



Consequences

Timothy E. Buchanan

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In 1948, philosopher Richard Weaver argued that ideas have consequences. *Consequences* explores three diverse outcomes from one idea—communism.

In Soviet Russia, the idea became dogma, a type of secular religion. The *Soviet Secular Religion* skewed all the efforts of central planners in a pre-determined direction, with debilitating effects, from the reign of Lenin to Stalin and Brezhnev. Dogma and doctrine empowered Mikhail Gorbachev in his attempts at reform, even while it constrained those efforts, and blinded him to the unfolding collapse of the system.

Formed soon after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Communist Party of India had its own theoreticians and leaders, and a diversity of opinions. But their reliance on Moscow's authority to maintain consensus meant dependence; the CPI became a pawn of the Kremlin. Russian interests often conflicted with those of South Asia, confounding the CPI's chances for revolutionary success. Moreover, the People's Republic of China promoted competing ideas. The Moscow/Peking split prompted a mirroring, and fatal, schism within the CPI.

In the United States, anti-communism fueled Containment, the Cold War paradigm. The most dangerous aspect of this conflict of ideas, a threat that was truly existential, was always 'The Bomb' (or rather, tens of thousands of them). American nuclear policy may be divided into three eras. In the 1940s and 50s, anti-communist ideology dominated political discourse, and the U.S. sought a preponderance in arms. Around 1960, rationality became the vogue, ushering in the era of Détente. Finally, ideology returned with the election of 1980, shaping policies that helped end the long confrontation of ideas.

Where Soviet dogma obsessed over production, the American Ideology is engrossed with consumption. The book's afterword argues that American economic planners are unconsciously biased, in a manner similar if antipodal to that of Soviet economists. Something like a Gorby moment, where skewed indicators show progress even as the system collapses, is not impossible for the United States.

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