet Union, see Rakowska-Harmstone (1992).

them to rely on local support through genuinely competitive elcetions. Naturally they became more independent from the center and more responsive to local pressure, which was almost inevitably for greater autonomy, or even independence (Lapidus 1991, 435). The logic of ethnic politics in newly democratizing countries dictates that politicians will compete to champion nationalist causes, a condition that forced the local elites to conform to indigenous pressure in order not to be outbid by the opposition (Wu 1992). Hence the 1989 national election and the 1990 local elections were critical in shifting the attitudes of the local elites, which facilitated greatly the spreading of nationalist movements. Democratization thus produced a negative externality in the nationality area by whipping up secondary demand for national self-determination.

Gorbachev was taken by surprise when the appointment of Gennadi Kolbin, a Russian, to succeed Dinmukhamed Kunayev, the ethnically Kazakh first secretary of the Kazakhstan party organization, triggered massive disturbances in Alma Ata in December 1986. This was the first significant expression of nationalist discontent after Gorbachev's accession. In 1987, demonstrations were staged in Moscow by the displaced Crimean Tartars and in the Baltic republics. Then there was the Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontations over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which gradually evolved into the bloodiest civil war among the Soviet republics. In 1989-1990, nationalities tensions erupted throughout the Union. Accompanying demokratizatsia, pro-indepndence organizations appeared in the Baltic republics–the Popular Fronts of Estonia, Lativia, and Lithuania. These quasi-parties then won handsomely in the 1989 election for the Congress of People's Deputies. The Party organizations developed intimate relations with the fronts, and began to press for more autonomy from Moscow. Similar pro-independence movements soon appeared in other non-Russian republics, including Byelorussia, Moldavia and Georgia. By this time, the nationalities question had been thrust to the top of the political agenda. This is the case not only because issues of nationalism always arouse the strongest emotional responses from those affected, but also

because the solution to the nationality crisis may involve the redrawing of political boundaries. Before territories are clearly defined and citizens' identities determined, it is virtually impossible to conduct any economic or political reforms, which means the solution of the nationality crisis must precede the solution of other crisis.

Conservative Comeback (1990-1991)

Towards the end of 1990, clear signs of a conservative comeback became evident. Gorbachev himself made several moves that could only be explained as concessions to the conservative forces, including key personnel appointments, major policy statements, and recalcitrant attitude in suppressing the Baltic independence movements. On the other hand, however, with the replacement of Nikolai Ryzhkov by a technocrat Valentin Pavlov as the prime minister, serious measures of economic reform were implemented, most notably among which was the move to soak up excess rubles. Though the exact way in which the problem of monetary hangover was solved appeared arbitrary (removing 50-and 100-ruble notes from circulation), this was in the right direction as most economists maintained that macrostabilization policies must precede large-scale marketiztion reforms (Fischer and Gelb 1991). Hence one finds a curious combination: political consolidation together with an overdue economic reform.

The rationale behind this conservative comeback cum economic reform is understandable following our franework. At the end of 1990, though a presidential system was installed with Gorbachev holding the newly established all-powerful position of union presidency, the general secretary could not fail to see the fatal flaw in his grand strategy–the undesirable externalities spreading from glasnost' and demokratizatsia to the nationality area. The format of one-party pluralism also activated the civil society to such an extent that only unlimited multi-party democracy and the abdication of the CPSU could satisfy the demand of the masses. These developments obviously went beyond what Gorbachev could tolerate, as his original goal was to save the Soviet Union from stagnation and inertia, not

to bury it. A natural response would be to tighten up control while there was still remnant coercion capacity in the state's hand, and to push for economic reform whatever the objective conditions.

From the last months of 1990 to August 1991, when the abortive coup happened, Gorbachev was squeezed between the radicals and the conservatives, instead of manipulating one against the other, as he previously did. His position was seriously weakened because his strategy failed, and his enemies from both sides clearly saw it. ⑲

The August coup was poorly planned and awkwardly executed. Its failure was only to be expected. It showed not the personal shortcomings of the coup makers, but rather how successful Gorbachev had been in demoralizing the conservatives in his capacities as both the state head and the party chief, and in his insistence on dissolving the coercion organs to facilitate his liberalizing and democratizing campaigns. Because of the special norms, structures, and psychology, a highly centralized authoritarian regime can be easily dismantled from within, especially from top, by reformers in positions of power (Bova 1991, 122).

