

Process Paper

The team selected the topic of the Collapse of the Soviet Union due to its profound historical significance. As a major global event during the Cold War era, it shaped the geopolitical landscape and influenced subsequent developments. Understanding why and how such a powerful superpower collapsed is important for comprehending the complexities during the Cold War.

To explore this topic, the team conducted extensive research using various sources. The team delved into primary documents, scholarly articles, and firsthand accounts. Additionally, the team analyzed historical narratives and examined the perspectives of different stakeholders, including political leaders, citizens, and international actors. Access to primary sources from Moscow archives significantly enriched the team's understanding. Collections that were previously inaccessible became available, revealing the final years of the Cold War. These materials, spanning millions of pages, provided critical avenues for exploration. Notably, repositories in other former Soviet republics, such as Ukraine, Estonia, and Latvia, also contributed valuable insights.

The team's research revealed several eye-opening insights. Firstly, the team learned about the significant role played by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. His policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) aimed to revitalize the Soviet economy and streamline bureaucracy. However, unintended consequences emerged: openness led to criticism of the entire Soviet system, and restructuring exposed the flaws of both capitalist and communist structures. Secondly, the team discovered that the collapse was not sudden but a gradual process. By the late 1980s, Hungary dismantled its border fence with Austria, Poland witnessed the rise of Solidarity, and the Baltic states moved toward independence. The Berlin Wall fell, symbolizing the end of the Iron Curtain. These events collectively weakened the Soviet empire.

The collapse of the Soviet Union profoundly impacted the Cold War dynamics. It marked the victory of democratic movements and capitalism over authoritarianism and central planning. The emergence of independent states from the former Soviet bloc reshaped global geopolitics. Moreover, the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. altered the balance of power, influencing subsequent conflicts, alliances, and international relations.