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International Organization

**Janice Gross Stein, Thomas Risse-Kappen, Rey Koslowski
and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, and Richard Ned Lebow**

**Symposium: The End of the Cold War and
Theories of International Relations**

Jack S. Levy

Learning and Foreign Policy

Robert Powell

The Neorealist–Neoliberal Debate

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Abstracts

Political learning by doing: Gorbachev as uncommitted thinker and motivated learner

by Janice Gross Stein

The direction and scope of the change in Soviet foreign policy after 1985 cannot be explained without reference to the impact of Gorbachev's representation of the Soviet security problem. Changes in the international distribution of capabilities and generational change are indeterminate explanations of the changes in Soviet foreign policy. Building on propositions from social cognition and organizational psychology, I argue that through inductive "trial-and-error learning" from failure, Gorbachev developed a new representation of the "ill-structured" Soviet security problem. Gorbachev learned in part because he was a relatively uncommitted thinker on security issues and was open to the ideas of experts. He was also highly motivated to learn because of his commitment to domestic reform. The complex interactive relationship between learning and action that provided quick feedback is captured by the social cognition of "learning by doing." The conditionality of political learning suggests a rich research agenda for the analysis of foreign policy change.

Ideas do not float freely: transnational coalitions, domestic structures, and the end of the cold war

by Thomas Risse-Kappen

Realist or liberal explanations for the end of the cold war cannot account for the specific content of the change in Soviet foreign policy or for Western responses to it. These theories need to be complemented by approaches that emphasize the interaction between international and domestic factors and that take seriously the proposition that ideas intervene between structural conditions and actors' interests. Some of the strategic prescriptions that informed the reconceptualization of Soviet security interests originated in the Western liberal internationalist community, which formed transnational networks with "new thinkers" in the former Soviet Union. These new ideas became causally consequential for the turnaround in Soviet foreign policy and also had an impact on American and German reactions to it. Even though transnational networks were active in Germany, the Soviet Union, and the United States, their success varied. Domestic structures like the nature of political institutions, state-society relations, and political culture determine the ability of transnational networks first, to gain access to a country's political system and second, to build "winning coalitions."

These differences in domestic structures can largely explain the variation in impact of the strategic prescriptions among the three countries.

Understanding change in international politics: the Soviet empire's demise and the international system

by Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil

The succession of mostly nonviolent revolutions that replaced Eastern European communist governments in 1989 and the lack of any action by the Soviet Union to stop these changes transformed the international political system. Since these changes were not driven by changes in relative capabilities, they did not follow the postulates of neorealist theory. Rather, the revolutions of 1989 changed the rules governing superpower conflict and, thereby, the norms underpinning the international system. This constructivist perspective systematically links domestic and international structures with political practice and shows that international systems consist of ensembles of social institutions. These institutions change in response not only to shifting distributions of capabilities but also to redefinition of actors' identities as well as changes in state–society relations. Transformations of the international system occur when political practices change and therefore fail to reproduce the familiar international “structures.”

The long peace, the end of the cold war, and the failure of realism

by Richard Ned Lebow

Three of the more important international developments of the last half century are the “long peace” between the superpowers, the Soviet Union's renunciation of its empire and leading role as a superpower, and the post–cold war transformation of the international system. Realist theories at the international level address the first and third of these developments, and realist theories at the unit level have made an *ex post facto* attempt to account for the second. The conceptual and empirical weaknesses of these explanations raise serious problems for existing realist theories. Realists contend that the anarchy of the international system shapes interstate behavior. Postwar international relations indicates that international structure is not determining. Fear of anarchy and its consequences encouraged key international actors to modify their behavior with the avowed goal of changing that structure. The pluralist security community that has developed among the democratic industrial powers is in part the result of this process. This community and the end of the cold war provide evidence that states can escape from the security dilemma.