

Stalin's Maintenance of Power

Basis of comparison	Argument	Limitations
Economic Policies	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stalin aimed to create a centrally-controlled economy with collectivization of agriculture and rapid industrialization to catch up and overtake the advanced economies of the Western world In the USSR, agriculture was still backward, and peasants were not producing the quantities of grain Stalin needed for industrialization In addition, the Kulaks were blamed for hoarding their farm produce and keeping food prices high, thus making themselves rich at the expense of the workers and hence state income By 1927, the USSR had not developed its industry much beyond the pre-1914 level, and fell short of the West Moreover, Stalin was convinced of an inevitable war with capitalist nations and wanted self-sufficiency especially in heavy capital equipment <p>Topic Sentence Stalin introduced economic policies to establish state control over the agricultural sector of the Soviet economy and to eliminate domestic opposition, which he used to maintain his power.</p> <p><u>Collectivization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dmitri Volkogonov: Stalin's economic policy was mainly to remove all opposition to himself rather than being motivated by economic means Through rapid collectivization, land was confiscated from the rich peasants, the Kulaks, and became collectives which were commonly held Grain from collective farms were forcibly obtained and had to be sold at a discount to the state Furthermore, through the process of "de-Kulakization", peasants branded as Kulaks and anyone who opposed collectivization were deemed as class enemies and were arrested, executed, or sent to labour camps By 1937, 90% of farms in the USSR were collectivized Exported a record 5.2 million tons of grain in 1931 Up to 10 million Kulaks were deported to Siberia or labour camps by the end of the collectivization process Through such policies, Stalin was able to maintain a firm grip over the peasants, preventing them from selling their grain for their own profit at the expense of the government, while destroying the Kulak class 	<p><u>Collectivization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The control that Stalin managed to establish to remain in power through his agricultural policies was limited Despite the use of force on the Kulaks, resistance to Stalin's policy of collectivization remained Between 1929 and 1930, there were over 44,000 serious disturbances that included peasant demonstrations and riots against the Soviet institution in protest against collectivization In addition, many historians like Robert Service and Sheila Fitzpatrick argued that Stalin's economic policies had caused widespread misery to the peasant class The de-Kulakization process served only to destroy the most productive of peasants, and by 1939 Soviet agricultural productivity had barely returned to the level recorded for Tsarist Russia in 1913 Poor agricultural output led to food shortages, which resulted in famine and millions of deaths in rural areas in the 1930s These policy failures meant that successful economic policies were not the main contributing factor to Stalin's maintenance of power The use of force and repression was what allowed Stalin to make policy blunders without facing a backlash from his supporters <p><u>Industrialization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> However, industrialization came at a high cost The dramatic movement towards industrial production resulted in massive rural-urban migration, overcrowding of cities and poor working conditions Wages in 1937 were only 85% of 1928 Forced labour resulted in millions of deaths, most within two years Moreover, Stalin's industrialization programme achieved much less in reality The atmosphere of fear and repression promoted a culture of falsification and corruption, meaning that official figures were often exaggerated or falsified These policy failures meant that successful economic policies were not the main contributing factor to Stalin's maintenance of power The use of force and repression was what allowed Stalin to make policy blunders without facing a backlash from his supporters

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Conquest: Collectivization had become Stalin's weapon to break peasant resistance once and for all <p><u>Industrialization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin's rapid industrialization of the Soviet economy helped his regime to gain greater legitimacy and portray himself as responsible for a "second revolution", thus increasing his popularity • This was achieved through the movement toward a centrally-planned economy under GOSPLAN and the launching of a series of Five-Year Plans from 1928-41 • Managed to transform the state from an economically-backward country to an industrial front on par with the west • By 1941, the official Soviet figure for increased industrial production was 852%, with spectacular gains made in iron, steel, coal and electrical generation industries • Development of the Soviet economy through the rise of new industrial cities like Magnitogorsk and the sharp expansion of the proletariat • Peter Gattrell: The outcome of collectivization and industrialization was an economy strong enough to sustain the USSR through WW2, and Russia's modernization could not have been achieved by any other way • Successful economic policies thus showed that Stalin's regime was effective and discouraged opposition <p><u>Opposition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin faced opposition from the peasant class, which were not strongly supportive of the Bolshevik regime since the October Revolution • The peasants were capitalist in orientation and had little interest in socialism • In particular, the Kulaks, the rich peasants, resented the transition to a communist economy the most • Were blamed for hoarding their farm produce and keeping food prices high, thus making themselves rich at the expense of the workers and hence state income • To Stalin, these Kulaks were the main threat to his complete control over the agricultural sector of the Soviet economy 	
Use of Force	<p>Topic Sentence Stalin used force and repression in the form of purges to remove dissidents and potential opposition, thus ensuring his unopposed rule.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Conquest argued that the purges had two effects: firstly, to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, the level of control that Stalin had through the elimination of real or perceived threats to his power was limited by the lack of control he exercised over the purges and the agencies that carried out the purges • Historians like Arch Getty had argued that Stalin was unable to control the NKVD and the violence spiraled out of control

