

History Higher Level – Paper 2: Cold War (Origins and End)

Groundwork Questions

1. Origins (conferences)

Introduction:

- Postwar conferences between Russia and USA
- Yalta was the high watermark—displayed serious differences between the two in the issue of the UN, Poland, Germany and reparations
- Potsdam—atom bomb, Germany, Poland and war against Japan

Thesis

- Conferences did play a major part in contributing to the origins of the Cold War as post-war disagreements can be traced to the decisions of the conferences
- But American-Soviet relations cooled only gradually after 1945; there was still extensive contact up to 1947
- The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan made the break in relations evident rather than conferences

Yalta and Potsdam

| Issue | Impact of decisions made |
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| USSR security interests in East Europe | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concerned by their security given invasions from West Europe, the USSR wanted to establish a buffer zone in East Europe• Stalin thought he had a free hand in Yalta over East Europe since the Red Army already occupied it <p>Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stalin would allow for free elections in response to Western demand for self-determination based on the Atlantic Charter but the agreement was so vague that Stalin could stretch it• Western allies wanted a greater role in East Europe which was shot down by Stalin—the US already owned Italy and Greece <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stalin actually adopted a flexible |

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| | <p>policy over the region, and did not seek to immediately impose communist dictatorships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His position hardened in 1947 with the formation of Cominform in 1947 which Communized, Sovietized and Stalinized East Europe—in response to the Marshall Plan |
| <p>Revival of Germany</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sides were concerned about the revival of Germany as it was the aggressor in both World Wars <p>Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potsdam: demilitarization, deindustrialization, decentralization, democratization and denazification of Germany • Divided Germany and Berlin but planned to reunify them in the long term <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soviet zone faced a political challenge to the unpopular SED—free elections would strip SED of power; Stalin had to intervene • Western powers unified their zones firstly for economic reasons in 1948 but USSR took it as a threat • Culminated in the Berlin Blockade, the first real flashpoint in 1948 |
| <p>Economic recovery</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stark differences in economic power after the war—the US were richer given their booming economy while the USSR was badly affected • USSR feared American economic imperialism <p>Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US favored international economic reconstruction—IMF and World Bank as well as |

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| | <p>Bretton Woods, but USSR saw it as economic imperialism and a tool of US diplomacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soviets favored Soviet reconstruction as the primary priority—saw the reparations from the Soviet zone as vital <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploitation of East Germany resulting from the Soviet mindset alarmed the Americans as they needed resources for their own German regions and to revive the European economy • Allies ended reparations and began reviving their economies, preceding the unification of West Germany |
| <p>Japan</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US wanted Soviet entry into war against Japan which Stalin promised in exchange for territory in Japan <p>Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potsdam: success of the atom bomb and Japanese surrender caused the US to back out, as they wanted it to remain an American sphere <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The atomic weapon became a major concern for Soviet security |
| <p>Different national leaders</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roosevelt was overconfident and thought he could resolve everything eventually • Was ill during Yalta hence the US was unprepared and indecisive • Truman replaced Roosevelt by Potsdam and was diplomatically inept and inexperienced; was too aggressive • Churchill was replaced by Attlee <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacked unity in dealing with Stalin |

Pre- and post-war issues

| Issues | Impact |
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| Economic differences | Linked to issue of reparations |
| Military differences and issues of perception | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soviets had the largest ground forces and dominated East Europe • US had the largest air force and navy as well as the atomic monopoly <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sides were increasingly concerned about invasion and was reinforced by Stalin's insecurity causing him to launch his own atomic program • Would not have been a problem if not for pre-war tensions |
| Domestic pressures | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US democracy meant that the government was subject to strong domestic elements • Stalin established a dictatorship over the USSR <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bipartisan rivalry—the Republicans pressured Truman to pursue an anti-communist stance • Stalin conflated personal security with Soviet security—grew increasingly paranoid |
| Threat of Soviet expansionism | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditionally, Russian foreign policy is imperialist—influenced by Marxist internationalism and contemporary economic and strategic concerns <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin was possibly seeking to recreate this empire e.g. Iran, Turkey, Greece and Japan • They also backed communist parties in West Europe e.g. France and Italy |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West responded in the form of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan to revive European economies and resist communism |
| Ideology | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major differences i.e. role of governments, elections, human rights, nature of the economy and society • Hostile US participation in the Russian Civil War and the Red Scare motivated by fears of Marxist internationalism |
| Marriage of convenience | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified by common threat of Nazi Germany despite strained relations • Mutual suspicions such as Second Front and the Soviet spy rings in the West |

Conclusion:

- Even if the conferences did play a notable role in contributing to tensions, it was containment and dollar diplomacy that truly sparked the Cold War by provoking the Berlin Blockade

2. Origins (mutual fears)

Introduction:

- Grand Alliance came under strain after WW2 and began to break down in 1945—prior to WW2 there was an ideological clash but no danger of direct conflict as both were: isolationist and militarily weak (US demobilized while USSR had the Purges)
- Mutual fears: anxieties that the two major powers were seeking political, economic and military dominance over each other, leading to misunderstanding of intentions
- Search for security: physical protection of territories from invasion or subversion

Thesis:

- Mutual fears were indeed important but there were secondary factors which lend themselves also to the origins of the Cold War such as ideology, superpower rivalry, domestic pressure and clash of personalities

Mutual fears

| Issue | Impact |
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| Mutual military threat | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• US had the largest navy and air force in the world—power projection capabilities in addition to atomic monopoly• Red Army clearly dominated East Europe and this conventional superiority made USA fear potential invasion into West Europe <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soviets thought the atomic monopoly was meant to scare them into conceding to the US when in reality the US genuinely wished to end the war and reduce losses—trapped by the impotence of omnipotence; faced many obstacles like self-image, and objection from allies• Berlin Blockade led US to fear imminent invasion which was responded to with creation of NATO, committing the US to defending West Europe—in reality Stalin had no real plans |

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| | until after 1949 |
| Spheres of influence | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin thought FDR conceded East Europe during Yalta; was rebuffed by Truman who called for democracy • US thought domination of East Europe stemmed from Marxist internationalism • US saw the growing popularity of communist parties in West Europe e.g. France and Germany as a sign of Soviet subversion <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin was more driven by search for security as he wanted a buffer against Germany—motivated by previous invasions from the West e.g. Napoleonic Wars, WW1, hostile Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War and WW2 • His control of East Europe was uneven and only sought to impose strong control over critical areas like Poland—preferred a gradual approach • Some East Europe countries even pressed Stalin for intervention, e.g. German SED party • Furthermore, growth of Communism in West Europe was due to post-war economic hardship leading to resentment—Stalin had ordered moderate policies and to preserve the Grand Alliance • West Europe would also pressure the US to play a bigger role in Europe instead |
| US economic dominance vs. Soviet reconstruction | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US GNP rose sharply during the war; the Soviets suffered losses in manpower and infrastructure • Stalin feared economic imperialism and subsequent undermining of his control, citing the Bretton Woods system and |

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| | <p>Marshall Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soviets needed US aid but also convinced that capitalism would collapse, interpreted US reluctance as dollar diplomacy • No agreement over German reparations over industrial output and equipment • Soviets wanted reparations while US wanted to revive the European economy—both missed each other’s objectives <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unification of the Western zones and Marshall Plan threatened Soviet security, hence the “communization, Sovietization and Stalinization” policy as well as creating East Germany • The US only approved the Marshall Plan after the Czech coup in 1948 as it was the last bastion of democracy in East Europe • The US was also reluctant to provide aid even to Britain to minimize tax burden |
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Other factors

| Issue | Impact |
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| Ideology | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differing ideologies: communism and capitalism • Both were universal beliefs and saw each other as inherently expansionist <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reality both sides were more pragmatic • Examples: though Soviets thought US had to provide them with a huge loan and invest in East Europe as the capitalist market was supposedly saturated, the US domestic |

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| | <p>economy was booming and there was no need to invest in East Europe; similarly, US believed that Soviets were being expansionist when they were merely protecting their own security interests</p> |
| <p>Superpower rivalry</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The belief that a great power had the right to assert its influence over the world • Driven by the Russian history of empire building and sense of entitlement as a victor state, trying to expand into Iran, Turkey, Greece and Japan • Decline of Britain created a power vacuum in the Mediterranean and Middle East <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin did back down from expansionism when the US adopted a firm response—not noted by the Americans |
| <p>Domestic pressures</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic system of the US: responsiveness to public opinion required • Truman’s popularity was dropping by 1946 amid accusations from Republicans of pandering to Soviets • Stalin faced pressure from the Soviet people to relax his policies partly due to exposure to higher standards of living in Europe <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truman eventually forced to adopt his doctrine and containment to save his approval ratings • Stalin justified his repressive policies using US “threat” |
| <p>Clash of personalities</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FDR did not share his thoughts even with his advisers—everyone |

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| | <p>was unclear about his policy until the opinion polls came out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Was contradictory and vague, tended to improvise• Was overconfident and his lack of open support for a Soviet sphere of influence confused Stalin• He died before Potsdam and Truman replaced him— inexperience and blind faithfulness to FDR's policies failed to impress Stalin• Churchill lost the election and was replaced by Attlee who was more concerned with domestic issues |
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3. Origins (ideology)

Introduction:

