

Were the policies of
mikhail gorbachev or
ronald regan more
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Were the policies of Mikhail Gorbachev or Ronald Regan more responsible for ending the Cold War?

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Part A: Identification and Evaluation of Sources

The objective of this investigation is to explore the question: Were the policies of Mikhail Gorbachev or Ronald Regan more responsible for ending the Cold War?

The first source is Mikhail Gorbachev's speech "*Europe as a Common Home*". This source is relevant as it provides Gorbachev's position on the U. S-Soviet relations. This source is valuable in terms of origin, because by 1989 Gorbachev was the first to criticize "the sluggish economy", demonstrating the notion to bring a cultural, economic, and social up rise[1]. Furthermore it's valuable concerning purpose because it demonstrates Gorbachev's aim to diminish the Soviet approach to internal affairs with the "New Political

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Thinking Policy” and disbandment of the Brezhnev Doctrine, therefore it’s visible to historians of the aim to “revitalize the S. U” into a democracy. Finally, it’s valuable in terms of its content as it describes Gorbachev’s’ change from “class to humanitarianism”, showcasing the effort to create an “integrated European continent.”[2]

This source is limited in content because this speech was delivered in 1989; evidently, it only shows the success; limiting historians to the struggle on domestic issues and escalating Cold War tensions. Moreover, this source is limited in its purpose as it only portrays Gorbachev’s standpoint on the S. U.’s progress, thus limiting historians to Regan’s perception of the growth, hence a narrowed perspective. Finally, this source is limited in its content because Gorbachev delivered his speech to the Council of Europe, an organization for human rights; thus there is the possibility of the address being exaggerated to look auspicious.

The second chosen source is a book *The Rebellion of Ronald Regan: A History of the End of the Cold War* by the American historian, James Mann. This source is relevant because it analyses the significance of Gorbachev and Reagan’s contributions to end of the Cold War. In regards to Mann being born in 1946 this is valuable because it provides a first-hand account of the events from 1985-1991. Furthermore, Mann worked for the Los Angeles Times and Washington Post until 1987, giving him eye-witness accounts to the events during this time, thus providing documental evidence. Moreover, this source has value in its content, because through the undisclosed documents Mann prevails how American foreign policy was conducted and its penetrating influence to the negotiations between America and Moscow. <https://assignbuster.com/were-the-policies-of-mikhail-gorbachev-or-ronald-regan-more-responsible-for-ending-the-cold-war/>

Nevertheless with respect to its purpose this book illustrates how Ronald Reagan's "Tear Down That Wall" speech fortified Reagan's position in the Senate which "helped to create the climate in which the CW could end." [3]

Nonetheless, concerning its content, this source is a limitation because Mann is an American historian, thus giving a western perspective. The material also reveals a restriction, as Mann repeatedly speaks of Reagan's implementations; depicting a one-sided comparison among the two figures. Finally, purpose also serves a limitation because this book does not delve into the impact of Gorbachev's domestic and foreign affairs; lacking hindsight of Gorbachev's character and situation.

Part B: Investigation

The Cold War (CW) was acknowledged for its consistent term of tension between the democracies of the Western World and the communist countries of Eastern Europe, in particular, the United States (U. S.) and Soviet Union (SU.). The fall of the S. U. was a "decades-in-the-making outcome of CW politics", but it occurred suddenly between the late 1980s and early 1990s at the hands of Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, primarily at the level of U. S.-USSR politics. Through the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) where leaders explored the possibility of constraining each country's atomic weapons, the Perestroika and Glasnost policies, movements for political reformations within the "Iron Curtain", and the Sinatra Doctrine, which granted satellite states the authority to deal with their own affairs, we can see Gorbachev's and Reagan's contributions to the acceleration of the dismantlement of the S. U. and communism.

