

Topic 3: End of the Cold War

SAJC History Unit, 2023

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Syllabus Overview

In this theme, students will study the Cold War which resulted from the USA and USSR emerging as ideologically-opposed superpowers after the Second World War. These tensions, which largely began in Europe, extended to other parts of the world,

where it interacted with forces such as nationalism and decolonisation to bring profound changes to domestic politics in these countries, which in turn shaped the development of the Cold War. Furthermore, students will examine how the Cold War order initially defined by bipolarity, developed to feature more complex dynamics with China's rise as a Cold War actor in Asia.

Syllabus Content

End of the Cold War

- The USA's policy of renewed confrontation and containment: the USA's role in arms control negotiations, the Strategic Defence Initiative programme, the Reagan Doctrine
- Decline of the USSR and shifts in Soviet foreign policy: economic problems, Gorbachev's 'New Thinking', the Sinatra Doctrine
- Eastern European movements and revolutions in the 1980s: Poland and East Germany
- Historical interpretations of end of the Cold War: Western triumphalist, Soviet initiative and 'People Power' debates

Syllabus Learning Outcomes

Students are able to:

- evaluate the manifestation of the Cold War conflict across different contexts over time, and its impact on the Cold War

3. End of the Cold War

3.1 The USA's policy of renewed confrontation and containment: the USA's role in arms control negotiations, the Strategic Defence Initiative programme, the Reagan Doctrine

Detente in the 1970s

- Détente in the Cold War refers to the period of improved relations and relaxation of tensions between the superpowers during the 1970s under US President Nixon. It was marked by Nixon's visit to Moscow in 1972 (first visit by a US President), the "Vietnamization" of the Vietnam War and also an increase in arms control negotiations and agreements.
- In spite of the increased superpower cooperation that détente heralded in various fields, the US-Soviet relationship essentially remained a competitive

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one. Although the nuclear arms race was, to some extent, abated by the institutionalisation of arms control negotiations, it nonetheless continued.

- The superpowers maintained their rivalry across the Third World. Newly forged economic ties between the US and USSR were drawn into politics. There were also changes to America's leadership and foreign policy. All of these ultimately served to undermine the fragile superpower accommodation that had been established.
- As mistrust returned to the superpower relationship, each side saw the other as trying to take advantage of détente to achieve unilateral gains in the Cold War.
- Strains in superpower relations were also evident in the spate of third world conflicts most notably Yom Kippur in 1973, the Angolan Civil War (1975-91), the Nicaragua situation (1979) and of course, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

Soviet Opportunism in the Third World

- The Soviet leadership did not see détente as an end unto itself. Instead, they saw this as an opportunity to strengthen the USSR vis-à-vis the US. In a way, it could be understood as a continuation of the Soviet policy of 'peaceful coexistence' that emerged during the Khrushchev years.
 - This, of course, was not a passive doctrine and encompassed the imperative of consolidating and expanding the boundaries of communism whenever possible. The USSR had certainly not eschewed its ideological struggle against the West, and détente actually marked the height of Soviet involvement within the Third World.
- As a result, the USSR strengthened its ties with its clients, Cuba, East Germany and Vietnam. Moreover, East German and Cuban advisors were sent to African states such as Angola, Mozambique, South Yemen and Ethiopia to assist in revolutionary struggles throughout the 1970s.
 - It supported Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978 and procured a naval base at Cam Ranh Bay. Its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (ostensibly to defend communism there), reawakened American fears of Soviet expansionism and dealt the coup-de-grace to a détente already crumbling under pressure from various fronts.

The Unrelenting Nuclear Arms Race

- By the start of détente, the USSR achieved rough parity with the US and was poised to take the lead in the nuclear arms race. Another key motive for the

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Soviet détente with the US had been its desire to improve its position in the nuclear arms race both quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

- Technological advancements made this a distinct possibility. The Soviets now possessed MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle) capability, which allowed each warhead to strike at a different target and made verification of the number of Soviet warheads difficult.
- The Soviets also developed the 'Backfire' strategic bomber, whose range could not be easily ascertained. American policy-makers feared Soviet nuclear superiority and also believed nuclear deterrence was under grave threat.
- Between 1962 and 1977, the USSR deployed SS-4s and SS-5s targeted at the West and had 600 warheads. In 1978, it placed 414 MIRVed SS-20s, two-thirds of which were targeted at Western Europe, and one-third at East Asia. By October 1980, this increased to 441 with 270 pointing at Western Europe and 171 at East Asia.
- The period of 1953 to 1964 [from the end of the Korean War and Stalin's death to John F. Kennedy's assassination (1963) and Nikita Khrushchev's ouster as leader of the USSR] could be characterised as one of 'oscillatory antagonism' i.e. a period that was marked by 'peaceful co-existence and intermittent conflict'. During this period, as with the rest of the Cold War era, superpower competition focused on these four areas:
 - The Space Race;
 - Nuclear arms race;
 - Instability in Europe;
 - The search for Cold War allies;
- Following the origins of the Cold War in Europe, the superpowers extended their bipolar competition globally. Besides engaging in the Space Race and Arms Race, the US and USSR competed for allies and influence and this was particularly pronounced amongst Third world states, due to a power vacuum as a result of a general trend of decolonisation.
- The Berlin Blockade in 1948 represented the reality of the Cold War on the ground. The Blockade highlighted the tensions in Europe, and one which escalated with the formation of NATO in 1949. Why? It would mean the presence of both the Red Army (Soviets) and NATO troops and arsenal on continental Europe. The Berlin Blockade hence arguably reflected a flashpoint between both superpowers that could escalate dangerously with the presence

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of opposing military strength in Europe. The formation of NATO itself represented the increased bipolar competition in the strategic realm—the consolidation of Western European states and Canada in an alliance against the Soviet Union.

The Space Race

- The Space Race was a competition of space exploration between the United States and Soviet Union. It involved efforts to explore outer space with artificial satellites, to send humans into space, and to land people on the Moon. Space race occurred between 1957 to 1975.
- The Soviet launch of Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite, into space in October 1957 shocked the US as it signified Soviet advancement in missile technology. There were huge implications as the rocket that transported Sputnik into space could also carry nuclear warheads.
- It spurred the US to action and sped up competition over space exploration and technology. Under Eisenhower, the US responded with a series of satellite launches and the formation of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958 to accelerate research and development in space technology.
- In 1961, the USSR sent the first human to space—Yuri Gagarin. In 1963, USSR's Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to go into orbit. Speaking to Congress in 1961, President Kennedy stated the need to "catch up and overtake" the USSR in space exploration and technology. The US subsequently responded by sending Neil Armstrong to "walk" on the moon.
- Below is a timeline of key developments in the Space Race:

October 4, 1957	First artificial satellite launched into space (USSR)
November 3, 1957	First animal (dog) in space (USSR)
January 31, 1958	First US satellite launched to space (USA)
September 14, 1959	First probe sent to Moon (USSR)
April 12, 1961	First human sent to space (USSR)
July 10, 1962	First communications satellite launched to space (USA)
June 16, 1963	First woman sent to space (USSR)
March 18, 1965	First extra-vehicular activity (USSR)
July 20, 1969	First human to step foot on Moon (USA)
April 23, 1971	First space station (USSR)
November 14, 1971	First satellite to orbit another planet (USA)
July 15, 1975	First space missions (USA & USSR)

"We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too. It is for these reasons that I regard the decision last year to shift our efforts in space from low to high gear as among the most important decisions that will be made during my incumbency in the office of the Presidency." –

John F. Kennedy on the Space Race in 1962

- Analysis: Why was the Space Race important? The Space race was an important arena of superpower competition in the Cold War as it reflected the respective technological capabilities of the US and USSR. It was an assertion of power, demonstrating the superiority of the country which made breakthroughs in space exploration. Additionally, sending satellites into space also represented advancement in communications technology and had military implications due to the potential of missile technology.

