

Discuss the role of two leaders in the development of the Cold War

The role of both leaders was essential in the development of the Cold War. For Gorbachev, his New Thinking was crucial in revamping both Soviet domestic and foreign policy. Foreign policy concessions diffused tensions with the US, while the the unrest caused by Glasnost, as well as the failure of Perestroika, became a tension point that fuelled internal unrest and the ultimate collapse of the USSR. Reagan's aggressive defence spending and foreign policy resulted in increased economic pressure on the USSR, and his willingness for reconciliation paved the way for a defusing of tensions. The time frame studied will be from the beginning of Reagan's presidency in January 1981, to the collapse of the USSR in 8 December 1991.

Firstly, Gorbachev's New Thinking resulted in a less aggressive Soviet foreign policy. Prior to Gorbachev, Soviet foreign policy was characterised by significant military and economic commitments to Eastern Europe and the Third World, particularly in Afghanistan. Kennedy suggested this was an "imperial overstretch" which constituted a severe drain on the Soviet economy. Gorbachev's New Thinking relieved this economic pressure by separating communism from foreign policy, framing conflict with the West as avoidable, and seeking negotiation on common universal shared values. This was evidenced by an ending of support for third world uprisings in Vietnam, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and most significantly, a unilateral withdrawal from Afghanistan. Additionally, Gorbachev ended economic subsidies for Eastern European governments, and openly promoted Glasnost and Perestroika, undermining the authoritarian communist regimes of Eastern Europe. This was formalised in the Sinatra Doctrine, which allowed members of the Warsaw Pact to determine their own internal affairs. This relaxation of control over Eastern Europe resulted in the collapse of the Communist bloc, with Poland and Hungary dismantling the Iron Curtain. This end of support for global conflicts, alongside the dismantling of the Eastern European communist bloc, resulted in the defusing of tensions with the West.

Gorbachev's doctrine of reasonable sufficiency when it came to nuclear and conventional arms further helped with the defusing of tensions. He demonstrated a willingness to make unilateral concessions, dropping the demand for Reagan to abandon SDI in 1987, despite this previously being a key Soviet demand. This attitude of concession was vital in defusing military tensions with the US and in Europe. In 1987, he signed the INF Treaty at the Washington Summit, marking the first arms reduction treaty in Eastern with the unprecedented provision for on-site verification. He also signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in 1990, reducing conventional forces to a level of parity with NATO. In 1991, START I that Gorbachev undertook saw a reduction of 80% of all strategic nuclear weapons then in existence. These concessions demonstrated the cooling of the missile race, which contributed to the cooling of tensions between the two superpowers, allowing him to concentrate on his domestic reforms which were key to ending the Cold War. Importantly, Gorbachev alone had the ability to make significant headway in domestic reform as General Secretary of the CPSU, given the resistance faced by the entrenched military industrial complex. This was seen in the Mathias-Rust scandal of 1987, which Gorbachev adroitly exploited to remove his military opponents.

Furthermore, Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost were key to the unraveling of the USSR. Glasnost sought to revitalize the ossified Soviet leadership through promoting openness and transparency. However, Gorbachev's relaxation of censorship only served to encourage the mass media, intellectuals, and cultural figures to criticize the Soviet government. His abandonment of the doctrine of the absolute authority of the CPSU undermined the CPSU's monopoly on truth, stimulating opposition to the Soviet leadership. The policy of glasnost ultimately resulted in media forces like Radio Free Europe and Voice of America being able to penetrate the Eastern European bloc, allowing the spread of criticism across the entire Communist bloc, not just to the USSR.

Meanwhile, perestroika sought restructuring of the Soviet economic and political system, yet these served to undermine the Soviet government. Economically,

Gorbachev sought to introduce elements of market forces to revitalize the Soviet command economy, promoting the autonomy of industries, the rights of workers, reducing collective farms and the overemphasis on heavy industry. Furthermore, he greatly reformed the foreign economic sector, allowing foreigners to invest in the USSR with the Soviet Joint Venture Law of 1987. Ultimately, Gorbachev and his reformers' lack of economic experience, coupled with the resistance from entrenched factions within the CPSU and the KGB, meant that these reforms were doomed to failure, as evidenced by the disastrous 500 days plan. This resulted in shortages, unemployment and inflation by 1991, contributing to the sense of economic crisis, and mounting domestic unrest. These reformist policies also had political impacts on the rest of the Eastern European communist bloc, as the Eastern Europeans sought similar reforms from the own Communist governments – or even the end of communist control.

