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**PCS 302**

**ASSIGNMENT**

You are required to read up on the end of the Cold War:

. Highlight the role of Mikhail Gorbachev and his policies in the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

. Discuss the role of President Ronald Reagan of the USA in ending the Cold War.

. Discuss the implication of the collapse of the Cold War on global politics with an emphasis on the emergence of a "New World Order."

**ANSWER**

Cold War, the open yet restricted rivalry that developed after World War II between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. The Cold War was waged on political, economic, and propaganda fronts and had only limited recourse to weapons. The term was first used by the English writer George Orwell in an article published in 1945 to refer to what he predicted would be a nuclear stalemate between “two or three monstrous super-states, each possessed of a weapon by which millions of people can be wiped out in a few seconds.” It was first used in the United States by the American financier and presidential adviser Bernard Baruch in a speech at the State House in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1947. Following the surrender of Nazi Germany in May 1945 near the close of World War II, the uneasy wartime alliance between the United States and Great Britain on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other began to unravel. By 1948 the Soviets had installed left-wing governments in the countries of Eastern Europe that had been liberated by the Red Army. The Americans and the British feared the permanent Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and the threat of Soviet-influenced communist parties coming to power in the democracies of Western Europe. The Soviets, on the other hand, were determined to maintain control of Eastern Europe in order to safeguard against any possible renewed threat from Germany, and they were intent on spreading communism worldwide, largely for ideological reasons. The Cold War had solidified by 1947–48, when U.S. aid provided under the Marshall Plan to Western Europe had brought those countries under American influence and the Soviets had installed openly communist regimes in Eastern Europe. The Cold War reached its peak in 1948–53. In this period the Soviets unsuccessfully blockaded the Western-held sectors of West Berlin (1948–49); the United States and its European allies formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a unified military command to resist the Soviet presence in Europe (1949); the Soviets exploded their first atomic warhead (1949), thus ending the American monopoly on the atomic bomb; the Chinese communists came to power in mainland China (1949); and the Soviet-supported communist government of North Korea invaded U.S.-supported South Korea in 1950, setting off an indecisive Korean War that lasted until 1953. From 1953 to 1957 Cold War tensions relaxed somewhat, largely owing to the death of the longtime Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in 1953; nevertheless, the standoff remained. A unified military organization among the Soviet-bloc countries, the Warsaw Pact, was formed in 1955; and West Germany was admitted into NATO that same year. Another intense stage of the Cold War was in 1958–62. The United States and the Soviet Union began developing intercontinental ballistic missiles, and in 1962 the Soviets began secretly installing missiles in Cuba that could be used to launch nuclear attacks on U.S. cities. This sparked the Cuban missile crisis (1962), a confrontation that brought the two superpowers to the brink of war before an agreement was reached to withdraw the missiles. The Cuban missile crisis showed that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union were ready to use nuclear weapons for fear of the other’s retaliation (and thus of mutual atomic annihilation). The two superpowers soon signed the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty of 1963, which banned aboveground nuclear weapons testing. But the crisis also hardened the Soviets’ determination never again to be humiliated by their military inferiority, and they began a buildup of both conventional and strategic forces that the United States was forced to match for the next 25 years.