	<p>eliminate opposition, and secondly, to terrorize the remainder into submission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin achieved this through the OGPU and later the NKVD, which had his opponents executed or sent to labour camps in Siberia and the Urals • The first two stages of the purges were successful in removing important party members, the old Bolsheviks, from the party • Using Kirov's murder in 1934 to his advantage, Stalin claimed a widespread conspiracy against the party and had prominent party members such as Bukharin, Kamenev and Zinoviev arrested and executed after their show trials • By 1940, Stalin was the only member of Lenin's Politburo alive and his domination of the CPSU was all but secured • Thus, Stalin successfully eradicated all opposition in the left and right wings, which enabled him to maintain his power without being challenged by influential old Bolsheviks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the third stage of the Great Purges, the general populace was targeted for purges through the convenient labeling of people as "spies" or "saboteurs" • A huge media campaign was started, encouraging ordinary people to criticize and denounce party officials, fellow workers, neighbors and family members • Stalin was thus able to create a climate of fear and suspicion, keeping any form of opposition to his rule in check <p><u>Opposition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even after his rise to power, Stalin continued to face opposition within the CPSU • In the early 1930s, there was growing opposition to Stalin's leadership, especially concerning his collectivization and industrialization policies, which had resulted in famine and misery for peasants and workers • Within the party, Riutin attempted to garner support in 1932 in opposition to Stalin's policies and wanted Stalin's dismissal • Other leaders like Bukharin and Trotsky were criticizing him behind his back • Most significantly, Sergei Kirov, the Leningrad party boss, had challenged Stalin's industrialization policy and was well-received in congress • General Secretary title removed and both Stalin and Kirov were given the title of Secretary of Equal rank; Stalin could be removed or demoted from the Politburo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purges led to the destabilization of society and developed a momentum of their own by zealous local officials who had a target-fulfilling mentality • This limited Stalin's ability to control every segment of the party and society • Nonetheless, the use of force did terrorize the masses and ensure unquestioning loyalty to the vozhd
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Social Policies (Propaganda)	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The destabilization of the political, economic and social structure of the USSR through the purges and Stalin's collectivization and industrialization policies meant that a strong image of Stalin needed to be created in order to ensure their loyalty <p>Topic Sentence Stalin used social policies to build up a cult of personality, legitimizing his position of authority and encouraging unquestioning loyalty to him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roy Medvedev argued that Stalin did not rely on terror alone but also on the support of the majority of people who were effectively deceived by cunning propaganda The use of visual images such as through paintings, sculpture and posters was essential to the communication of his cult to the masses, and was strictly regulated Paintings and images tended not to focus on domestic and family life but instead on factories and collective farms where workers and peasants lived happily together, creating an abundant socialist future Through the control of the Pravda and Isvestiya newspapers, only favorable views of the 5-year plans were propagated and the famines in the 1930s were denied This had the effect of convincing the masses that Stalin's policies were effective and thus gain continued support for his leadership Stalin became the focus of many paintings and films, exhibiting fawning devotion and crediting him with almost god-like qualities Tight control over education exaggerated his role in Soviet history, which was re-interpreted in his favour Stalin was identified with great Russian leaders like Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, while old Bolsheviks like Trotsky were discredited or removed by doctoring images Allowed Stalin to be seen as the only legitimate leader Thus, strict control over Soviet culture through effective social policies increased domestic support for Stalin's leadership and prevented the possibility of opposing views about him from being spread among the masses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> However, the level of support and control Stalin managed to achieve through his social polices is debatable as it is difficult to measure the actual impact such policies had on the different segments of the Soviet society Sheila Fitzpatrick argued that Stalin's regime was relatively unpopular in Russian towns The NKVD regularly reported that the ordinary "little man" in Soviet towns, who thought only of his own and his family's welfare, was dissatisfied with Soviet power, although in a passive manner Hence, the lack of notable and widespread resistance against Stalin's regime cannot be used to claim that Stalin was widely popular among the masses or that opposition was non-existent Thus, the use of force was more critical in maintaining Stalin's power
Social Policies	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stalin sought to create the new Soviet man and woman based on his belief that people could be programmed 	<p><u>Education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behind the undoubted rise in literacy rates and educational standards, Stalin created a privileged elite

