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ASSIGNMENT; Gorbachev and the end of the cold war

1. ROLE OF MIKHAIL GORBACHEV AND HIS POLICIES IN THE EVENTUAL COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

Mikhail Gorbachev served as general secretary of the communist party of the soviet union from 1985 too 1991, before he assumed office, much attention went to building up the nation’s military at the expense of development within the soviet union, which ultimately weakened the several reforms which changed the military, cultural, and political climates, which eventually led to his downfall. He pursued an economic policy that aimed to increase economic growth while increasing capital investment, the capital investment was to improve the technological basis of the soviet economy as well as to promote certain structural economic changes. He then came into conclusion that deeper structural changes were necessary, in 1987-1988 he pushed through reforms that went less than halfway to the creation of semi free market system, the consequences these with the contradictions of the reforms brought chaos to the country and great unpopularity to Gorbachev.

The government of the Soviet Union was communist in name, it didn’t emulate the values and structure of communism. It reflected a more authoritarian, the citizens were controlled. Gorbachev started reforming the Soviet Union by implementing policies to bring about individual freedom, bureaucratic transparency, and to stimulate economic change. He then launched OPENNESS as a part of his reform efforts, he believed that the opening up of the political system essentially democratizing it was the only way to overcome inertia in the political and bureaucratic apparatus, which had a big interest in maintaining the status, he also believed that the path to economic and social recovery required the inclusion of people in the political process.

Some huge defence expenditure that characterised the cold war years were one of the causes of soviet economic decline, he then transformed soviet foreign policy, his change in foreign policy led to the democratization of eastern Europe and the end of the cold war. On the other hand, Gorbachev’s policies deprived the Soviet Union of ideological enemies, which in turn weakened the hold of soviet ideology over the people.

Gorbachev’s decision to allow election with a multiparty system and create a presidency for the Soviet Union began a slow process of democratization that eventually destabilized communist control and contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1990 election, he faced conflicting internal political pressures, Boris Yeltsin and the pluralist movement advocated democratization and rapid economic reforms while the hard-line communist elite wanted to thwart Gorbachev’s reforms agenda.

A poorly executed coup attempt occurred in 1991 bringing an end to the communist party and putting up the movement to disband the Soviet Union. The most significant anti=coup role was played by Yeltsin, who used the opportunity to promote himself and Russia, he also demanded the reinstatement of Gorbachev USSR president.

1. ROLE OF PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN OF THE USA IN ENDING THE COLD WAR

Ronald Reagan was elected US president in 1980, he was determined to increase pressure on the soviets and intimidate them into making concessions in the cold war. Reagan convinced congress to increase military expenditure.

Reagan felt that the US needed to have a strong military, at that point he was willing to negotiate with the soviet, he proposed a missile defence system called strategic defence initiative SDI.

Reagan supported anti-communist groups around the world in a policy known as the Reagan Doctrine. He also deployed the CIA’s special activities division paramilitary officers to train, equip and lead the mujihadeen forces against the soviet army.

1. Implication of the collapse of the cold war on global politics with an emphasis on the emergence of a “New World Order”.

Globalization has weakened nation states, whereby countries and citizens are exposed to unprecedented risks in the face of international capital, with the fail of the Berlin Wall and collapse of the Soviet Union.

Russia-West relations are difficult to ease, their relations are in part extension of the confrontation between the US and Soviet camp, after the cold war the west has seen unprecedented success in expanding its own sphere of influence and security boundaries.

Western expansion and intervention have resulted in failed states and turbulent areas.