

End of the Cold War

Introduction

- Through the 1950s and 1960s, the Cold War was characterised by a series of crises and confrontations.
 - In that time, the United States and the USSR never quite took that fatal step of fighting a direct war with each other.
 - However, both sides - and indeed the rest of the world - lived in constant fear of this possibility, especially one that involved nuclear weapons
- As a result, by the late 1960s, the two sides were exploring ways to reduce tensions through **Detente**
 - They tried to improve relations and even cooperate in areas such as arms reduction and trade
 - This process became known as detente, a French word that means "easing of tensions"
 - The key mover of detente was US President Richard Nixon
- Although relations improved during the detente period, it did not last because of:
 - Too many areas of disagreement between the United States and the USSR
 - Too much pressure exerted on both countries

- Internal political rivalries in the United States led several presidents, especially Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, to adopt tougher approaches towards the USSR.

Rise and Fall of the Detente

- In the late 1960s and early 1970s, US President Richard Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev seemed willing to consider the possibility of having a less hostile relationship.
- Both men were concerned about the risk of a direct conflict and the financial cost of their rivalry.
 - They wanted to invest more in their own economies and the welfare of their people.
 - It was this combination of risk and cost which drove detente.
- Detente was presented by both sides in a positive thing and as an act of goodwill
 - However, some historians view detente motivated more by the superpowers' desire to achieve their aims in less costly and risky ways.

Reasons for Detente

Leaders' considerations motivating detente

1. Mutual fear of triggering a nuclear war
 - Nixon and Brezhnev were concerned that another crisis like the Cuban Missile Crisis could trigger a nuclear war.
2. Soviet fear of being isolated

- Sino-Soviet relations declined throughout the 1960s, while Sino-American relations improved.
 - Brezhnev was worried that the USSR might become isolated unless he also improved relations with the United States.
- 3. US desire to withdraw from the Vietnam War
 - Nixon was looking for ways to extract the United States from the Vietnam War.
 - The United States was struggling with the considerable cost of the Vietnam War and rising oil prices
- 4. Soviet desire to reduce military spending.
 - Amid its economic problems, the USSR was finding it difficult to accord its vast military spending in both its domestic and external commitments.
 - Example: Remaining competitive in the Nuclear Arms Race.

Examples of Detente in Action

Summit Meetings

- They began visiting each other's countries and meeting to discuss important issues such as nuclear weapons, conflicts around the world, trade and technology
- The meetings were known as **summit meetings**, as they involved the leaders of the countries.
- Examples:
 - **Feb 1972**
 - Nixon became the first US President to visit China since it turned communist in 1949.

- A continuation of the progress made in 1971, when the US table tennis team became the first group of Americans allowed to enter China since the communist takeover in 1949 (as part of **Ping Pong Democracy**)
- **May 1972**
 - Nixon visited Brezhnev in Moscow to sign a document called the Basic Principles.
 - The superpowers agreed to prevent dangerous exacerbation in their relations by doing their utmost to avoid military confrontations, to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war, and to exercise restraint in mutual relations.
 - Both leaders also signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty | (SALT I), limiting each side's production of nuclear weapons.
- **June 1973**
 - Brezhnev visited the United States to sign the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, in which both sides agreed to do all they could to avoid a nuclear war.
- **June 1974**
 - Nixon went to Moscow again to discuss ways to strengthen collaboration in many areas, especially in the economic aspects, as well as for further disarmament and a possible SALT II

Ping Pong Diplomacy

- Ping-pong diplomacy refers to the use of table tennis (ping-pong), a sport that China is good in, to improve relations between the United States and China.
- On 6 April 1971, the United States and Chinese table tennis teams played against each other at the world championships in Japan.

- As the Chinese were interested in building better relations with the United States, they invited the US team to visit China.
- On 10 April 1971, the US team became the first Americans to visit China since the Communist Revolution in 1949.
 - This was widely perceived as an important step in reducing tensions. It paved the way for Nixon's visit to China in February 1972 and the eventual establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China in 1979.

