BAALMUN’25
Cabinet of Mikhail Gorbachev
Open Agenda

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1. Letter from the Secretariat

Most esteemed Participants, the Academic and the Organization team, Advisors and Guests,

As the Secretariat of BAALMUN'25, it is our utmost pleasure to announce that we are back, better than ever and waiting for each of our delegates with open arms. We welcome you to this prestigious, vibrant and intellectually stimulating platform of BAALMUN'25.

We are on the edge of our seats to host BAALMUN'25 on 21-22-23 February 2025 in our home, Beşiktaş Atatürk Anatolian High School.

This year, BAALMUN aims to deliver beyond expectations, being a beacon of innovative thinking, and fostering an environment where diversity of thought converges to generate impactful solutions to the world's most pressing issues.

Our academic and organisation teams are working day and night to organise the best conference experience for our valued MUN society members. As the BAALMUN'25 team, from committees to activities, we are delicately combing our ideas and plans for BAALMUN'25 with a fine-toothed comb, doing everything in our power to provide our esteemed participants with a judgement-free platform where you can exchange ideas, challenge perspectives and craft solutions. We encourage every one of our participants to embrace this opportunity to learn and grow as a global citizen in BAALMUN'25.

As we embark on this journey together, let us embrace the spirit of collaboration, mutual respect, and open-mindedness. Your contributions and dedication will undoubtedly shape the success of BAALMUN'25.

We are so excited to see you at our conference, as our beloved leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk once said “Peace at home, Peace at the world!”

Best regards,
The BAALMUN’25 Secretariat

2. Letter from Under-Secretary General

Most esteemed Participants, the Academic and the Organization team, Advisors and Guests,

It is my great honor to welcome you to the third annual session of BAALMUN and to the Mikhail Gorbachev Cabinet, a crisis committee that will take you deep into one of the most transformative periods in modern history. As your Under-Secretary-General, I am excited to see how you navigate the political, economic, and social challenges that shaped the final years of the Soviet Union.

Mikhail Gorbachev's tenure was best known by its sweeping reforms, ideological struggles, and geopolitical shifts that redefined global politics. As members of this cabinet, you will be tasked with making high-stakes decisions, responding to dynamic crisis updates, and engaging in intense negotiations that will test your strategic thinking and leadership skills. Whether you embrace perestroika and glasnost or challenge them, your role will be crucial in determining the fate of the Soviet Union.

I expect you all to read this study guide and do your own separate research before the conference. If you have any questions about the committee, feel free to contact me through my contact information below.

-Berfin Kılınçaslan

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Introduction to the Committee

Gorbachev's cabinet takes place in 1991 where delegates will take leadership positions of the Soviet Union during the final years of its existence. Gorbachev's perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (transparency) reforms which aimed to expand the Soviet system politically and economically but also caused severe internal conflict and external pressure, define the unstable political environment in which this committee operates.

The Soviet Union is at a breaking point by 1991. The Cold War is coming to an end' but the USSR is still facing serious economic issues, growing nationalism within Soviet republics, and growing dissatisfaction within the military and the Communist Party leadership. Gorbachev's vision of a modernised USSR is rejected by a section within the government during the August Coup of 1991. Later that year, Boris Yeltsin's rise to power and support for Russian sovereignty leads the way for the Soviet Union's collapse.

Delegates will have to navigate this difficult time as members of the Soviet Cabinet. Do you agree with Gorbachev's reform proposal or will you support the hardline forces that are determined to maintain the Soviet system at all costs? Will you support Russian independence or the unity of the Soviet Union? These decisions will determine the future of the USSR and the post-Soviet world.

3. Key terms

- **Perestroika**: Gorbachev's restructuring policy aimed to decentralize economic control, allowing for some market-oriented reforms within the framework of socialism. Yet, in reality, perestroika's impact was chaotic. By loosening state control over prices and production without fully embracing market principles, the Soviet economy entered a period of severe disruption. Factories no longer received state subsidies, leading to widespread shortages and inflation. Rather than saving the Soviet

economy, perestroika exacerbated its inefficiencies.

- **Glasnost**: A radical departure from the traditionally secretive Soviet government, glasnost encouraged public discourse and criticism of the regime. It lifted the iron curtain on Soviet history, revealing long-suppressed truths about events like the Stalinist purges, forced collectivization, and the real costs of Soviet industrialization. Glasnost also empowered the Soviet republics to express long-standing grievances, particularly in the Baltics, Ukraine, and the Caucasus, where calls for independence grew louder.