The Arms Race

- Following the first Soviet atomic test in 1949, Truman took steps to develop the hydrogen bomb and to produce 'tactical' nuclear weapons. Nonetheless, Truman was unwilling and unable to conceive of the atomic bomb as anything other than a massively destructive weapon of deterrence and last resort. At that point in time, the theory of deterrence was premised on the general threat of reprisal in the face of a surprise Soviet attack as the US did not expect the USSR's newly developed atomic capacity to increase to a level to threaten the US.
- Such a theory of deterrence evolved in the 1950s when it was perceived that the capacity of the USSR to attack the US with nuclear weapons was growing. The Soviet economy was apparently growing faster than the US, with investments mainly focused on heavy industry and arms production. Based on this assumption, the USSR could potentially surpass the US in inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) development.
- Such projections established in the minds of US policy-makers the necessity to constantly seek and maintain superiority in the arms race to maintain a positive deterrence, such that the USSR would be assured of massive retaliation by the US on Soviet cities should the USSR launch a surprise attack.
- Positive deterrence with massive retaliation subsequently evolved by the start of the 1960s into an idea of balanced deterrence with the 'Mutually Assured

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Destruction' (MAD) theory, under which deterrence would work 'through the punitive threat of irresistible hurt to the enemy's social and economic structure, rather than through the prospect of victory in combat.' At the same time, Kennedy insisted on diversifying US military forces and building up conventional forces to enable the US to adopt a 'flexible response' to conflicts of varying intensity and magnitude, instead of an over-reliance on nuclear deterrence.

- In 1961, the US possessed a 6 to 1 lead over the USSR in nuclear warheads (3267 to 500) and the missile gap was very much in the US' favour. This was partly because the US had a headstart in the research and development of nuclear technology and also possessed superior technology and resources. Nonetheless, the idea of balanced deterrence arose from the recognition that each side had the potential to survive a first strike and deliver a retaliatory blow.
- Until the late 1960s, the Soviets lagged behind the Americans in all fields of nuclear weapons. The Soviets possessed fewer than 50 ICBMs in 1961, only 4 of which were actually deployed. In contrast, the Americans had 70 ICBMs deployed in the same year. Soviet nuclear inferiority necessitated a policy of catching up with the Americans and at the same time, creating the capacity to 'wage and win' a nuclear war. At the same time, Soviet prudence, due to perceptions of inferiority, prompted Soviet leaders to actively promote peace or back away from the brink of crises, which combined with the development of a nuclear capability, could prevent the outbreak of war.
- The nuclear arms race was a key arena of superpower rivalry and competition as both the US and USSR were the world's leading powers in the decades after the Second World War and each competed with the other to maintain the military superiority that would give them an advantage in the Cold War.

3.1.1 The USA's Role in Arms Control Negotiations

- Nixon and Brezhnev signed seven agreements covering the prevention of accidental military clashes; arms control, cooperative research in a variety of areas, including space exploration; and expanded commerce.
 - Earlier on: **Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968**, which showed signs of emerging detente
 - During the **May 1972** meeting, the **SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) agreements** were signed which addressed two major issues.

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- First, they limited the number of anti-ballistic missile (ABM) sites each country could have to two. (ABMs were missiles designed to destroy incoming missiles.)
- Second, the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles was frozen at existing levels. SALT I, as it came to be known, was the foundation for all arms limitations talks that followed.
 - This was followed by Summit II (Nixon and Brezhnev) and Summit III (Jimmy Carter and Brezhnev). Though there were few new agreements added in Summit II, it reflected both superpowers' continued commitment to peace.
- Under Carter however, the relationship cooled due to his emphasis on human rights. However, SALT II—which placed restrictions on strategic arsenals--was still **signed but not ratified by both countries**.
- With the election of Ronald Reagan, détente as Nixon envisioned it would come to an end.

Stalemate in Arms Control Negotiations

- The US began Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) talks in December 1981. Reagan had earlier proposed the 'zero-option' for all intermediate range missiles i.e. the negotiated withdrawal of all intermediate range missiles from Europe.
- In May 1982, he proposed deep cuts in ICBMs (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles) and in June 1982, the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) began. While opposed to the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty II (SALT II), the Reagan Administration eventually decided to observe its provisions as long as the Soviets did likewise.
- While Reagan challenged the USSR to end the arms race, it seems that the arms control negotiations were designed for Soviet rejection. Regardless of US intentions, the positions of the superpowers were basically irreconcilable, and talks on nuclear arms control reached an impasse.

INF Talks

- With regard to the INF issue, Reagan offered the Soviets the 'zero option': the removal of all Soviet IRBMs (SS-20s) to cancel the deployment of US cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe. This was rejected by the Soviets as they

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did not want to sacrifice their deployed systems for something the US had yet to build or deploy.

- However, the Soviets were determined to keep cruise missiles and Pershing IIs out of Europe as their accuracy would prove too much of a threat. In addition, the 'zero option' did not take into account French and British missiles, as well as US air/sea 'forward based' systems.
- As there was no progress made on the INF issue, in November 1983, the US sent the first batch of Pershing II missiles to Western Europe. This provoked the Soviets into leaving the INF talks and into deploying shorter range SS-12s and SS-23s in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. In 1984, the USSR boycotted the Los Angeles Olympics in retaliation.

START

- START marked a return to negotiations on curtailing strategic arms, and aimed at 'deep cuts' in the weapons both sides possessed (including a 50% reduction in ICBMs).
- For the first time, it seemed that the arsenals of the superpowers might actually be reduced. It was recommended that both sides cut their nuclear arsenals down to a total of 850 ICBMs and SLBMs (Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles), with no more than 5000 warheads, of which only 2500 could be on ICBMs.
- Such a proposal would benefit the US the most, as its missile forces emphasised on SLBMs. The Soviets had three-quarters of their warheads (6000 in all) on ICBMs and would have to make radical changes to reach the 850 limit for all missiles and the 2500 limit for warheads. Soviet ICBMs were the most modern, accurate and reliable. Hence, to the Soviets, such a proposal was totally unacceptable and only favoured the American side.
- Consequently, the Soviets rejected the proposed cuts, as it excluded America's advantage in SLBMs and strategic bombers. The Soviets left START negotiations in November 1982. With the USSR's rejection of the cuts, there was little progress and talks subsequently remained deadlocked.