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)

- SALT refers to the high-level bilateral conferences and treaties involving the United States and the USSR in the 1970s.
 - The main concern of these conferences was the limitation of arms in a bid to reduce tensions and the prospects of a military conflict.
- The first round of SALT began in Helsinki, Finland, on 17 November 1969.
 - Considered to be the crowning achievement of the strategy of detente embarked upon by Nixon and Brezhnev, SALT I saw the United States and the USSR agree to the limiting of the number of nuclear missiles in their arsenal. SALT II began in 1974.
- It was a complicated and time-consuming process.
- In 1979, the SALT II agreement was suspended (for long-range nuclear attacks) in the 1970s finally announced.
 - By that time, superpower relations had taken a downturn and the US Congress refused to formally recognise SALT II.
- **Main Terms of SALT I**

- Limits on the number of nuclear missiles and bombs held by each side
- Limits on the development of anti-ballistic missile defences, which could shoot down incoming missiles
- Each side was allowed to use spy satellites to verify that the other side had honoured the limitations imposed
- Further talks to be held to create a SALT II agreement

- **Main terms of SALT II**

- Further limits on the number of bombers and missiles each side held
- Ban on the development and testing of new types of intercontinental ballistic missiles
- Restrictions on the deployment of missiles (e.g. the number of places they could be launched from)

- **Helsinki Accords, 1975**

- US, USSR and 30 other countries signed an agreement in August 1975 where they promised to:
 - Resolve international disputes by diplomacy
 - Protect human rights e.g. Freedom of speech, freedom from unfair arrest

- **Apollo-Soyuz Test Project**

- A US-USSR joint space venture
- In July 1975, millions of people across the globe witnessed on television the historic moment when a US Apollo spacecraft docked with a Soviet Soyuz capsule.
- The mission commanders of the respective spaceships exchanged the first international handshake in space - a moment widely regarded as the symbol of detente between the two

superpowers.

Decline of Detente

- In 1977, after the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, then US President Jimmy Carter in 1977 abandoned detente and took a much more aggressive approach towards the USSR.
- At the same time, Brezhnev began to think the USSR was not gaining much from detente either.
- Both sides began to criticise each other's actions again and accused the other of breaking their promises.
 - Examples
 - Carter blamed the USSR for not settling disputes peacefully.
 - According to Carter, the USSR was making things worse by supplying arms to its allies in war zones such as Angola and Ethiopia.
 - Brezhnev countered that the United States was doing pretty much the same in Central and South America, as well as in South Africa.
 - They also accused each other of trying to get around the various nuclear arms limitation treaties.
 - The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.
 - When Carter heard about the invasion, he described it as "the most serious threat to peace since the Second World War."

The Decline of the USSR in the

1970s and 1980s

Introduction: Soviet Economy before the 1970s

- The Soviet command economy was based on the idea that the state was in the best position to make decisions about the economy.
 - The state decided which areas of the economy should receive investment and be developed.
 - The state controlled resources such as oil, coal and energy. It also controlled production, prices, wages and all other vital aspects of the economy.
- For much of the USSR's existence, the command economy seemed to be achieving its main aims.
 - **Examples**
 - From 1928 to 1940, the USSR was transformed into a modern industrial power with impressive growth rates.
 - By the 1940s, the USSR was a modern economy with industries, infrastructure such as roads, railways, dams and power stations, and a developing public education system.
 - This modernisation was a tremendous achievement.
 - Its economy also contributed to the USSR being able to defeat Nazi Germany in WWII despite the immense loss of life and damage to property.
 - In the 1950s and 1960s, it saw continued economic growth. The Soviets had guaranteed jobs, good healthcare, a place to live and free education to the university level.

Weaknesses of the Soviet Economy

- After impressive growth rates in the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet economy began to slow down.
- The USSR began to experience a steady, long-term decline in the rate of growth.