- Defining ideology—a set of ideas which is seen as the most appropriate way on which society should work
- It did play a vital role in the rising tensions after—or even before—WW2 but if it is an important cause, it implies that it had a major impact on the decision making processes of the superpowers
- Also assumes that ideology made the conflict inevitable
- Analyzing the key areas of conflict to examine the role of ideology

Thesis:

- Both superpowers responded to ideological pressures in a pragmatic manner; security matters and domestic and external pressures were often far more important

Ideology: a clash between communism and democracy/capitalism

| USA | USSR |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited government • Separation of powers • Multi-party politics and elections • Universal human rights • Free market and free trade • Open society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong central government • Total control by the party • One party system • Very few rights • Command economy • Closed society |

Ideological clashes (political)

| Issue | Impact |
|-------------------------|--|
| American domestic fears | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep fears dating back to Russian Civil War and the 1920s Red Scare—feared domestic subversion • Cited Soviet ideology of Marxist international and inevitable war; 5 Year Plans were to establish a war economy <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communism in the US was overstated—the party was very small and was suppressed easily • US policy was not seeking to destroy Russia as originally feared; was isolationist until 1941 • Likewise, USSR's world |

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| | <p>revolution quickly dissipated and was replaced by socialism in one country, dismantling Comintern in 1943</p> |
| <p>Spheres of influence</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americans supposedly wished to develop a sphere of influence over West Europe • Soviet creation of the East Europe bloc was supposedly driven by Marxist internationalism—enforced by the Red Army’s presence • Thought that Stalin wished to eventually export communism to West Europe <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US actually wanted to draw down their forces due to domestic pressures • Marxist internationalism was dismantled and replaced with an inward looking socialism in one country system—dismantled Comintern in 1943 • Roosevelt’s ambivalence gave Stalin the impression that he had a free hand in East Europe; furthermore, Stalin did not impose sweeping communism immediately—did so only in Poland which posed the largest threat to the Soviets • Gradualist approach seen in Hungary where it was a democracy up to 1947 where local communists took over on their own • West Europe was not Stalin’s priority as well—pressed them to remain moderate and join coalitions • Policy hardened only after Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan |

Ideological clashes (economic)

| Issues | Impact |
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| Global economic restructuring | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USA was the richest in the world by 1945 (GNP: \$211bn) and Soviets were less than a quarter—devastated by WW2 • Soviets saw Bretton Woods, IMF and World Bank as serving the capitalist systems and priming the world for exploitation • Did not want to reveal economic data as a closed society <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US did not wish to exploit anyone but rather wished to ensure peace and counter global instability and protectionism of the 1930s |
| Dollar diplomacy | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin assumed the US economy would collapse after WW2 and would require Soviet business—expected aid • US had cut off Lend-Lease to the Soviets and gave aid in return for economic access to East Europe • Soviets were led to resume their pre-war autarky <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soviets failed to understand US domestic politics—taxpayers would be unwilling to finance such an aid program after the war • US were similarly unfriendly to the UK—cut off Lend-Lease and provided a massive loan which was renegotiated multiple times on unfriendly terms |
| Capitalist economic zone in West Europe | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some argue that the US wished to create an exclusive economic zone • The Marshall Plan was supposedly to create an |

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| | <p>economic sphere, ensuring free flow of US content into the East bloc</p> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reality, this was due to pressure from UK to revive the German economy—was to aid the economic revival of West Europe and West Germany • US Congress opposed the Marshall Plan until the shock of the Czech coup in 1948 • Mainly due to fearful West European leaders who wished to stave off expansion of Soviet communism |
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Security reasons

| Issues | Impact |
|--------------|--|
| Soviet fears | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suffered numerous attacks from the West; Napoleonic Wars, Russian Civil War, WW2 • Wished to create a buffer on their Western border • US had the largest air force and navy as well as the atomic monopoly <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US failed to appreciate security concerns given their invulnerability • Atomic monopoly and indecisiveness stirred up suspicion, causing Soviets to accelerate bomb work leading to 1949 |
| US fears | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soviets had the largest conventional army in the world—argued that Soviet communism was dedicated to destroying American way of life and its international authority • Long Telegram advocated |

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| | <p>containment</p> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led to the Truman Doctrine which forced Stalin's hand |
| Germany | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sides feared a resurgent Germany • Western creation of Trizonia; West Germany and it joining NATO caused fears among Soviets <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West European countries were the ones who pressed for NATO as they were inferior to the Red Army—required a shield |

Domestic pressures

| Issues | Impact |
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| Stalin | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absolute ruler but his deputies waged internal wars to win his support, leading to uncertainty in Soviet foreign policy—some wanted compromise while others wanted resistance |
| Truman | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truman faced stiff Republican opposition and pressured him to adopt a strong stance towards the Soviets • No evidence of strong anti-Soviet feelings till 1947 • Truman was pressured to sack officials who were conciliatory towards the Soviets |

Pressures from allies and client states

| Issues | Impact |
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| East Germany | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin thought the communist SED would win in East Germany • Unpopularity of the SED led them to seek Stalin's |

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| | intervention, pressuring him to support a separate East Germany |
| West Europe | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West European centralist parties faced strong communist opposition, pressing the US to support them via Marshall Plan and the creation of NATO • Heightened American perception of the Soviet threat |

Imperialism

| Issues | Impact |
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| USSR | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russians were inherent empire-builders; expansion was only halted by WW1 • Stalin saw it as his right to restore Russia given his victory in WW2 • Stalin was both a communist and a nationalist Russian imperialist • US refusal to provide Russians with economic support led to harsh reparations policies in East Europe and failed to meet West Europe's obligations |
| USA | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americans were supposedly driven by capitalistic concerns • The Marshall Plan was supposedly to create an economic sphere, ensuring free flow of US content into the East bloc <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reality, this was due to pressure from UK to revive the German economy—was to aid the economic revival of West Europe and West Germany • US Congress opposed the Marshall Plan until the shock of the Czech coup in 1948 • Mainly due to fearful West European leaders who wished to |

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| | stave off expansion of Soviet communism |
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Role of leaders

| Issues | Impact |
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| Stalin | Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paranoia conflated Soviet security with his own security, meant that compromise was out of the question • Drawn to communist and war with capitalism • Opportunist—tried to expand into Iran, Turkey, Greece and Japan and deployed the Red Army but backed down quickly • Spies told him that the US was genuinely ready to cooperate in 1945 but he dismissed the notions |
| Truman | Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexperienced—led to no coherent foreign policy till 1947 • Confused by Stalin's ambivalence |

4. Origins (policies)

Introduction:

- Cold War responsibility largely covered who was responsible in the traditionalist and revisionist schools of thought that ascribed blame to either side
- Post-revisionists conceded that both sides were to blame and began to focus on what was responsible for the breakout of the war i.e. policies

Thesis:

- Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan ultimately catalyzed the split of Berlin and triggered the Berlin Blockade which hardened Cold War tensions

Soviet policies

| Policy | Impact |
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| Expansion into East Europe by end of WW2 | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stalin adopted a gradual policy for East Europe based on specific circumstances relevant to each state—forcibly imposed communist rule only on Poland as it posed a direct threat to Soviet security• East European countries also had considerable local support for communism• However, this expansion was interpreted as Soviet violation of the Declaration of Liberated Europe—which advocated prevention of expansion and self-determination <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• East Europe was determined by the Red Army and Poland, Hungary and Romania came under the sphere of influence• Stalin saw the agreement as non-binding and Roosevelt led him to believe he had a free hand in East Europe• Expansion was largely due to security concerns as seen with Poland; furthermore this only reflected the existing balance of power—the Red Army already |

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| | <p>had control of these states</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the change of the US position from a regional to a global power that saw the Soviet takeover as a threat to its global authority and advocacy for free exchange of ideals |
| COMECON | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formed in January 1949, a reason for the outbreak and the development of the Cold War • A series of bilateral trade treaties between East Europe countries and Soviets • Coordinated 5 Year Plans and encouraged specialization in chemicals and engineering • Designed to control economic development and support agricultural collectivization as well as development of heavy industries • Communization, Sovietization and Stalinization of East Europe <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caused tensions as many Western politicians felt that East Germany was lost • West introduced the Deutschmark in 1948 but did not apply it to Berlin till after the Soviets introduced the Ostmark and claimed it applied to the whole of Berlin • Western currency retaliation led to Berlin Blockade in 1948 to attempt to stop the economic progress of West Germany • COMECON was in reality a response to the Marshall Plan—which was the true reason for the breaking up of the wartime alliance |
| Berlin Blockade | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berlin was divided into four zones but Berlin itself lay in the Soviet |

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| | <p>zone and the Western forces in Berlin depended on supplies from the Western zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blockade was enacted in 1948, cutting off all communication routes and stopped the supply of food, electricity and gas from reaching the West Berliners • Existing stocks would only last a month • West introduced a counter blockade to cut East Germany off • Lucius Clay decided to supply West Berlin by airlift—200,000 flights in 320 days • Soviets were put in a poor light <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caused the military alliance NATO to be formed for a military presence against the Soviets and also confirmed American commitment to West Europe, securing its leadership role • However, the blockade was a response to the Marshall Plan which aimed to revive the West European countries and counter communism • Furthermore, the application of the Deutschmark to Berlin was rightly interpreted by Soviets as a sign of a separate West German state—prospect of West German rearmament and recovery horrified the Soviets into carrying out the blockade |
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American policies

| Policy | Impact |
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| Truman Doctrine | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced in 1947 as an announcement that the USA should support countries threatened by communism • Reflected a belief that there was |

