

**Humanities: History**  
**Unit 3: Bi-Polarity & the Cold War**  
**Chapter 4: The End of the Cold War**

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**4.1 Why did the Cold War end?**

1. US economic might	<p><u>Economic boom in the USA and Western European countries</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Vietnam War and global oil crises affected the US economy adversely in the 1970s.</li> <li>• To counter the negative impacts of the oil crises, President Reagan began a policy of economic liberalisation to stimulate the US economy. Western European countries like Britain also adopted Reagan's economic policies.</li> <li>• Individual enterprise was encouraged to reduce the people's reliance on the government for goods and services.</li> <li>• National budgets were cut and national assets such as phone companies, oil companies and airlines were privatised.</li> <li>• Reagan's economic policies worked. A period of economic prosperity followed in the USA and Western Europe. US economic partners, such as West Germany and Japan also contributed to the USA's economic prosperity in the 1980s.</li> </ul>
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	<p><u>Renewal of the arms race</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The growth of the American economy allowed the USA to renew the arms race, putting pressure on the Soviet Union to keep up with military spending and production.</b></li> <li>• 'Star Wars' programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To intensify the pressure on the Soviet Union, Reagan proposed the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) programme or 'Star Wars' programme, as it was popularly called.</li> <li>○ This expensive programme aimed to use new space-based technologies to detect and destroy any potential nuclear attacks on the USA via intercontinental missiles.</li> <li>○ The Soviet Union did not have the financial or scientific resources to match the USA in this space-based military technology.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 'Able Archer 83' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tensions between the Soviet Union and the USA intensified when NATO, led by the USA, placed more than 100 mobile Pershing II Nuclear Missiles in West Germany. These mobile missiles were aimed at targets in the western parts of the Soviet Union.</li> <li>○ In November 1983, the USA and its NATO allies held a joint 10-day military exercise codenamed '<b>Able Archer 83</b>'.</li> <li>○ The exercise was so realistic that the Soviet Union was convinced that it was disguised as an actual nuclear 'first strike' against the Soviet Union. Hence, the Soviet Union prepared their nuclear forces and put their air force units in East Germany and Poland on alert.</li> <li>○ <b>Once again, the two superpowers came very close to the possibility of a nuclear war.</b></li> <li>○ This near breakout of a nuclear war made Reagan re-evaluate his aggressive foreign policies towards USSR. He realised that the Soviet Union was just as concerned as the USA about maintaining peace and averting wars.</li> <li>○ Reagan became more open to negotiations and nuclear disarmament talks with the Soviet Union from 1985 onwards.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>2. Weaknesses of the Soviet economy</p>	<p><u>Inefficiencies of the Command Economy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In contrast to the economic growth in the USA and the West, the Soviet Union's economy started stagnating from the 1970s.</li> <li>• The characteristics of the command economy included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Founded on the communist ideology.</li> <li>○ The government controlled and owned all aspects of production to ensure a classless society.</li> <li>○ Private enterprises were forbidden.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The command economy failed for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lack of full and accurate information to policymakers to make decisions on the allocation of resources in the economy, leading to resources not always distributed efficiently.</li> <li>○ Widespread corruption and inefficiency caused by poor quality control.</li> <li>○ Lack of motivation as hard work and innovation was not rewarded.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on quantity instead of quality of produce, leading to poor quality products.</li> <li>○ Harsh control in society which prevented criticism and feedback.</li> </ul> <p><u>Low standards of living</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stalin's economic Five-Year Plans emphasised industrial production such as factory machinery and industrial goods, <b>at the expense of consumer goods such as clothes and foodstuff.</b></li> <li>● During the Cold War, the Soviet Union diverted many resources towards the military sector to keep up with the arms race.</li> <li>● Ordinary Soviet citizens was not able to enjoy the access to quality and quantity of consumer goods that the people in the capitalist West enjoyed.</li> <li>● The <b>large disparity between the shortages of the communist countries and the excesses of the capitalist countries</b> led to much discontent among the Soviet citizens.</li> <li>● The Soviet government worsened the resentment felt by its citizens by opening specialty luxury goods stores only high-ranking party officials had access to.</li> </ul> <p><u>External economic burdens of the Soviet Union</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reagan's renewal of the arms race forced the Soviet Union to spend more on defence than it could afford. The high military expenditure could not be sustained in the long run, given its weak economy.</li> <li>● Eastern Europe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The command economy model was applied to all of the Soviet Union's communist satellite states in Eastern Europe, through economic bartering (exchange of goods and services instead of money).</li> <li>○ The Soviet Union's annual subsidy to its Warsaw Pact allies through discounting of oil prices amounted to about US\$3 billion, a sum that the Soviet Union cannot afford given its weakening economy.</li> <li>○ Eastern European countries also borrowed heavily from Western banks in the 1970s.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● War in Afghanistan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The long-drawn war in Afghanistan drained the Soviet Union of its military, financial and human resources.</li> <li>○ While the USA enjoyed the support of its economically stronger allies, the Soviet Union found its allies to be an economic burden.