Why was the USSR in decline in the 1970s and 1980s?

Weaknesses of the Soviet Economy: Structural Weaknesses of the Command Economy

Examples and Explanation

The Soviet economy had worked relatively well when it consisted of a small number of very large industries, particularly coal, steel and electricity. The government could make decisions about these industries, which could then be implemented. However, as the Soviet economy grew and expanded by the 1970s, the Soviet economy became overwhelmed by the increasing demands. The Soviet government struggled to cope with the many companies making different goods. It acted too slowly and made poor decisions. As a result, the USSR began to experience a steady, long-term decline in the rate of growth. For example, output growth for Soviet agriculture dropped from 4.8 percent a year in the 1950s to 1.8 percent in the 1970s. Similarly, by the late 1970s, industrial output had dropped from a double digit percentage growth to a 3 to 4 percent decline.

Link

The structural weaknesses of the command economy has thus translated

into the decline of growth in the Soviet economy as the economy grew beyond the ability of the command economy system to efficiently manage, leading to overall Soviet decline.

Weaknesses of the Soviet economy: External burdens on the economy

The Soviets engaged in numerous proxy wars that were substantial financial burdens. For example, they fought in the Afghan-Soviet War between 24 Dec 1979 to 15 Feb 1989. Soviet troops entered the Afghanistan to maintain the power of the pro-Soviet government there, but they were tied down for the next 10 years by Afghan fighters known as the Mujahideen. The Mujahideen saw themselves as fighting against the communist regime. To make matters worse for the USSR, they knew the territory

Return of Cold War Tensions

Introduction

- Ronald Reagan, American President from 1981-1989 brought a return to escalated Cold War tensions.
- Reagan had a straightforward and aggressive approach towards the USSR - essentially, the USSR was wrong, and the United States and its allies were right.
 - In one speech, he referred to the USSR as an "evil empire"

US Economic Superiority: Economic Boom in the United States and Western Europe

- Reagan also had radical ideas for US domestic policy. Like his close ally British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, he believed that people and businesses needed to be liberated from government regulation.
 - They believed people and the free market were better than governments at providing solutions to problems.
 - They both believed that government regulations stifled trade and innovation in business and held back economic expansion.
 - They emphasised that governments should cut taxes.
 - This would give people an incentive to work harder and start their own businesses since the government would not be taking their hard-earned wealth
- Both advocated that governments should spend less and limit their involvement in people's lives (such as through welfare or state healthcare) as far as possible.
- Most historians agree that they contributed to an economic boom in the United States and Western Europe, even if they were not necessarily the main cause.

How Big of a Boom Was It?

Comparison of capitalists and communist economies - 1970 to 1990 Gross Domestic Product

Year	USSR	United States	West Germany	Japan
1970	8886	23958	17277	15484
1975	9779	25956	19193	18082

Year	USSR	United States	West Germany	Japan
1980	10245	29611	22497	21404
1985	10692	33023	24133	24437
1990	10989	36982	(Germany) 25391	29949

US Military Superiority: Expanding US Might

- The booming economy gave Reagan and his allies the confidence and the money to champion US values of capitalism and democracy.
- Reagan believed in taking a tough line with the USSR wherever possible and increasing US defence spending.
- Examples
 - He supported anti-communist forces in Afghanistan and Nicaragua
 - He increased the US defence budget massively.
 - In his first two weeks in office, he increased the defence budget by USD 32.6 billion.
 - New weapons systems such as the B1 nuclear bomber were introduced.
 - This huge spending left the United States with USD 4 trillion of debt by the 1980s.
- In 1982, he gave the go-ahead for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, popularly known as the "Star Wars" programme).
 - This was a multi-billion dollar project to create a system that could use satellites and lasers to destroy missiles before they hit

their targets.