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| | <p>a Soviet mastermind behind every crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sparked by increasing pressure on Truman by the Republicans to adopt a tougher stance on the USSR • Long Telegram by George Kennan argued that Soviet expansionism was inherent and that the US had to adopt a policy of containment—changed the attitudes of policy makers and contributed to the hardening • British withdrawal from Turkey and Greece created a power vacuum that forced the US to intervene though the situation was not really that bad • Truman made a speech in 1947 exaggerating the threat posed by communism and dramatized the conflict as an ideological fight—Congress granted \$400m in aid to Greece and Turkey |
| <p>Marshall Plan</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European economic crisis from 1946-47 saw agricultural, industrial output and exports take a major hit • US realized that West Europe required aid and feared that Stalin could take advantage of the chaos • Utilized large dollar grants which West Europe used to purchase food, raw materials and industrial machinery from America • Czech coup in 1948 shocked the US congress from having a firm opposition to financial aid (\$29bn became \$5.3bn) when the communists overthrew a democratic government • America provided \$13.5bn to 16 countries up to 1952—mainly to Britain, France and Germany |

5. End (Reagan, Gorbachev, People Power, Economy¹)

Introduction:

- Reagan had two terms where the first involved hardline policies against the USSR and the second was more conciliatory
- The first term alienated the Soviets while the second contributed to a smaller degree to ending the war—Reagan triumphalists claim that Western strength and containment ended the Cold War
- Prior to 1985, Soviet domestic policies were aimed at maintaining the single party dictatorship—foreign policy was hypercompetitive
- Gorbachev's New Thinking fundamentally changed the direction of Soviet foreign policy especially with satellite states; glasnost and perestroika caused the CPSU and USSR to collapse
- People power school of thought: role of the masses in the East European bloc and the USSR as well as anti-war movements in the West
- End of the Cold War defined as collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 OR collapse of the USSR in December 1991

Thesis:

- Gorbachev was far more significant in ending the Cold War compared to Reagan—contributed to also by people power but it was Gorbachev who allowed people power to breakout

Reagan's policies

| Policy | Impact |
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| Ideological offensive | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claimed that the USSR was a creation of ideology and very vulnerable to assault; tried to undermine its legitimacy in the eyes of the Soviet people • Condemned it as an evil empire—especially after the shooting of flight KLo07—e.g. a speech to a Christian group • Suggests that disillusionment with communism from the Soviet population was caused by this offensive <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality was that disillusionment was already inherent due to the political repression and economic mismanagement |

¹ Unnecessary unless it is a given factor

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulated by Basket 3 provisions and Ostpolitik (opening of relations between FRG and GDR) which demonstrated the superiority of the capitalist system • Dissidence was present only in the intellectual class aka. Solzhenitsyn • Communists retained support especially from KGB and Red Army • More likely that Reagan was doing this to win domestic support and enforce superiority of the American way of life, placing US on the high moral ground • Also thought that this would compel the Soviets to take him seriously |
| <p>Massive increase in defense spending</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded the US Navy from 450 to 600 ships, revived B1 and B2 bombers, deployed the MX ICBM and Trident missile defense system • Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”) • Supposedly to force the USSR into bankruptcy <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence to suggest that the Soviets followed suit; the economy was already in crisis and the aging leadership was in disarray • Not supported by many key Reagan officials—rather, this was to give the US a bargaining chip in negotiations • Furthermore, lifting the sanctions imposed after invasion of Afghanistan suggests this was not the intention • Even then, he did not fulfill his |

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| | <p>aim as it only convinced the Soviets of a possible nuclear attack; culminated in Able Archer 83</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soviets withdrew from START and INF in 1983 as a result of rearmament • Did not sustain this increase anyway as the US developed a heavy deficit—the world’s largest debtor by the mid-1980s • Served to create a stalemate |
| <p>Reagan doctrine</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revived the policy of rollback from the 1950s—to intervene in various skirmishes around the world, e.g. Central America and Afghanistan to actively suppress and fight the Soviet advance • Supposedly a key policy which forced Soviet retreat from Afghanistan <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reality the countries in the regions became communist due to local agency rather than Soviet intervention, e.g. Nicaragua—the leftists overthrew a US-backed dictatorship • Soviets had no intention of encouraging these movements and shied away from the region after Afghanistan • Reagan only sent the Stinger missiles in 1986 when Gorbachev had already decided to pull out • Even if rollback was achieved, these areas were unimportant to Soviet interests; East Europe was the key • Possible that Reagan was using this to garner domestic support |
| <p>Conciliatory second term in office</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifted from hardline policies to a softer one • Had survived an assassination |

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| | <p>attempt and had a reputation as a warrior; he had nothing to lose and did not have to fear public perception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under strong pressure from nuclear disarmament groups and Congress to reduce military presence in Europe due to budget deficit • 1. Accepted Gorbachev's sincerity and recognized that he was the one who could end the Cold War—supported Gorbachev's New Thinking • 2. Won the support of the CIA and defense community—Reagan played a vital role in pressing the military to accept reductions • 3. Won over the NATO leaders such as Thatcher, Mitterrand and Kohl—convinced them to renew their faith in US agreements with the Soviets |
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Gorbachev's policies

| Policy | Impact |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Foreign policy: New Thinking</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous Soviet policy was influenced by Communist internationalism—inevitability of ideological war, security concerns and opportunism • By the time Gorbachev took over, the Soviets were overstretched due to military deployment in East Europe and the 3rd world, financial subsidies and military aid—e.g. Afghanistan • Gorbachev got rid of Communist internationalism and favored accommodation with the West based on common universal values • 1) Withdrew from the 3rd world and ended support for national |

liberation movements, stopping aid to their clients like Vietnam, Nicaragua and Ethiopia; Afghanistan was the most significant

- 2) Ended economic subsidies to the East European bloc and openly promoted glasnost and perestroika in their satellite states
- 3) Rejected the Brezhnev doctrine and replaced it with the Sinatra doctrine: "my way"—local communist regimes were no longer Soviet-backed
- 4) Reasonable sufficiency: reduced the number of nuclear weapons and orientated conventional forces to a defensive posture despite Reagan's refusal to drop SDI—signed the INF (nuclear arms reduction with on-site verification), Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (reduced Soviet conventional superiority) and START 1 (reduced up to 80% of all strategic nuclear weapons)
- 5) Unilateral concessions: reduction of forces, withdrawal of Red Army from East Europe and Sino-Russia border, and withdrawal from Afghanistan

Analysis:

- Lack of subsidies meant that the economic crisis was worsened—the standard of living fell sharply
- Sinatra doctrine surfaced in 1989 with the collapse of local communist regimes in East Europe, e.g. Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany; essentially declared that East Europe was no longer a Soviet concern
- Foreign policy changes allowed

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>Gorbachev to focus on glasnost and perestroika—power as General Secretary meant that he could overcome the Soviet military-industrial complex</p> |
| <p>Domestic policy: glasnost and perestroika (openness and restructuring)</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The USSR was highly centralized and a repressive single-party state under the CPSU, controlling all aspects of society • There was socio-economic stagnation • Weak agricultural sector, inefficient heavy industry, shortages and parallel markets • Social troubles: alcoholism, drop in health and education standards • Hoped to use glasnost to promoted openness and transparency in the government, promoting freedom of information and debate to revitalize the USSR, relax censorship and soften human rights issues • Hoped to use perestroika to restructure the political and economic system, to separate the party and state and make the economy more disciplined and efficient • CPSU lost control over economic policy and removed the impact of ideology on the economy—allowed greater industrial autonomy, shifted away from heavy industries and promoted workers' rights, as well as seeking for FDI and aid <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasnost resulted in the undermining of the CPSU's monopoly of truth and information • Perestroika faced stiff resistance from the CPSU; Gorbachev tried |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>to bypass this with popularly elected bodies in 1989, leading to multiparty systems and seeing a sharp rise in the number of popular movements but were small and generally ineffectual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy reforms saw corruption and undermining of living standards; drop in GNP, higher unemployment and shortages • Would eventually lead to a coup against Gorbachev; indecision and incompetence of the plotters discredited the CPSU, leading to its collapse in 1991 |
| <p>Domestic policy: separatist threat</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorbachev failed to take strong action in dealing with separatism in the USSR • Resentment over repressive rule by the CPSU, enforced by the Red Army—opposition to Russification • Did not repress separatism in the Baltic states, Muslim republics etc., e.g. Georgia • Failed to quiet Yeltsin who asserted the identity and sovereignty of Russia <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culminated in Gorbachev being forced to negotiate the Union Treaty which would grant greater independence to satellite states, seen as the last straw that threatened the unity of the USSR and resulting in the coup |

People power

| Movement | Impact |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Anti-war movement in the West</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put much pressure on Western governments in the early 1980s <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wore down after the mid-1980s |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>due to growing American economic problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence that it even affected US decision-making, e.g. continued to deploy Pershing and Cruise missiles to counter Soviet SS20 deployment |
| <p>East Europe and Soviet satellite states</p> | <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising dissidence especially after Helsinki accords in 1975 (Basket 3), leading to the rise of Helsinki Watch Groups • Affected mainly new middle and educated classes who were more exposed and were aided by Ostpolitik which increased East-West contacts <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The movement actually remained very small due to communist secret police by early 1980s • Unrest was limited due to huge loans taken in by communist regimes to support their standard of living; it was only by the late 1980s that the standard of living reversed and popular unrest grew • However, this standard of living only fell due to Gorbachev's policies of withholding subsidies • His calls for reform resonated with East Europeans and put pressure on local regimes • Gorbachev's backing of the Brezhnev doctrine would have easily put these movements down |