3.1.2 The Strategic Defense InitiativeRonald Reagan and His Policies

- In January 1981, the Republican, Ronald Reagan came to power. In his Presidential campaign, he had championed the necessity to restore US prestige and pride as a Superpower. Carter's successor to the US presidency, the Republican

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- Ronald Reagan was plausibly the most ideologically driven of all post-war American Presidents. He had a history of being a strong anti-Communist and saw Soviet action in the Third World and its military buildup as confirmation that the USSR was an 'evil empire', which he famously proclaimed in 1983.
- He alleged that the Soviets were responsible for all the world's problems and zealously opposed communism. With Reagan, the bipolar worldview and language used during Truman's presidency returned. Communism was defined as the "right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat" and détente dismissed as a licence for the Soviets to pursue "policies of subversion, aggression and expansionism".
- Under the Reagan Administration, America fought the Cold War vigorously on all fronts. Congress was persuaded to approve plans for a phenomenal increase in US military spending. Arms control talks were effectively terminated due to an emphasis on strong nuclear defence. An aggressive policy to 'roll-back' Soviet influence in the Third World was introduced. This shift to a more belligerent US posture took place when superpower relations were at their worst since the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- During his two terms as US president, Reagan introduced an unprecedented American military build-up. This was aimed at restoring US pride and prestige as a superpower, and geared towards reinstating American military superiority that was believed to have been lost during détente, and help the US regain the initiative in its contest with the USSR.
 - A sum in excess of US\$ 2 trillion was spent on building up both conventional and nuclear forces. There was accelerated deployment of the MX ICBM and Trident SLBM, as well as development of the B-1 and B-2 bombers.
 - As the largest US military build-up during its peacetime history, this represented a potent challenge to the USSR and raised tensions. He also initiated the ambitious 'Star Wars' program (read section on SDI).
- Reagan also argued that the two SALT agreements were not in the interests of the US, and for a while, it appeared that the Reagan Administration would not pursue arms control vigorously.
 - However, public opinion in support of arms control and disarmament, which took the form of the nuclear 'freeze' movement in the West, ultimately pushed Reagan to take limited steps towards the resumption of arms control negotiations.

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- The US also ordered more surveillance flights along the USSR's long borders as tensions rose. In 1983, the USSR shot down a South Korean airliner which was flying from Alaska to Korea. It strayed into Soviet airspace over sensitive military installations. All passengers were killed. The US accused the USSR of deliberate murder while the USSR accused the US of spying using a commercial plane.
- The Reagan Administration also blamed the USSR for instability across the Third World. It thus embarked on a confrontational policy against countries that were deemed hostile, with an ostensible emphasis on democracy and human rights. US policy toward the Third World was subsequently termed the Reagan Doctrine.
 - Despite his rhetoric, Reagan was cautious about committing America overseas, as the public and Congress opposed any US military intervention. Such sentiments were largely a legacy of the Vietnam War.
 - Accordingly, he resorted to secrecy, relying on anti-communist insurgents instead of directly confronting Soviet-supported governments. Covert operations were expanded, and America increased military and financial aid to pro-US governments or groups.
- American relations with the USSR had already worsened due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Carter ordered a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Under Reagan, US-Soviet relations worsened further due to the political situation in Poland.
 - The pro-Soviet Polish government sought to destroy the anti-communist Solidarity movement there through the enactment of martial law in 1981.
 - In response, Reagan ordered a grain and technological embargo on the USSR in support of the Solidarity movement.

Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI)

- US-Soviet relations reached a nadir in 1983 as a momentous new development pertaining to the arms race and arms controls between both sides soured relations significantly.
- An element that became central to Reagan's military build-up was the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), i.e. the 'Star Wars' program. In a startling television broadcast on 23 March 1983, he announced that the US would pursue this highly ambitious and expensive project.

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- It was a nationwide ballistic missile defence system that deployed a protective shield of laser and particle beam weapons in space. Enemy missiles would be destroyed in flight by US satellites.
- SDI was not simply an answer to perceived US vulnerability, for it held the potential to completely alter the strategic landscape. Offensive weapons would be rendered impotent. This also undermined previous US-Soviet agreements, such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972. Moreover, it threatened to extend the arms race into outer space as well as provoke a new round of competition in the field of offensive weapons.
- To the Soviets, this seemed to be a pressing threat as SDI would make Soviet retaliation less threatening and an American first strike more likely. An initial American surprise attack would destroy much of Soviet ICBMs, allowing SDI to defeat the remnants of Soviet retaliatory missiles. However, if the USSR chose to compete with the US in developing such a defence system, it would cripple the already ailing Soviet economy.
- Nonetheless, American analysts doubted the viability of SDI.
 - SDI would cost an enormous US\$28million.
 - SDI technology was not fool-proof and could miss one or two missiles, which would be disastrous.
 - SDI's development was seen as a way of forcing the Soviets into concessions. However, SDI was still in its experimental stage and hence, it was difficult to exploit it as a bargaining chip when its real potential was not known.
- With his dream of SDI, Reagan's Cold War challenge to the Soviets reached its peak. They in turn, treated the proposal seriously as it was a very dangerous, destabilising alternative to arms control measures and deterrence. It was condemned both as a violation of the ABM Treaty and a hostile bid to neutralise Soviet strategic rocket forces.
- Ultimately, there was no scientific breakthrough and SDI remained a matter of science fiction rather than science fact. Even so, SDI did prove to be a stumbling block to arms reduction negotiations between Reagan and Gorbachev

3.1.3 The Reagan Doctrine

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- Reagan's primary concern in the Third World was the spread of communism across Latin America. In July 1979, the Marxist Sandinista movement toppled American ally Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua. From 1980, leftist guerrillas beset El Salvador. This prompted a massive increase in military as well as economic aid to El Salvador.
 - By the end of 1981, the CIA also organised and supported a military force of Nicaraguan exiles known as the *contra revolucionarios* (contras) to counter the Sandinistas. US intervention in Grenada in 1983 again demonstrated Reagan's determination to drive communism out of the region.
- He also authorised the CIA to train and aid the Mujahideen guerrillas in Afghanistan against Soviet occupation forces. The Reagan Administration provided some US\$ 2 billion in military and economic aid.
 - From 1986 onwards, America also supplied them with sophisticated weaponry, which included the 'Stinger' hand-held anti-aircraft missile, which proved lethal against Soviet aircraft and helicopters. The Mujahideen served to harass Soviet troops in Afghanistan for nearly a decade, and would lead to their withdrawal.

3.2 Decline of the USSR and shifts in Soviet foreign policy: economic problems, Gorbachev's 'New Thinking', the Sinatra Doctrine

- Commonly known as the Soviet Union, the USSR was by far the largest country in the world, the West's principal adversary in the post-1945 hostility of the Cold War, and a dominant force in international politics. Its government prohibited other political organisations and instituted one-party rule, which exerted centralised control over the political, economic, social and cultural lives of the people.
- The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) came into being in 1922, with a federation of six republics. It signalled the political reunification of the republics under Bolshevik rule following the collapse of the Tsarist regime in 1917. This expanded to include fifteen republics. On 1 January 1992, the USSR officially came to an end, marking the 'collapse of Communism' in the USSR.
- The death knell of the Russian empire was sounded in March 1917, when the people of Petrograd (present-day Leningrad) rose up in protest until Tsar

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Nicolas II abdicated. His government collapsed, leaving power in the hands of a Provisional Government. This was in turn, overthrown in November 1917 by the Bolsheviks led by Vladimir I. Lenin. After a bitter civil war, the Bolsheviks, now calling themselves Communists, emerged victorious and established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in December 1922.

- Initially established as a federal union of four Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs, also known as 'union republics'), the USSR would expand to encompass 15 SSRs by 1956, reunifying most of the former Russian Empire. The largest union republic was the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR). With its geographical boundaries spanning Central Asia to the Arctic Ocean, the USSR was a multinational country that comprised 113 different nationalities. Given its complex ethnic composition, the USSR's Russian and non-Russian populations shared little in common – culturally, religiously, or linguistically.

3.2.1 The USSR before Gorbachev: A Systemic Crisis

- In the aftermath of World War II, the world was forced to acknowledge the tremendous power of the Soviet military. Throughout the 1950s-60s, its high economic growth rates prompted western observers to fear that the USSR was an expanding economic power. As late as 1989, Soviet propaganda depicted the USSR as an advanced superpower on the verge of replacing capitalism.
 - However, when Reagan renewed the Cold War against the USSR, America's Cold War adversary was beset with serious political and economic problems. The USSR was in systemic crisis, and in no position to sustain the Cold War.

