ANATOMY OF A SYSTEMIC TRANSITION: THE CASE OF POLAND

Mizanur Rahman Khan

Introduction

The dialectics of nature which, according to Greek Philosopher Heraclitus, is that "all things change" also applies to human society. Since antiquity, man's constant quest for change and improvement of his existence has, in fact, been the driving force behind the forward movement of human civilization. Over centuries, the evolution of different politico-economic systems was the result of this quest.

In simple terms, systemic transition in a human society refers to a process of transformation where the core values of the incumbent system undergo a radical change, both in form and content. In the case of Poland today, for example, the core principles of their socialist construction i.e., state ownership of the means of production and political monism manifest in one-party rule have been discarded in favour of privatization and political pluralism. However, the transition is a continued and dialectical process where the embryos of the new system are yet to take firm root and flourish, while the old system still displays a powerful instinct for survival. Therefore, the triangular balance among economics, politics and security during a systemic transition remains all the more delicate and porous, when both the objective and subjective factors are equally important and reinforce each other.

The modern world can be said to have known, among others, two grand systemic transitions—one to capitalism and liberal democracy and the other to socialism and one-party dictatorship. However, the structure and process of these transitions differed both in time and
space. While France witnessed a bourgeois revolution exactly two centuries ago, England experienced an evolutionary development of capitalism and democracy. Today’s Western democratic system came into being as a late product of market society, the first need of which was a liberal state, but not a democratic one. Historical developments in the 18th century England showed that initially a liberal system of competitive politics was designed based only on property-based franchise. The parties were then responsible to a narrow and limited, but economically powerful electorate. Between 1688 and 1832, the power of monarchs was limited by the great court parties, the Tories and the Whigs. With the spread of the industrial revolution, the working class grew in numbers, organization and strength sufficient to achieve entry into the electorate, thus making the popular franchise a component of the democratic British state. Liberal democracy was, therefore, the historical product of a successfully developing capitalist market society. However, the earlier laissez-faire market societies have been gradually modified to accommodate state intervention, government planning and introduction of welfarism.

In like manner, the transition to socialism in different countries also varied. Before the Russian revolution of 1917, Marxism was split mainly into evolutionary and revolutionary trends, depending on the interpretation of developments in the late 19th and early 20th century. A defeated and war-ravaged Russia coupled with its utter lack of democratic tradition fell victim to Leninist Marxism. That success brought about by a group of middle-class revolutionaries threatened to take the 20th century by storm. But the revolutionary appeal of Marxism could not hold ground in the industrially advanced Western Europe and the USA. Instead, Leninism and Stalinism kept the idea on the move—into Eastern Europe and China in the late 1940s and into the developing world in the 1960s. However, it took not much time for a final halt in the communist triumph and its subsequent decline.

Today, after about three-quarter of a century of practice, communism seems to be disowning the past and beginning afresh. The

2. The term communism refers to the radical form of socialism and in this paper it is used in the context of those countries where the ruling regimes officially declared communism as their ultimate goal.
communists of the Gorbachev variety have finally come to realize that Marx’s dictum that existing production relations become a fundamental obstacle to the development of productive forces, i.e., the prevailing economic system can stifle growth, applies not to the capitalist, but to the communist countries. Hence, the past reforms “within the system” of communism have ultimately given way to reforms “of the system” under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Peter the Great. Gorbachev with his ‘New Political Thinking’ both at home and abroad seems to have turned upside down the Brezhnev-set programme of pioneer ride into communism. In fact, Gorbachev is frustrated with the straitjacket of inherited doctrines and has sought to expand its permissible parameters and outer limits.

The consequence of this liberalization in Moscow is that changes are racing out of control in Eastern Europe which till recently remained captive of ‘socialist internationalism’. Now, with the Hungarian communists voting their party out of existence and moving towards free elections and East Germany emerging from the rubbles of the Berlin Wall, with Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria falling in quick succession, Poland is the only nation in the region where the opposition is already in power, or as one analyst puts, “the only government with the outsiders on the inside”3. However, this transition in Poland and elsewhere is a totally new phenomenon having no precedent. Nor does it have any conceptual aide like Smith, Ricardo, Marx or Engels. The previous attempts to endow communism with a human face have ended in brutal repression and bloodshed, the latest being the Peoples’ Army massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square. Therefore, if the events in Poland do involve a peaceful and eventually successful transition from communism to market economy and multi-party democracy, it will be the first case of evolutionary termination of communism in human history. This would then invalidate one pet theory of the former Reagan Administration, articulated by Jeane Kirkpatrick, that right-wing authoritarian governments are amenable to changes for the better, but communist regimes are not.

However, such a monumental hope is yet to be translated into reality. The Solidarity-led government of Poland has been suddenly propelled into office by deep-seated economic crisis and will be

judged by its ability to solve it. Ostensibly, the process set into motion seems to be a rolling back to where it all began four decades ago and its shock-waves are being felt both within and far beyond. Therefore, some pertinent questions might be raised here: Why does Poland become the avant-garde of this transition? How are the issues of economics, politics and security interacting at this critical juncture of Polish history? What is the state of domestic balance and correlation of forces in Poland today? What are the ramifications of Polish transition for the immediate neighbourhood and beyond? These are among the queries the present paper attempts to deal with.

Unique Features of Polish Communism

The communist world currently consisting of about a dozen countries was widely divergent in terms of historical background, government systems, stages of development, and cultural traditions. Once installed in power, these regimes faced problems and tasks that greatly differed from each other and classical Marxism provided scanty tools for their solution. But Stalinism was at its zenith in the Soviet Union at the time when East European states were being re-established. Naturally, the Soviet model as the first of its kind was to be the blueprint for the countries concerned. However, the indigenous influences were also at work so that each country contained forces which modified Stalinism in their own ways. Therefore, one can observe elements of both unity and diversity in communism building. However, the process of communist construction in Poland had been characterized by some unique features, as distinct from other East bloc countries.