Essay Questions/Practice

1. For what reasons, and with what results, did the Second World War allies become post-war enemies? (May 2008)

Introduction:

- Grand Alliance (UK, US, USSR) began to break down in 1945 following prewar and wartime tensions
- First hint of conflict at Yalta and Potsdam over several issues—postwar tensions also given different circumstances after the war
- Led to the division of Germany, followed by the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan; catalyzed the split of Berlin and triggered the Berlin Blockade, the first real flashpoint

Thesis:

- Reasons can be discussed in themes: conferences, mutual fears, and ideology—the mutual fears and pragmatism was ultimately the main driving factor alongside domestic and foreign pressures
- Consequences can be discussed in terms of Soviet and US actions after the war; the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan (dollar diplomacy), and Stalin's COMECON and Berlin Blockade—the US may be more to blame even given Stalin's paranoia

Reasons

Conferences—Yalta and Potsdam

USSR wanted to maintain their interests in East Europe as a buffer zone

- Convinced that Roosevelt gave them a free hand as the Red Army had occupied it anyway
- Stalin would allow for free elections in response to Western demand for self-determination based on the Atlantic Charter but the agreement was so vague that Stalin could stretch it
- Western allies wanted a greater role in East Europe which was shot down by Stalin—the US already owned Italy and Greece
- Stalin actually adopted a flexible policy over the region, and did not seek to immediately impose communist dictatorships
- His position hardened in 1947 with the formation of Cominform in 1947 which Communized, Sovietized and Stalinized East Europe—in response to the Marshall Plan

Germany

- Both sides worried about Germany and its potential revival, since it was at fault for both WW1 and WW2
- Divided Germany and Berlin but planned to reunify them in the long term
- Soviet zone faced a political challenge to the unpopular SED—free elections would strip SED of power; Stalin had to intervene

- Western powers unified their zones firstly for economic reasons in 1948 but USSR took it as a threat

Economic recovery

- Stark differences in economic power after the war—the US were richer given their booming economy while the USSR was badly affected
- US favored international economic reconstruction—IMF and World Bank as well as Bretton Woods, but USSR saw it as economic imperialism and a tool of US diplomacy
- Soviets favored Soviet reconstruction as the primary priority—saw the reparations from the Soviet zone as vital
- Exploitation of East Germany resulting from the Soviet mindset alarmed the Americans as they needed resources for their own German regions and to revive the European economy
- Allies ended reparations and began reviving their economies, preceding the unification of West Germany

Different national leaders

- Roosevelt was overconfident and thought he could resolve everything eventually
- Was ill during Yalta hence the US was unprepared and indecisive
- Truman replaced Roosevelt by Potsdam and was diplomatically inept and inexperienced; was too aggressive
- Churchill was replaced by Attlee
- No unity and confused Stalin

Ideology

US domestic fears of Communism

- Dating back to the Russian Civil War and the Red Scare in the 1920s—feared expansionism
- Communism in the US was overstated—the party was very small and was suppressed easily
- US policy was not seeking to destroy Russia as originally feared; was isolationist until 1941

Spheres of influence

- Americans supposedly wished to develop a sphere of influence over West Europe
- Soviet creation of the East Europe bloc was supposedly driven by Marxist internationalism—enforced by the Red Army's presence
- The US actually wanted to draw down their forces due to domestic pressures
- Marxist internationalism was dismantled and replaced with an inward looking socialism in one country system—dismantled Comintern in 1943
- Gradualist approach seen in Hungary where it was a democracy up to 1947 where local communists took over on their own
- West Europe was not Stalin's priority as well—pressed them to remain moderate and join coalitions
- Policy hardened only after Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan

Economic situation

- USA was the richest in the world by 1945 (GNP: \$211bn) and Soviets were less than a quarter—devastated by WW2
- Soviets saw Bretton Woods, IMF and World Bank as serving the capitalist systems and priming the world for exploitation
- Did not want to reveal economic data as a closed society

Dollar diplomacy

- Stalin assumed the US economy would collapse after WW2 and would require Soviet business—expected aid
- US had cut off Lend-Lease to the Soviets and gave aid in return for economic access to East Europe
- Soviets were led to resume their pre-war autarky

Rise of capitalism in West Europe

- Some argue that the US wished to create an exclusive economic zone
- The Marshall Plan was supposedly to create an economic sphere, ensuring free flow of US content into the East bloc
- Was actually due to UK pressure to revive the German economy to prevent it from being a burden on Europe
- Czech coup in 1948 led to the approval of the Marshall Plan

Mutual fears

Military threat

- US had the largest navy and air force in the world—power projection capabilities in addition to atomic monopoly
- Red Army clearly dominated East Europe and this conventional superiority made USA fear potential invasion into West Europe
- Soviets thought the atomic monopoly was meant to scare them into conceding to the US when in reality the US genuinely wished to end the war and reduce losses—trapped by the impotence of omnipotence; faced many obstacles like self-image, and objection from allies

Spheres of influence

- Originated from the conferences: concession of East Europe during Yalta and Potsdam
- US interpreted domination of East Europe as expansionism; was more for security and was motivated by invasions from the West, e.g. Napoleonic Wars, WW1, Russian Civil War, WW2
- Stalin's control of East Europe was uneven and only sought to impose strong control over critical areas like Poland—preferred a gradual approach
- Some East Europe countries even pressed Stalin for intervention, e.g. German SED party
- Furthermore, growth of Communism in West Europe was due to post-war economic hardship leading to resentment—Stalin had ordered moderate policies and to preserve the Grand Alliance
- West Europe would also pressure the US to play a bigger role in Europe instead

Economic insecurity

- US GNP rose sharply during the war; the Soviets suffered losses in manpower and infrastructure
- Stalin feared economic imperialism and subsequent undermining of his control, citing the Bretton Woods system and Marshall Plan
- Soviets needed US aid but also convinced that capitalism would collapse, interpreted US reluctance as dollar diplomacy
- No agreement over German reparations over industrial output and equipment
- Soviets wanted reparations while US wanted to revive the European economy—both missed each other's objectives

Results (Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, COMECON and Berlin Blockade)

US Action (Truman Doctrine of containment):

- Truman's popularity was falling by 1946 and was accused of pandering to Soviets—eventually forced to adopt his doctrine and containment to save his approval ratings
- Introduced in 1947 as an announcement that the USA should support countries threatened by communism
- Reflected a belief that there was a Soviet mastermind behind every crisis
- Long Telegram by George Kennan argued that Soviet expansionism was inherent and that the US had to adopt a policy of containment—changed the attitudes of policy makers and contributed to the hardening
- British withdrawal from Turkey and Greece created a power vacuum that forced the US to intervene though the situation was not really that bad
- Truman made a speech in 1947 exaggerating the threat posed by communism and dramatized the conflict as an ideological fight—Congress granted \$400m in aid to Greece and Turkey

US Action (Marshall Plan):

- Long Telegram by George Kennan argued that Soviet expansionism was inherent and that the US had to adopt a policy of containment—changed the attitudes of policy makers and contributed to the hardening
- British withdrawal from Turkey and Greece created a power vacuum that forced the US to intervene though the situation was not really that bad
- Truman made a speech in 1947 exaggerating the threat posed by communism and dramatized the conflict as an ideological fight—Congress granted \$400m in aid to Greece and Turkey

USSR Action (Expansion into EE)

- Stalin adopted a gradual policy for East Europe based on specific circumstances relevant to each state—forcibly imposed communist rule only on Poland as it posed a direct threat to Soviet security
- East European countries also had considerable local support for communism
- However, this expansion was interpreted as Soviet violation of the Declaration of Liberated Europe—which advocated prevention of expansion and self-determination

- Expansion was largely due to security concerns as seen with Poland; furthermore this only reflected the existing balance of power—the Red Army already had control of these states

USSR Action (COMECON):

- Formed in January 1949, a reason for the outbreak and the development of the Cold War
- A series of bilateral trade treaties between East Europe countries and Soviets
- Coordinated 5 Year Plans and encouraged specialization in chemicals and engineering
- Designed to control economic development and support agricultural collectivization as well as development of heavy industries
- Communization, Sovietization and Stalinization of East Europe
- Caused tensions as many Western politicians felt that East Germany was lost
- West introduced the Deutschmark in 1948 but did not apply it to Berlin till after the Soviets introduced the Ostmark and claimed it applied to the whole of Berlin
- Western currency retaliation led to Berlin Blockade in 1948 to attempt to stop the economic progress of West Germany
- COMECON was in reality a response to the Marshall Plan

USSR Action (Berlin Blockade)

- Berlin was divided into four zones but Berlin itself lay in the Soviet zone and the Western forces in Berlin depended on supplies from the Western zones
- Blockade was enacted in 1948, cutting off all communication routes and stopped the supply of food, electricity and gas from reaching the West Berliners
- Existing stocks would only last a month
- West introduced a counter blockade to cut East Germany off
- Lucius Clay decided to supply West Berlin by airlift—200,000 flights in 320 days
- Soviets were put in a poor light
- Creation of NATO

Conclusion:

- Alliance broke due to mutual fears and search for security, egged on by domestic and foreign pressures
- The USA undertook the first few unfriendly actions and threatened Soviet interests, which led to a retaliation in the form of the blockade, thus starting the Cold War