However, Nye argues that it was ultimately the failure of Soviet system that drove the end of the Cold War, rather than the role of Gorbachev, arguing that it was the declining communist ideology and the failure of the Soviet economy that precipitated its collapse. The failure of ideology can be seen by existing dissent within the Eastern European as early as the Polish and Hungarian Uprisings of 1956, as well as continual East German emigration till the abolishment of the Berlin Wall. Glasnost only served to bring these tensions to the surface, instead of creating or deepening these tensions themselves. Furthermore, the decline of the Soviet economy was not due solely to perestroika, but rather the systemic faults of the Soviet economy itself. The Soviet economy suffered from an overemphasis on heavy industry, as well as a centrally administered economy that was inflexible and slow in handling information. This resulted in serious economic problems as early as the 1970s, with the GNP of the USSR being less than half of the US in 1980, and the YoY decline being roughly consistent between 1960s-1970s and 1970s-1980s. Thus, Gorbachev's role was ultimately limited, as glasnost only served to expose underlying tensions and perestroika failed to address preexisting economic problems, rather than creating new economic problems in of itself.

However, Gorbachev's political restructuring was critical in undermining the authority of the CPSU and the integrity of the party-state holding the USSR together, which ultimately led to the mass secession of its constituent republics. Gorbachev's attempts to democratise the Soviet political system, alongside his more liberal economic reforms, had eroded CPSU unity and monopoly of power. His attempt at introducing popularly elected bodies to bypass the CPSU such as the Supreme Soviets and the Soviets Congress of People's Deputies saw the rise of ambitious nationalists such as Yeltsin who prioritized the interests of the republics over the USSR. The repeal of Article 6 in 1990 permitted opposition parties to flourish legally in the USSR, which further weakened the political hold of the CCP, undermining its control over the state. These political reforms resulted in a weakened central control of the USSR. Gorbachev's failed attempt at a Union Treaty which sought a confederate system was resisted by the conservatives, who launched a coup against him in August 1991. While Yeltsin's resistance to the coup made it ultimately unsuccessful, the coup itself resulted in the massive loss of influence of both Gorbachev and the CPSU. This resulted in the rapid secession of the republics from the USSR by the end of 1991, marking the end of the Cold War.

Apart from that, the role of Reagan's aggressive foreign policy toward the USSR has been cited as having a major impact on the end of the Cold War. Reagan undertook an ideological offensive against the Soviet Union, deriding it as the "Evil Empire" and decrying it after the shooting down of KL007. Furthermore, he made speeches decrying communism in other communist territories, as seen by his visits to China in 1984, where his speeches on freedom and democracy incited student demonstrations. However, the same inciting power was not as significant in the USSR, as resentment against the Soviet system had already pre-dated Reagan after years of economic mismanagement and repression. This resentment was further stimulated by Ostpolitik and the Helsinki Basket 3 Provisions, which were seen as concessions to the West, and signs of Soviet weakness. Furthermore, while there was internal resistance in the USSR, it was confined to the intellectual class such as Solzhenitsyn or Sakharov, rather than the masses.

Reagan's revival of the US military was also significant in putting economic pressure on the USSR. Reagan's supply-side economic policies and economic liberalisation resulted in the revival of the American economy, and allowed the him to renew the arms race and exert pressure on the USSR. Reagan headed significant developments in both US conventional and nuclear forces, growing the US navy from 450 to 600 ships, reviving the B1 and B2 strategic bombers, introducing the MX ICBMs and the Trident SLBMs, and spending heavily on SDI. However, David Painter suggested that while the US build-up, especially SDI, alarmed the Soviets, there was no evidence of a corresponding increase in Soviet spending, since the Soviet economy was already in crisis and its aging leadership was in disarray. Despite this limited economic pressure, key Reagan administration officials such as Schulz and Weinberger have pointed out that these aggressive military developments were not undertaken to bankrupt the USSR but to negotiate from a position of strength. In particular, SDI threatened to undermine the MAD doctrine by allowing US to maintain first-strike capability. Historians suggest that it was this threat of US nuclear superiority that contributed to diplomatic pressure on Gorbachev, and forced Soviet concessions in arms talks. However, these concessions may have been to do more with Gorbachev's willingness to compromise rather than pressure from Reagan's rearmament initiatives. This can be seen by how, before 1985, Reagan's spending only alienated the Soviets, with the Able Archer exercise of 1983 seen as aggression and the Soviets walking away from the INF and START I talks.