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⑲ It is typical that in the early stages of the transition process, the reformers enjoy advantages vis-a-vis both the outside regime opponents and the hardiners. This is because the opposition are afraid of political regression, so the reformers can threaten them with cancelling the game and returning to the authoritarian status quo ante. On the other hand, the hardiners are suffering form the fact that the reformers are in positions of power, and the latter's claim that the situation is under control is plausible. However, with the passing of time, the center position occupied by the reformers gradually shifted from an asset to a liabilty. This is the case because the opposition no longer believe in the reformer's ability to cancel the game, as the political fate of those who initiated liberalization becomes increasingly tied to its continuation. The opposition has been emboldened to push for more sweeping changes, with or without the blessing of the reformers. On the other hand, the hardliners feel that their conservatism has been vindicated by events, that the whole system is about to collapse, and that their struggle against the reform is required to save the regime. This is what Bova (1991) calls the "collapse of the political center." The Soviet Case clearly demonstrates the validity of this general observation.

Final Collapse (August-December 1991)

After the August coup, Gorbachev dealt a fatal blow to the conservative remnants by actually dissolving the Party. But then he was rapidly losing power to Boris Yel'tsin who had become a hero and won international recognition through his bravery during the coup and his role in saving the young democracy. The only chance for Gorbachev at this stage was a conflict of programs between the Russian liberals and the republic nationalists. This last hope was dashed on December 1, when the Ukrainian referendum showed unquestionable popular support for independence, and then Yel'tsin reached a compromise with the republics by signing into existence the new Commonwealth, and declared the death of the Soviet Union. In actuality, the conservatives launched the first coup, which was followed by Yel'tsin's own liberal coup. Gorbachev's strategy created for himself and the system two most awesome enemies: the radical democrats and the nationalists. The joining of forces by the two easily spelt the end of the old regime as the state had been deprived of its coercive capacity by its leader.

Conclusion

The breakdown of the Soviet Union is an interesting case that challenges the ability of the current theories of political development to provide a full explanation. As has been noted, the traditional comparative communism literature says very little about the possibility of a total collapse of the totalitarian system. The modernization theories fail to capture the timing, the mode, and the complex roots of the revolutionary changes in the Soviet Union. The political transition literature puts too much emphasis on voluntarism, and joins with the modernization theories in having a narrow political (i.e. participation-centered) focus, to the neglect of other important problem areas. In order to capture the main features of the Soviet case, one needs to combine the concept of elite stragetic thinking and intercrisis relations. Based on the Binder et al. theory of crises and sequences,

this paper develops a model that leaves room for Communist reforming elite to initiate the process of change, while stipulates that certain externalities and spillovers are inevitable once specific institutional reforms are implemented or certain crises erupted. This refined model puts particular emphasis on the nationality crisis, claiming that once it has been activated, all the institutional reforms in other areas will be bogged down.

The collapse of the Soviet Union is thus understood as initiated by the great reformer–Gorbachev. A looming economic crisis in the economic realm at first prompted the new general secretary to focus on an Andropov-style economic reform (*early perestroika*). The inability of the reforming elite to overcome the inertia and resistance of the bureaucracy led them to launch *glasnost'*, which was a liberalization drive designed to sensitize the masses to the inadequacies of the old system and to enlist their support for the reformers. Glasnost' gradually evolved into *demokratizatsia*, which provided competitive elections under the format of one-party pluralism as channels to register the preferences of the masses and to kick out Gorbachev's conservative opponents, as withness the refomers' victory in the 1989 election and the subsequent purge of the Party. Up to this point, Gorbachev's grand strategy was successful in whipping up social demand and creating bottom-up pressure for his reform enterprise. However, since his reform focus had shifted to the participation area, negative externalities were created not only in the target area, i.e. in the economic sphere, but also in the nationality area. The "national in form, socialist in content" federal system set up by Lenin and the rapid modernization process under the Soviet rule did not dampen nationalist emotions among the nationalities in the Soviet Union. On the contrary, they intensified the nationalist tendency by providing an infrastructure for separatism and creating a strong sense of distributional injustices in the republics. With the state gradually losing its coercive capacity, which in itself was a negative externality of the participation reforms, the political opportunities for the nationalists were greatly expanded. The result was a *nationality eruption*. Together

with the desire for swift economic improvement and deepened participation reform in the form of multi-party democracy, a multi-crises situation had been created that overloaded the system. Under these circumstances, Gorbachev was forced to concede to the hardliners by tightening up political control in the participation and nationality areas (*conservative comeback*), but also tried to implement the overdue economic reform. The collapse of the political center then culminated in the August coup, which was a desperate move by the demoralized conservatives. The failure of this last attempt swiftly brought about the liberals' own coup–Yel'tsin expropriating more and more power from Gorbachev. In the final stage of *collapse*, the Russian liberals joined forces with the republic nationalists to topple the Union and create the new Commonwealth.