2. “The importance of ideology as a major cause of the Cold War has been greatly exaggerated.” To what extent do you agree with this statement? (November 2008)

Introduction:

- Defining ideology—a set of ideas which is seen as the most appropriate way on which society should work
- It did play a vital role in the rising tensions after—or even before—WW2 but if it is an important cause, it implies that it had a major impact on the decision making processes of the superpowers
- Also assumes that ideology made the conflict inevitable
- Analyzing the key areas of conflict to examine the role of ideology

Thesis:

- Both superpowers responded to ideological pressures in a pragmatic manner; security matters and domestic and external pressures were often far more important

Ideology: a clash between communism and democracy/capitalism

| USA | USSR |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited government• Separation of powers• Multi-party politics and elections• Universal human rights• Free market and free trade• Open society | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong central government• Total control by the party• One party system• Very few rights• Command economy• Closed society |

Ideological clashes (political)

American domestic fears

- Deep fears dating back to Russian Civil War and the 1920s Red Scare—feared domestic subversion
- Cited Soviet ideology of Marxist international and inevitable war; 5 Year Plans were to establish a war economy
- Communism in the US was overstated—the party was very small and was suppressed easily
- US policy was not seeking to destroy Russia as originally feared; was isolationist until 1941
- Likewise, USSR’s world revolution quickly dissipated and was replaced by socialism in one country, dismantling Comintern in 1943

Spheres of influence

- Americans supposedly wished to develop a sphere of influence over West Europe
- Soviet creation of the East Europe bloc was supposedly driven by Marxist internationalism—enforced by the Red Army’s presence
- Thought that Stalin wished to eventually export communism to West Europe
- The US actually wanted to draw down their forces due to domestic pressures

- Marxist internationalism was dismantled and replaced with an inward looking socialism in one country system—dismantled Comintern in 1943
- Roosevelt's ambivalence gave Stalin the impression that he had a free hand in East Europe; furthermore, Stalin did not impose sweeping communism immediately—did so only in Poland which posed the largest threat to the Soviets
- Gradualist approach seen in Hungary where it was a democracy up to 1947 where local communists took over on their own
- West Europe was not Stalin's priority as well—pressed them to remain moderate and join coalitions
- Policy hardened only after Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan

Ideological clashes (economic)

Global economic restructuring

- USA was the richest in the world by 1945 (GNP: \$211bn) and Soviets were less than a quarter—devastated by WW2
- Soviets saw Bretton Woods, IMF and World Bank as serving the capitalist systems and priming the world for exploitation
- Did not want to reveal economic data as a closed society
- US did not wish to exploit anyone but rather wished to ensure peace and counter global instability and protectionism of the 1930s

Dollar diplomacy

- Stalin assumed the US economy would collapse after WW2 and would require Soviet business—expected aid
- US had cut off Lend-Lease to the Soviets and gave aid in return for economic access to East Europe
- Soviets were led to resume their pre-war autarky
- Soviets failed to understand US domestic politics—taxpayers would be unwilling to finance such an aid program after the war
- US were similarly unfriendly to the UK—cut off Lend-Lease and provided a massive loan which was renegotiated multiple times on unfriendly terms

West Europe capitalist economic zone

- Some argue that the US wished to create an exclusive economic zone
- The Marshall Plan was supposedly to create an economic sphere, ensuring free flow of US content into the East bloc
- In reality, this was due to pressure from UK to revive the German economy—was to aid the economic revival of West Europe and West Germany
- US Congress opposed the Marshall Plan until the shock of the Czech coup in 1948
- Mainly due to fearful West European leaders who wished to stave off expansion of Soviet communism

Security reasons

Soviet fears

- Suffered numerous attacks from the West; Napoleonic Wars, Russian Civil War, WW2
- Wished to create a buffer on their Western border
- US had the largest air force and navy as well as the atomic monopoly
- US failed to appreciate security concerns given their invulnerability
- Atomic monopoly and indecisiveness stirred up suspicion, causing Soviets to accelerate bomb work leading to 1949

US fears

- Soviets had the largest conventional army in the world—argued that Soviet communism was dedicated to destroying American way of life and its international authority
- Long Telegram advocated containment
- Led to the Truman Doctrine which forced Stalin's hand

Germany

- Both sides feared a resurgent Germany
- Western creation of Trizonia; West Germany and it joining NATO caused fears among Soviets
- West European countries were the ones who pressed for NATO as they were inferior to the Red Army—required a shield

Domestic pressures

Stalin

- Absolute ruler but his deputies waged internal wars to win his support, leading to uncertainty in Soviet foreign policy—some wanted compromise while others wanted resistance

Truman

- Truman faced stiff Republican opposition and pressured him to adopt a strong stance towards the Soviets
- No evidence of strong anti-Soviet feelings till 1947
- Truman was pressured to sack officials who were conciliatory towards the Soviets

Pressures from allies and client states

East Germany

- Stalin thought the communist SED would win in East Germany
- Unpopularity of the SED led them to seek Stalin's intervention, pressuring him to support a separate East Germany

West Europe

- West European centrist parties faced strong communist opposition, pressing the US to support them via Marshall Plan and the creation of NATO
- Heightened American perception of the Soviet threat

Imperialism

USSR

- Russians were inherent empire-builders; expansion was only halted by WW1
- Stalin saw it as his right to restore Russia given his victory in WW2
- Stalin was both a communist and a nationalist Russian imperialist
- US refusal to provide Russians with economic support led to harsh reparations policies in East Europe and failed to meet West Europe's obligations

USA

- Americans were supposedly driven by capitalistic concerns
- The Marshall Plan was supposedly to create an economic sphere, ensuring free flow of US content into the East bloc
- In reality, this was due to pressure from UK to revive the German economy—was to aid the economic revival of West Europe and West Germany
- US Congress opposed the Marshall Plan until the shock of the Czech coup in 1948
- Mainly due to fearful West European leaders who wished to stave off expansion of Soviet communism

Role of leaders

Stalin

- Paranoia conflated Soviet security with his own security, meant that compromise was out of the question
- Drawn to communist and war with capitalism
- Opportunist—tried to expand into Iran, Turkey, Greece and Japan and deployed the Red Army but backed down quickly
- Spies told him that the US was genuinely ready to cooperate in 1945 but he dismissed the notions

Truman

- Inexperienced—led to no coherent foreign policy till 1947
- Confused by Stalin's ambivalence

Conclusion:

- Both superpowers responded to ideological pressures in a pragmatic manner; security matters and domestic and external pressures were often far more important

3. "Mutual fears and search for security were the reasons for the breakdown of East-West relations between 1945 and 1949." With specific reference to developments in this

period, to what extent do you agree with this statement? (May 2013)

Introduction:

- Grand Alliance came under strain after WW2 and began to break down in 1945—prior to WW2 there was an ideological clash but no danger of direct conflict as both were: isolationist and militarily weak (US demobilized while USSR had the Purges)
- Mutual fears: anxieties that the two major powers were seeking political, economic and military dominance over each other, leading to misunderstanding of intentions
- Search for security: physical protection of territories from invasion or subversion

Events:

- Yalta and Potsdam Conferences (1945)
- Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan announced (1947)
- Unification of Western zones of Berlin and Germany: Bizonia and Trizonia (1948)
- Post-Czech coup Marshall Plan approval (1948)
- Berlin Blockade (1948-1949)
- NATO's creation (1949)

Thesis:

- Mutual fears were indeed important but there were secondary factors which lend themselves also to the origins of the Cold War such as ideology, superpower rivalry, domestic pressure and clash of personalities

Mutual fears

Mutual military threat

- US had the largest navy and air force in the world—power projection capabilities in addition to atomic monopoly
- Red Army clearly dominated East Europe and this conventional superiority made USA fear potential invasion into West Europe
- Soviets thought the atomic monopoly was meant to scare them into conceding to the US when in reality the US genuinely wished to end the war and reduce losses—trapped by the impotence of omnipotence; faced many obstacles like self-image, and objection from allies
- Berlin Blockade led US to fear imminent invasion which was responded to with creation of NATO, committing the US to defending West Europe—in reality Stalin had no real plans until after 1949

Spheres of influences

- Stalin thought FDR conceded East Europe during Yalta; was rebuffed by Truman who called for democracy

- US thought domination of East Europe stemmed from Marxist internationalism
- US saw the growing popularity of communist parties in West Europe e.g. France and Germany as a sign of Soviet subversion
- Stalin was more driven by search for security as he wanted a buffer against Germany—motivated by previous invasions from the West e.g. Napoleonic Wars, WW1, hostile Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War and WW2
- His control of East Europe was uneven and only sought to impose strong control over critical areas like Poland—preferred a gradual approach
- Some East Europe countries even pressed Stalin for intervention, e.g. German SED party
- Furthermore, growth of Communism in West Europe was due to post-war economic hardship leading to resentment—Stalin had ordered moderate policies and to preserve the Grand Alliance
- West Europe would also pressure the US to play a bigger role in Europe instead