On December 25, 1991, the Soviet flag flew over the Kremlin in Moscow for the last time. Representatives from Soviet republics (Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) had already announced that they would no longer be part of the Soviet Union. Instead, they declared they would establish a Commonwealth of Independent States. Because the three Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) had already declared their independence from the USSR, only one of its 15 republics, Kazakhstan, remained. The once-mighty Soviet Union had fallen, largely due to the great number of radical reforms that Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev had implemented during his six years as the leader of the USSR. However, Gorbachev was disappointed in the dissolution of his nation and resigned from his job on December 25. It was a peaceful end to a long, terrifying and sometimes bloody epoch in world history. In the Russian Revolution of 1917, revolutionary Bolsheviks overthrew the Russian czar and four socialist republics were established. In 1922, Russia proper joined its far-flung republics to form Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The first leader of this Soviet state was the Marxist revolutionary Vladimir Lenin. The Soviet Union was supposed to be “a society of true democracy,” but in many ways it was no less repressive than the czarist autocracy that preceded it. It was ruled by a single party–the Communist Party–that demanded the allegiance of every Russian citizen. After 1924, when the dictator Joseph Stalin came to power, the state exercised totalitarian control over the economy, administering all industrial activity and establishing collective farms. It also controlled every aspect of political and social life. People who argued against Stalin’s policies were arrested and sent to labor camps known as gulags or executed. After Stalin’s death in 1953, Soviet leaders denounced his brutal policies but maintained the Community Party’s power. They focused in particular on the Cold War with Western powers, engaging in a costly and destructive “arms race” with the United States while exercising military force to suppress anticommunism and extend its hegemony in Eastern Europe. In March 1985, a longtime Communist Party politician named Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the leadership of the USSR He inherited a stagnant economy and a political structure that made reform all but impossible. Gorbachev introduced two sets of policies that he hoped would help the USSR become a more prosperous, productive nation. The first of these was known as glasnost, or political openness. Glasnost eliminated traces of Stalinist repression, like the banning of books and the omnipresent secret police, and gave new freedoms to Soviet citizens. Political prisoners were released. Newspapers could print criticisms of the government. For the first time, parties other than the Communist Party could participate in elections. The second set of reforms was known as perestroika, or economic restructuring. The best way to revive the Soviet economy, Gorbachev thought, was to loosen the government’s grip on it. He believed that private initiative would lead to innovation, so individuals and cooperatives were allowed to own businesses for the first time since the 1920s. Workers were given the right to strike for better wages and conditions. Gorbachev also encouraged foreign investment in Soviet enterprises. However, these reforms were slow to bear fruit. Perestroika had torpedoed the “command economy” that had kept the Soviet state afloat, but the market economy took time to mature. (In his farewell address, Gorbachev summed up the problem: “The old system collapsed before the new one had time to begin working.”) Rationing, shortages and endless queuing for scarce goods seemed to be the only results of Gorbachev’s policies. As a result, people grew more and more frustrated with his government. Mikhail Gorbachev is one of the prominent figures who are believed to have had their part in bringing the end to the Cold War. It may also be said that he is the most controversial character among them. We have seen a multitude of contrasting opinions about the motivations and consequences of Gorbachev’s statesmanship, ranging from Western euphoric fascination in the 1990s to accusations of treason by the members of the collapsed Soviet establishment. More analytical judgments point to the problem of the factual importance of individual agency in shaping the considered events. Several years after the end of the Cold War it became apparent that the USSR was bound to ‘lose’ the prolonged competition with the Western world. Especially the rigid, wildly inefficient planned economy presented a self-defeating idea. Additionally, Communism as an ideology began to lose its appeal among third world countries, and in the early 1980s the Kremlin was beginning to realize that the possibility of a Communist expansion had become rather marginal. Simultaneously, there was growing pressure from the United States which reinitiated the arms-race with resources vastly beyond the Soviet capabilities. Parallel to these arguments is the recognition that even if the Soviet cause was moribund, it was not certain when and how the Cold War would end. The competition could have extended well into the 21st century or could have ended in a nuclear confrontation. Trying to account for the discrepancy between such hypothetical scenarios and the actual events that took place in the late 1980s, one feels bound to address the central problem of the relation between structure and agency. In response to this issue, the following discussion starts with two main parts. The first of them constitutes an analysis of the structural (both international and intra-USSR) factors in the 1980s. The second section dissects the individual agency of Gorbachev as general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in a face-off with the given material and ideational structures. The third and final part of the discussion is designed to provide Gorbachev’s figure with the background of the collective agency operating during the considered period, as well as to answer the question of the discrepancy between the secretary general’s intentions and the actual results produced. These two issues are essential to understanding how much merit Gorbachev ‘deserves’ for the part he played in ending the Cold War. The very nature of the Soviet economy made any initiatives for reform extremely difficult and their success uncertain at best. In order to be effective, modern economies often require quick producer reactions to the fluctuating and direction-changing consumer demand. The problem of the Soviet ‘non-capitalist’ model was that the overwhelming majority of production decision-making was centralized, relying on time-consuming statistical measurements. The problem was further aggravated by the rigidity of five-year plans that put additional emphasis on long-term predictions which, more often than not, proved to be inadequate to the actual state. Inefficiency of the command economy had developed throughout the four decades after the end of World War II. In fact, the Soviet economy experienced a long-term decline (from the 1950s until the early 1980s) in the rate of economic growth. At the time when Gorbachev ascended to power, annual GDP increases oscillated around 2 percent which translated into actual stagnation. Gorbachev came up with bold initiatives both in the area of foreign policy and in the domestic dimension. His personal diplomacy and unilateral concessions succeeded in deflating threat perceptions among Western statesmen. Within the USSR, however, Gorbachev’s awkward reforms eroded the very foundations on which the central authority of the Kremlin was based. His economic reforms were indecisive and lost their boldness over time. However, their negative effect on the material living standards of disenchanted Soviet citizens remained considerable. Popular discontent was aggravated by the open criticism of the establishment’s shortcomings by the media, which had been enabled by the introduction of glasnost. Even more importantly, the policy of ‘openness’ led to a reemergence of multiple nationalisms within the USSR. The eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union did not provoke an international military conflict. This peaceful collapse was possible chiefly because of Gorbachev’s tremendous breakthroughs in foreign policy in 1987-8. Mikhail Gorbachev’s record as the last Soviet leader presents a puzzling mixture of unprecedented success and spectacular failure. It may be perceived as a stroke of luck that someone with such personality made it to the top post of the Soviet political establishment. Once in power, he proved to be a virtuoso at exploiting the system’s centralized, hierarchical structure in order to impose his own vision of foreign and domestic policies. Gorbachev’s merit has been further eroded by new evidence which shows him as a mere representative of the growing numbers of ‘new thinkers’. It is also argued that the diplomatic breakthrough was induced by the ‘climate of opinion’ set by the collective agency of other prominent individuals. Nevertheless, Mikhail Gorbachev was the only individual who was able, because of his position, and willing to change the USSR’s attitude towards the West and vice versa. It was his skillful diplomacy that prevented a violent end to the Cold War.