First, historically, while communism building went parallel with nationalism in the Soviet Union, in most of Eastern Europe it had been anti-national and this was manifest most blatantly in Poland. Once an eminent power in Europe, Poland lost its statehood for nearly 150 years from the late 18th century until the end of the WWI. But Polish nationalism remained deeply embedded in the hearts of the people as they were divided among the three contending empires.

Later, although the traumatic experiences of the WWII engendered a growing popular support for the Left in Poland, that support did

not extend to the point of favouring a Soviet-style communism in a
country where the war-hardened anti-German sentiments did not
allay the strong anti-Russian feelings. This explains why Poland
had presented the greatest obstacles of any country to legitimization
of the communist rule in the region. A common tactics of communist
consolidation of power in Eastern Europe was the creation of a
single united party by merging the communist and socialist parties
and declaring a "Peoples’ Democracy" under a new constitution.
However, the "Peoples’ Democracy" was to be declared latest in
Poland in 1952. Stalin once complained that imposing communism
on the stubborn Poles made as much sense as putting a saddle on a
cow. With Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization and the resultant eruption
of nationalism in Eastern Europe, nationalist Gomulka had to be
gotten back to power following the worker demonstrations in 1956.
It may also be recalled that back in 1976 while amending the 1952
Constitution, the Polish parliament had to tone down, in the face
of mass protest, the wording that expressed the role of the ruling
Poland United Workers’ Party (PUWP) in Polish society, as well as
the wording that expressed the bond of friendship between Poland
and Soviet Union.

Second, an element characteristic of the communist consolidation
of power was the Stalin-initiated great purges and executions within
the ruling parties in the East bloc to get rid of the so-called ‘Titoists’
and ‘revisionists.’ During 1948-53, it is estimated that around 2.5
million people—something over a quarter of the total membership
was expelled from East European communist parties and between
125,000 to 250,000 were imprisoned. Again Poland was the only
country where no trials, expulsions and executions of native com­
munist leaders took place.

Third, in most of the cases the communist leadership having
gained power adopted a policy of nationalization of industries and
collectivization of agriculture. While the policy of gradual collectiv­
zation was successful in other Soviet bloc countries; it is only
Poland where no wholesale collectivization could take place. Again,
most of the collectivized farms were disintegrated following the
worker unrest in 1956 and later, despite repeated attempts the party

7. Adam Westoby, Communism Since World War II (New York : St. Martin’s
could not reverse the process. This was a social phenomenon without parallel in the Soviet bloc. As a result, individual peasant farming always dominated in Poland, with about 80 percent of the cultivable lands belonging to the private sector.

Fourth, before taking over power, all the communist parties of the Soviet bloc countries were a fringe factor in their national politics in terms of membership strength. However, once the communist parties acquired power, either through insurrection or ‘managed’ elections, their membership increased manifold overnight for obvious reasons. But party membership in terms of the total population always remained the lowest in Poland in the Soviet bloc countries. Data of 1987 shows that claimed party membership varied from 15.2 percent in Rumania to 11.0 percent in Czechoslovakia to 6.7 percent in the USSR, while it was only 5.8 percent in the case of Poland. Particularly notable was the fact that during the end of the 1970s, the percentage of the white-collar workers in party membership had taken a nose-dive to 33 percent from the 43 percent at the end of the 1960s. After the birth of Solidarity in late 1980, about one-third of the party membership joined it. Such wide-spread infection of party rank and file by the Solidarity and the resultant defection significantly explains why a military solution was adopted in December 1981 to quell the opposition.

Fifth, in the mosaic mix of Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism, churches remained, in varying degrees, a persistent non-communist institutional interest in Eastern Europe. Religious freedom substantially varied from an outright ban on observance in Albania to the relative independence of the churches in Poland. Again, with the only exception of Poland, religious observance and affiliation have declined since WWII in countries of Eastern Europe. While churches could be controlled elsewhere in Eastern Europe, in Poland they always remained an independent force; except a minority fraction (PAX group which became a transmission belt of the communist government). Currently, about 95 percent of the Polish population are baptized Catholics; the number of clergy has doubled since 1945 and vocations increased during the 1980s. During the 1970s and early ’80s the Polish churches became a rallying point

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8. Problems of Communism, Jan-February 1988, p. 73.
for the supporters of human rights and democracy. Legally also the Polish church was a political actor whose independent Znak group even had parliamentary representation, which served as the voice of the opposition.

Finally, while domestic upheavals and disturbances were manifest in some countries of Eastern Europe over the last years, the frequency was greater in Poland. Massive worker unrest and disaffection with the system were manifest in October 1956, March 1968, December 1970, July 1976 and August 1980 that persisted till the fall of the communist government in August 1989. It would, therefore, be patently wrong to compare the recurrent Polish crises with the Hungarian uprising of 1956 or the Prague Spring of 1968. The leaderships of Imre Nagy and Alexander Dubcek represented renegade communist regimes whose highly reformist policies, imposed mostly from ‘above’ left in doubt the continuity of Sovietized socialism. On the other hand, in the recurrent Polish crises and upheavals spurred from ‘below’, the economic factors, such as, food shortages, price rises and demand for wage increases always loomed large. And in four cases, without parallel in Soviet bloc, worker revolts resulted in major changes in the top party and government positions. It is, therefore, evident that the Polish people had an ingrained propensity to change their system for something else.

The Coalition Government: Challenges and Opportunities

While the previous shuffles in Polish party and government structure can be said to be changes in form only, the latest shuffle in rules of the game can be dubbed as a change of real essence. In fact, during the closing days of August 1989 the communist world witnessed a seismic development—the installation of a coalition government in Poland headed by a non-communist for the first time since 1948. The government led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a lawyer and founder member of Solidarity, holds 161 seats in the 460-member Sejm, the lower house of the parliament. Other partners in the coalition are the PUWP (173 Deputies), the United Peasants Party (76 Deputies) and the Democratic Party (27 Deputies). The latter two parties till recently served under the communists as their docile junior partners.