- Clearly, such a system could change the nature of war.
- The SDI did not develop into a viable weapon
- However, it put pressure on the Soviets, who were never sure whether the weapon would become a reality.
 - The USSR was already finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the United States, given its stretched. Renewed arms spending would ruin it.

Gorbachev's Reforms

Introduction

- In 1985, the USSR elected 54 year old Mikhail Gorbachev to be its leader following the death of Konstantin Chernenko, who led the USSR for less than 14 months after succeeding Yuri Andropov in early 1984.
- Gorbachev was aware of the terrible problems facing the USSR:
 - The declining economy
 - The war in Afghanistan
 - The disillusionment of the Soviet people
 - The challenge of the United States under Reagan.
- Despite this, he believed that the USSR could be transformed with new ideas and new thinking.
- He did not intend to dismantle communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, but he did not want to reform it radically.
- He described his ideas as New Thinking.
 - Gorbachev's New Thinking in domestic policy took the form of two key reforms: **Glasnost ("openness")** and **Perestroika**

("restructuring").

Glasnost

- Gorbachev called for open debate on government policy and honesty in facing up to problems.
- Glasnost was not a detailed set of policies, but it did mean radical change.
 - For example, it would allow open political debate by Communist Party members who disagreed with the government. It would also allow criticism on the government in the media.
- With openness and reforms, the Soviet people were able to learn about the heinous crimes committed by the Soviet Union in the past
 - For example, during the Stalinist years in an exhibition called "Week of Conscience" held in November 1988.
- Unfortunately, Glasnost backfired.
 - It released much resentment against the communist government.
 - Glasnost also exposed the shortcomings of the government officials such as their inefficiency and corruption.
 - This led to decreasing confidence in the party.
 - The Soviets were also further exposed to aspects of the outside world, and especially the better quality of life in the United States and Western European countries, through popular Western culture.
- As a result, the positive picture of Soviet life that the government previously presented to the public quickly fell apart.
 - Many in the Soviet bloc felt deceived and lost confidence in the vision and rule of the communist governments.
 - Hence, instead of rallying the people behind the reforms of

"openness", Glasnost had unintentionally created a platform which unleashed criticism of communist rule that eventually brought about the disintegration of the USSR.

Perestroika

- Perestroika, also known as "restructuring" in Russian, was the series of political and economic reforms which Glasnost was meant to pave the way for.
- Perestroika involved a range of measures.
 - Managers in companies and industries were encouraged to innovate and try new approaches without first seeking permission from the government.
 - Managers were also encouraged to involve workers in discussions and decision making about their businesses.
 - In 1987, Perestroika allowed market forces to be introduced into the Soviet economy.
 - or the first time in 60 years, it was no longer illegal to buy and sell for profit.
- The intent was to encourage new ideas, to increase efficiency and to fight the problem of corruption
- Failure as an economic reform
 - There was no overall increase in output.
 - Instead, there were chronic problems of unemployment, growth of black markets, as well as shortages in basic necessities.
 - This was a result of the conflicting methods of cooperative ownership.
 - Cooperative ownership meant that that private ownership of small businesses was permitted, but the state still retained control over the means of production.

- This meant that small business owners still had to pay high taxes and deal with dishonest officials.
- Furthermore, infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities, for agriculture remained inadequate.
- The number of unprofitable enterprises that needed government support increased, while many Soviet citizens lost interest in setting up their own businesses.

Reduction on Military Spending

- Gorbachev was eager to bring his New Thinking to foreign policy and the role of the military in the USSR. He began to cut spending on defence.
- After almost 50 years of massive investment and preparations for war with the United States and its allies, the Red Army began to shrink.
 - Gorbachev was realistic enough to recognise that the USSR could not hope to outspend the United States on nuclear weapons and other military spending.
- At the same time, Gorbachev brought a new attitude to the USSR's relations with the world.
 - In his speeches, he repeatedly talked about international trust and cooperation rather than confrontation as the way forward for the USSR.
- Examples
 - He announced cuts in arms spending.
 - In 1988, he began the final withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.
 - In 1990, Gorbachev signed the Treaty of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) that established comprehensive limits on key categories of conventional military equipment in Europe.

