

## The End of the Cold War

### Source A

Who can say whether, in these circumstances, the eventual rejuvenation of the higher spheres of authority (which can only be a matter of time) can take place smoothly and peacefully, or whether rivals in the quest for higher power will not eventually reach down into these politically immature and inexperienced masses in order to find support for their respective claims? If this were ever to happen, strange consequences could flow for the Communist Party: for the membership at large has been exercised only in the practices of iron discipline and obedience and not in the arts of compromise and accommodation. And if disunity were ever to seize and paralyze the Party, the chaos and weakness of Russian society would be revealed in forms beyond description. For we have seen that Soviet power is only a crust concealing an amorphous mass of human beings among whom no independent organizational structure is tolerated. In Russia there is not even such a thing as local government. The present generation of Russians have never known spontaneity of collective action. If, consequently, anything were ever to occur to disrupt the unity and efficacy of the Party as a political instrument, Soviet Russia might be changed overnight from one of the strongest to one of the weakest and most pitiable of national societies.

George F. Kennan, (writing as "X") "The sources of Soviet conduct", Part III, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (July 1947), pp. 566-582, available at: <http://www.historyguide.org/europe/kennan.html>

### Source B

Moscow's relations with the Communist countries in Eastern Europe had long been troublesome. The Kremlin leadership had been challenged by a defiant Yugoslavia in 1948, by the East German uprising in 1953, by the 1956 uprisings in Poland and Hungary, and in Czechoslovakia by the Dubcek regime in 1968. The Red Army invaded and suppressed the revolts in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. In 1968, Brezhnev also announced that the Soviet Union had the right to intervene in the affairs of any of the Communist bloc countries to suppress counter revolution (the Brezhnev Doctrine). Throughout the post-Stalin era the Kremlin experienced severe difficulties in keeping its Eastern European satellites united. Yugoslavia continued to move on its own reformist path, with the reduction of the central power of the Party, and in 1961 it was the only Eastern European state to attend a conference of non-aligned nations. At the end of 1967 Albania, 'Stalin's most loyal ally', chose to align itself with Communist China and it formally withdrew from the Warsaw Pact in September 1968. Romania also adopted a separatist path after 1956 and resisted Moscow's attempts to control the Romanian domestic economy. All this demonstrated that the Soviet grip on the Eastern European countries was steadily declining. The problems inherent in democratic centralism adopted in Eastern Europe were essentially similar to those experienced in the Soviet Union. However, the Eastern European regimes were more fragile than that of Moscow, for the survival of their rulers hinged upon the quality of the Soviet leadership and, by implication, the strength of Soviet military power and influence. The sense of vulnerability was muted by the determination of the Kremlin under Brezhnev to maintain 'the Soviet security buffers acquired after the Second World War'.

Saki Dockrill, *The end of the Cold War era: The transformation of the global security order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 49-51.

### Source C

A few days earlier, Gorbachev had visited Stanford University, just as he had after the 1990 summit. During a reception at George Shultz's house, Palazhchenko pointed to several Stanford professors and whispered to his boss that they were distinguished experts on the Soviet Union. Beaming, Gorbachev marched over to them and demanded, "Well, did any of you ever imagine that all this was going to happen?"

"All this" referred to the end of Soviet communism, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War. For a long moment, no one knew quite what to say. Breaking the silence, a Soviet-born professor of Russian literature, Gregory Freidin, tossed the question back to Gorbachev in Russian: "What about *you*, Mikhail Sergeyevich? Did *you* ever imagine it?"

For an instant, Gorbachev was nonplussed. Then he threw back his head and laughed. The moment captured the irony and the complexity of Gorbachev's role in the last three years of the Cold War, and of his position in history. He was responsible for much of what had happened – including, not incidentally, the rise of Boris Yeltsin – yet he had neither foreseen nor intended the outcome.

In his 1943 study *The Hero in History*, the social philosopher Sidney Hook draws a distinction between the "eventful leader," under whose rule important developments occur, and the "event-making leader," who unleashes forces and then acts as their master and shaper.

Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the highest levels: The inside story of the end of the Cold War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), p. 467.

### Source D

In his farewell address to the nation on January 15, 1953, President Harry Truman made this statement of faith and prophecy:

As the free world grows stronger, more united, more attractive to men on both sides of the Iron Curtain – and as the Soviet hopes for easy expansion are blocked – then there will have to come a time of change in the Soviet world. Nobody can say for sure when that is going to be, or exactly how it will come about, whether by revolution or trouble in the satellites, or by a change inside the Kremlin.

Whether the Communist rulers shift their policies of their own free will – or whether change comes about in some other way – I have not a doubt in the world that a change will occur.

I have a deep and abiding faith in the destiny of free men. With patience and courage, we shall some day move on into a new era.

At the end of 1991, the world moved into that new era prophesied by Truman nearly four decades earlier. The struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States in the interval was the greatest armed contest the world had ever seen. The destructive power assembled by each side dwarfed that of any previous arms race or war. The rivalry pushed into every corner of the globe, no matter how remote. The cost was as epic as the conflict itself, in excess of two trillion dollars just on the American side. It was a struggle of irreconcilable ideas as well as arms, a competition of opposing philosophies rooted in no less a concept than the nature of man and the relationship between citizen and government. While the two sides might "coexist" militarily, they could not do so politically.

Robert M. Gates, *From the shadows: The ultimate insider's story of five presidents and how the won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 532-533.

## Source E

Mr. Garthoff claims that in the early and mid-1980s no one "[expected] or [foresaw] that within a decade the Cold War, communist rule, and the Soviet Union itself would come to an end." The statement certainly holds true for him and his colleagues in the Sovietological community. It is demonstrably wrong when applied to President Reagan. Reagan acted with the conviction that the Soviet Union was not strong but weak, that its power rested on police terror at home and nuclear blackmail abroad, and that, being in the profoundest sense unnatural, it did not have long to live. In a speech at Notre Dame in May 1981, to cite but one example, Reagan asserted that "the West will not contain communism; it will transcend communism," and dismissed the whole communist experiment as a "sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written."

Such pronouncements, which ran counter to the academic consensus and earned Reagan in some circles the reputation of a dangerous right-wing fanatic, did not rest entirely on intuition. In the early 1980s the U.S. government occasionally received intelligence reports that depicted in stark terms the internal crisis afflicting the Soviet Union -- intelligence not all that different from the "unvarnished internal reporting of the KGB," to which Mr. Garthoff gives much credit for informing the Soviet leaders that their country was in trouble. The grand strategy of the Reagan administration with regard to the U.S.S.R. was to exploit this crisis by every available means in order to push Moscow toward reform.

In 1984, after leaving government service and shortly before Gorbachev came into office, I summarized this strategy in an article in this journal, where I depicted the Soviet Union as a country in the throes of a "revolutionary situation," whose leaders had no alternative (except war) but to carry out drastic internal reforms. These arguments paraphrased National Security Decision Directive 75, a still classified document dating to December 1982 that spelled out Reagan's Soviet policy.

Subsequent events corroborated these assumptions and the soundness of this strategy. At the beginning of Reagan's second term, Moscow entrusted its leadership to a man convinced that the Soviet Union urgently needed to liberalize at home and adopt a less aggressive stance abroad. As soon as Mikhail Gorbachev proceeded from words to deeds, President Reagan embraced him and, in the author's words, gradually moved from an "essentialist" to an "interactionist" position. Of course, the shift was not a change of heart by Reagan but an adaptation to the altered conditions in the U.S.S.R.

Richard Pipes, "Misinterpreting the Cold War: The Hard-Liners Had It Right", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (Jan. 1995), pp. 157-58.<sup>1</sup>

## Essay Question

Using these sources and your own knowledge, analyze the reasons why the Cold War came to an end during the period 1989-1991.

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<sup>1</sup> Review of Raymond Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994)