It may be recalled that the turning point came in last June, when Solidarity won a resounding victory in Poland’s semi-free elections
in four decades. The trade union movement took all the 161 seats it was allowed to contest in the Sejm and 99 of the 100 seats in the Senate. The communists and their allies, principally the UPP and the DP retained a majority, i.e., 299 seats in the 460-member Sejm through an uncontested reserved list. Even then, the communists failed to form a workable government. As the communists misread their standing with the electorate, they also misjudged their allies. The UPP and the DP holding the balance in parliament began to ponder their own future in light of Solidarity’s election sweep.

Following the stalemate in government formation, the UPP and the DP defected from the communist alliance and accepted Solidarity leadership under Lech Walesa. The new alliance with a total of 264 seats in the Sejm would, thus, have a majority over the communists’ 173 Deputies. Having no alternative, the ruling communist party had to accept a junior partnership in the Solidarity-led government. However, Solidarity had to grant some concessions in keeping the newly-created powerful Presidency, ministries of Defence and Interior under the communist control.

Therefore, the current domestic power configuration looks very delicate and complex. The weekly Guardian cogently comments, “After the improvisation comes the really difficult part. Poland will now possess a unique sort of sandwich system. The actual government will be the thick nourishing filling between a top layer of Presidential power under General Jaruzelski and the bottom layer of communist opposition.” The moot question that now bothers the minds of observers and analysts is whether Solidarity, till recently a rebellious and freewheeling trade union, can ultimately turn itself into leading a patchy coalition. The Solidarity has inherited the failures of communism and there seems to be real doubt whether it can clean up the mess in a short time to retain public trust. This will depend on how effectively the coalition government faces the dangers and challenges that lie ahead.

First, the possibility of a coup in Poland designed to prevent the final emergence of a democratic government cannot still be ruled out. Although, the younger of the 2 million communists talk of ‘social democratization’, older members talk of ‘re-centralization’. The promotion of Mr. Rakowski to Party leader was supported by those who believed the party should not have bowed out of power.

POLAND'S NEW DEMOCRACY

Electorate

National Assembly (560 members)

Senate (100 members)
Solidarity - 98
Independent - 1
Vacant - 1

Sejm (480 members)
PUWP - 173
Solidarity - 161
UPP - 76
DP - 27
Catholics - 23

President and Commander-in-Chief

Prime Minister

Appoints

Cabinet

Power to declare 3 month state of emergency

Dissolves

Power to reject

Electorate

Armed Forces
without a fight. Rakowski himself seemed to be agitating for Soviet political intervention, deliberately exaggerating the alleged dangers of Polish developments. There is no doubt that some elements in the secret police, in the party apparatus and in the army may be sympathetic to his views. Although the communists adopted recently a party line along social democracy, only time will show how far they can shed off their habit of unquestioned ruling. Also in the long-run, dangers are there that the Solidarity government will not be effective in dealing with economic crises. It could be weakened by in-house dissensions and sabotaged by communist hard-liners, and thus, the coalition could break down. In such an event, the communists might try to impose one-party rule again. Above all, it ultimately depends on how far the communists of Gorbachev variety can have control over the Soviet leadership, where the domestic situation is not very encouraging.

Second, one of Solidarity’s difficulties is that by leaving the guns and tanks under the continued command of the communists, it will remain hostage to coercive instruments of state power. Although President Jaruzelski reshuffled the top military brass and the Defense Minister General Sewiski expressed support to the new government, the latter reportedly showed concern over the prospect of a decreased allocation to defence. On the other hand, Solidarity concedes that continued command over the army and the police by the communists would be of little use once Solidarity controls the purse-strings. However, it would be very difficult to achieve a new domestic balance both in terms of power and resource allocation, given 40 years of all-pervasive power and privilege enjoyed by the defense elites.

Third, Solidarity is yet to make up its mind whether it is a trade union or a political party. As a trade union, it has shrank from its peak of 10 million members in 1981 to just 2 million now; it has a higher percentage of unskilled workers, speaks in populist tones and follows Mr. Walesa. As a party, it has the support of most voters. This Solidarity consists most prominently of its members of parliament under the leadership of Mr. Geremek. Mr. Walesa’s statements are not always approved by the Deputies and vice versa. Although no real split has yet taken place, the already manifest signs of crack might be reinforced with the continued exercise of government power.
Also, as to the policy programmes and their implementation there seems to remain wide gaps between factions of Solidarity. Political Solidarity understands that effective treatment of the ailing economy will make life even worse, at least in the short run, if it is ever to get better. Such bitter austerity measures, like drastic de-subsidization of food and basic needs, decontrolling of prices and a monetarist policy to control wage and inflation, closing down of loss-making factories and a certain degree of unemployment would be vitally needed. The Prime Minister through public speeches keeps on soliciting peoples support and endurance for such measures and the Deputy Finance Minister, while unveiling the economic recovery plan recently, indicated that living standards would have to drop for the time being. On the other hand, trade union Solidarity, with its main support base in the declining heavy industries like steelworks, mines and shipbuilding, continues demanding wage increases and price controls. But Poland can afford neither for the moment. Already the communist government in its closing days decontrolled most of the food prices and instantly, they have doubled or even quadrupled, pushing inflation to over 50 percent a month. The Solidarity-led parliament already passed resolutions indexing wages to 80 percent of price rises. This is surely to further wage-price spiral. Recently, Walesa voicing a stern warning against further price increases stated, "If someone fools around with prices, they do so at the expense of this government. The system has cornered us in a cul-de-sac and I don't know whether we will save ourselves from civil war". It may be recalled that the previous systemic transitions mentioned earlier, were also accompanied by uprisings and civil war, repressions and great human sufferings including the deaths of millions under Stalin.