The Soviet Political Regime: An Authoritarian Political Structure

- Karl Marx had predicted that the collapse of capitalism would take place in two stages: (1) the middle class bourgeois capitalists would overthrow the autocratic monarchy and set up systems of parliamentary democracy; and (2) when industrialisation was complete, the industrial workers (proletariat), who were now in a majority, would overthrow the bourgeois capitalists and establish a classless society, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.
- After the Russian Civil War and communist revolution in Russia, this 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was nowhere to be found. Moreover, during the civil war, the governing body of the Communist Party, the Politburo, had gotten into the habit of acting as the government when quick decisions were required, and continued to do so when the war was over. Lenin defended this situation on the grounds that the proletariat were exhausted and weak, and their leaders, the Communist Party, must rule the country for them. This enabled the Communists to establish complete control over the country.

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- Thus, government by a single ruling party, the Communist Party (subsequently known as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, or CPSU from 1952 onwards) was a key feature of the Soviet political system.
- In order to exercise central political control on national, regional as well as local levels, a massive bureaucracy was created to administer policy. This consisted of full-time, paid officials who managed day-to-day decisions and ensured they were aligned with Soviet ideology. Once entrenched, this bureaucracy relished power, dictating policy from the top down, and would subsequently prove highly resistant to attempts to reform the system.
- After Stalin's death, Khrushchev introduced measures to decentralise the bureaucracy and return some degree of power to the people. He was, however, foiled by the greed and ambition of others. To protect their interests, those in authority within the CPSU and state administration did everything they could to delay his reforms. During the Brezhnev era, reform disappeared completely from the agenda and anything that threatened the stability of the system was not tolerated – the ruling elite/bureaucracy thus had to be kept happy.
- As a result, the Soviet political system was dominated by a professional bureaucracy, not the working class. As it was accustomed to making decisions without prior consultation with the people, this was insensitive to the needs of Soviet citizens.
 - The nomenklatura system meant that political appointments were awarded based on loyalty instead of good public administration/service. The bureaucracy thus also enjoyed a privileged position and material benefits. There were enormous income disparities between officials and ordinary workers, and corruption was rampant because power was held by a single political group.
- Instead of abolishing class altogether, the bureaucracy itself became a new class of owners and exploiters. The productive resources of society were not being used for the benefit of all its members; the bureaucracy utilised control over the state machinery to further their own selfish interests. Soviet society became stratified, with party officials and bureaucrats enjoying private shops, private hospitals, limousines, country dachas as well as exclusive holiday resorts, while the rest of the population eked out a meagre existence.
- The privileges of party functionaries would emerge as a public issue in the late 1980s, as the press began to report them more openly and as the mounting economic difficulties of the Soviet people made them increasingly difficult to tolerate. A relatively small elite appeared to have managed to achieve

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communism for themselves and not necessarily for their long-suffering fellow citizens. The communists would eventually lose their position because of their failure to live up to their own ideal of forging a classless society.

A Centrally Planned Economy

'We can fly a rocket to Venus but our fridges don't work.'

- Gorbachev when asked to comment on the Soviet economy

- The Soviet economy was a socialist economy based on the basic principle of state ownership. It has also been described as a command economy as all economic decisions were taken by the state planners.
 - The State owned and administered land, industry, state farms, and transportation.
 - 85% of the Soviet population was under state employment.
 - The State planned and implemented economic policies such as resource allocation, wages and pricing, and production targets.
- In addition, there was a small sector of cooperative ownership, which accounted for 15% of total employment. For example, in agriculture, land was assigned to farmers in perpetuity and they ran the farms according to government policy. It was envisaged that eventually these cooperatives would be converted to state enterprises.
- Full employment, cheap housing and transport, as well as low prices for basic foodstuffs were perceived as the 'gains of socialism'. The Soviet regime seemed to provide an acceptable standard of living which would steadily improve. This, however, was but an illusory stability. Living standards had been maintained, but at a cost in rising state subsidies that could not be indefinitely sustained. Economic growth had been high, but was steadily slowing.
- By the 1960s and 1970s, the Soviet economy was experiencing problems which arose largely as a result of its socialist system. These problems were structural and required fundamental structural reforms.
- The bulk of the USSR's exports (about 80%) were in the form of raw materials. Raw materials helped the USSR to earn hard currency which was used to purchase grain, consumer goods and high technology from the West. Oil accounted for 50% of Soviet earnings but most of the oil was sold to Eastern Europe at subsidised prices.

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- Due to economic difficulties, the USSR had to import grain and high technology. This aggravated the economic problems as it represented a drain of resources. The import of Western technology amounted to US\$2.5 billion annually by 1980. A quarter of Soviet export earnings were used to buy food products.

Features of Soviet Economic Planning

- The USSR faced immense economic problems upon its establishment. Both industry and agriculture were inefficient, and there were constant food shortages. To overcome these pressing problems, Stalin ordered the Soviet state to appropriate private industrial and agricultural property, with the objective of expediting industrialisation and collectivising agriculture. The creation of a centrally planned economy was inaugurated with Stalin's first Five-Year Plan in 1929, and by the mid-1930s, this was firmly in place in the USSR.
- Practically all assets in the Soviet economy such as farms, factories and other productive resources were owned by the state and controlled by its agents through a system of centralised economic planning.
 - A government agency known as Gosplan (State Planning Committee) was responsible for drafting the national plan. It defined not only the country's investment targets, but also precise physical quotas for every enterprise's output, the mix of economic inputs (e.g. raw materials and labour) it was to use, and a detailed schedule for completion. Another state committee fixed wholesale and almost all retail prices.
- The Soviet state succeeded in developing an industrial base of extraordinary dimensions, albeit skewed towards military and heavy industry instead of consumer needs. Stalin believed the rapid development of heavy industry was necessary to ensure the USSR's survival. In the post-war period, Stalin rebuilt the devastated Soviet economy, retaining centralised planning and the emphasis on heavy industry rather than satisfying the needs of Soviet citizens. This emphasis on heavy industry and military production over civilian needs continued until future Soviet leader Gorbachev introduced fundamental reforms.

Inherent Structural Flaws of the Soviet Economy

- This centrally planned economic system, however, suffered from serious structural flaws. It was effective in performing straightforward tasks that had well-defined objectives, such as building a railway system or winning a war. Conversely, for more complicated economic tasks based on higher levels of economic productivity, centralised planning became an obstacle to further

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development. It meant that the preferences of planners, not consumers, were dominant. Less attention was paid to what mattered to ordinary people, like quality and design, and more to state requirements, in particular, military ones.

- Moreover, there was little incentive for innovation, because rewards were tied to the fulfilment of quotas and a risky initiative might not pay off. Enterprises were monopolies, so there was no domestic competition to drive up performance, and there was no need to worry about bankruptcy if there was no demand for what was sold (as virtually all Soviet enterprises were owned by the state). There was also no incentive for workers to improve productivity. Wage differences were slim and it was rare to be fired for poor performance.
- There were various attempts to deal with these problems from the 1960s onwards, but it had not been possible, until the beginning of the end of communist rule, to combine the strengths of centralised economic planning with the incentives provided by market forces.

Economic relations with Eastern Europe

- The USSR gave high levels of subsidies to Eastern European economies in an attempt to prop up the unpopular pro-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe. Material and technological aid was given consistently. Oil was sold cheaply to these countries.
- After crises and repression, such as in Poland and Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in the 1970s, the Soviet government would increase the level of subsidies in order to pacify the masses. This represented a serious economic burden on the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

- By the end of the Brezhnev era, the Soviet economy was in a crisis and fundamental reforms were needed to address the problems. Andropov and Chernenko were in power for too short a period to initiate major reforms. This role was left for Gorbachev to fulfil.
- The economic problems posed a crisis for the USSR because:
 - Popular discontent was rising due to the constant shortage of consumer goods and basic food products.
 - This was worsened by public knowledge of corruption among officials who enjoyed privileges and access to better food and consumer goods.