Economic differences

- US GNP rose sharply during the war; the Soviets suffered losses in manpower and infrastructure
- Stalin feared economic imperialism and subsequent undermining of his control, citing the Bretton Woods system and Marshall Plan
- Soviets needed US aid but also convinced that capitalism would collapse, interpreted US reluctance as dollar diplomacy
- No agreement over German reparations over industrial output and equipment
- Soviets wanted reparations while US wanted to revive the European economy—both missed each other's objectives
- Unification of the Western zones and Marshall Plan threatened Soviet security, hence the "communization, Sovietization and Stalinization" policy as well as creating East Germany
- The US only approved the Marshall Plan after the Czech coup in 1948 as it was the last bastion of democracy in East Europe
- The US was also reluctant to provide aid even to Britain to minimize tax burden

Other factors

Ideology

- Differing ideologies: communism and capitalism
- Both were universal beliefs and saw each other as inherently expansionist
- In reality both sides were more pragmatic
- Examples: though Soviets thought US had to provide them with a huge loan and invest in East Europe as the capitalist market was supposedly saturated, the US domestic economy was booming and there was no need to invest in East Europe; similarly, US believed that Soviets were being expansionist when they were merely protecting their own security interests

Superpower rivalry

- The belief that a great power had the right to assert its influence over the world
- Driven by the Russian history of empire building and sense of entitlement as a victor state, trying to expand into Iran, Turkey, Greece and Japan
- Decline of Britain created a power vacuum in the Mediterranean and Middle East
- Stalin did back down from expansionism when the US adopted a firm response—not noted by the Americans

Domestic pressures

- Democratic system of the US: responsiveness to public opinion required
- Truman's popularity was dropping by 1946 amid accusations from Republicans of pandering to Soviets
- Stalin faced pressure from the Soviet people to relax his policies partly due to exposure to higher standards of living in Europe
- Truman eventually forced to adopt his doctrine and containment to save his approval ratings
- Stalin justified his repressive policies using US "threat"

Clash of personalities

- FDR did not share his thoughts even with his advisers—everyone was unclear about his policy until the opinion polls came out
- Was contradictory and vague, tended to improvise
- Was overconfident and his lack of open support for a Soviet sphere of influence confused Stalin
- He died before Potsdam and Truman replaced him—inexperience and blind faithfulness to FDR's policies failed to impress Stalin
- Churchill lost the election and was replaced by Attlee who was more concerned with domestic issues

Conclusion:

Mutual fears were indeed important but there were secondary factors that lend themselves also to the origins of the Cold War such as ideology, superpower rivalry, domestic pressure and clash of personalities.

4. To what extent was Soviet policy responsible for the outbreak and development of the Cold War between 1945 and 1949? (November 2005)

Introduction:

- Cold War responsibility largely covered who was responsible in the traditionalist and revisionist schools of thought that ascribed blame to either side

- Post-revisionists conceded that both sides were to blame and began to focus on what was responsible for the breakout of the war i.e. policies

Thesis:

- Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan ultimately catalyzed the split of Berlin and triggered the Berlin Blockade which hardened Cold War tensions

Soviet policies

Expansion into East Europe by end of WW2

- Stalin adopted a gradual policy for East Europe based on specific circumstances relevant to each state—forcibly imposed communist rule only on Poland as it posed a direct threat to Soviet security
- East European countries also had considerable local support for communism
- However, this expansion was interpreted as Soviet violation of the Declaration of Liberated Europe—which advocated prevention of expansion and self-determination
- East Europe was determined by the Red Army and Poland, Hungary and Romania came under the sphere of influence
- Stalin saw the agreement as non-binding and Roosevelt led him to believe he had a free hand in East Europe
- Expansion was largely due to security concerns as seen with Poland; furthermore this only reflected the existing balance of power—the Red Army already had control of these states
- Was the change of the US position from a regional to a global power that saw the Soviet takeover as a threat to its global authority and advocacy for free exchange of ideals

COMECON

- Formed in January 1949, a reason for the outbreak and the development of the Cold War
- A series of bilateral trade treaties between East Europe countries and Soviets
- Coordinated 5 Year Plans and encouraged specialization in chemicals and engineering
- Designed to control economic development and support agricultural collectivization as well as development of heavy industries
- Communization, Sovietization and Stalinization of East Europe
- Caused tensions as many Western politicians felt that East Germany was lost
- West introduced the Deutschmark in 1948 but did not apply it to Berlin till after the Soviets introduced the Ostmark and claimed it applied to the whole of Berlin
- Western currency retaliation led to Berlin Blockade in 1948 to attempt to stop the economic progress of West Germany
- COMECON was in reality a response to the Marshall Plan—which was the true reason for the breaking up of the wartime alliance

Berlin Blockade

- Berlin was divided into four zones but Berlin itself lay in the Soviet zone and the Western forces in Berlin depended on supplies from the Western zones
- Blockade was enacted in 1948, cutting off all communication routes and stopped the supply of food, electricity and gas from reaching the West Berliners
- Existing stocks would only last a month
- West introduced a counter blockade to cut East Germany off
- Lucius Clay decided to supply West Berlin by airlift—200,000 flights in 320 days
- Soviets were put in a poor light
- Caused the military alliance NATO to be formed for a military presence against the Soviets and also confirmed American commitment to West Europe, securing its leadership role
- However, the blockade was a response to the Marshall Plan which aimed to revive the West European countries and counter communism
- Furthermore, the application of the Deutschmark to Berlin was rightly interpreted by Soviets as a sign of a separate West German state—prospect of West German rearmament and recovery horrified the Soviets into carrying out the blockade

American policies

Truman Doctrine

- Introduced in 1947 as an announcement that the USA should support countries threatened by communism
- Reflected a belief that there was a Soviet mastermind behind every crisis
- Sparked by increasing pressure on Truman by the Republicans to adopt a tougher stance on the USSR
- Long Telegram by George Kennan argued that Soviet expansionism was inherent and that the US had to adopt a policy of containment—changed the attitudes of policy makers and contributed to the hardening
- British withdrawal from Turkey and Greece created a power vacuum that forced the US to intervene though the situation was not really that bad
- Truman made a speech in 1947 exaggerating the threat posed by communism and dramatized the conflict as an ideological fight—Congress granted \$400m in aid to Greece and Turkey

Marshall Plan

- European economic crisis from 1946-47 saw agricultural, industrial output and exports take a major hit
- US realized that West Europe required aid and feared that Stalin could take advantage of the chaos
- Utilized large dollar grants which West Europe used to purchase food, raw materials and industrial machinery from America

- Czech coup in 1948 shocked the US congress from having a firm opposition to financial aid (\$29bn became \$5.3bn) when the communists overthrew a democratic government
- America provided \$13.5bn to 16 countries up to 1952—mainly to Britain, France and Germany

5. Examine the role played by economic factors and the arms race in the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War by 1991. (November 2013)

Introduction:

- The USSR comprised of Russia and its East European empire
- The end of the Cold War was indeed in 1991 with the collapse of the USSR
- Collapse of the USSR meant the collapse of its military power, the end of communism, the Warsaw Pact and COMECON

Thesis:

- Despite economic problems, there was no real unrest until 1985
- Reagan's arms race policy did not do anything to end the Cold War either; no evidence to support triumphalism
- People power was also relatively muted
- Common thread: Reagan's spectator position gave Gorbachev the ability to implement his domestic policies but only because Reagan stepped aside; economic problems were only aggravated by Gorbachev's policies and this stoked the people power in the USSR, leading to the break up of the Soviet bloc and then the break up of the USSR after the coup

Analysis (economic problems):

- Soviet economic model was based on the Stalinist system of command economy—forced collectivization and heavy industry
- Was slowing down by the 1970s and growth was stagnant by 1980
- Plagued by a weak agricultural sector—depended on US grain imports and the industrial sector was unbalance and inefficient
- Undermined also by massive Soviet subsidies through COMECON and the defense burden
- Stagnation of wages and rising dissatisfaction led to the growth of strikes from 1988 onwards
- Gorbachev wanted to fix this but had no clear plan and no real understanding of economics
- Impacted Eastern Europe hugely—the COMECON system was based on Soviet subsidies and was worsened by growing debt
- Decline of Soviet economy meant governments failed to buy off political resistance with a good standard of living

However, despite these economic problems, there was no real crisis or unrest in 1985:

- Gorbachev's half-hearted reforms would develop the real crisis in the 1980s which saw inflation and rationing which then resulted in strikes and demonstrations
- Crisis had little to do with Western influence as well; containment cannot be held responsible—was rather Ostpolitik which saw the West provide loans to prop up the communist states and exchange of ideas, leading to dissatisfaction
- Growing economic crisis in the late 1980s did not deter support for a socialist economy
- Governments had the trend in USSR of responding to economic crises through repression or concession—did they lose will to do so in 1980?
- Furthermore, economic reasons were not always the driver of anti-government chaos in the communist bloc
- E.g. Poland and Lech Walesa—calling for the legalization of Solidarity in 1988, which forced roundtable talks and introduction of free elections
- E.g. Romania—the trigger was the persecution of pastor Laszlo Tokes
- The main trigger for the collapse of the Soviet Union was the failure of the August coup, a reaction to separatist and nationalist pressures

Analysis (Reagan and the arms race):

Ideological offensive

- Claimed that the USSR was a creation of ideology and very vulnerable to assault; tried to undermine its legitimacy in the eyes of the Soviet people
- Condemned it as an evil empire—especially after the shooting of flight KLo07—e.g. a speech to a Christian group
- Suggests that disillusionment with communism from the Soviet population was caused by this offensive
- Reality was that disillusionment was already inherent due to the political repression and economic mismanagement
- Stimulated by Basket 3 provisions and Ostpolitik (opening of relations between FRG and GDR) which demonstrated the superiority of the capitalist system
- Dissidence was present only in the intellectual class aka. Solzhenitsyn
- Communists retained support especially from KGB and Red Army
- More likely that Reagan was doing this to win domestic support and enforce superiority of the American way of life, placing US on the high moral ground
- Also thought that this would compel the Soviets to take him seriously