Again, frequent pronouncements are there for privatization of the centrally-planned economy and the government even appointed a Minister for the purpose, with creation of a new Department—the Plenipotentiary for Changes in Ownership. However, there is still no clear blueprint about how to achieve it. Besides, the Solidarity camp is reported to be split between two broad factions of economists: a 'socialist' group that favours policies like worker

self-management and a ‘liberal’ group that would like to introduce market forces quickly and decisively.

In fact, Solidarity is likely to be caught up in some Harold Wilson dilemma, familiar in Western Europe during the past 20 years. In the late 1960s the British Labour Party Prime Minister talked of increasing competitiveness of moribund industry through a technological revolution. But he was unable to transcend his party’s roots in the big, nationalized industries. It took Thatcher to implement a painful but successful restructuring of Britain’s economy by a strong, single-party government and by breaking union power in the biggest industries. Therefore, the British Labour Party experience may offer some useful, if depressing, lessons for Poland’s non-communist Prime Minister—a successful Labour government needs the support of market forces and private entrepreneurs and the best way to get it is by restraining the demands of its own constituency—the workers.

Fourth, there seems to be schisms opening between the rural peasantry and the city dwellers. While the peasants demand lowering of prices of farm inputs and increasing of prices for their produce, the urban dwellers resist any rise of food prices. Besides, there is the Rural Solidarity and the Peasant Party which contend for support of the peasantry in the countryside. Rural Solidarity resents the offering of ministry of Agriculture to the Peasant Party which was viewed as a communist auxiliary in the countryside. Besides, there is the powerful church which draws its support from the massively Catholic peasantry and the latter can also trust the church to back up its demands. Therefore, one of the major challenges facing this government is to find a lasting solution to agriculture, a perennial problem in Poland because of the communist government’s discriminatory policies. In the past, agricultural foodstuffs proved to be the most sensitive sector in terms of fomenting social unrest. Therefore, it is a problem that affects much more than just peasantry in Poland, the biggest but declining agricultural producer in Eastern Europe.

Fifth, at the politics and political management level, there are some big obstacles represented by past Polish traditions, its system of communist nomenklatura and the media. Except Czechoslovakia, none of the East European states had a democratic tradition.

Soviet imposition of communist rule in territories of Eastern Europe in fact was prefigured by similar experiments by the Versailles peace makers in establishing liberal democracy in the inter-war period. But new political culture proved ill-suited to the then prevailing class structure of the countries concerned and the leaderships gradually turned autocratic or to a return to monarchy. For example, in Poland proportional representation institutionalized political fragmentation and by 1925, 92 political parties got registered, 32 of which were represented in the parliament. 14 successive governments took office between independence in 1918 and the Pilsudski coup of May 1926.15

With such an unwholesome experience under Prussian and Russian despotism, national authoritarianism and Soviet communism, Poland today presents a real challenge for the growth of pluralist democracy. The signs of split and fragmentation in political life have been already indicated. After politically lean years for long, as parties begin to emerge, the divisions along the Left and Right also are taking roots. Cardinal Glemp, the Polish Primate already endorsed a Christian Democratic Movement which the social democrats of the Solidarity dubbed as reactionary.17 Previous systemic transitions were also full of conflicts and struggles between Thermidors and Bonaparts, between Leninists and Stalinists, between Trotskyists and Bukharinistes etc. Now, the new government needs to be very decisive in simultaneously introducing market discipline in economics as well as pluralism in politics. There are both 'iron-fisters' and 'counter-fisters' who argue in opposing manner about whether market forces and liberal democracy can go together during a major systemic reform. It may be recalled that in Western Europe, market economy antedated evolution of liberal democracy. Therefore, free-market orientation should not be equated with multi-party democracy, as also experiences in countries of the Third World reveal.

The system of communist nomenklatura (provision of filling government posts by party-approved candidates) presents also an

16. Political Parties are rapidly growing in numbers. The Parties, liquidated in 1944-48, are reappearing, such as, the Polish Socialist Party, the Labour Party, the National Party etc. Also recently founded Confederation of Independent Poland, the Green Party etc. are becoming active. Please see Prof. Piotr Winzorek, “Towards Pluralistic Parliamentary Democracy” Contemporary Poland, No. 11-12/1989.
enormous obstacle. Even with the levers of government in Solidarity's hand the communist bureaucracy still remains largely untouched. Solidarity reckons that the former ruling party directly or indirectly fills 0.9 of the 1.2 million jobs that entail some degree of power\(^\text{18}\). Similar is the case with the media which is still dominated by the communist bureaucracy, although a Solidarity member has been appointed as the Director of the national Radio and Television. Therefore, nomenklatura's power must be blunted before 'taking over the government' can mean much. For this, local level elections are yet to be organized.

Finally, the greatest problem seems to be not mere economic shortages or lack of democratic experience but something deeper. Forty years of communist rule have institutionalized laziness, back-scratching and corruption. This is to be found in the lethargy of many Poles, a refusal to believe in work ethics and a need to be unscrupulous for survival. Although the communist government adopted significant measures for stimulating the private sector, the response was sluggish and till todate only 4-7 percent of GDP is contributed by the private sector outside agriculture. The people at large seem resigned because of failed promises of the past. What is most disquietening is the trend among the Poles of leaving the country for the West, causing a costly brain drain. About 8.5 million Poles—one fifth of the total population travel West in search of jobs every year. According to Bonn, about 230,000 Poles, a record number, are expected to seek permanent residence in FRG during the current year and this trend has increased since June last. About 70 percent of these emigrants are 35 years or younger and Polish figures showed that since 1980—the country had lost 2000 engineers and technicians, 3,000 doctors and 3000 architects\(^\text{19}\). The non-communist Prime Minister keeps urging them to stay on and create conditions for enterprising young people. But a fair segment of the Poles seems to be preferring a run away from their homeland, either with or without communism.