Ronald Reagan was elected US President in 1980, partly due to his criticism of the Soviet Union and his staunch anti-communist stance. Reagan 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 by 13 per cent in 1982. The Strategic Defense Initiative was considered during this period. There was great concern in the USSR that the Soviets would fall even further behind in the arms race. New weapons such as the stealth bomber, which could fly undetected by radar, were being developed. Development also continued on the neutron bomb, which could wipe out large numbers of people without destroying buildings and infrastructure. Politician’s line up for a photo shoot President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher Reagan did not trust the Soviet leaders and his relationship with Brechnev (the leader prior to Gorbachev) was often fraught. The President thought the USSR was misusing the period of détente to increase Soviet power and influence. In 1983, Reagan made a speech where he called the USSR an "evil empire". From the end of World War II and for decades to follow, the world was in the grip of the Cold War. With the United States and the Soviet Union vying for global domination, the two super powers built huge arsenals of nuclear weapons capable of destroying the world many times over as they regarded each other with suspicion and fear. Then, during a short period of time in the 1980s, the situation completely changed. From a definite worsening of relations at the beginning of the decade, the U.S. and the USSR started approaching each other and entered into negotiations about arms reductions. The Soviet leadership introduced domestic reforms and released its grip over Eastern Europe, allowing the countries there to freely elect their leaders and the way they wished to be governed. And ultimately, the winds of change that swept across Eastern Europe would also reach Moscow, as the Soviet Union collapsed and ceased to exist, leaving the United States as the only super power of the world. The role of U.S. President Ronald Reagan in the end of the Cold War and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. It describes the political and strategic situation when Reagan was elected, and analyzes the different aspects of the foreign policy Reagan carried out while he was in office. The thesis argues that Reagan's policy played a significant part in bringing about the end of the Cold War, but not simply by assuming an aggressive stance toward the Soviet Union, which seems to be a popular interpretation today. Through the implementation of a huge U.S. military buildup and the introduction of the Strategic Defense Initiative, Reagan did apply increasing pressure on the Soviet Union, a pressure the economically challenged USSR could not find an answer to. However, by showing how Reagan's original hard-liner policy based on confrontation and tough rhetoric changed to a more conciliatory approach toward the end of his first term, the thesis argues that it was this capability on Reagan's part to adjust his policy and adapt to the situation that started to yield results vis-à-vis the USSR. By mixing firmness with a willingness to move away from a purely coercive approach, Reagan eased tensions between the USA and the Soviet Union and thereby helped facilitate the reforms initiated by the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. While it was Gorbachev's reforms that ultimately led to the liberation of Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War, this thesis argues that Reagan's contribution to this outcome should not be underestimated.