- This allowed the Soviets to reduce the size of its military

The Reagan-Gorbachev Summits

- In 1983, Reagan was shocked to discover that the Soviets had almost launched a nuclear strike against the United States.
 - A malfunction in the Soviets' early warning system made them think the United States had fired missiles at the USSR.
 - Reagan was keen to advance nuclear disarmament and to tamp down the strategic arms race.
- He also observed Gorbachev's reforms with great interest
- These factors led Gorbachev to make overtures to Soviet leaders and to eventually engage Gorbachev in negotiations with a shared commitment to nuclear abolition.
- Between 1985 and 1988, Reagan and Gorbachev had five summit meetings.
 - By the end of these summits they had reached agreements to further reduce their nuclear weapons.
 - Reagan had also declared that he no longer thought the USSR was an "evil empire" because of the changes Gorbachev was making.

"De-ideologisation" of Soviet Foreign Policy

- As part of Gorbachev's commitment towards New Thinking at home and abroad, Soviet foreign policy underwent a change known as "de-ideologisation".
- This meant an end to all ideologically driven engagements designed to promote communism globally and change the United States.
- Gorbachev recognised that in order to successfully reform the Soviet

economy, he had to first reduce the large amounts of money being spent overseas in superpower competition with the United States.

- Examples
 - Under Gorbachev, the USSR would also no longer intervene in other countries to support communist regimes or takeovers, as it did under former leaders such as Brezhnev.
 - To demonstrate his commitment towards de-ideologisation, Gorbachev withdrew troops from military engagements in Afghanistan and Angola alongside Soviet support for communist regimes in Cuba and Vietnam.
 - Next, he was prepared to tell the hard-line communist leaders of Eastern Europe that they had to change as well.
 - In 1989, Gorbachev called the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries together.
 - He explained to them that he was now committed to a policy of non-intervention in the affairs of their countries.
 - He jokingly referred to this policy as the "Sinatra Doctrine."

Sinatra Doctrine

- This policy was named after the singer Frank Sinatra, who was famous for the song "My Way."
- In other words, Gorbachev was telling Eastern European states that they could and should go their own way.
- The term was first used by Gorbachev's Foreign Minister, Gennadi Gerasimov.
- In many ways, the policy was already in effect.
 - For example, the Polish government had negotiated with the trade union Solidarity to partially allow free elections in 1989

which could include non-communists in government.

- The policy caused extreme concern among the more hard-line communist leaders.
 - Most of the Warsaw Pact leaders, including East Germany's Erich Honecker and Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu, were traditional, hard-line communists.
 - They completely disagreed with Gorbachev's ideas and were sure that the USSR would not really abandon the communist countries of Eastern Europe

Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe

- In July 1988, Gorbachev made a speech at the Warsaw Pact summit stating his intention to withdraw large numbers of Soviet troops, tanks and aircraft from other communist states.
 - He reinforced these intentions in a speech to the Polish parliament soon after.
- In March 1989, Gorbachev made clear to the Warsaw Pact leaders that the Soviet army would leave Eastern Europe and no longer prop their countries up.
 - They would have to listen to their people.
- In the months that followed, there was a sudden and dramatic collapse of communism across Eastern Europe.

Examples

1. **May: Hungary**

- Hungarians began dismantling the barbed wire fence between Hungary and non-communist Austria

2. **June-August: Poland**

- Solidarity won 99 out of 100 seats in Poland's senate at the June elections.
- Protests against communist rule in Poland continued to take place throughout the summer.

3. **September: Hungary and Czechoslovakia**

- Thousands of **East Germans** on holiday in Hungary and Czechoslovakia refused to go home. They escaped through Austria into West Germany.