Despite all these odds mentioned above, the transition should not appear that bleak under a people-installed leadership. In some ways, as Brzezinski draws an analogy, today's Poland is at a stage very comparable to that of Franco's Spain in the late 1960s. The Spanish economy was then badly underdeveloped and a dictatorial rule was

in the stage of final decomposition. Yet, today Spain is a successful case of democratic political and economic development. However, one has to bear in mind that the Polish system has been a closed one for over four decades. Therefore, much depends on the evolving correlation of forces and how the new government can be effective enough to crystallize a programme of economic renewal.

First, Poland is the largest country in Eastern Europe, both in territory and population and has abundant natural resources. Polish agriculture, primarily in private hands, does not have to undergo the arduous process of decollectivization, experienced in Soviet Union or Hungary.

Second, Solidarity has the people’s support and it can unleash the most creative forces—to regenerate public enthusiasm and mobilize the best brains in the country who have been previously excluded from participation and power. In fact, one of the reasons of Solidarity’s success is that it has represented this counter-elite to the communist rulers. Therefore, Solidarity has a manpower pool to execute its programme.

Third, while privatization will be a complex process, it will not be an utter novelty like in the Soviet Union. The communist government already initiated the process, but then, lack of public trust pervaded. The new government is to reinforce that foundation to intensify the process of privatization.

Fourth, despite having a staggering $40 billion foreign debt, reports suggest that there is a good deal of hard currency in Poland. Currently, several million Poles work in Western countries and they send remittances home. It is estimated that 20 percent of the Poles have dollars as ‘real money’ and Walesa himself estimates that Poles have about $7 billion hidden in desk drawers. Given government initiative these funds can be mobilized to finance economic reform.

Fifth, it is self-evident that developments in Poland could not have taken place without the blessings or acquiescence of Gorbachev, whose programme of domestic renewal certainly gave the Poles both the cover and the stimulus to make their own way. Gorbachev enunciated policies of primacy of the freedom of choice and non-interference in internal affairs of states in any pretext, in fact, precipitated the death knell of the Brezhnev doctrine. The Soviets seemed

to have feared the greater danger of a mass revolt in Poland and that
with inevitable repression would amount to a death sentence for
perestroika. In that case, Gorbachev's credibility as a reformer
would be destroyed both at home and abroad. The contrast of con­
centration of power by Gorbachev at home and relaxation in Eastern
Europe underscores that Gorbachev made the Soviet Union itself as
his key political battle ground. So there are good reasons to believe
that Poland will not become a rerun of history unless the outer limits
of freedom are hastily crossed.

Finally, the issue of assisting the reforms and changes in countries
of Eastern Europe has become a popular cause in the West and it
looks to be all eager to help Poland's painful transition for obvious
reasons. But their reaction as yet seems to be guarded and cautious,
lest it might appear to be overbearing to Moscow. During his visit
to Poland in July last, President Bush stated that Poland's econo­
ic crisis became an international responsibility and he would
launch a rescue package. The latest debt rescheduling, the fifth time
in the last 10 years, agreed upon at Paris Club so far eased terms of
payment by now about 10 billion of the $40 billion foreign debt.
In Paris meet of G-7 Bonn proposed the establishment of a group of
international experts, including the Poles, to draw a list of feasible
projects to be financed by Western aid. During his visit to Poland
just few days ago, Chancellor Kohl topped his Western counterparts
with a $2.2 billion aid package. However, this time the West seems
determined to avoid the mistakes of the 1970s when their aid and
credit were grossly misused by the communist government. Given a
well-conceived restructuring plan worked out together with the IMF,
the World Bank and the EEC, Western assistance is likely to be
forthcoming, although it may fall short of $10 billion, demanded
by Solidarity.

Ramifications of the Polish Transition

In the East

Retrospectively, the de-Stalinization programme in Eastern
Europe and the consequent eruption of nationalist trends in the late
1950s and 1960s were met with Soviet tanks as well as with ending
of the Kosygin-Libermann reforms because of the dread of conta­
gion. But time has changed and it produced a Soviet leader like
Gorbachev who himself initiated this epoch-making change. Break­
ing with all Soviet traditions and sounding more visionary and evan­
gelical than even Thomas Jefferson or Woodrow Wilson, Gorbachev began to preach the concepts of universal values and one civilization instead of the two mutually exclusive ones. Recently, reacting to changes in the East bloc Gorbachev stated, "It seems the choice has been made. The task at present is to develop progress toward a new peaceful era in a calm and measured way......It will be very dangerous if someone tries to return to what has already been the past." 21.

Thanks to Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' in foreign policy, the Parliaments in Warsaw and Budapest condemned the suppression of the Prague Spring of 1968. Even the Soviet leader recently condemned the crushing of the Prague Spring and Kremlin finally admitted that Hitler and Stalin secretly agreed 50 years ago to divide Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe into spheres of of Nazi and Soviet influence. Despite all these confessions to dissociate himself from the past, Gorbachev has plenty of reasons to worry about the scope and pace of change in an area that experienced long deprivations under Russian and Soviet rule. The Polish example is already serving as the harbinger of falling dominoes—that already unseated old guards in Hungary, GDR, Bulgaria and the latest in Czechoslovakia. A symbiotic relationship does exist between all the reform and freedom movements in the East.

Nonetheless, the nagging question about the limits of Soviet tolerance remains. Before Gorbachev, the taboos for East Europe were clear: no challenge to the communist monopoly on power and no question of leaving the Warsaw Pact. The first taboo has already vanished and some influential circles in Moscow even began advocating what is being called a policy of 'Reverse Finlandization' of Eastern Europe. 23 It is argued that Eastern Europe can grow independently and the relationship of an increasingly losing concern for Moscow can ultimately be replaced by a mutually-rewarding one, that would also take care of Soviet security interests in the region. But there are some basic differences with Finland. Whatever might be the modalities, the Soviets seem only to want stability and growth there even under a frame of market economy.