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- Industrial growth in all sectors was slowing down and the USSR was lagging behind the West.
- The party officials and state bureaucrats were too entrenched in their positions to contemplate serious reforms.
- For Gorbachev, this represented a major retrogression from the USSR's progress towards the Communist utopia and he felt it was his responsibility to bring the USSR back on track.

3.2.2 Gorbachev's 'New Thinking'

- Apart from domestic problems, Gorbachev's predecessors also bequeathed to him a counterproductive foreign policy, one that had been confrontational against the West. He concluded that both the superpower rivalry and Soviet defence burden were crippling the USSR, as well as impeding his domestic reforms, and thus set out to end the Cold War.
- Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev operated under the principles of what became known as Novoe Myshlenie ('New Thinking'). This consisted of removing ideology from foreign and security policy-making. Instead of irreconcilable conflict between capitalism and communism, Gorbachev advocated conciliation with the West, and argued that all states were interdependent and the whole planet would be in danger if they did not unite.
- Gorbachev's fundamental changes in Soviet foreign policy thus saw efforts to: (1) end the nuclear arms race, (2) withdraw from the superpower rivalry in the Third World, as well as (3) loosen control over the USSR's informal 'empire' in Eastern Europe. These resulted in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, and heralded the end of the Cold War.

Initiatives to End the Nuclear Arms Race

- A main source of Cold War tensions had been the nuclear arms race. In contrast to past leaders, Gorbachev believed that increasing Soviet military power would not improve relations with the West. Instead, the idea of 'reasonable sufficiency' was introduced. This meant that the USSR should not pursue parity with the West and only possess sufficient military forces for defence. Thus, he sought to end the arms race and begin disarmament.
- Reagan's re-election campaign revealed the American public's displeasure towards his confrontational policies against the USSR. As a result, upon re-election in 1984, he began to soften his anti-communist stance. In early 1985, nuclear arms negotiations resumed between the superpowers and Gorbachev.

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seized the initiative to show his willingness to end the arms race. He made unilateral concessions to demonstrate his commitment.

- Gorbachev began his efforts to end the nuclear arms race by suspending both Soviet countermeasures against NATO's INF arsenal and nuclear tests. In April 1985, the USSR ceased further deployments of its SS-20s in Europe. In August, Gorbachev announced a moratorium on nuclear testing and offered to extend it indefinitely if the US followed suit.
- At his first meeting with Reagan at the Geneva Summit of November 1985, Gorbachev and his American counterpart explored the prospects for nuclear disarmament. Although arms control negotiations met an impasse due to Reagan's commitment to SDI, both leaders were unanimous in their desire for a world free from the spectre of nuclear war.
- In January 1986, Gorbachev continued his peace offensive by proposing a 3-stage plan for complete nuclear disarmament by the year 2000. Stage 1 involved the reduction of both sides' INF in Europe to zero, without similar reductions in British or French nuclear forces. The US, however, was unprepared and could not respond to this radical proposal.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

- During the next superpower summit at Reykjavik in October 1986, Gorbachev once more offered comprehensive concessions to set nuclear disarmament into motion. He was prepared to remove all SS-20s from Europe and cut Soviet strategic weapons by 50%. Arms reduction talks, however, ended acrimoniously and little progress was made.
- Although Reagan was interested in what Gorbachev had to offer, he was unwilling to compromise on SDI. Gorbachev, on the other hand, insisted that America's abandonment of SDI was a necessary condition for any arms reduction negotiations to be meaningful.
- After Reykjavik, Gorbachev discarded mutual agreement on SDI as a prerequisite for disarmament talks. In February 1987, he accepted the terms of the 'zero option' that Reagan had offered in 1981 but was rejected by the Soviets (refer to Lecture 1). By April, Gorbachev proposed further INF cuts beyond the 'zero option'. This was known as the 'double zero option': apart from IRBMs, shorter range missiles were also to be eliminated.
- In December 1987, both superpowers signed the INF Treaty (based on the 'double zero option') at the Washington Summit. This marked the first success of Gorbachev's 'New Thinking'. It was the first nuclear arms treaty the superpowers had signed since 1979. More importantly, the INF Treaty was a

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milestone in arms negotiations as it represented the abolishment of an entire class of weapons and a reversal of the nuclear arms race.

Strategic Arms Reduction Talks / Treaty (START)

- The US and USSR had been engaged in START talks since 1982 but no significant progress had been made due to disagreements over SDI. By September 1989, however, Gorbachev removed his objections after American laser tests had failed and Congress downgraded funding to SDI and prohibited further testing in outer space. The end of the nuclear arms race between the superpowers was at long last, in sight.
- Arms reduction negotiations would gain enough momentum over the next few years. By July 1991, Gorbachev and George H.W. Bush (who succeeded Reagan as US President) met in Moscow to finally sign START. This would eliminate large numbers of ICBMs.
- Under the terms of the treaty, American and Soviet ballistic missile warheads would be reduced by 35% and 50% respectively within seven years, such that each side eventually possessed only 4900 ICBM warheads as part of a total of 6000 'accountable' warheads.
- Some time after START was signed (September 1991), the US ordered its nuclear forces to stand down from 24-hour strategic alert status. This meant that America no longer perceived the USSR as a military threat, and confirmed the end of the nuclear arms race.

Role of the USSR in International Politics

- Past Soviet leaders had viewed the world as a bipolar one. Gorbachev, however, held a very different outlook. The main theme of a speech he made to the CPSU in February 1986 was 'global interdependence'. He argued that all states faced common problems which had to be addressed collectively. The global superpower rivalry saw little gains and only exacerbated tensions. He thus endeavoured to end US-Soviet political antagonism.

Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan

- To improve relations with America, Gorbachev sought to disengage the USSR from its occupation of Afghanistan, which he had deemed a 'running sore'. In February 1988, he announced that Soviet occupation forces would be fully withdrawn from the country.
- Negotiations under the auspices of the UN resulted in a series of arrangements that committed the Soviets to pull out all of their forces by February 1989 –

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which the USSR was able to meet on schedule. This served to significantly repair Soviet-Western ties.

Improved Sino-Soviet Ties

- Gorbachev also pursued closer relations with another of the USSR's rivals, Communist China. Relations between both sides had been estranged during the 1950s and resulted in the Sino-Soviet split. Improved ties rested on the resolution of several issues, including Soviet support for Vietnam's military presence in Cambodia, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and large numbers of Soviet troops deployed along China's northern border.
- The USSR's moves to resolve these issues under the framework of 'New Thinking' persuaded the Chinese government to agree to a summit meeting with Gorbachev in Beijing in May 1989, the first between the communist powers since the Sino-Soviet split.

The 'Gorbachev Doctrine' in the Third World

- In addition to ending the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and mending ties with China, Gorbachev terminated the USSR's support for many Soviet clients across the Third World. This was termed the 'Gorbachev Doctrine' by American scholar Raymond Garthoff and represented a policy of disengagement from Third World conflicts. Instead, the USSR now sought to sponsor the peaceful resolution of political or armed conflicts worldwide.
- To help resolve estranged ties with China, Gorbachev had pressured Vietnam to withdraw its troops from Cambodia in 1988. He also phased out Soviet military aid to Vietnam as well as withdrew all Soviet forces that had been stationed in Vietnam since 1979.
- Later that year, in December, US and Soviet negotiators helped to mediate a settlement for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Angola by the mid-1991. The Soviets also cut back on military aid to Ethiopia and withdrew their advisors from the country in 1990.
- Soviet aid to the leftist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua was also scaled down dramatically in 1990, paving the way for free elections which the Sandinistas eventually lost.

