Fall of the USSR:

Economic Weakness and the Failure of Reform
Problems:
- 1928- late 1980s the soviet economy was a command economy, under Stalin this was successful but the growth rate declined under Krushchev and Breshnev
- the economy failed to create incentives for work due to the small pay gap between richest and poorest, which led to low labour productivity
- waste was an issue due to quantity measured over quality
- lack of modernisation in equipment, and storage which led to food waste
- 17% of GDP was being spent on the arms race
- centralised economy meant expertised was not being used to set targets

Changes by Gorbachev:
- Rationalisation 1985-86, designed to modernise and stimulate
- Reform 1987-90, introduced market forces
- Transformation 1990-91, abandoned aspects of the system

The above policies (Perestroika) failed to increase economic growth
By the summer of 1991 the USSR was effectively bankrupt

Gorbachev’s Political Reforms
- Gorbachev wanted to open up debate within the party, allow intellectuals more freedom and allow more access to information but instead reformed led to greater pressure for change

Glasnost 1986-88 (openness)
- invited writers and intellectuals to criticise hardliners and support his reforms
- newspapers were allowed to publish details of Stalin’s atrocities
- previously banned books were now published
- originally people criticized Stalin but this then extended to Marx and Lenin
- Gorbachev did not escape criticism, he was accused of reformed too slowly to lead to demands not for reform but independence

Democratisation 1988-90
- 1988 reforms: multicandidate elections meant that 1500 of the congress of people’s deputies would be elected and the remained 750 would be appointed by the communist party
- however these elections didn’t allow votes for other political parties
- in 1989, Yeltsin won 89% of votes in Moscow and 5 members of the central committee lost their seats
- in the republic elections in 1990, democratic Russia won 85% of seats in Moscow

Impact of the Nationalist Resurgence
- under Breshnev the government encouraged some forms of national expression, for example education in their native languages

Gorbachev
- replacement of corrupt native leaders with non-corrupt Russians, however this angered people as they would rather have someone who represented them
- acceleration led to economic decline and therefore standard of living decreased
- Lithuania declares independence in March 1990
- Gorbachev proposed a new Union Treaty which did not have the support of the hardliners in the party, this caused them to stage a coup