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Gorbachev's Personal Agenda for the November Meeting

General Secretary Gorbachev probably approaches the November meeting with little expectation of any major substantive breakthrough on arms control or regional issues. He may envision progress on secondary issues such as the consular agreement, cultural exchanges and possibly some trade issues. His immediate goal, however, will be to explore your personal commitment to future progress on improved relations--with all of the potential benefits to the USSR--and arms control. His broader objective will be to engender expectations in the aftermath of the meeting of possible progress on these issues if the US would first demonstrate the necessary "flexibility". Gorbachev's underlying hope therefore will be that such expectations might inhibit the ability of your Administration to sustain funding for SDI and the strategic modernization program.

The notion is probably misleading that Gorbachev needs agreement on at least a general framework for arms control in order to achieve his domestic economic goal. The basic resource allocation decisions for the next several years almost certainly have been set. Given Gorbachev's commitment to economic modernization, he is not likely to have allowed his ability to promote his program to be dependent on the prospects for a major arms control breakthrough at your Geneva meeting. The more recent signs from Moscow indicate that the Soviets do not expect any significant achievements on arms control, and in his sessions with Secretary Shultz Gorbachev made no moves of the kind we would expect if he did in fact badly want, much less need, a significant arms control advance.

Moreover, while a strategic arms control agreement would have substantial value in providing assurance against large, unexpected growth in US programs in the years ahead, the Soviets probably feel they can reasonably forecast the level of US budget growth and force developments for at least the next several years.

Most important, with the high level of expenditures they achieved by the mid-seventies, a low rate of procurement growth would still enable them to achieve substantial modernization and growth in their force capabilities. This has been clearly demonstrated by their achievements over the last ten years.

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For Gorbachev's five-year economic agenda, trade with the West and access to Western technology is more important than achieving a formal arms control agreement. His central objective for the Geneva meeting, then, is to promote the kind of atmosphere that would provide more opportunity for such trade and a more open economic relationship--if not with the US, then with West Europe and Japan.

Along with progress on strategic issues, a basic goal for Gorbachev will be to strengthen the image of Soviet equality with the United States in the eyes of the US administration and the world public. His concern to demonstrate equality may prompt him at times to take an aggressive tack so as not to appear on the defensive over such issues as human rights and the Soviet role in regional disputes. He may suggest the two sides issue a joint statement on the principles that should govern bilateral relations, including the principle of equality. He may also view agreements on specific bilateral issues, such as establishing new consulates, expanding cultural and scientific exchange, continuing bilateral talks on regional issues, and expanding trade as implicit steps in this direction.

Gorbachev probably would favor an agreement to hold subsequent meetings with you, even while voicing the standard Soviet line that these will be useful only if there is a prospect of achieving concrete results.

Gorbachev is likely to argue for an extension of SALT II, continuation of the SALT I Interim Agreement, and specifically continued observance of mutual restraint in abiding by the terms of the SALT I and II agreements.

He is likely to make a spirited defense of the Soviet record on compliance with arms control agreements, and to air Soviet charges of US noncompliance. His intent will be to suggest that suspicion is mutual and that it should be resolved in the Standing Consultative Commission, without holding up further progress on arms control or deterring either side from continuing to observe agreements already reached.

Gorbachev may make a strong effort to persuade you to agree to a mutual reaffirmation of the ABM treaty. The Soviets have called for a reaffirmation publicly and at the NST talks in Geneva. He also may expound upon the Soviet interpretation of that treaty, as Defense Minister Sokolov did in a recent article.

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Gorbachev may make a determined pitch for an agreement to limit ASAT systems. He will argue that the US is now in a strong position vis-a-vis the USSR, having successfully tested an ASAT against a target in space. He may note that the Soviets have announced they no longer are bound by their unilateral moratorium on ASAT testing, and assert that the USSR is ready to compete in this area if the US refuses to agree to ASAT limits.

A more ambitious goal, but one for which Gorbachev will have lower expectations of success, would be to reach an agreement with you in a more substantive area, such as nuclear testing. The Soviets have long urged the US to resume negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty, and to ratify the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty. The unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing that the Soviets announced in August was aimed at increasing pressure on the Administration to move in this direction, with the November meeting clearly in mind. Gorbachev may try to get you to agree to join the Soviets in a nuclear test moratorium. He could offer some kind of compromise on verification as a sweetener.

Gorbachev probably considers the NST talks the most difficult issue to resolve, and although he does not expect or need a major breakthrough soon, he nonetheless is likely to devote more attention to this issue than to any other during the November meeting. The focus of his attention will be on getting the President to agree that a reduction in strategic offensive arms must be linked to some limit on SDI research. As a minimum, Gorbachev will argue for a reaffirmation of the January 8 agreement as the basic framework for the NST negotiations, and he will reassert the Soviet interpretation of that agreement. Beyond that, he is likely to repeat--and possibly refine--the Soviet position that research beyond the laboratory stage is not permissible. He may try to get you to agree that the Defense and Space negotiations should focus on defining the boundary of permitted research.

Although Gorbachev will maintain that until space issues are resolved there can be no final agreement on strategic offensive weapons, he will devote some attention to the latest US START proposals, particularly those parts the Soviets find objectionable. He may also reveal some elements of the next Soviet counter-proposal. Gorbachev may suggest that the distance between the two sides is shortest on INF issues, and that an INF agreement could be reached in the foreseeable future. He also may propose

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some mechanism to speed up progress in the WST talks, such as more frequent meetings between Secretary Shultz and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze or some other special channel between the two capitals.

Gorbachev will count his meeting with you as a success if he is able to project a strong--even charismatic-- leadership image, demonstrate competence, articulate effectively Soviet goals, and appear to be forthcoming and approachable. If substantive gains can be achieved, so much the better. But this is not a requirement in the short run. Moreover, Gorbachev appears to be preparing his position should the meeting go bad, and if it does he will do his best to place the blame on you.

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