- **Shock Therapy**: The economic policy of rapid market reform championed by Yeltsin after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Shock therapy dismantled the Soviet command economy almost overnight, introducing rapid privatization of state-owned industries. While it was intended to quickly transition Russia into a capitalist economy, the immediate consequences were disastrous. The removal of price controls led to hyperinflation, wiping out savings, and the sudden privatization created a class of oligarchs who bought up former state assets at a fraction of their value. The social fabric of Russia was torn apart as poverty and inequality soared.

- **Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)**: A loose association of former Soviet republics formed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Initially, Gorbachev had envisioned the USSR transitioning into a more federated structure, with greater autonomy for the republics while maintaining a unified state. Instead, the CIS became a vehicle for the republics to formalize their independence, signaling the end of Gorbachev's hopes for a reformed union.

- **Command Economy**: The Soviet Union's central economic model, where the state controlled all production, pricing, and distribution. Under this system, inefficiencies ran rampant. Factories produced goods based on quotas rather than demand, leading to a surplus of unusable products

and shortages of basic necessities. By the 1980s, it became clear that the command economy could not compete with the West's more dynamic capitalist system.

- **Warsaw Pact**: The military alliance of Eastern Bloc nations led by the Soviet Union. Throughout the Cold War, it served as a counterbalance to NATO. Gorbachev's policies of reducing Soviet influence in Eastern Europe effectively ended the Warsaw Pact, as the Soviet military withdrew and countries like Poland, Hungary, and East Germany embraced democratization and moved toward independence from Moscow's control.

4. Background to the Agenda

4.1. Gorbachev's Battle for Domination

The Communist Party and the increasing strength of nationalist movements throughout the republic posed a threat to Gorbachev's attempts to reform the USSR in 1991. Gorbachev was elected with the goal of reviving the Soviet system, but his programs of glasnost (political transparency) and perestroika (economic restructuring) unintentionally caused dissatisfaction among the governing power. As the USSR's republics fought for more freedom, many were concerned that the governing body would be weakened.

Battle with Extremists: Gorbachev's reform program was doubted by members of the Political Bureau, the military, and the KGB, who felt it weakened the Communist Party's influence and laid the path for the USSR's collapse.

Gorbachev's Declining Power: Gorbachev's influence had significantly weakened by 1991. Even though he stayed in office following the August coup attempt, leaders like Yeltsin, who advocated for Russian sovereignty, gradually overtook authority.

4.2. Economic Collapse of the USSR

The Soviet economy experienced a crisis in 1991 as Gorbachev pushed for economic changes. The socialist system was inefficient,

and perestroika's shift to a more economic strategy did not provide results right away.

Food Shortages and Inflation: The Soviet Union was dealing with inflation, poor agricultural productivity, and severe food shortages. These economic problems were worsened due to the lack of consumer goods and the poor management of the military-industrial complex which used up a large amount of national resources.

Strikes and Protests: An increase in strikes and protests were witnessed throughout the industrial regions as a result of growing inflation and stale salaries. Many members of the Soviet workforce started to doubt the Soviet economic control as they became more dissatisfied with the Communist regime.

4.3. Parties Involved and Foreign Relations

Yeltsin's Defiance: Yeltsin publicly criticised Gorbachev's leadership calling for more democracy and economic liberalisation while also condemning the slow pace of reforms. Especially following his stand against the extremists during the August Coup, his popularity increased among the population.

Russian Nationalism: Tension between Moscow and the Soviet government worsened as a result of Yeltsin's growing popularity and his support for Russian sovereignty over Soviet territories. By 1991, Yeltsin had become the president of a free Russian Federation that would be pivotal in the fall of the USSR.

The Baltic States and Ukraine: Nationalist groups grew in numerous Soviet republics as Gorbachev's reforms weakened central authority. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the Baltic states declared their independence in 1991. Later that year, Ukraine too declared its independence. Within the Soviet republics, these movements were a part of a larger theme of growing nationalism.

Gorbachev's "New Thinking": Gorbachev's foreign policy in the late 1980s was to ease tensions with the West, particularly with the U.S., and this was summarised in his "New Thinking". Gorbachev's readiness to engage in discussions with Western leaders had an important role in the Cold War's conclusion.

NATO Expansion: As Gorbachev worked to strengthen relations with the West, concerns were raised regarding NATO's future and function in a post-Soviet world. By 1991, the possibility of NATO expansion into Eastern Europe was seen as a further setback to the Soviet power, although it had long alarmed the Union.