Arguably, Reagan's most significant contribution was his willingness to move from his strong anti-communist stance in his first term, to a second term of rapprochement with the Soviets, as Ridgeway suggests. His willingness to work with Gorbachev, recognizing that he was the only one able to effect change in the USSR, was important in allowing for the success of Gorbachev's New Thinking, allowing him to concentrate on glasnost and perestroika. He was able to implement reduced military spending, persuading his Vice-President Bush as well as the CIA and the defence community to accept significant cuts to military spending in wake of the INF and START I treaty. Likewise, his good relations with European leaders like Kohl, Thatcher and Mitterand

meant that he was able to persuade them to work with Gorbachev, given the persistent European fear that any agreement with the Soviets would be at their expense. Nevertheless, it is clear that it was Gorbachev's initiative in willing to rectify long-term Soviet problems that was more significant, and Reagan's role was more confined to coordinating an American and international reciprocation.

To conclude, while the extent was different, both leaders played a pivotal role in the mutual defusing of tensions, as well as increasing pressures on the USSR, which ultimately resulted in the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War.

Compare and contrast the role of two leaders on the development of the Cold War

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Firstly, both leaders played a key role in promoting social democratic ideals in Europe and Asia. Reagan's aggressive foreign policy toward the USSR has been cited as having a major impact on the end of the Cold War. Reagan undertook an ideological offensive against the Soviet Union, deriding it as the "Evil Empire" and decrying it after the shooting down of KL007. Furthermore, he made speeches decrying communism in other communist territories, as seen by his visits to China in 1984, where his speeches on freedom and democracy incited student demonstrations. However, the same inciting power was not as significant in the USSR, as resentment against the Soviet system had already pre-dated Reagan after years of economic mismanagement and repression. This resentment was further stimulated by Ostpolitik and the Helsinki Basket 3 Provisions, which were seen as concessions to the West, and signs of Soviet weakness. Furthermore, while there was internal resistance in the USSR, it was confined to the intellectual class such as Solzhenitsyn or Sakharov, rather than the masses.

Meanwhile, Gorbachev's New Thinking resulted in a less aggressive Soviet foreign policy. Prior to Gorbachev, Soviet foreign policy was characterised by significant military and economic commitments to Eastern Europe and the Third World, particularly in Afghanistan. Kennedy suggested this was an "imperial overstretch" which constituted a severe drain on the Soviet economy. Gorbachev's New Thinking relieved this economic

pressure by separating communism from foreign policy, framing conflict with the West as avoidable, and seeking negotiation on common universal shared values. This was evidenced by an ending of support for third world uprisings in Vietnam, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and most significantly, a unilateral withdrawal from Afghanistan. Additionally, Gorbachev ended economic subsidies for Eastern European governments, and openly promoted Glasnost and Perestroika, undermining the authoritarian communist regimes of Eastern Europe. This was formalised in the Sinatra Doctrine, which allowed members of the Warsaw Pact to determine their own internal affairs. This relaxation of control over Eastern Europe resulted in the collapse of the Communist bloc, with Poland and Hungary dismantling the Iron Curtain. This end of support for global conflicts, alongside the dismantling of the Eastern European communist bloc, resulted in the defusing of tensions with the West. Interestingly, Gorbachev's speech on glasnost in China in 1989 would parallel Reagan's earlier speech of 1984, and repeat many of the same talking points about democracy and freedom. This would result in student movements like the Tiananmen Square Riots of 4 June 1989.

Furthermore, the actions of both leaders placed economic strain on the Soviet economy. Reagan's revival of the US military was significant in putting economic pressure on the USSR. Reagan's supply-side economic policies and economic liberalisation resulted in the revival of the American economy, and allowed him to renew the arms race and exert pressure on the USSR. Reagan headed significant developments in both US conventional and nuclear forces, growing the US navy from 450 to 600 ships, reviving the B1 and B2 strategic bombers, introducing the MX ICBMs and the Trident SLBMs, and spending heavily on SDI. However, David Painter suggested that while the US build-up, especially SDI, alarmed the Soviets, there was no evidence of a corresponding increase in Soviet spending, since the Soviet economy was already in crisis and its aging leadership was in disarray. Despite this limited economic pressure, key Reagan administration officials such as Schulz and Weinberger have pointed out that these aggressive military developments were not undertaken to bankrupt the USSR but to negotiate from a position of strength. In particular, SDI threatened to undermine the MAD doctrine by allowing the US to maintain first-strike



capability. Historians suggest that it was this threat of US nuclear superiority that contributed to diplomatic pressure on Gorbachev, and forced Soviet concessions in arms talks. However, these concessions may have been to do more with Gorbachev's willingness to compromise rather than pressure from Reagan's rearmament initiatives. This can be seen by how, before 1985, Reagan's spending only alienated the Soviets, with the Able Archer exercise of 1983 seen as aggression and the Soviets walking away from the INF and START I talks.