Gorbachev’s loosening of governmental power created a domino effect in which Eastern European alliances began to crumble, inspiring countries such as Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia to declare their independence. The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989, leading East and West Germany to officially reunite within a year, ending the Cold War. Once the Berlin Wall fell, citizens in Eastern European countries such as Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania staged protests against their pro-Soviet governments, hastening the collapse of communist regimes across the former Soviet bloc. Other countries such as the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine followed suit, creating the Commonwealth of Independent States. By the end of 1989, eight of the nine remaining republics had declared independence from Moscow, and the powerful Soviet Union was finally undone. By the summer of 1990, all the formerly communist Eastern European officials had been replaced by democratically elected governments, setting the stage for the region’s reintegration into Western economic and political spheres. The dismantling of the Soviet Union had many long-lasting effects on the global economy and the region’s foreign trade. Its downfall increased the United States’ influence as a global power and created an opportunity for corruption and crime in Russia. It also prompted many cultural changes and social upheavals in former Soviet nations and smaller neighboring communist countries. Between 1989 and 1991, the gross national product in Soviet countries fell by 20 percent, ushering in a period of complete economic breakdown. By the time Gorbachev took office in 1985, the Soviet economy had been stagnant for 20 years and was badly in need of reform; to wit, the country’s gross national product (GNP) went from 5.8% in 1940 to 2.6% in 1970. Grocery store shelves were often empty, and lines for food were long. The Soviet economy historically had relied little on foreign trade because of the region’s large energy and raw material base; in 1985, exports and imports accounted for just 4 percent of the Soviet GNP. The trading the Soviet Union did engage in was mostly with communist countries, many of which were in Eastern Europe. In 1988, Soviet trade with socialist countries amounted to 62 percent of the country’s total foreign trade, while 15 percent of its foreign trade was made with Third World countries. Soviet trade with Western countries largely consisted of currency and Soviet oil exports, as well as trading one manufactured good for another (Pepsi for Stolichnaya vodka, for example). A few years prior, in April of 1988, Soviet and American trade delegations met in Moscow to examine possibly expanding trade relations. The Soviet government’s hope was to gain an understanding of Western management and marketing processes and learn new manufacturing skills. That same year, the Soviet Union signed a normalization agreement with the European Economic Community. Gorbachev’s economic policies of Soviet expansion and cooperation with the Western world changed the attitude of the country from one that regarded foreign trade as a means to compensate for short-term scarcities to one that considered imports to be long-term alternatives to domestic production. This helped open the door to Soviet expansion into the world market, bolstering relations with not only former Soviet bloc nations, but also Western powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom. In the mid-1990s, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and U.S. President George H.W. Bush signed trade agreements designed to make it easier for U.S. citizens to conduct business in Russia. In 1997, for the first time, Russia participated in economic discussions at the G7 summit in Denver, Colorado. The following year, Russia was integrated as a full member, and the G7 became the G8. By the early 2000s, Russian President Vladimir Putin was working to create a free-trade zone in Russia, and the country eventually joined the World Trade Organization in 2012. While the United States was able to become the dominant global superpower in the years following the Soviet Union’s collapse, Russia has gained ground in the past several years. A recent study by the U.S. Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute indicates that the United States’ power is declining because the world is entering a new phase in which the authority of traditional governments worldwide is destabilizing, stating that the United States “can no longer count on the unassailable position of dominance, supremacy, or pre-eminence it enjoyed for the 20-plus years after the fall of the Soviet Union.” The dissolution of the USSR left the U.S. as the only true world superpower, freeing the U.S. government from the constraints imposed by the existence of any threat from a powerful rival. This allowed the U.S. government to intervene militarily and otherwise in foreign countries without fear of major retaliation.