4. **October: East Germany**

- Gorbachev visits East Germany and made a key speech urging all East European leaders to reform their countries.
 - He made it clear that the USSR would not use troops to keep them in power.

5. **October: Hungary**

- Hungary declared itself a democratic republic rather than a communist republic.

6. **November: East Germany**

- The largest demonstration in East Germany's history took place as over one million people demanded for democracy and free elections in East Berlin.
 - In response, the East German government announced the opening of borders and the lifting of the Berlin Wall on the evening of 9 November.

- Even the Berlin Wall, a symbol of the Cold War, and of communist control of Eastern Europe, could not withstand the pressure. On 9 November 1989, the guards abandoned the Berlin Wall and jubilant crowds began to dismantle it.

7. November: Czechoslovakia

- In Czechoslovakia, huge demonstrations forced the communist leaders to resign, resulting in the opening of its borders with the West.
- In June 1990, it held free elections.

8. December: Bulgaria and Romania

- Massive demonstrations led to the collapse of the communist regimes in Bulgaria and Romania (and Albania in 1992).

Collapse of the USSR

- In January 1990, Gorbachev visited the Baltic state of Lithuania, which was part of the USSR.
- Its leaders made clear that they wanted independence.
- Gorbachev was, for once, uncompromising. He would not allow this.
- Nevertheless, in March, Lithuania declared its independence.
- Almost as soon as he returned from Lithuania in 1990, Gorbachev received a similar demand for independence from the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.
 - He responded by sending troops to end rioting there.
 - He also sent troops to Lithuania.
 - But by May-June, the crisis had worsened.
- Reformers within the USSR demanded an end to the Communist Party's domination of government.

- In May, Boris Yeltsin was elected the President of the Russian Republic, the largest republic in the USSR.
 - Yeltsin made it clear that he saw no future for the USSR.
 - He said that the many republics in the USSR should become independent states.
- In July, Ukraine declared its state sovereignty.
- Other republics followed. By the end of 1990, nobody was sure what the USSR meant any longer.
 - Examples
 - In January 1991, events in Lithuania turned to bloodshed as Soviet troops opened fire on protesters.
 - In April, the Republic of Georgia declared its independence.
- In August 1991, hard-liners and leading military officers attempted a coup to take over the USSR.
 - The plotters included Gorbachev's Prime Minister, Pavlov, and the head of the armed forces, Dmitry Yazov.
 - They held Gorbachev prisoner in his holiday home in Crimea.
 - They sent tanks and troops onto the streets.
 - Huge crowds gathered in Moscow.
 - They strongly opposed the military coup, and Yeltsin became the leader of the popular opposition.
 - Faced with this resistance, the plotters lost faith in themselves and the coup collapsed.
- A few days later, Gorbachev returned to Moscow. He might have survived the coup, but he had lost his standing as the Soviet leader.
- He had to admit that the USSR was finished, and he with it.
- In a televised speech on 25 December 1991, Gorbachev announced his resignation as the president of the USSR and the end of the USSR.
 - This event also signalled the end of the cold war.

Conclusion

- The end of the Cold War has been long debated.
 - Unlike the world wars, the Cold War did not have an official end with a series of peace treaties.
- Some historians make the case that the Cold War ended in 1985 when Gorbachev came to power.
- Some argue it ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.
- Others put forward that it ended in December 1989, when US President George Bush and Gorbachev met at the Malta Summit and declared the Cold War over.
- However, to many historians, the collapse of the USSR in 1991 signalled the definitive end of the Cold War.

Review: Why did the Cold War End?