As far as the second taboo is concerned, despite Solidarity's concessions to the communists and reassurances to Moscow, the Pact's future looks really shaky. National antagonism and anti-Russian sentiments are resurfacing in the region. Radical reforms in Poland, Hungary and the Soviet Union, new reform winds in GDR, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia and conservative intransigence in Romania—all these tend to make strange bed-fellows. Intra-bloc dissensions and conflicts over human rights' issues, customs war, Hungary's manifest flirtation with neutralism etc. certainly add new strains on the deepening fissures within the 7-member alliance.

Therefore, despite Gorbachev's approval of national choice to politico-economic developments, he subtly makes it clear that Warsaw Pact membership is inviolate. In Soviet security calculus, countries like Poland, GDR and Czechoslovakia in Central Europe must remain as a cordon sanitaire around the European part of the Soviet Union. For the moment, Gorbachev may be calculating that Poland cannot risk any break with the alliance in view of the Soviets having much economic leverage and also being the only effective guarantor of a 100-mile swath of formerly German territory, incorporated into Poland after the Nazi defeat. Although there is a bilateral treaty recognizing existing border between Poland and West Germany, Poland's western border would legally come under question if German reunification becomes a reality. That apprehension compounded by unhappy historical memories is likely to put a brake on Poland's run away from Moscow and towards the West.

In any calculation, Gorbachev would find it an odd blessing to be joined at Pact meetings by representatives of a Polish coalition in which communists occupy a minority grace-and-favour position. Although it is not an exact analogy, the orthodox and less radical members of the alliance and even the Soviets must be apprehensive of trading secrets with Poland, because of its suspected role as a potential Fifth Column in the Pact, as NATO was about the rise of Eurocommunism in France and Italy in the 1970s, when there appeared the possibility of communists becoming privy to guarded secrets about Western security. Therefore, participation of Poland or Hungary in the Pact would accelerate the redefinition of the purposes and functions of the alliance, which has already been set in motion by Gorbachev through his vision of one Europe.
In the West

All these rather dramatic and unimaginable developments, to use a French expression *fuite en avant*, certainly bear great politico-economic and security consequences. It is interesting to note that a process of intensive integration in Western Europe is marked by an opposite process of disintegration in Eastern Europe. Therefore, the immediate consequences of Eastern developments might look unsettling for the West and their alliance. The elements of disunity and centrifugal trends are likely to be reinforced by the push and pull factors of East European developments. The US is going for a reduction of defense budgets for the fifth consecutive year. Western governments are also cutting defence spending and the NATO armaments' modernization programme appears to be shelved for the moment.

However, the greatest opportunity from the opening up of Eastern Europe would present to West Germany, another emerging economic superpower. Because of history and geography, Germany before WWII had always been a Central European power. Now, in all likelihood Soviet relaxation in Eastern Europe would be filled up by increasing presence of West Germany, both politically and economically in the immediate future. Signs of this trend are already manifest. Germany with its unrivalled economic might in whole of Europe is destined to be the number one financier of the Eastern reforms and changes. And if reunification either in the form of a confederation or of merging into one state takes place and it seems either of them would happen in some day, then a combined GNP of one Germany would outdo that of Britain and France combined. With such an overbearing prospect, FRG might slow down the deepening of its integration process with the West in order to widen the EC with possible inclusion of Hungary, Poland and even GDR and Czechoslovakia in the future. In any scenario, one point is to be cognizant of—Germany is likely to achieve through peaceful means what, in fact, the two devastating World Wars eluded her—a European supremacy. That prospect might appear somewhat unsettling for the non-Germans at large across the European continent.

From tactical point of view, events in Eastern Europe also seem to help Margaret Thatcher, for they tend to dilute both the integration scheme of 1992 and also the membership of the EC.
and this serves to reinforce her arguments against a strengthening of the EC. The other major power France for reasons rooted both in past and present looks to be scared of a united Germany and therefore, it became the number one champion of the 1992 project.

Taken together, some historic issues intersect at the moment in Western alliance: (a) If the Soviets are really ready for drastic disarmament and an open Eastern Europe, can NATO be sustained? (b) In the light of the rapid developments in the East, can the US and its allies agree on a more appropriate European defence, one that relieves the US of an increasingly unsustainable strategic and fiscal strain? (c) Will there remain nuclear weapons for long in West Germany or will it completely drop out of the Western alliance and assume a neutral position? (d) Can a Germany pursuing reunification as a real possibility be kept in the European Community? These are some issues that would bother the US and its Western allies in the coming days and months.

Finally, the Eastern developments seem to present a sobering lesson for the West. The future of genial cooperation and detente, so assiduously cultivated during the last years, might be at stake, if the West attempts to inject themselves geopolitically into Poland or other parts of Eastern Europe. Strategists like Kissinger and Brzezinski advocate for an overt recognition of Soviet security interests in Eastern Europe in exchange of the Soviets' allowing her allies greater latitude in pursuing domestic reforms. Besides, the West faces an opportunity no smaller in historical implications than the one President Truman faced when he committed massive aid to help Western Europe recover from war devastations. US and its allies now can do the same to Poland, Hungary GDR, Czechoslovakia and other Soviet bloc countries. Moreover, if perestroika in the Soviet Union continues, then the Polish experience might eventually lead to a wider system of all European cooperation. However, it is yet to gauge whether the early December seaborne superpower summit off Malta would inch forward that monumental prospect.

In The Third World

In the 1960s a growing number of developing countries tended to equate socialism with their destiny. Then socialism as the state-sponsored industrialization and one-party rule has been viewed as a quicker way to modernization and growth. However, the romantic
rendezvous with socialism in those countries is already a passing phase and the trends are towards a more open, privatized economy. The developments in the communist camp are likely to further reinforce their disillusion with socialism.