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Increasing resistance within the communist bloc</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The growing pressures from the people of the communist bloc for political and economic reforms also weakened the Soviet Union.</li> <li>● In the past, the Soviet Union sustained the communist political system in Europe through the use of force. Attempts at dissent were met with the threat of direct Soviet intervention. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hungarian Revolution (1956): A popular uprising led to the removal of the communist regime of Rakosi and the installation of Nagy as Prime Minister. When Nagy announced that Hungary would withdraw from the Warsaw</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<p>Pact and introduce multi-party social democracy, Soviet forces invaded Hungary and overthrew Nagy's government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prague Spring (Czechoslovakia, 1968): Its communist leader Dubcek attempted to introduce democratic and human rights reforms. However the Warsaw Pact countries and Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia and replaced Dubcek with a more compliant leader.</li> <li>○ Nevertheless, Soviet dissidents continued to speak out against the repressive regimes of the communist blocs. Many of these dissidents were arrested, persecuted or even executed.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The poor treatment of dissidents led USA to emphasise on human rights in Cold War relations.</li> <li>• This increased the pressure from the Soviet Union for political reforms instead of dealing with opposition harshly.</li> </ul>
3. Impact of glasnost and perestroika on the USSR and Eastern Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in March 1985. He believed that there was a need to reform Soviet Union's internal and foreign policies.</li> <li>• He advocated economic and political reforms as a solution to Soviet Union's problems.</li> <li>• He replaced the old supporters of the Soviet military industrial complex with his own supporters.</li> <li>• After strengthening his position within the Communist Party and government, Gorbachev introduced a period of 'new thinking' by implementing a series of reforms.</li> </ul> <p><u>Glasnost</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glasnost means 'openness'. Gorbachev believed that his reforms would succeed only if there was <b>greater transparency and freedom of expression</b> in the country.</li> <li>• Gorbachev began his policy of Glasnost in 1986 with a series of public debates. He abolished the tight censorship that the government had on all media and encouraged free expression of thoughts and opinions.</li> <li>• Soviet dissidents were also freed from exile signifying that alternative voices could be heard without persecution.</li> <li>• Vital information was made transparent. People were exposed to previously inaccessible aspects of the outside world.</li> <li>• Reconstruction of Soviet history was also permitted. Past leaders like Stalin could be cast as imperfect leaders.</li> <li>• Negative consequences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instead of restoring faith in the citizens, many of them felt that the government had lied to them and deprived them of what the rest of the world had access to.</li> <li>○ The Soviet people lost even more confidence in the vision and rule of communist governments.</li> <li>○ Hence, this fuelled even greater nationalistic tendencies within Eastern Europe and the communist bloc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Perestroika</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perestroika means 'restructuring'. It rode on Glasnost and was focused on reforming the failing Soviet economy via economic and political reforms.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perestroika aimed to <b>encourage greater interest, productivity and investment</b> among Soviet workers.</li> <li>• Under Perestroika's economic reforms, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Small cooperatives could be established</li> <li>○ Private ownership was allowed in areas such as service and manufacturing industries.</li> <li>○ The state relaxed wages control.</li> <li>○ The state allowed entrepreneurs to set the price of goods and services.</li> <li>○ State-owned banks replaced the state to regulate the supply of money.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Under Perestroika's political reforms, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Elections for party candidates were allowed.</li> <li>○ General elections for varied organisations were opened.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Negative consequences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gorbachev hoped that Perestroika would reinvigorate the stagnant Soviet economy through giving workers a sense of ownership.</li> <li>○ However, as the government relaxed its control over the production of goods and services, factory managers and owners of small businesses had to find their own funding and establish new trade relations. As a result, there were many unprofitable enterprises which needed government support.</li> <li>○ Many of the old command economy structure remained, such as widespread corruption and shortage of basic necessities.</li> <li>○ Political reforms also undermined Gorbachev's authority as he was caught between conservatives who felt his reforms were too radical and liberals who felt that his reforms did not go far enough.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Gorbachev's UN speech</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gorbachev sought to improve relations with Reagan and other capitalist western countries during the 1980s. He reinforced his friendly approach towards foreign relations in a speech at the UN in 1988: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All countries had the right to choose their own political and economic systems.</li> <li>○ This led to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1988.</li> <li>○ The Soviet Union would respect human rights through the amendment of its criminal code.</li> <li>○ Foreign radio and television stations could broadcast in the Soviet Union.</li> <li>○ The Soviet Union would recall all troops stationed in Eastern Europe.</li> <li>○ The Soviet Union would reduce its military troops.</li> <li>○ The Soviet Union would continue talks with the USA on nuclear disarmament.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gorbachev stated that the Soviet Union would undertake these actions unilaterally.</li> <li>• Gorbachev's announcements paved the way for the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Republics, and accelerated the end of the Cold War.</li> </ul>
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4. End of Soviet control over the communist bloc