Massive increase in defense spending

- Expanded the US Navy from 450 to 600 ships, revived B1 and B2 bombers, deployed the MX ICBM and Trident missile defense system
- Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars")
- Supposedly to force the USSR into bankruptcy

- No evidence to suggest that the Soviets followed suit; the economy was already in crisis and the aging leadership was in disarray
- Not supported by many key Reagan officials—rather, this was to give the US a bargaining chip in negotiations
- Furthermore, lifting the sanctions imposed after invasion of Afghanistan suggests this was not the intention
- Even then, he did not fulfill his aim as it only convinced the Soviets of a possible nuclear attack; culminated in Able Archer 83
- Soviets withdrew from START and INF in 1983 as a result of rearmament
- Did not sustain this increase anyway as the US developed a heavy deficit—the world's largest debtor by the mid-1980s
- Served to create a stalemate

Reagan Doctrine

- Revived the policy of rollback from the 1950s—to intervene in various skirmishes around the world, e.g. Central America and Afghanistan to actively suppress and fight the Soviet advance
- Supposedly a key policy which forced Soviet retreat from Afghanistan
- In reality the countries in the regions became communist due to local agency rather than Soviet intervention, e.g. Nicaragua—the leftists overthrew a US-backed dictatorship
- Soviets had no intention of encouraging these movements and shied away from the region after Afghanistan
- Reagan only sent the Stinger missiles in 1986 when Gorbachev had already decided to pull out
- Even if rollback was achieved, these areas were unimportant to Soviet interests; East Europe was the key
- Possible that Reagan was using this to garner domestic support

Conciliatory second term in office

- Shifted from hardline policies to a softer one
- Had survived an assassination attempt and had a reputation as a warrior; he had nothing to lose and did not have to fear public perception
- Under strong pressure from nuclear disarmament groups and Congress to reduce military presence in Europe due to budget deficit
- 1. Accepted Gorbachev's sincerity and recognized that he was the one who could end the Cold War—supported Gorbachev's New Thinking
- 2. Won the support of the CIA and defense community—Reagan played a vital role in pressing the military to accept reductions
- 3. Won over the NATO leaders such as Thatcher, Mitterrand and Kohl—convinced them to renew their faith in US agreements with the Soviets

However, Reagan's ideological warfare was not as unique; did not depart in believing in American ideology

- The problems in the Soviet bloc pre-dated Reagan
- 1st term would have alienated the USSR anyway

- No evidence for the buildup of Soviet spending on weapons
- It was not intended to outspend the Soviets but to provide the US with adequate defense instead
- Was he even trying to bankrupt the Soviets? Restoration of US military might could have allowed them to negotiate from strength
- America's improved relations with China had little impact

Analysis (people power):

Anti-war movement in the West

- Put much pressure on Western governments in the early 1980s
- Wore down after the mid-1980s due to growing American economic problems
- No evidence that it even affected US decision-making, e.g. continued to deploy Pershing and Cruise missiles to counter Soviet SS20 deployment

East Europe and Soviet satellite states

- Rising dissidence especially after Helsinki accords in 1975 (Basket 3), leading to the rise of Helsinki Watch Groups
- Affected mainly new middle and educated classes who were more exposed and were aided by Ostpolitik which increased East-West contacts
- The movement actually remained very small due to communist secret police by early 1980s
- Unrest was limited due to huge loans taken in by communist regimes to support their standard of living; it was only by the late 1980s that the standard of living reversed and popular unrest grew
- However, this standard of living only fell due to Gorbachev's policies of withholding subsidies
- His calls for reform resonated with East Europeans and put pressure on local regimes
- Gorbachev's backing of the Brezhnev doctrine would have easily put these movements down—but he didn't

Analysis (Gorbachev):

Foreign policy: New Thinking

- Previous Soviet policy was influenced by Communist internationalism—inevitability of ideological war, security concerns and opportunism
- By the time Gorbachev took over, the Soviets were overstretched due to military deployment in East Europe and the 3rd world, financial subsidies and military aid—e.g. Afghanistan
- Gorbachev got rid of Communist internationalism and favored accommodation with the West based on common universal values
- 1) Withdrew from the 3rd world and ended support for national liberation movements, stopping aid to their clients like Vietnam, Nicaragua and Ethiopia; Afghanistan was the most significant
- 2) Ended economic subsidies to the East European bloc and openly promoted glasnost and perestroika in their satellite states

- 3) Rejected the Brezhnev doctrine and replaced it with the Sinatra doctrine: “my way”—local communist regimes were no longer Soviet-backed
- 4) Reasonable sufficiency: reduced the number of nuclear weapons and orientated conventional forces to a defensive posture despite Reagan’s refusal to drop SDI—signed the INF (nuclear arms reduction with on-site verification), Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (reduced Soviet conventional superiority) and START 1 (reduced up to 80% of all strategic nuclear weapons)
- 5) Unilateral concessions: reduction of forces, withdrawal of Red Army from East Europe and Sino-Russia border, and withdrawal from Afghanistan
- Lack of subsidies meant that the economic crisis was worsened—the standard of living fell sharply
- Sinatra doctrine surfaced in 1989 with the collapse of local communist regimes in East Europe, e.g. Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany; essentially declared that East Europe was no longer a Soviet concern
- Foreign policy changes allowed Gorbachev to focus on glasnost and perestroika—power as General Secretary meant that he could overcome the Soviet military-industrial complex

Domestic policy: glasnost and perestroika

- The USSR was highly centralized and a repressive single-party state under the CPSU, controlling all aspects of society
- There was socio-economic stagnation
- Weak agricultural sector, inefficient heavy industry, shortages and parallel markets
- Social troubles: alcoholism, drop in health and education standards
- Hoped to use glasnost to promote openness and transparency in the government, promoting freedom of information and debate to revitalize the USSR, relax censorship and soften human rights issues
- Hoped to use perestroika to restructure the political and economic system, to separate the party and state and make the economy more disciplined and efficient
- CPSU lost control over economic policy and removed the impact of ideology on the economy—allowed greater industrial autonomy, shifted away from heavy industries and promoted workers’ rights, as well as seeking for FDI and aid
- Glasnost resulted in the undermining of the CPSU’s monopoly of truth and information
- Perestroika faced stiff resistance from the CPSU; Gorbachev tried to bypass this with popularly elected bodies in 1989, leading to multiparty systems and seeing a sharp rise in the number of popular movements but were small and generally ineffectual
- Economy reforms saw corruption and undermining of living standards; drop in GNP, higher unemployment and shortages

- Would eventually lead to a coup against Gorbachev; indecision and incompetence of the plotters discredited the CPSU, leading to its collapse in 1991

Domestic policy: separatist threat

- Gorbachev failed to take strong action in dealing with separatism in the USSR
- Resentment over repressive rule by the CPSU, enforced by the Red Army—opposition to Russification
- Did not repress separatism in the Baltic states, Muslim republics etc., e.g. Georgia
- Failed to quiet Yeltsin who asserted the identity and sovereignty of Russia
- Culminated in Gorbachev being forced to negotiate the Union Treaty which would grant greater independence to satellite states, seen as the last straw that threatened the unity of the USSR and resulting in the coup

6. “The Cold War came to an end due to the hardline approach of Ronald Reagan’s policies in the early 1980s.” To what extent do you agree with the statement? (May 2010)

Introduction:

- Reagan had two terms where the first involved hardline policies against the USSR and the second was more conciliatory
- The first term alienated the Soviets while the second contributed to a smaller degree to ending the war—Reagan triumphalists claim that Western strength and containment ended the Cold War
- Prior to 1985, Soviet domestic policies were aimed at maintaining the single party dictatorship—foreign policy was hypercompetitive
- Gorbachev’s New Thinking fundamentally changed the direction of Soviet foreign policy especially with satellite states; glasnost and perestroika caused the CPSU and USSR to collapse
- People power school of thought: role of the masses in the East European bloc and the USSR as well as anti-war movements in the West
- End of the Cold War defined as collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 OR collapse of the USSR in December 1991

Thesis:

- Gorbachev was far more significant in ending the Cold War compared to Reagan—contributed to also by people power but it was Gorbachev who allowed people power to breakout

Analysis (Reagan):

Ideological offensive

- Claimed that the USSR was a creation of ideology and very vulnerable to assault; tried to undermine its legitimacy in the eyes of the Soviet people

- Condemned it as an evil empire—especially after the shooting of flight KLo07—e.g. a speech to a Christian group
- Suggests that disillusionment with communism from the Soviet population was caused by this offensive
- Reality was that disillusionment was already inherent due to the political repression and economic mismanagement
- Stimulated by Basket 3 provisions and Ostpolitik (opening of relations between FRG and GDR) which demonstrated the superiority of the capitalist system
- Dissidence was present only in the intellectual class aka. Solzhenitsyn
- Communists retained support especially from KGB and Red Army
- More likely that Reagan was doing this to win domestic support and enforce superiority of the American way of life, placing US on the high moral ground
- Also thought that this would compel the Soviets to take him seriously