From another perspective, the systemic transition in the communist countries of Eastern Europe might adversely affect the interests of the Third World. Still no progress was made in reaching the 0.7 percent of the GNP of the North as aid target and, in fact, the assistance is declining in real terms. Now the opening up of Eastern Europe might divert the development cooperation away from the Third World and concentrate towards the East. Because of obvious Western geopolitical considerations, the West has a special interest in communist perestroika and looks all willing to ease the transition process through providing massive assistance. Also, the new and larger opportunities for Western investors and exports in Eastern Europe could lead to less financial flows to the Third World where the needs are greater and more immediate.

Besides, the carry-over of an extreme free market philosophy by the North to the development dialogue tends to neglect the official support needed for development, particularly of the LDCs. The increasing association of aid with trade is also diverting much needed aid from the poorer countries, because free trade prescriptions are not accompanied by a genuine liberalizations of market access. Also, greater participation by the reformist communist countries in the global financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank may mean a reduced lending from these institutions to the Third World. Therefore, nothing much positive is likely to be forthcoming for the poorer countries from Eastern transition. Perhaps, they have to continue to be taught about virtues of the bootstrap philosophy without the boots.

Conclusion

The ruling elites of the communist system, like any other regimes of the past, have been facing the crucial choice between holding on to all power and privilege at the risk of losing all of it, or surrendering some in the hope of holding on to the rest. History knows both outcomes. The spate of current reforms unleashed by the communist regimes bear testimony to adoption of the second path. However, the far reaching implications of adopting this path seem to be great
and immeasurable. The talk in the communist countries today, in reality, is not to reform socialism, but to use reforms as a way out from socialism.

The non-communist-led government of Poland stated their avowed objectives of introducing market economy and parliamentary democracy. However, with the provision of the communists' reserved seats in the parliament, political pluralism can be said to remain still in partial operation, of course, with real promises of full play in future. Already a good number of parties and groups came into existence, giving signals of fragmentation and factionalism, which the Polish society had been infected with in the past. In view of the fact that economic factors and considerations had always loomed large in political developments in Polish society and the current transition has also been precipitated by the economic failures of the communist government, absence of any visible improvement in the economy for long may shatter the still fragile public confidence in pluralist democracy. In such a scenario, the possibility of political pluralism taking on a degenerated form, such as, resorting to authoritarianism cannot be ruled out. But Poland had already shown that force and repression can not solve the problem. Therefore, it ultimately depends on how effectively and to what extent the new government can carry the people along the untrodden path.

Finally, the systemic transition that countries of Eastern Europe are undergoing today has great ramifications on global economy, politics and security. The opening up of the East bloc initiated by Gorbachev and his bold policy steps have created a genuine possibility of putting the antagonistic bloc politics into the frame of a permanent and genial cooperation between the East and West. This would help reduce tensions and conflicts, the fallout of which should naturally be a reduction of global military spending. However, there is no guarantee or indication that the resources freed from global disarmaments would be directed to meet the development needs of the poorer countries. Therefore, unless some automatic mechanisms are devised for mobilization of development funds, along the line, envisaged in the Brandt Commission Report, the poor developing countries cannot expect much from the systemic transition in question.
An International Seminar on "Development Dynamics: Political and Security Dimensions" was held in Dhaka during 11-14 December 1989, sponsored and organized by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS). The Seminar was attended by about 175 participants from 11 countries of Asia, Europe and North America. The participants were from academic and research institutions and belonged to diverse disciplines.

2. The Seminar was inaugurated by the Hon'ble President of Bangladesh Janab Hussain Muhammad Ershad. In his inaugural address the President emphasized the need to view development in all its aspects with a holistic approach bearing in mind the wide ranging factors influencing its dynamics. Such factors as the primacy of politics or dictates of security of the state profoundly affect the development dynamics. The President underscored the interdependent and interlocking character of development, politics and security with domestic, regional and global ramifications and stressed the need for a multidisciplinary approach to development planning. Such a perception guided Bangladesh in initiating the process of decentralized planning at the national level, regional cooperation in South Asia through the establishment of the SAARC and global cooperation for environmental protection.

3. The inaugural session was also addressed by Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Mr. Anisul Islam Mahmud as the special guest. National Professor Muhammad Shamsul Huq, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the BISS presided over the inaugural session. Brig (Retd) M Abdul Hafiz, Director General of the Institute also addressed the seminar. Barrister A K H Morshed, former Foreign Secretary, offered the vote of thanks.

4. In all twenty papers covering various aspects of the theme were presented and discussed in five working sessions. The discussion was marked by openness and objectivity in an atmosphere of
academic freedom. The concluding session presided over by National professor Muhammad Shamsul Huq was addressed by the Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh Mr. Abul Ahsan as the chief guest. A brief summary of the proceedings of the various sessions was adopted at the concluding session.

5. It was observed in the seminar that the concept of security in its traditional sense of military power was found to be inadequate and even counter-productive in today’s context. It was felt that security of a nation-state tends to get enhanced once a nation-state achieves all-round development. Thus, the issues of development inevitably come to the forefront while influencing the nation building process. It is in this sense that the linkages between the issues of development and those of security assume special significance. The inadequacies of the existing conceptual framework for the study of such linkages were highlighted by the distinguished economists, political scientists and analysts present in the seminar.

6. It was observed that security was not a matter of military strength or preparedness but it was rather preeminently dependent on the internal cohesion of a nation which reduces tension and allows for systematic evolution of political and economic systems based on popular support and national policy directed towards the betterment of the majority of people. Without a participatory political process and economic viability of the state, the vulnerability cannot be eliminated or faced adequately merely by military strength.