3.2.2 The “Sinatra Doctrine”

Relaxation of Soviet Control over Eastern Europe

- Towards the end of the 1970s, scepticism towards Communism emerged in Eastern Europe, and that resulted in decreasing support for Communist and left-wing parties that were propped up by the Soviet Union.
- Poor economic conditions across the Eastern European satellite states proved to be fertile ground for strikes, protests and pro-democracy movements to occur.
- Most of these popular movements began as underground movements due to the oppressive political climate. It was only with the coming to power of Gorbachev and his break from the Brezhnev Doctrine that these movements came to the fore in 1989.
- Since the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the USSR had adhered to the Brezhnev Doctrine. Maintaining coercive control over the region, however, would only undermine Gorbachev’s domestic reforms politically and economically. As such, in July 1989, Gorbachev offered the Soviet satellite states “the right of every nation to choose its own path”. They should govern “their way”, and this was known as the “Sinatra Doctrine”.

An Overview of the "Sinatra Doctrine" in Eastern Europe (excluding Poland and East Germany)

Rise of Charter 77 and Velvet Revolution (Czechoslovakia)

- Charter 77 was an informal civic initiative in communist Czechoslovakia from 1976 to 1992, named after the document Charter 77 from January 1977.
- Charter 77 criticised the government for failing to implement human rights provisions of a number of documents it had signed, including the 1960 Constitution of Czechoslovakia, the Final Act of the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Third Basket of the Helsinki Accords), and 1966 United Nations covenants on political, civil, economic, and cultural rights.
- The document also described the signatories as a "loose, informal, and open association of people . . . united by the will to strive individually and collectively for respect for human and civil rights in our country and throughout the world."
- It emphasised that Charter 77 is not an organisation, has no statutes or permanent organs, and "does not form the basis for any oppositional political activity." This final stipulation was a careful effort to stay within the bounds of the Czechoslovak law, which made organised opposition illegal.
 - However, the leaders, Václav Havel, Ludvík Vaculík and Pavel Landovský were still arrested, and the movement went underground and only re-emerged in 1989, with the Velvet revolution.
- The Velvet Revolution was a non-violent transition of power in what was then Czechoslovakia. It took place from November 17 to December 29, 1989, when popular demonstrations against the one-party government of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia combined students and older dissidents who took to the streets to voice their displeasure.
- The result of this revolution was the end of 41 years of Stalinist rule in Czechoslovakia and the subsequent dismantling of the planned economy and conversion to a parliamentary republic.

- It was a largely peaceful demonstration that brought about a smooth transition from communism to democracy.

Hungarian pro-democracy movement in the 1980s

- Hungary's transition to a Western-style democracy was one of the smoothest among the former Soviet bloc. By late 1988, activists within the party and bureaucracy and Budapest-based intellectuals were increasing pressure for change. Some of these became reformist social democrats, while others began movements which were to develop into parties.
- Young liberals formed the Federation of Young Democrats (Fidesz) which came from a core of the Democratic Opposition formed the Association of Free Democrats (SZDSZ). There was also the national opposition established the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF). Such civic activism intensified to a level not seen since the 1956 revolution.
- National unity was forged in June 1989 as the country reburied Imre Nagy, his associates, and, symbolically, all other victims of the 1956 revolution, as the nation remembers the struggles they had with Communist dictatorship.
- A national roundtable, comprising representatives of the new parties and some recreated old parties—such as the Smallholders and Social Democrats—the Communist Party, and different social groups, met in the late summer of 1989 to discuss major changes to the Hungarian constitution in preparation for free elections and the transition to a fully free and democratic political system.
- In a historic session on October 16–20, 1989, the Parliament adopted legislation providing for multiparty parliamentary elections and a direct presidential election, paving the way for an end to Communism in Hungary.
- Gorbachev was informed of these changes by Hungarian Prime Minister Miklós Németh and while he did not agree with it, he also assured the Hungarians that will not stand in the way of this process.

Gorbachev: Yes, because there were entirely different conditions both in the Party and in the country. Now we are opening the way towards socialist pluralism. The multiplicity of

opinions is not a tragedy for society; on the contrary, it is a real advantage.

Németh: I see no difference between pluralism in a single-party system and in a multi-party system. You are absolutely right: if there is freedom of thought and a unified program according to which people behave, everything goes on as it should.

- Record of Conversation between President M. S. Gorbachev and Miklós Németh regarding Hungary holding multiparty elections, March 1989

- This marked the end of the Brezhnev Doctrine which previously had seen Soviet forces come in to suppress any popular movements (e.g. Hungarian Uprising and Prague Spring) or changes to the Communist leadership in these satellite states.
- Gorbachev's new approach, popularly termed as the 'Sinatra Doctrine' (because of Frank Sinatra's song 'My Way') for allowing Eastern European countries to pursue Communism in their own ways, was a significant reform impacting the outlook in Eastern Europe.

Bulgarian pro-democracy movement in the 1980s

- By the time the impact of Mikhail Gorbachev's reform program in the Soviet Union was felt in Bulgaria in the late 1980s, the Communists in Bulgaria, like their leader Todor Zhivkov, had grown too feeble to resist the demand for change for long.
- Liberal outcry at the breakup of an environmental demonstration in Sofia in October 1989 broadened into a general campaign for political reform. More moderate elements in the Communist leadership reacted promptly by deposing Zhivkov and replacing him with foreign minister Petar Mladenov on November 10, 1989.
- This swift move, however, gained only a short respite for the Communist Party and prevented revolutionary change. Mladenov promised to open up the regime, even going as far as to say that he supported multi-party elections. However, demonstrations throughout the country brought the situation to a head.

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- On December 11, Mladenov went on national television to announce the Communist Party would cede its monopoly over the political system. On January 15, 1990, the National Assembly formally amended the legal code to abolish the Communist Party's "leading role."
- Similar to the changes in Hungary, the first multi-party elections since 1939 were held in June 1990, thus paving Bulgaria's way to a multi-party system and the end of Communism in Bulgaria.
- The pro-democracy movement was clearly gaining momentum across the whole of Eastern Europe as the Communist satellite states all transitioned to democracy.

Romania's violent transition to democracy in the 1980s

- Romania's transition to democracy was a violent one which ended in the summary trial and execution of its last Communist leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena on 25 December 1989.
- The first signs of rebellion came in an anti-communist march in Brașov on 15 November 1987. The revolt started at the enterprise of Trucks Brașov, by a strike begun on the previous night, and continued the next morning with a march downtown, in front of the Council of the Romanian Communist Party. However, the Securitate (secret police) forces and the military surrounded the city centre and disbanded the revolt by force, arresting some 300 protestors.
- In 1989, demonstrations in the city of Timișoara were triggered by the government-sponsored attempt to evict László Tőkés, an ethnic Hungarian pastor, accused by the government of inciting ethnic hatred. Romanian students spontaneously joined the demonstration, which became a more general anti-government demonstration. The military forces and Securitate fired on demonstrators on 17 December 1989, killing and injuring men, women, and children.
- The majority of the Romanian population had little or no information on the Timișoara events from the national media, but they learned about the Timișoara revolt from radio stations such as Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, and by word of mouth.