5. Chronology

5.1. 1985 - Gorbachev becomes General Secretary

Mikhail Gorbachev was named General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party on the 11th of March, 1985.

As the youngest Soviet leader in decades, he made a name for himself as an advocate for change right away, promoting perestroika (economic restructuring) and glasnost (political openness). In an attempt to revive the Soviet political and economic systems, he seeks to overcome the inefficiencies and slow pace of the system. Extremists in the military-industrial complex and the Communist Party, however, oppose his plans.

5.2. 1987 - Soviet economy deteriorates

By 1987, centralised control, long-term poor management, and the inflexibility of the economic system were all contributing factors to the Soviet economy's problems.

The quality of living in the Soviet Union keeps declining, and shortages of consumer goods and food grow more common. Workers nationwide are protesting and going on strike in response, demanding better pay and living conditions.

The economy becomes more unstable as inflation sets in, weakening public confidence in Gorbachev's reform plans.

5.3. 1989 - Berlin Wall falls

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, marks the end of the communist rule in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, which was led by the Soviet Union.

Compared to Soviet activities during earlier chaos, Gorbachev chose not to use military force to intervene in Eastern Bloc countries. This is a big part of his ‘New Thinking” foreign policy’ aiming to prevent future conflicts and defuse tensions with the West.

An important turning point in global politics, the fall of the Berlin Wall represents the end of communism in Europe and the reunification of Germany. This incident highlights the pressure on the Soviet Union to change or face collapse.

5.4. 1990 - Soviet republics begin declaring sovereignty

The Baltic States declared their independence from Moscow in 1990 as they fought towards full freedom. Growing demand for independence in other Soviet republics follow these statements, which are the first important indications of separation within the Soviet Union.

As republics try to maintain their cultural identities and break away from Moscow’s control, nationalist movements gain popularity.

Many USSR citizens believe that Soviet leadership has lost its political authority as a result of their inability to control these movements. Gorbachev, meanwhile, is advocating for a new treaty that would make the Union a more flexible alliance of countries. There are conflicting reactions to this plan which leads to further instability.

5.5. June 1991 - Boris Yeltsin elected as President of the Russian Federation

In the first presidential election in Soviet history, Boris Yeltsin was elected president of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) on June 12,1991.

This election marks a turn towards democratic reforms and Russian nationalism. He soon becomes an opponent of Gorbachev's reforms, claiming that his plans are inefficient and slow to tackle the problem facing the Soviet Union

.In contrast to Gorbachev's vision, Yeltsin supports democracy and increased freedom for the Russian Republic. The USSR's downfall is sped up by the election, which strengthens Yeltsin's popularity among Russians and increases the gap between Moscow and the Soviet Republics.

5.6. August 1991 - The August Coup

The August Coup of 1991 is a failed attempt by extremists in the Communist Party to overthrow Gorbachev. The coup leaders consisted of top military and civilian officials, including Vice President Gennady Yanayev. They opposed Gorbachev's reform program, were angry at the loss of control over Eastern European states and fearful of the New Union Treaty, which was on the verge of being signed by the Soviet Union.

On the 19th, members of the KGB, military, and Communist Party declared an emergency. Gorbachev was placed under house arrest. Boris Yeltsin mobilised the public against him, sparking nationwide protests in Moscow. The coup was over by the 21st because the military would not shoot civilians. Yeltsin's popularity increased and the Communist Party was weakened.

7. Everything to know about socialism

To fully understand the ideological underpinnings of the Soviet Union, one must examine the concept of *socialism*, which served as the foundation of Soviet governance and society. Socialism, as envisioned by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century, was a response to the inequalities and exploitation of capitalism. At

its core, socialism advocates for collective ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. The ultimate goal is a classless society where wealth and power are distributed equitably, rather than concentrated in the hands of a few.

However, the socialism practiced in the Soviet Union—often referred to as *Marxist-Leninism*—was a departure from Marx's original vision. Following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, *Vladimir Lenin* adapted Marx's theories to fit the unique circumstances of Russia, a predominantly agrarian society with a small working class. Lenin's model emphasized the role of a vanguard party that would lead the working class in the establishment of a socialist state. This would eventually lead to a *dictatorship of the proletariat*, a transitional phase before the eventual achievement of true communism.

Under *Joseph Stalin*, who succeeded Lenin as leader of the Soviet Union, socialism took on an even more authoritarian character. Stalin's policies of forced collectivization and rapid industrialization were aimed at consolidating state control over the economy and ensuring the survival of the Soviet state in a hostile capitalist world. His *Five-Year Plans* were designed to transform the Soviet Union from a backward agrarian economy into a modern industrial superpower. However, these policies came at a tremendous human cost—millions of peasants died in famines resulting from collectivization, and political purges eliminated perceived enemies of the state.