Eastern Europe

- Gorbachev's UN speech to withdraw Soviet troops from Eastern Europe led to the disintegration of Soviet Union's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.
- This was very different from the Brezhnev Doctrine, which had emphasised on the intervention of Soviet Union in the politics of its allies (See above on Hungarian Revolution and Prague Spring).
- There was a 'domino effect' as Eastern European regimes collapsed one after another under the pressure of popular revolutions throughout the Eastern European countries.

Month/Year	Country in Eastern Europe which saw the collapse of its communist regime
May 1988	Poland
Jan 1989	Hungary
Oct 1989	East Germany
Dec 1989	Czechoslovakia
Dec 1989	Bulgaria
Apr 1990	Romania

Fall of the Berlin Wall

- The Berlin Wall had been a symbol of communist oppression in Eastern Europe.
- On 9 November 1989, an announcement was made by the East German Communist Party that the Berlin Wall would be open for 'private trips'. The announcement was aimed at opening the border to West Germany for orderly and legal travel.
- However, thousands of Berliners decided to cross the border for 'private trips' the very night the announcement was made, and border checkpoints were overrun.
- The Berlin Wall was physically dismantled part by part from June 1990 to November 1991.
- The fall of the Berlin Wall was significant as it symbolised the fall of the 'Iron Curtain' and the Eastern communist bloc.

Dissolution of the Soviet Union

- Although the international community welcomed Gorbachev as a forward thinker, he was unpopular at home.
- His domestic reforms (Perestroika and Glasnost) failed to improve the Soviet economy and society.
- Moreover, his reforms and foreign policies had removed the superpower status the Soviet Union once enjoyed.
- One of Gorbachev's harshest critics was Boris Yeltsin. In June 1991, Yeltsin was elected as President of Russia, while Gorbachev as President of the Soviet Union (comprising Russia and neighbouring countries collectively called the Soviet Republics).
- Hard-line members of the Communist Party were horrified that Gorbachev had given too much to the USA and their own power was being threatened.
- In August 1991, these hardliners launched a coup to remove Gorbachev. (*Coup: A sudden and violent takeover of a government*)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, their attempt was unsuccessful due to its opposition by Yeltsin, who was backed by Russian military officers and pro-democracy protesters.</li> <li>• With overwhelming mass public support, Yeltsin suspended the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.</li> <li>• On 8 December 1991, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus declared their independence from the Soviet Union.</li> <li>• On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as President of the Soviet Union.</li> <li>• The Soviet Union was officially dissolved and the Cold War came to an end.</li> </ul>
5. Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gorbachev's reforms opened up peoples' long suppressed desire for greater freedom.</li> <li>• Once the fear that the communist party held over the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Republics was gone, there was nothing Gorbachev could do to stop them from achieving their desire of ending communist control in their countries.</li> <li>• As communism had failed, the people embraced democracy and capitalism.</li> <li>• The Cold War had a great impact on many countries, and the impact is still felt in many countries today.</li> </ul>