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was done through his educational, women and religious policies <p><u>Education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1931, Stalin had recognized that academic standards had dropped, which prevented the development of an industrialized society • With the rapid expansion of the industrial sector, Stalin needed educated workers to work in skilled drops and be economically productive • Stalin imposed a strong centralized control over education, and introduced 10 years of compulsory schooling for all children and equal opportunity for all • A uniform, core curriculum was introduced and discipline enforced • Achieved great success as literacy rate increased from 51% in 1926 to 88% by 1940 <p><u>Women</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social problems during Stalin's rule included falling birth rates, as well as high divorce and abortion rates, which left the Soviet population in decline • Blamed rising juvenile crime and homeless children on weakening families • Stalin sought the reversal of traditional values through the New Family Code in 1936, which banned abortions, made divorce harder and provided cash rewards for women with more children • Birth rates rose slightly from 25 per 1000 live births in 1935 to 31 per 1000 live births in 1940 • Encouraged the participation of women in the workforce to contribute to the economy • Women formed 1/3 of the workforce in 1935 <p><u>Religion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin saw religion as a sign of backwardness and an affront to the collective needs of the nation • Persecuted and executed many priests, and destroyed many churches and monasteries • By 1941, 40,000 churches and 25,000 mosques were closed down • Only 1% of churches in 1917 left 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intelligentsia that formed the nomenklatura became the equivalent of the bourgeois of the past • Hence, Stalin was able to achieve greater literacy at the expense of his ideology <p><u>Religion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a 1937 census 57% had declared themselves religious • Stalin reversed his policies in WW2 to boost morale; churches were reopen and the clergy released • Nevertheless, this shows that religion had been subdued and co-opted to serve Stalin's goals
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Introduction

- Stalin replaced Lenin's leadership position and rose to power by 1929
- However, in the early 1930s, his power was not yet complete; he did not have total control over both the party and the state
- His efforts to maintain his regime could be defined as efforts to eliminate opposition to his authority and increase support from within and outside the party
- Good Economic Policies: Use of policies pertaining to the economy to gain support and eliminate sources of opposition

- **Use of Force:** Use of terror and coercion to eliminate sources of opposition
- **Personality Cult:** Use of indoctrination to promote the systematic adulation or political worship of an SPS leader
- Time frame: 1929-1953

Totalitarianism

- The 20th century saw the emergence of numerous totalitarian regimes, led by SPS rulers in power
- Historians like Leonard Schapiro have identified totalitarianism based on several central features of an SPS ruler's regime
- 1. A systematic use of coercion and terror to eliminate and pre-empt opposition, ensuring total compliance with the regime
- 2. A political system headed by an all-powerful leader, with a deliberate cult of personality created through censorship and propaganda to indoctrinate all sections of society
- 3. An absolute state control and control of the economy and directing it towards the SPS ruler's goals
- 4. Moulding people into the totalitarian leader's ideal
- The Stalinist state was totalitarian to large extent

Conclusion

- Stalin's domestic policies had mixed success
- While collectivization was a success due to an increase in grain exports in 1931 and the destruction of opposition within the agricultural sector, collectivization was largely a disaster due to the fall in grain output
- Despite the tremendous loss of life and living standards and some exaggeration of official Soviet figures, industrialization was a success in the heavy industry and armaments as it allowed Stalin to defeat Germany in WW2
- The purges implemented by Stalin were successful in eliminating both real and perceived threats to his power, which enabled him to rule with an iron fist until his death in 1953
- The development of the personality cult was successful, reaching a peak in 1936-37 during the Great Purges, as Stalin dominated all aspects of Soviet life