The Iron Curtain Comes Down Assessment

**Name:**

**Date:**

Step 1:

Identify four different reasons that answer the question and rank them in the spaces provided (1 being the most important reason, 4 being the least). For each one, name it and briefly explain how it contributed to the fall.

**Question: What were the biggest causes of the fall of the Soviet Union?**

List your causes here. For each one, name it and briefly explain how it contributed to the fall.

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| 1.  Economic Decline  The Soviet economy was inefficient, highly centralized, and couldn’t compete with Western economies. Extensive shortages, stagnation, and lack of innovation contributed to public dissatisfaction and undermined the capacity of the government to maintain its dominance. |
| 2.  Political Corruption and Lack of Reform  The Communist Party held to its firm grip of power over the government, but growing consciousness of corruption and a paucity of liberty fueled dissidence within. Reforms by Gorbachev such as glasnost (openness) unveiled the regime's shortcomings without completely addressing them. |
| 3.  Nationalism in Satellite States  The Soviet economy was inefficient and centralized and could not compete with economies in the West. Widespread shortages, stagnation, and a lack of innovations fueled public discontent and eroded the power of the government to continue dominating. |
| 4.  The Arms Race and Afghanistan War  The expensive arms race with America and the long Afghan War siphoned away resources and morale. The economic and manpower losses associated with these wars were a direct factor in the collapse of the empire. |

Step 2:

Compare the causes and choose a winner. Explain each of your choices of winner in two to three **complete sentences**, summarizing specific information from the lesson.

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| **First Round – Fill in the causes you identified in Step 1.** | **Identify which cause won and explain why you thought it was a bigger cause of the fall of the Soviet Union.** |
| **Cause 1 vs Cause 4** **→** | **Winner 1 and explanation:** Economic Decline  Although the arms race and war were expensive, they were symptomatic of a much deeper issue. The Soviet economy was structurally defective, and its inability to maintain military expenditure or take care of its people eventually led to political transformation. |
| **Cause 2 vs Cause 3 →** | **Winner 2 and explanation:** Nationalism in Satellite States   Even as corruption among political leaders was one key problem, increased vigor and cohesion of nationalist movements challenged Soviet rule directly. These movements caused declarations of independence and formal dissolution of the USSR. |

Step 3:

Compare the winners of the first round to identify the cause you consider most significant. Explain your choice in complete sentences.

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| **Final Round – What cause wins between Winner 1 and Winner 2 above and why?** |
| **Overall winner and your explanation:** Economic Decline  It was impossible without financial stability for the USSR to maintain its armed forces, finance reform, or quash rebellions. The collapse in economics extended to every aspect of society and initiated the emergence of nationalist movements, which became the reason behind the downfall of the Soviet Union. |