Stalin's version of socialism also fostered a rigid command economy, where the state dictated what was produced, how much was produced, and at what price. This system succeeded in turning the Soviet Union into a global superpower, particularly in the aftermath of World War II, but it also created inefficiencies and stagnation. By the 1980s, it was clear that the command economy could no longer sustain the Soviet Union's military and industrial apparatus.

Gorbachev's reforms, particularly perestroika, were an attempt to revitalize socialism by introducing elements of market competition and reducing the state's grip on the economy. However, Gorbachev was not advocating for a wholesale abandonment of socialism. Instead, he envisioned a system that preserved the socialist ideals of equality and social welfare while incorporating more flexible economic practices. His model was closer to the *social democracies* of Western Europe, where state intervention in the economy was balanced with political freedoms and a market-based economy.

In contrast, Yeltsin and his supporters saw socialism as a failed experiment. They believed that only a complete break from the Soviet past—through the adoption of capitalism and liberal democracy—could save Russia from economic ruin. This ideological divide between Gorbachev and Yeltsin would play a central role in the coming conflict.

8. Committee Composition

5.7. USSR Political Bureau and Soviet Ministers

Mikhail Gorbachev - General Secretary of the Communist Party: The leader of the Soviet Union advocating for reform and trying to modernise the system with his perestroika and glasnost policies.

Anna Gorbacheva - Chief of Staff: Gorbachev's personal advisor and primary confidant, who overlooked a variety of admin duties related to the implementation of government objectives and reforms.

Eduard Shevardnadze - Minister of Foreign Affairs: An important figure in international discussions and weapon reduction discussions, helping to guide Soviet politics and the end of the Cold War.

Nikolai Ryzhkov - Chairman of the Council of Ministers: In his time as Chief of State, Ryzhkov was responsible for managing economic reforms and the Soviet economy during a crisis.

Alexander Yakovlev - Architect of Glasnost and Perestroika: The reforms of Glasnost and Perestroika, which aimed to expand Soviet society and rebuild its economy, were influenced by Yakovlev, a major architect behind Gorbachev's reforms.

Yegor Ligachev - Second Secretary of the Communist Party: Ligachev was a conservative Communist Party member who opposed Gorbachev's reforms wholeheartedly to protect traditional Soviet values and block the movement towards political freedom.

Valentin Pavlov - Prime Minister of the USSR: Pavlov was in charge of economic policies as a chairman of the Soviet government, but he was also seen as a member of the strong resistance to GOrbachev's reforms.

Anatoly Lukyanov - Chairman of the Supreme Soviet: Lukyanov was a neutral politician who aimed to find a balance between Gorbachev's reforms and Soviet government, attempting to mediate between conservative and liberal reforms.

Gennady Yanayev - Vice President of the USSR: An extremist who played a key role in the August Coup, which attempted to overthrow Gorbachev and put an end to his reform movement.

Vadim Bakatin - Minister of Interior: Bakatin is in charge of internal security, he was a marxist who had been a Kurdish rebel in the past, which affected how he handled matters related to regional freedom and Soviet ethnic minorities.

Grigory Romanov - Politburo Member: A strong conservative, Romanov aimed to preserve the current situation structure inside the Communist Party and resisted Gorbachev's changes.

Lev Zaikov - Secretary of Defense Industries: In charge of the military-industrial complex, Zaikov played an important role in protecting the dominance of the defence sector and blocking economic changes that may have weakened the Soviet military.

5.8. Military Generals and KGB Leadership

Viktor Chebrikov - Head of KGB: Chebrikov was a key figure in Soviet internal security as the head of KGB, overlooking reform advocates within the Party and opposing the reform movement.

Dmitry Yazov - Minister of Defense: A military extremist, Yazov had an active role in the August Coup to maintain Soviet military supremacy and was opposed to Gorbachev's reforms.

5.9. The Russian Federation Government

Boris Yeltsin - Head of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic: Yeltsin was a leading figure in the Russian independence movement who fought against Gorbachev's dominance of power and in favour of more Russian freedom. His resistance played a big role in the Soviet Union's downfall.

Vladimir Ivashko - Politburo Member: Ivashko, a neutral member of the Politburo, expressed concern about the growing demand for freedom from republics like Russia and Russian nationalism, but he also supported Gorbachev's reforms.

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