Similarly, Gorbachev's perestroika was unable to resolve the economic problems of the Soviet system. Economically, Gorbachev sought to introduce elements of market forces to revitalize the Soviet command economy, promoting the autonomy of industries, the rights of workers, reducing collective farms and the overemphasis on heavy industry. Furthermore, he greatly reformed the foreign economic sector, allowing foreigners to invest in the USSR with the Soviet Joint Venture Law of 1987. Ultimately, Gorbachev and his reformers' lack of economic experience, coupled with the resistance from entrenched factions within the CPSU and the KGB, meant that these reforms were doomed to failure, as evidenced by the disastrous 500 days plan. This resulted in shortages, unemployment and inflation by 1991, contributing to the sense of economic crisis, and mounting domestic unrest.

Additionally, both leaders were willing to compromise when it came to the arms race. Gorbachev's doctrine of reasonable sufficiency when it came to nuclear and conventional arms further helped with the defusing of tensions. He demonstrated a willingness to make unilateral concessions, dropping the demand for Reagan to abandon SDI in 1987, despite this previously being a key Soviet demand. This attitude of concession was vital in defusing military tensions with the US and in Europe. In 1987, he signed the INF Treaty at the Washington Summit, marking the first arms reduction treaty in Eastern with the unprecedented provision for on-site verification. He also signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in 1990, reducing conventional forces to a level of parity with NATO. In 1991, START I that Gorbachev undertook saw a reduction of 80% of all strategic nuclear weapons then in existence.

These concessions demonstrated the cooling of the missile race, which contributed to the cooling of tensions between the two superpowers, allowing him to concentrate on his domestic reforms which were key to ending the Cold War. Importantly, Gorbachev alone had the ability to make significant headway in domestic reform as General Secretary of the CPSU, given the resistance faced by the entrenched military industrial complex. This was seen in the Mathias-Rust scandal of 1987, which Gorbachev adroitly exploited to remove his military opponents.

On Reagan's part, he managed to sway popular opinion in favour of rapprochement with the USSR, despite running on a campaign of escalating conflict between the superpowers. Reagan recognised Gorbachev's concessions when it came to nuclear power, and moved to implement the terms of INF and START I, despite these treaties of disarmament being opposed to his earlier military policies of rearmament. He was able to implement reduced military spending, persuading his Vice-President Bush as well as the CIA and the defence community to accept significant cuts to military spending in wake of the INF and START I treaty. Likewise, his good relations with European leaders like Kohl, Thatcher and Mitterand meant that he was able to persuade them to work with Gorbachev, given the persistent European fear that any agreement with the Soviets would be at their expense.

However, Gorbachev was much less successful in convincing the Politburo to go along with his more liberal policies. Gorbachev's attempts to democratise the Soviet political system, alongside his more liberal economic reforms, had eroded CPSU unity and monopoly of power. His attempt at introducing popularly elected bodies to bypass the CPSU such as the Supreme Soviets and the Soviets Congress of People's Deputies saw the rise of ambitious nationalists such as Yeltsin who prioritized the interests of the republics over the USSR. The repeal of Article 6 in 1990 permitted opposition parties to flourish legally in the USSR, which further weakened the political hold of the CCP, undermining its control over the state. These political reforms resulted in a weakened central control of the USSR. Gorbachev's failed attempt at a Union Treaty which sought a confederate system was resisted by the conservatives, who launched a coup against

him in August 1991. While Yeltsin's resistance to the coup made it ultimately unsuccessful, the coup itself resulted in the massive loss of influence of both Gorbachev and the CPSU. This resulted in the rapid secession of the republics from the USSR by the end of 1991, marking the end of the Cold War. Ultimately, Gorbachev, unlike Reagan, was unable to gain the support of the Politburo, and his attempts to go ahead resulted in strong domestic resistance, and ultimately the coup that was the final nail in the coffin for the CPSU..

In conclusion, Reagan's actions were useful in placing greater foreign policy and economic pressure on the USSR, while Gorbachev's failure to resolve the internal dissent in the USSR was exacerbated by these pressures, leading ultimately to the collapse of the USSR. However, it may be worthwhile to consider that while the leaders played a large part in defusing Cold War tensions, it is possible that their impact was limited, and it was rather structural problems in the USSR that led to its ultimate downfall. Nye suggests that the Soviet centralised economy was inherently flawed, and it was popular dissatisfaction with this system that precipitated the collapse of the USSR. This can be seen by how the YoY decline of the Soviet economy in the 1970s and 1980s stayed largely constant at 10%, despite a change in leadership, and changing relations with the US. Thus, while Gorbachev and Reagan's actions did much to defuse Cold War tensions, the ultimate collapse of the Union must be attributed to its inherent flaws.