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- To address the peoples' concerns over Timișoara events, Ceaușescu staged a 'mass meeting' on 21 December, which was meant to show 'spontaneous movement of support for Ceaușescu.'
- Held in the [now named] Revolution Square in Bucharest, it began like many of Ceaușescu's speeches over the years. Ceaușescu spoke of the achievements of the "Socialist revolution" and Romanian "multilaterally developed Socialist society." He also blamed the Timișoara riots on fascist agitators who want to destroy socialism.
- However, Ceaușescu had misjudged the crowd's mood. Roughly eight minutes into his speech, several people began jeering, booing and others began chanting "Timișoara!" He tried to placate the crowd by announcing social benefit reforms that included the raising of the national minimum wage but to no avail. He would retreat from the scene and took cover (Communist Party) Central Committee Building.
- Once again, Ceaușescu sent in his military forces, but this time, the people continued to besiege the CC Central Committee Building into the next day. Rebellions were also occurring in other parts of Romania as well.
- Considering that Ceaușescu was a lost cause, the Securitate did little to help him. Ceaușescu fled by helicopter from the rooftop of the CC Building, only to find himself abandoned in the city of Târgoviște, Romania.
 - There, Ceaușescu and his wife Elena were captured and tried by a court-martial on charges of genocide and sabotage of the Romanian economy, convicted after an hour and a half, and executed by firing squad moments after the verdict and sentence were announced on 25 December 1989.
- The reason why this popular movement ended in violence was largely due to the fact that Ceaușescu's regime was brutal and repressive. His rule was widely regarded as the most rigidly Stalinist in the Eastern European bloc.
- He maintained controls over speech and the media that were very strict even by Soviet-bloc standards with internal dissent not tolerated. The Securitate was one of the most ubiquitous and brutal secret police forces in the world.

- Hence, with such an oppressive regime, it is little wonder why the people would revolt in the manner which they did, against the backdrop of the economic hardship and atrocities that Ceausescu had committed over the years.

Consequences of Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' in Foreign Policy

- Soviet relations with the West improved markedly during Gorbachev's leadership largely as a result of the INF Treaty and Soviet acquiescence to the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe. At the time of the Malta Summit between Bush and Gorbachev (December 1989), the Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, Gennady Gerasimov, announced that "we buried the Cold War at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea".
- In contrast to his domestic reforms, Gorbachev's foreign policy initiatives won him much international praise and admiration. For his efforts to reduce superpower tensions around the world, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1990. Ironically, due to rumours of a conservative coup, Gorbachev was unable to collect his prize until June 1991. Unfortunately for him, these rumours would be proven true in August of 1991.

3.2.3 Eastern European movements and revolutions in the 1980s: Poland and East Germany

Rise of Solidarity Movement and Crisis in Poland, 1980

- From the onset, Poland's situation was a unique one, as it was annexed by the USSR during the days when the Soviets were in alliance with the Nazis. Poland came under the control of the Soviet Union following the end of World War II and Communism was imposed upon them.
- In 1978, a Polish Roman Catholic Cardinal, Karol Józef Wojtyła was elected to become Pope John Paul II, the leader of the Catholic Church (numbering around 1 billion) and served as a symbol of hope for the Poles.
- In July 1980, the raising of food prices by the Communist-led Polish government led to nationwide strikes, signalling the growing opposition to Soviet influence. These various inter-party strike committees unified into a single organisation aptly named Solidarity under the leadership of Lech Walesa.

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- At the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, the firing of Anna Walentynowicz, a popular crane operator, and activist galvanised the outraged workers into action and went on strike in August 1980, which sparked a response from the Communist-led Polish government.
- Wojciech Jaruzelski (the last Communist leader of Poland) imposed martial law in December 1981 in a bid to maintain a semblance of order in the country. The leader of the Solidarity Movement, Lech Walesa was detained, but gave a prophetic remark upon his arrest:

'This is the moment of your defeat. These are the last nails in the coffin of communism.' - Walesa, 1981

- The USSR also responded strongly to the developments in Poland, sending in the Red army to quell opposition.
- These movements were suppressed and this iron-fisted approach of the Soviet Union and the Polish communist leaders drew the ire of the USA and further strained superpower relations.
- Solidarity would re-emerge as a political party after the years of martial law in 1988 when they led a renewal of mass demonstrations and strikes as living standards had fallen below 1978 levels. The difference on this latter occasion was that the Polish government decided on negotiation rather than suppression.
- Roundtable negotiations, including representatives of the Polish communist party, Solidarity, and the Catholic Church were opened with the goal of ending Poland's political crisis. The result was the introduction of multi-party elections in which Solidarity won a landslide victory, including 99/100 seats in the Senate.
- In August 1989, Solidarity led the new Polish government and by the end of December 1990, the Poles elected Walesa as their first President in the post-Communist era.
- The significance of Solidarity cannot be underestimated, for it was the first independent trade union to be recognized by the state in an Eastern Bloc country.

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- It was also ironic that Communism, which was supposed to be primarily protecting the rights of the working class, would face an uprising by these same workers. This serves as an indictment that Communism as an ideology was failing the people of Eastern Europe.

East German Pro-Democracy Movement in the 1980s and the Fall of the Berlin Wall

- Perhaps the most dramatic and symbolic of all popular movements came in East Germany with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.
- Events in East Germany (German Democratic Republic, GDR) during 1989 were governed by a special set of circumstances that did not exist in other Eastern Bloc countries.
 - These included the division of Germany into zones of occupation after the war by the allies (US, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union) and the accompanying four power rights. Berlin, the former capital of Nazi Germany, was also divided into a four-power city. This eventually evolved into the creation of two separate German states, West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany, FRG) and East Germany.
 - Their common histories also meant that shared traditions, culture, and language were also important for dissidents in East Germany, as exile to West Germany was comparatively easier than in other Eastern Bloc nations (for e.g., Poles who ran away to France)
- East Germany, like the rest of the communist bloc, experienced a period of economic stagnation by the 1980s. This was due to increasingly outdated industrial standards, heavy environmental pollution, and most importantly, low levels of industrial reinvestment; all structural flaws of a Communist command economy.
- The Soviet-supported political party in East Germany, the Socialist Unity Party (SED) also treated dissidents with a heavy hand and had rigged the elections in May 1989, giving themselves a 98.85% electoral 'victory', but disillusioned and distanced themselves from the East Germans, some of whom, like the intelligentsia, had initially supported the Socialist movement.
- All these resulted in a mass exodus of East Germans, who first sought an escape route via Hungary when on 2nd May 1989, as it opened its borders to Austria (a Western bloc country). Hundreds of thousands of East Germans tried

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to travel out of the Eastern bloc on trains via this route, but when they were unsuccessful, they took refuge in the West German embassies found in Bucharest, Warsaw, and East Berlin.

- 1989 also marked the 40th Anniversary Celebrations of East Germany and with Gorbachev's accompanying visit; it was also an occasion for mass protest. Throughout the celebrations, chants of "Gorby, Gorby, save us!" echoed from the crowds and even from some communist youth members.
- On 9 November 1989, an East German official announced the relaxation of travel restrictions but without specifying where and when these policies would take effect.
- Fifty thousand people quickly gathered at the Berlin Wall, and rather than fire on the crowds, the guards on their own initiative and from the pressure of the crowd amongst them, opened the Berlin Wall, an action which came to signify the end of the Cold War.
- In the symbolic act of the people, literally, 'tearing down the wall' that separated East and West Berliners, this also clearly showed to the world that the people of Eastern Europe chose democracy over communism.

