The ‘Gerontocracy’
Succession of old/infirm leaders
Brezhnev – died in 1982, physical incapacity prevented any change in Soviet foreign policy
Andropov – attempted to start domestic reform, died 1984
Chernenko – represented majority of Politburo (avoid reform), no impact of foreign policy, died 1985

KAL 700
Korean airliner shot down by Soviet fighters (1983) – outrage in West
Politburo showing inflexibility during crisis – Gromyko (Soviet Foreign Minister) ignored questions from West, old age/illness rendered leadership incapable of action, low point of Second Cold War

Gorbachev became leader (1985)
Aims – make Soviet system more productive, reduce military spending
Shevardnadze – replaced Gromyko as Foreign Minister (1985)
Launched charm offensive on West with ‘New Political Thinking’
Afghan war – dragged on without decisive result, 15,000 Red Army soldiers killed, cost $8 billion per year
Supporting ‘global’ communism – USSR spend $40 billion annually propping up communist regimes

Geneva Summit (1985)
Reagan/Gorbachev – little decided, established personal rapport
Important for laying foundations for future negotiations

Reykjavik Summit (1986)
Gorbachev proposed phasing out nuclear weapons – offered concessions, price was withdrawal of SDI
Reagan not prepared to negotiate with SDI – no agreement reached

Washington Summit (1987)
INF agreement signed – scrapping all intermediate-range ballistic missiles
First time superpowers had agreed to arms reduction rather than arms control

Moscow Summit (1988)
Signed agreements on more complex details of INF treaty

Malta Summit (1989)
Gorbachev/Bush – established good working relationship
No new agreements made – both leaders declared Cold War over

Impact on Domestic Policy
Perestroika – reconstruction of economy, involved measure of private enterprise
Glasnost – policy of openness, encourage population to put forward new ideas/show initiative
Democratisation – attempt to get more people involved in Communist Party

Domestic and Foreign consequences
More critical approach towards communism, encouraged reformers to push for further liberalisation
Within 4 years – popular opinion in USSR shifted towards adoption of some ideas of West, others called for wholesale rejection of communism
By 1988 – ‘Gorby-mania’ sweeping through East, calls for Gorbachev’s ideas to be implemented in own countries
1985 – Gorbachev made clear he would not uphold Brezhnev Doctrine

Brezhnev Doctrine
Formulated after Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia (1968)
Reasons for abandonment
- Supporting unpopular/inefficient regimes was costly
- Gorbachev had genuine belief of rejuvenating socialism through allowing some liberalisation
- Believed use of armed intervention was morally wrong
- Without Cold War tensions – no longer needed for USSR to exert control over East