WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?

SOVIET ECONOMY

• By 1980 the Soviet Union was a Superpower ‘Only in the military sense.’ (Zubok)
• Command economy produced raw materials such as iron, coal and steel
• However, this was low quality
• Failed to produce consumer goods or high-tech goods
• By the 1970s - failing to produce large quantities of raw materials
• Eastern Bloc was costing $80 billion (throughout 1970s)
• ‘Technological backwardness’ - made the economy less efficient
• Mid 1980s - 25% of Soviet GDP spent on the military

HISTORIOGRAPHY

• Soviet leaders forced to negotiate as the USSR could not tolerate military spending
• More significant than leadership - as the economic context forced the leaders to act
• BROOKS/WOHLFORTH: ‘Soviet decline made the Cold War’s ending on US terms the most likely outcome.’

ROLE OF REAGAN

• Hard-line, right-wing anti-Communist
• 1983 - Soviet Union = ‘Evil Empire’
• Increased arms spending - by 1985 30% of federal budget = military (development of Stealth bomber and Trident missile).
• Reagan Doctrine
• Willing to assist anti-Communist groups
• Afghanistan - 1987 - $687 million aid to the Mujahedin (largest covert operation WW2)
• Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) - space-based lasers to intercept and destroy Soviet missiles
• ‘Could protect US from retaliation, breaking ‘balance of terror’ that had prevented nuclear war’
• Intermediate Range Missiles to Western Europe to counter Soviet SS20s (Thatcher supported in UK)
• Restricted trade with the Soviet Union to safeguard competitive advantage (oil technology in 1981/ 1982 US oil and gas)
• Exposed moral corruption of communist regimes

HISTORIOGRAPHY

• Triumphalism
• Reagan’s policies ended of the Cold War
• SDI ended arms race
• Exposed moral and economic weaknesses
• Johnson: ‘Without American dynamism... it is unlikely that the Soviet leadership would have set out on the unknown, risky and potentially disastrous road of reform... they had no alternative.’
• ‘Although the Gorbachev factor was primary, the Reagan factor was necessary.’

ROLE OF GORBACHEV

• New Thinking’
• Perestroika
• Restructuring economy
• Reducing military spending
• Promoted end of arms race
• Glasnost
• Openness in Soviet politics
• Superpower Relations
• Based on co-operation rather than confrontation
• Eastern Europe
• End of Brezhnev Doctrine
• Wanted to adapt
• Communism to the modern world
• Sixsmith: ‘Gorbachev failed to realise that communism’s day was over.’
• Reforms merely created an appetite for further freedom and greater frustration
• Allowed nationalism to flourish

HISTORIOGRAPHY

• Acknowledge Communism was weak
• Shuld learn from the West (politically/economically)
• McMahon: ‘The accession of Gorbachev to leader of the USSR stands as the most crucial turning point in the Cold War’s final phase.’
• Gorbachev undermined legitimacy of Communism
• White: ‘Marx and Lenin must bear at least a share of the blame for the political repression and economic mismanagement.’

IDEOLOGY / NATIONALISM

• Maoism-Leninism
• Soviet people had lost faith in ideology
• Communist leadership failed to represent the working class
• Read: ‘The Brezhnev era was marked by time-serving, inefficient, corrupt party plenem who lacked a belief in the socialist ideal.’
• 1970 Soviet worker = 165 rubles per month // Politician = 900
• Society was inferior to capitalism - based on oppression rather than consent
• Nationalism
• USSR dismantled by ‘people power’
• Czechoslovakia ‘Velvet Revolution’
• Hungary - opened Western border (threatened East Germany)
• Poland - Solidarity win election in 1988
• Ukraine withdrew from new union - effectively ending the USSR

HISTORIOGRAPHY

• Ideology failed to deliver the economic prosperity it had promised
• Gorbachev undermined legitimacy of Communism