In sum, the system collapsed under the pressure of multiple crises, which was a direct result of Gorbachev's strategy to create social pressure for his economic reform programs. Gorbachev erred in picking the participation area as his starting point, which entailed uncontrollable externalities and spillovers, especially in the nationality problem area, where the Soviet Union was most vulnerable. Besides a lack of understanding of the intercrisis relations and the seriousness of the Soviet nationalities question, Gorbachev's original sin was his shallow power base and the staying power of the system that he challenged: he was the youngest politburo member when assuming the position of general secretary, and the Soviet system had lasted for seven decades when he began to change it. This basic condition forced him to find outside support, a strategy by nature threatening the system's very survival.

This much is what we can learn about the Soviet case through the refined crises and sequences model. On the other hand, the theory also benefits from the testing of the case. First, the role of the elite to initiate the whole process of change is more appreciated. The Soviet case witnessed a top-down process in the initial stages, which only later on became more bottom-up. Not only was the chain reaction started from top, the very location where it began was chosen

by the reforming elite, which had profound impact on the subsequent developments through externatlities and spillovers. All this suggests is elite strategic thinking, which was of little, if any, significance in the original crises and sequences model, is of great importance when we analyze the process of political transition from totalitarian systems. The second point is that we have to be more specific in talking about externalities and spillovers so as to make explanations and predictions more precise. Though the greatest strength of the crises and sequences model is its discussion of the facilitative inputs and secondary demands, just exactly how crises spread from one problem area to another is not clearly specified. The Soviet case provides a lively scenario to fill this theoretical vacuum. The third point is about the overriding importance of the nationality crisis. Whether a country is prone to nationalist-separatist tensions is obviously contingent, and cannot be determined by any theory of political transition. However, once such tensions are present, they will explode into a crisis if preceded by a deflation of state power, i.e. by a coercion crisis. In a multi-crises situation, no institutional reform is possible without first solving the nationality problems. This point was mentioned in the original crises and sequences model, but nowhere can we find a stronger case supporting such a theme than in the Soviet experience. In short, by applying the crises and sequences model to the Soviet case, theoretical modifications are developed which can serve to widen the applicability of the model. Based on this theoretical improvement, one can select several cases for a comparison, to further test the model.

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蘇聯的崩解——「危機及時序」分析途徑

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摘　要

本文採用「危機及時序」(Crises and Sequences)的分析途徑來解釋蘇聯的崩解。全文包含三個部分。第一部分就現有的理論加以分析。我們發現傳統的現代化理論對蘇聯崩解的背景有很強的解釋力，但論及時機、過程及各種社會因素的交互作用則明顯不足。另一方面政治轉型理論雖然較少決定論的色彩，卻太過於著重過程，而疏忽了其他面向。這類理論對蘇聯崩解所包含的複雜社會因素，比現代化理論更缺乏掌握的能力。由班德等人在一九七一年所提出的「危機及時序」的模型，一方面顧及背景，一方面包含過程，提供了很好的解釋框架，但如用到蘇聯的例子上，則必須加以修正。在本文的第二部分，就針對蘇聯的情況提出了修正的「危機及時序」理論，在其中提出了外部效應(Externalities)及擴散效應(Spillovers)的概念，並強調了民族問題的重要性。

在本文的第三部分，我們用修正後的理論來解釋蘇聯的狀況。在蘇聯崩解的過程中，一共有七個時期：布里茲涅夫晚期（八〇年代初）、「重建」初期（一九八五～八六）、「公開性」時期（一九八六～八八）、民主化時期（一九八八～八九）、民族問題爆發時期（一九八九～九〇）、保守派反撲階段（一九九〇～九一）及最後的崩解（一九九

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一年底）。經由我們的分析，發現蘇聯的覆亡關鍵點在領導者的錯算。戈巴契夫原擬在經濟領域內挑起群眾壓力，助其排除保守派的反對，以重建蘇聯的經濟體制。結果卻在參與及民族問題的領域，造成了負面的外部效應，受到激進民主主義者及民族主義者的挑戰。一個多重危機的局勢因而出現，致使蘇聯的系統超載，並終不免於瓦解。