Gorbachev's Reforms: Glasnost

Examples and Explanation

In 1985, the USSR elected 54-year-old Mikhail Gorbachev to be its leader. Gorbachev was aware of the terrible problems facing the USSR and introduced a series of radical measures in a bid to reform it. One of these

reforms was the policy of Glasnost ("openness"). Under this policy, Gorbachev called for open debate on government policy and honesty in facing up to problems. With openness and reforms, the Soviet people were able to learn about the heinous crimes committed by the Soviet Union in the past. For example, during the Stalinist years in an exhibition called "Week of Conscience" held in November 1988. Unfortunately, Glasnost backfired. It released much resentment against the communist government. Glasnost also exposed the shortcomings of the government officials such as their inefficiency and corruption. This led to decreasing confidence in the party. The Soviets were also further exposed to aspects of the outside world, especially the better quality of life in the United States and Western European countries, through popular Western culture.

Link

As a result, the positive picture of Soviet life that the government previously presented to the public quickly fell apart. Many in the Soviet bloc felt deceived and lost confidence in the vision and rule of the communist governments. Hence, instead of rallying the people behind the reforms of "openness", Glasnost had unintentionally created a platform which unleashed criticism of communist rule that eventually brought about the disintegration of the USSR and thus the end of the Cold War.

Gorbachev's Reforms: Perestroika

Examples and Explanation

In 1985, the USSR elected 54-year-old Mikhail Gorbachev to be its leader.

Gorbachev was aware of the terrible problems facing the USSR and introduced a series of radical measures to reform it. One of these reforms was the policy of Perestroika ("restructuring"). It was a series of political and economic reforms that was intended to encourage new ideas, to increase efficiency and to fight the problem of corruption. One such measure in 1987 saw Perestroika allow market forces to be introduced into the Soviet economy. For the first time in 60 years, it was no longer illegal to buy and sell for profit. However, the policy was a failure. There was no overall increase in output. Instead, there were chronic problems of unemployment, growth of black markets, as well as shortages in necessities. The number of unprofitable enterprises that needed government support also increased, while many Soviet citizens lost interest in setting up their businesses.

Link

The failure of the Perestroika reforms put further strain on the already weakened Soviet economy and brought increased hardship to its people. This fostered growing resentment that eventually contributed to the disintegration of the USSR and, thus, the end of the Cold War.

Gorbachev's Reforms: Reduction on military spending

Examples and Explanation

In 1985, the USSR elected 54-year-old Mikhail Gorbachev to be its leader. Gorbachev was aware of the terrible problems facing the USSR and introduced a series of radical measures to reform it. One area of his

reforms was in regard to military spending. Gorbachev was realistic enough to recognise that the USSR could not hope to outspend the United States on nuclear weapons and other military spending. He thus began to take measures to reduce Soviet military spending. In 1988, he began the final withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Furthermore, in 1990, Gorbachev signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) that established comprehensive limits on key categories of conventional military equipment in Europe.

Link

Both these measures allowed the Soviets to reduce military spending, causing the Soviet Union's competitors in the Cold War, the US and its Western allies, to feel less threatened by it. This, in turn, reduced tensions and thus contributed to the end of the Cold War.

Gorbachev's reforms: The Reagan-Gorbachev Summits

Examples and Explanation

In response to Gorbachev's reforms and a desire to advance nuclear disarmament and tamp down the strategic arms race, Reagan made overtures to Soviet leaders and eventually engaged Gorbachev in negotiations with a shared commitment to nuclear abolition. This led to five summit meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev from 1985 and 1988. By the end of these summits, they had reached agreements to reduce their nuclear weapons further. Reagan also declared that he no longer thought the USSR was an "evil empire" because of the changes

Gorbachev was making.

Link

The summits thus served to help resolve differences between the two superpowers and reduce tensions. In doing so, it contributed to the end of the Cold War.