7. It was emphasized that inadequacies at the conceptual level led to certain distortions in security perception both at regional and global level. However, some of these distortions could be corrected by strengthening regional institutions like the SAARC. In fact, there was a general consensus that the SAARC would be able to provide the needed coherence in the region. Even though the achievements of the SAARC had been modest up till now, its potential was considered to be substantial and in fact it was emphatically argued that the SAARC should be strengthened further.

8. While considering the regional aspect of security, the issue of Indian pre-eminence in South Asia was raised and it was felt that every effort should be made by all the countries of the region including India to initiate a series of confidence-building measures, both at the bilateral and regional level. It was viewed that such measures like removing the trade imbalances, opening up the Indian and intra-regional market, free flow of information among the countries
in order to generate the needed goodwill would provide the required impetus for confidence building.

9. The need to build viable political institutions and make them address the development aspects of a nation-state was also emphasized. Some of the ideas like evolving a new global order where the territorial boundaries were de-emphasized and transnational linkages getting increasing prominence were expressed. It was felt that such a trend would generate the needed South Asian consciousness which was a necessary precondition for enhancing cooperation. While attaching due importance to the view that security concerns of India as a major power extended beyond the region, it was also felt that India should take into consideration the security perceptions of her smaller neighbours in formulating its responses. While the importance of bilateral relations was highlighted, the need for evolving a mutually beneficial approach by nation-states was considered to be of paramount importance. In this context, the need for consideration of the security aspect in light of the perceptions of all the states was emphasized. It was also felt that SAARC would have to address at some future stage the issues of regional security in order to arrive at a consensus on strategic thinking at the regional level.

10. It was observed that the increasing East-West cooperation and the recent developments in Eastern Europe were likely to have an impact on the North-South relations. It was felt that it would warrant a general alteration in strategic thinking on the part of the countries both in the North and South. One immediate consequence could be a general reduction in development assistance to the developing countries as a result of the West’s bid to respond to the demands of economic assistance from the East in the wake of the recent democratization process in Eastern Europe.

11. The immediate consequence of the aforesaid developments for the South Asian region was found to be a general disengagement of the superpowers from the region. In the process the strategic options of some of the smaller states were found to have been narrowed down. However, the positive implication of this development was found to lie in the need on the part of the South Asian states to view the aspects of security more and more from a regional perspective and thereby facilitate the emergence of a desired consensus on strategic thinking and cooperation at the regional level.

12. The seminar was of the view that the world had entered an era of political and economic transition with far-reaching implications for the developing countries which called for further and careful study and research.
CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Muzaffer Ahmad
Professor, Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka.

Dr. M. G. Kabir (Late)
Associate Professor and Chairman, Dept. of Govt. and Politics, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka.

Mr. S. A. Ghadri
Deputy Director General, Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), Tehran.

Mr. Braham Masoud
Counsellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran.

Mr. J. Kadjat Hartojo
Assistant Director, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta.

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman
Senior Research Fellow looking after South Asia desk at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Dhaka.

Dr. Atiur Rahman
Senior Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Dhaka.

Mrs. Hosne Araf Karim
Officer on Special Duty, BIISS, Dhaka.

Mr. A.K.M. Abdus Sabur
Research Fellow, Soviet and East European desk, BIISS, Dhaka

Dr. Maimul Ahsan Khan
Research Fellow, BIISS, Dhaka.

Mr. M. Shahiduzzaman
Associate Professor and Chairman, Dept. of International Relations, University of Dhaka.

Dr. John Chipman
Assistant Director, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London.
Dr. R. L. Varshney
Former Director, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT)
New Delhi.

Mr. Zheng Ruixiang
Head for South Asian, Middle East and African Studies
China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), Beijing.

Dr. T. Sreedhar
Research Associate, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi.

Mr. Dev Raj Dahal
Assistant Director, Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) Kathmandu.

Prof. K.R. Singh
Director, National Security Programme, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Dr. A. Alekseyev
Deputy Director, South Asia Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, USSR.

Mr. Juichi Inada
Research Fellow, The Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) Tokyo.

Mr. Mikanur Rahman Khan
Senior Research Fellow, BIISSS

EDITORS

Brig (Retd) M Abdul Hafiz
Director General of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Dhaka

Mikanur Rahman Khan
Senior Research Fellow at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Dhaka.
List of Foreign Participants

China

1. Mr. Zheng Ruixiang
   China Institute of International Studies
   Beijing.

India

2. Prof. K R Singh
   National Security Programme
   School of International Studies
   Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

3. Dr. T Sreedhar
   Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
   New Delhi.

4. Dr. R L. Varshney
   Former Director
   Indian Institute of Foreign Trade
   New Delhi.

Indonesia

5. Mr. J Kadjat Hartojo
   Centre for Strategic and International Studies
   Jakarta.

Iran

6. Mr. Braham Masoud
   Institute for Political and International Studies
   Tehran.

Japan

7. Mr. Juichi Inada
   Japan Institute of International Affairs
   Tokyo.

Nepal

8. Dr. Hari Bansh Jha
   Director
   Institute of Third World Economic Studies
   Kathmandu.

9. Mr. Dev Raj Dahal
   Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies
   Kathmandu.
Pakistan

10. Dr. Samina Ahmad  
    Senior Research Analyst  
    Institute of Regional Studies  
    Islamabad.

11. Dr. Syed Farooq Hasnat  
    Centre for South Asian Studies  
    University of the Punjab  
    Lahore.

Great Britain

12. Dr. John Chipman  
    International Institute for Strategic Studies  
    London.

USSR

13. Dr. A. Alekseyev  
    South Asia Department  
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

USA

14. Dr. Thomas Timberg  
    Project Director  
    Robert R. Nathan Associates, Inc.  
    Washington D.C.

15. Mr. Itty Abraham  
    Ph. D. Student  
    Dept. of Political Science  
    University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
    Illinois.