Massive increases in defense spending

- Expanded the US Navy from 450 to 600 ships, revived B1 and B2 bombers, deployed the MX ICBM and Trident missile defense system
- Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”)
- Supposedly to force the USSR into bankruptcy
- No evidence to suggest that the Soviets followed suit; the economy was already in crisis and the aging leadership was in disarray
- Not supported by many key Reagan officials—rather, this was to give the US a bargaining chip in negotiations
- Furthermore, lifting the sanctions imposed after invasion of Afghanistan suggests this was not the intention
- Even then, he did not fulfill his aim as it only convinced the Soviets of a possible nuclear attack; culminated in Able Archer 83
- Soviets withdrew from START and INF in 1983 as a result of rearmament
- Did not sustain this increase anyway as the US developed a heavy deficit—the world’s largest debtor by the mid-1980s
- Served to create a stalemate

Reagan Doctrine

- Revived the policy of rollback from the 1950s—to intervene in various skirmishes around the world, e.g. Central America and Afghanistan to actively suppress and fight the Soviet advance
- Supposedly a key policy which forced Soviet retreat from Afghanistan
- In reality the countries in the regions became communist due to local agency rather than Soviet intervention, e.g. Nicaragua—the leftists overthrew a US-backed dictatorship
- Soviets had no intention of encouraging these movements and shied away from the region after Afghanistan
- Reagan only sent the Stinger missiles in 1986 when Gorbachev had already decided to pull out

- Even if rollback was achieved, these areas were unimportant to Soviet interests; East Europe was the key
- Possible that Reagan was using this to garner domestic support

Conciliatory second term in office

- Shifted from hardline policies to a softer one
- Had survived an assassination attempt and had a reputation as a warrior; he had nothing to lose and did not have to fear public perception
- Under strong pressure from nuclear disarmament groups and Congress to reduce military presence in Europe due to budget deficit
- 1. Accepted Gorbachev's sincerity and recognized that he was the one who could end the Cold War—supported Gorbachev's New Thinking
- 2. Won the support of the CIA and defense community—Reagan played a vital role in pressing the military to accept reductions
- 3. Won over the NATO leaders such as Thatcher, Mitterrand and Kohl—convinced them to renew their faith in US agreements with the Soviets

Analysis (Gorbachev):

Foreign policy: New Thinking

- Previous Soviet policy was influenced by Communist internationalism—inevitability of ideological war, security concerns and opportunism
- By the time Gorbachev took over, the Soviets were overstretched due to military deployment in East Europe and the 3rd world, financial subsidies and military aid—e.g. Afghanistan
- Gorbachev got rid of Communist internationalism and favored accommodation with the West based on common universal values
- 1) Withdrew from the 3rd world and ended support for national liberation movements, stopping aid to their clients like Vietnam, Nicaragua and Ethiopia; Afghanistan was the most significant
- 2) Ended economic subsidies to the East European bloc and openly promoted glasnost and perestroika in their satellite states
- 3) Rejected the Brezhnev doctrine and replaced it with the Sinatra doctrine: "my way"—local communist regimes were no longer Soviet-backed
- 4) Reasonable sufficiency: reduced the number of nuclear weapons and orientated conventional forces to a defensive posture despite Reagan's refusal to drop SDI—signed the INF (nuclear arms reduction with on-site verification), Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (reduced Soviet conventional superiority) and START 1 (reduced up to 80% of all strategic nuclear weapons)
- 5) Unilateral concessions: reduction of forces, withdrawal of Red Army from East Europe and Sino-Russia border, and withdrawal from Afghanistan
- Lack of subsidies meant that the economic crisis was worsened—the standard of living fell sharply
- Sinatra doctrine surfaced in 1989 with the collapse of local communist regimes in East Europe, e.g. Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany; essentially declared that East Europe was no longer a Soviet concern

- Foreign policy changes allowed Gorbachev to focus on glasnost and perestroika—power as General Secretary meant that he could overcome the Soviet military-industrial complex

Domestic policy: glasnost and perestroika (openness and restructuring)

- The USSR was highly centralized and a repressive single-party state under the CPSU, controlling all aspects of society
- There was socio-economic stagnation
- Weak agricultural sector, inefficient heavy industry, shortages and parallel markets
- Social troubles: alcoholism, drop in health and education standards
- Hoped to use glasnost to promote openness and transparency in the government, promoting freedom of information and debate to revitalize the USSR, relax censorship and soften human rights issues
- Hoped to use perestroika to restructure the political and economic system, to separate the party and state and make the economy more disciplined and efficient
- CPSU lost control over economic policy and removed the impact of ideology on the economy—allowed greater industrial autonomy, shifted away from heavy industries and promoted workers' rights, as well as seeking for FDI and aid
- Glasnost resulted in the undermining of the CPSU's monopoly of truth and information
- Perestroika faced stiff resistance from the CPSU; Gorbachev tried to bypass this with popularly elected bodies in 1989, leading to multiparty systems and seeing a sharp rise in the number of popular movements but were small and generally ineffectual
- Economy reforms saw corruption and undermining of living standards; drop in GNP, higher unemployment and shortages
- Would eventually lead to a coup against Gorbachev; indecision and incompetence of the plotters discredited the CPSU, leading to its collapse in 1991

Domestic policy: separatist threat

- Gorbachev failed to take strong action in dealing with separatism in the USSR
- Resentment over repressive rule by the CPSU, enforced by the Red Army—opposition to Russification
- Did not repress separatism in the Baltic states, Muslim republics etc., e.g. Georgia
- Failed to quiet Yeltsin who asserted the identity and sovereignty of Russia
- Culminated in Gorbachev being forced to negotiate the Union Treaty which would grant greater independence to satellite states, seen as the last straw that threatened the unity of the USSR and resulting in the coup

7. To what extent was the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 due to external pressures? (November 2015)

Introduction:

- Reagan had two terms where the first involved hardline policies against the USSR and the second was more conciliatory
- The first term alienated the Soviets while the second contributed to a smaller degree to ending the war—Reagan triumphalists claim that Western strength and containment ended the Cold War
- Prior to 1985, Soviet domestic policies were aimed at maintaining the single party dictatorship—foreign policy was hypercompetitive
- Gorbachev's New Thinking fundamentally changed the direction of Soviet foreign policy especially with satellite states; glasnost and perestroika caused the CPSU and USSR to collapse
- People power school of thought: role of the masses in the East European bloc and the USSR as well as anti-war movements in the West
- End of the Cold War defined as collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 OR collapse of the USSR in December 1991

Thesis:

- External pressures involve Reagan's hardline policies, which to be fair did not really play that major a role in the fall of the Union; it was Reagan's lack of participation and his accommodating second term that allowed Gorbachev to install his own reforms
- Internal pressures involved the nationalist and separatist threat forwarded by people power, as well as the coup led by Gorbachev's right-wing cabinet members in protest against the New Union Treaty which was going to make the USSR more federalist, giving countries freedom
- But it was ultimately Gorbachev's fault: the installation of New Thinking, glasnost, and perestroika (all facilitated by Reagan's second term in office), led to the popular dissent of the nationalists such as Solidarity, the Velvet Revolution, and Helsinki Watch Groups; would then lead to the Autumn of Nations in 1989 where the Soviet bloc fell, then the 1991 August coup leading to the December dissolution of the USSR

Analysis (external pressures—Reagan):

Ideological offensive

- Claimed that the USSR was a creation of ideology and very vulnerable to assault; tried to undermine its legitimacy in the eyes of the Soviet people
- Condemned it as an evil empire—especially after the shooting of flight KLo07—e.g. a speech to a Christian group
- Suggests that disillusionment with communism from the Soviet population was caused by this offensive
- Reality was that disillusionment was already inherent due to the political repression and economic mismanagement

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- No evidence to suggest that the Soviets followed suit; the economy was already in crisis and the aging leadership was in disarray
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- Furthermore, lifting the sanctions imposed after invasion of Afghanistan suggests this was not the intention
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Analysis (internal pressures—nationalism and separatism):

- Rising dissidence especially after Helsinki accords in 1975 (Basket 3), leading to the rise of Helsinki Watch Groups
- Affected mainly new middle and educated classes who were more exposed and were aided by Ostpolitik which increased East-West contacts
- The movement actually remained very small due to communist secret police by early 1980s
- Unrest was limited due to huge loans taken in by communist regimes to support their standard of living; it was only by the late 1980s that the standard of living reversed and popular unrest grew
- However, this standard of living only fell due to Gorbachev's policies of withholding subsidies
- His calls for reform resonated with East Europeans and put pressure on local regimes
- Gorbachev's backing of the Brezhnev doctrine would have easily put these movements down—but he didn't
- Gorbachev also failed to take strong action in dealing with separatism in the USSR
- Resentment over repressive rule by the CPSU, enforced by the Red Army—opposition to Russification
- Did not repress separatism in the Baltic states, Muslim republics etc., e.g. Georgia
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- Culminated in Gorbachev being forced to negotiate the Union Treaty which would grant greater independence to satellite states, seen as the last straw that threatened the unity of the USSR and resulting in the coup

Analysis (Gorbachev's policies):

Foreign policy: New Thinking

- Previous Soviet policy was influenced by Communist internationalism—inevitability of ideological war, security concerns and opportunism
- By the time Gorbachev took over, the Soviets were overstretched due to military deployment in East Europe and the 3rd world, financial subsidies and military aid—e.g. Afghanistan

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Domestic policy: glasnost and perestroika

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