Gorbachev's reforms: "De-Ideologisation" of Soviet Foreign Policy

Examples and Explanation

In 1985, the USSR elected 54-year-old Mikhail Gorbachev to be its leader. Gorbachev was aware of the terrible problems facing the USSR and introduced a series of radical measures to reform it. One area of his reforms was in regard to the "de-Ideologisation" of Soviet Foreign Policy. This meant an end to all ideologically driven engagements designed to promote communism globally and challenge the United States. Gorbachev recognised that to reform the Soviet economy successfully, he had first to reduce the large amounts of money being spent overseas as part of these efforts. To that effect, he declared that the USSR would no longer intervene in other countries to support communist regimes or takeovers, as it did under former leaders such as Brezhnev. To demonstrate his commitment towards de-ideologisation, Gorbachev withdrew troops from military engagements in Afghanistan and Angola alongside Soviet support for communist regimes in Cuba and Vietnam.

Link

By no longer engaging in superpower competition with the United States, the USSR eliminated one of the biggest sources of tension fueling the Cold War, thus contributing to its end.

US Economic Superiority

Examples and Explanation

In the 1970s, the United States and Western Europe enjoyed an economic boom. For example, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of the USA grew from USD 23,958 to USD 29,611 between 1970 and 1980. In contrast, in the same period, the USSR's GDP per capita only grew from USD 8,886 to USD 10,245. This boom was partially a result of measures pursued by leaders such as US President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who emphasised that governments should cut taxes and advocated that governments should spend less and limit their involvement in people's lives, such as through welfare or state healthcare, as far as possible.

Link

As a result of this economic boom, the US and its allies could simply outspend the USSR in the superpower competition in a way that the Soviets struggled to overcome. This encouraged the Soviets to seek to de-escalate the tensions underpinning the Cold War, thus contributing to its end.

US Military Superiority

Examples and Explanation

The US continued developing an ever-growing military superiority over the Soviet Union. For example, in 1982, he gave the go-ahead for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), popularly known as the "Star Wars" programme. This was a multi-billion-dollar project to create a system that could use satellites and lasers to destroy missiles before they hit their targets. Such a system could change the nature of nuclear war. Whilst the SDI did not develop into a viable weapon, it succeeded in putting pressure on the Soviets, who were never sure whether the weapon would become a reality. By this time, the USSR was already finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the United States, given its stretched resources. Thus, renewed arms spending to counter the SDI would ruin it.

Link

Faced with this fact and the overwhelming military advantage that the potential of the SDI might have, the Soviets were encouraged to attempt to de-escalate the tensions underpinning the Cold War, thus contributing to its end.

Reagan's Role

Examples and Explanation

Ronald Reagan became the President of the United States in 1981 and

would remain in office till 1989. Reagan had a straightforward and aggressive approach towards the USSR. Essentially, to him, the USSR was wrong, and the United States and its allies were right. In one speech, he even referred to the USSR as an "evil empire". He thus believed in taking a tough line with the USSR wherever possible and increasing US defence spending. For example, he supported anti-communist forces in Afghanistan and Nicaragua. He also increased the US defence budget massively, as seen by how, in his first two weeks in office, he increased the defence budget by USD 32.6 billion. This spending helped with the introduction of new weapons systems, such as the B1 nuclear bomber that enhanced US military might and threatened the USSR.

Link

This confrontational attitude towards the USSR, when they were already in a state of decline and increasingly unable to compete on equal terms, encouraged them to attempt to de-escalate the tensions underpinning the Cold War, thus contributing to its end.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe

Examples and Explanation

In July 1988, Gorbachev made a speech at the Warsaw Pact summit stating his intention to withdraw large numbers of Soviet troops, tanks and aircraft from other communist states. In March 1989, Gorbachev made clear to the Warsaw Pact leaders that the Soviet army would leave Eastern Europe and would no longer prop their countries up. In the

months that followed, there was a sudden and dramatic collapse of communism across Eastern Europe. For example, in October 1989, Hungary declared itself a democratic republic rather than a communist republic. Furthermore, on 9 November, the guards abandoned the Berlin Wall, and jubilant crowds began to dismantle it.

Link

As communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union did nothing to stop it, one of the largest points of contention between the two superpowers disappeared. This led to a drastic reduction in tensions that contributed to the end of the Cold War.