3.3 Historical interpretations of end of the Cold War: Western triumphalist, Soviet initiative and 'People Power' debates

- Historians have not seen eye-to-eye over the origins of the Cold War. There are orthodox, revisionist and post-revisionist views. Similarly, they disagree on how the Cold War ended.
- The end of the Cold War was greeted as a great victory for the West, especially the US:
 - Western triumphalists view the failure of Soviet communism as evidence of capitalism's superiority. It has been celebrated as the most dynamic and resilient socio-economic system in human history. The technological dynamism present within capitalist economies such as that of the US simply overwhelmed the backward communist economic system.
 - The end of the Cold War was also framed as a moral or religious parable. Many Western triumphalists also believe that the US won the Cold War because it deserved to win. Freedom, democracy, justice and moral courage had emerged victorious over despotism and 'darkness'. The victory over the USSR was moreover not just the result of military might

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or capitalism's superiority, but because Americans chose to put faith in God.

- While most historians agree that communism as an economic system and/or as an ideology was a big loser, as was the USSR, the US may not necessarily have won the Cold War. Thus it is possible to conclude that neither superpower won the Cold War, and the US lost as well:
 - More significantly, the Cold War had exacted a tremendous toll on America. Politically, the US often abandoned diplomacy, relied excessively on military might, supported dictators and turned its back on human rights throughout the Cold War. Ethnic and religious strife also exploded across the post-Cold War world, with serious repercussions for America.
 - In addition, its global security commitments and the arms race had weakened the American economy. Burgeoning budget deficits, reduced investment and decay of basic infrastructure resulted in a decline of US economic power relative to that of its major competitors, such as Western Europe and Japan. Moreover, maintaining the allegiance of NATO and its East Asian allies promoted their economic resurgence at US expense.

Western Triumphalism

- One school of thought in analysing the end of the Cold War asserts that it was American military power that deterred the Soviet threat. This forced the Soviets to acknowledge their economic system's failure, in particular, the inability to compete with the US militarily. This interpretation also views the Cold War's end as a Western triumph. It has two main versions:
- The first, advocated by academic Peter Schweizer and some of its former members, stresses the contributions of the Reagan Administration in ending the Cold War:
 - Ronald Reagan was different from his predecessors and abandoned America's policy of containment (based on the status quo, this only contained Soviet expansionism). Instead, he sought to bring about the victory of the West and the collapse of the 'evil empire'.
 - He introduced a number of political, military, military and psychological measures which helped to bring about this desired outcome. In particular, America's massive military build-up, which included modern military systems like the SDI, made the Soviets capitulate.

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- The second, more 'moderate' version of triumphalism asserted by Robert Gates, former CIA Director (and current US Secretary of Defence), views the end of the Cold War not primarily as the result of the Reagan Administration's policies, but of 'containment' in general:
 - From Truman to Reagan, all American presidents pursued the policy of containment. This brought about the reforms engineered by Gorbachev and the collapse of the USSR.
 - Successive generations of American leaders had accepted George Kennan's analysis in 1947 that if Soviet expansionism could be contained, the fundamental contradictions within the Soviet system would eventually bring it down. This was what had happened.
- Western triumphalism has faced considerable criticism. Its critics, who include prominent former members of the Reagan Administration such as Secretary of State George Schultz and Ambassador to the USSR Jack Matlock, have seen the end of the Cold War as the result of both Western (especially US) policies as well as fundamental changes within the USSR.
 - While Reagan adopted the right mix of policies before Gorbachev came to power, they would not have been effective if Gorbachev had not abandoned Marxist-Leninist ideology.
 - Thus, both Reagan and Gorbachev were equally responsible for the end of the Cold War.

Soviet Initiative

- In 1992, George Kennan wrote an article in the New York Times claiming that the US could not have influenced changes within the USSR. In his original conception of containment, he asserted that this would "encourage an internal implosion in the Soviet Union". Now, however, he argued that while the USSR did collapse from within, its disintegration was not determined by American foreign policy, but rather, resulted from its own internal dynamics.
- Kennan's article is representative of another school of thought on the end of the Cold War. This puts forward the argument that the USSR contained the seeds of its own destruction. While containment and the arms race may have hastened Gorbachev's reforms, which ended the Cold War and/or led to the demise of the USSR, credit goes primarily to Soviet leaders.
- One of the main proponents of this view is historian Raymond Garthoff, who insists on the primary role that Gorbachev played in bringing about the end of the Cold War:

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- The West did not bring about the end of the Cold War through containment and military deterrence. Reagan's military build-up and the Reagan Doctrine mattered even less.
- Instead, this came from a new generation of Soviet leaders, namely Gorbachev, who realised how badly their system at home and their policies abroad had failed. They decided the Cold War was no longer worth devoting resources to and focused inwards.
- Even so, there was still some importance to Western policies, particularly containment, which precluded any temptation Moscow may have had to advance its cause militarily.
- Others give Gorbachev full credit for the end of the Cold War:
 - If he had not come to power in 1985, the Cold War would have continued. The decisive factor was Gorbachev's idealistic view of the world based on universal reconciliation.
 - Also, Reagan's hard-line anti-communism probably slowed down the end of the Cold War.

"People Power"

- The views in favour of Western triumphalism and Soviet initiative, however, do not give the people in the West and Eastern Europe / USSR a role in the end of the Cold War. A third school of thought asserts that it was mass movements that ended the Cold War. It was not political or military pressure that brought this about, but popular (and peaceful) action:
- In the early 1980s, Western peace movements emerged to push for change. There was a massive wave of opposition to nuclear arms and the deployment of INF weapons. This was a logical extension of the earlier anti-nuclear movements of the 1960s and 70s, such as the 'Nuclear Freeze' movement and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).
- The dramatic revolutions that occurred in Eastern Europe in 1989 were due to popular democracy movements. With the exception of Romania (where Ceausescu was violently overthrown), ordinary people came out in support of peaceful democratic change.

3.4 Who Won the Cold War?

- If the Cold War is viewed as a confrontation between the superpowers, the dissolution of Soviet control over Eastern Europe and the collapse of the USSR create a strong temptation to see this in terms of a Western triumph. It does

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not follow, however, that Soviet defeat necessarily means Western or American victory. Nor does it follow that communism's failure leaves capitalism triumphant. The verdict is still out on which side won and which side lost.

3.4.1 Capitalism and Democracy Won the Cold War

- The end of the Cold War was greeted as a great victory for the West, especially the US:
 - Western triumphalists view the failure of Soviet communism as evidence of capitalism's superiority. It has been celebrated as the most dynamic and resilient socio-economic system in human history. The technological dynamism present within capitalist economies such as that of the US simply overwhelmed the backward communist economic system.
 - The end of the Cold War was also framed as a moral or religious parable. Many Western triumphalists also believe that the US won the Cold War because it deserved to win. Freedom, democracy, justice and moral courage had emerged victorious over despotism and 'darkness'. The victory over the USSR was moreover not just the result of military might or capitalism's superiority, but because Americans chose to put faith in God.

3.4.2 The USSR / Communism was the Bigger "Loser"

- While most historians agree that communism as an economic system and/or as an ideology was a big loser, as was the USSR, the US may not necessarily have won the Cold War. Thus it is possible to conclude that neither superpower won the Cold War, and the US lost as well:
 - More significantly, the Cold War had exacted a tremendous toll on America. Politically, the US often abandoned diplomacy, relied excessively on military might, supported dictators and turned its back on human rights throughout the Cold War. Ethnic and religious strife also exploded across the post-Cold War world, with serious repercussions for America.
 - In addition, its global security commitments and the arms race had weakened the American economy. Burgeoning budget deficits, reduced investment and decay of basic infrastructure resulted in a decline of US economic power relative to that of its major competitors, such as Western Europe and Japan. Moreover, maintaining the allegiance of NATO and its East Asian allies promoted their economic resurgence at US expense.