Prior to Gorbachev becoming General Secretary of the S. U., nuclear dismantlement was not in the agenda as Konstantin Chernenko strongly believed in communism. However on January 15, 1986 Gorbachev announced a proposal for a nuclear-free world by 2000, as he began to turn his attention towards helping the economy through changes in Soviet foreign policy and limiting the arms race against the U. S.[4]. However by 1990 the price of oil declined along with Soviet oil production, leaving the Soviet economy short in supply, lack of technological advancements compared to the U. S., and a gross amount of spending in the military industry. Gorbachev even says to his aide, Anatoly Chernyaev during a private conversation, “ We will lose, because right now we are already at the end of our tether.”[5]By Gorbachev enacting the development of the INF Treaty he hoped to prevent being dragged in further in the arms race, thus reducing costs and improving the economy. Eventually this proposal led to the Reykjavik Summit of 1986, where both leaders discussed the dismantlement of nuclear weapons on both sides, but due to a failed consensus towards the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), no agreement was met. Ultimately, the INF Treaty was concluded in Washington on June 1st, 1991, making it the first agreement to reduce nuclear missile arms; both the U. S and S. U. destroyed 2, 662 short, mid, and intermediate missiles.[6]Simultaneously during the upbringing of the INF Treaty, Reagan had secretly implemented the NSDD-75, which was to restrict the S. U.’s revenues in military, hence forcing them to shift from the defence industry to consumer goods. However due, to Gorbachev’ s proposal in arms -reduction, Reagan “ watered it down” before it was approved by Congress. As one can see both Reagan and Gorbachev

implemented policies towards national security as a way to reduce the threat of possible nuclear attack upon one another. However, Gorbachev's proposal in the INF Treaty was more effective because it allowed both Reagan and Gorbachev to discuss the matter as a whole, whereas if Reagan's NSDD-75 was effectuated due to its secret nature, it would have negatively impacted resulting in greater tensions and breaking the trust that had been accumulating.

Secondly, Gorbachev's implementation of the political reforms: the glasnost and perestroika policies on March 11th, 1985 prompted the reversal of the Soviet foreign policy doctrine and a far reaching de-ideologization.[7]The glasnost allowed leeway for the S. U. to re-continue the allowance of western goods and ideologies, such as elections which would parallel the democratic practices within Eastern Europe.[8]As for the perestroika, it ended price controls setup by the government.[9]Using this policy Gorbachev further exposed his idea of giving, " the sovereign right of each people to chose their social systems at their own discretion." This proved to be more effective as it strengthened the relations among the U. S, as Reagan saw that Gorbachev was shifting away from communism and towards a more democratic nature. The result of these two policies is seen when Gorbachev addresses the UN as he says, " Perestroika is changing our country, advancing it to new horizons. That process will continue, extend and transform Soviet society in all dimensions: economic, social, political, and spiritual, in all domestic affairs." [10]Here, one could see how Gorbachev is reflecting upon the ' re-construction' of the S. U. and because he parallels to the perestroika to being a new technological advancements, it could be seen

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how effective the perestroika and glasnost was in reducing tensions between the two superpowers. The effectiveness of the policy can be seen further in an interview with CBC. Ronald Reagan explains how since Gorbachev occupied a 'different' character compared to his predecessors, therefore though he was a Republican, he strayed his rhetoric of the 'evil empire' and entered his negotiations with respect, as did Gorbachev. Likewise, Ronald Reagan also created the Reagan Doctrine on February of 1985 as a tactic used to aid anticommunist countries in an effort to "roll-back" the Soviet-backed communist countries[11]. Until Gorbachev entered office this doctrine was proven to be effective as there was still a strong insurgence towards the ideology of expanding communism, however due to Gorbachev's 'different' thinking, the Reagan Doctrine was disbanded in 1988, as the perestroika and glasnost diminished the issues. Both Reagan and Gorbachev introduced policies in hopes to resolve domestic and foreign affairs within the countries, as a result to "end the CW", however Gorbachev's dual policy not only suited the better interest of the U. S. but was more effective in persuading his own citizens as he himself created it, giving citizens the notion that they too should follow in 'his steps'.

Finally, the introduction of the Sinatra Doctrine through which Gorbachev introduced a new and different Soviet position on the Comecon states. During the Twenty-Seventh Congress Gorbachev states, "unity has nothing in common with uniformity, hierarchy, interference by some parties in the affairs of others, or the striving of any party to have a monopoly over what is right".[12] Through this, Gorbachev explains how the position consists of no governmental or societal hierarchy, but simply the independence of each

nation and the free will of the people within it. The Sinatra Doctrine is further illuminated during Gorbachev's announcement to the Forty-Third Assembly at the United Nations on December 7th, 1988 when he says, "freedom of choice" and the withdrawal of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe.[13] These actions can be seen as Gorbachev's assurance to Eastern Europe and the Western Hemisphere that the S. U. promises to halt and no longer conduct any military interventions within the Comecon states. This is evident in the Soviet Bloc in Poland. In 1989 Polish voters voted for an anti-communist government, many Europeans thought that the S. U. would come in with tanks and weaponry to overthrow the elected government, as this is previously done to Hungary and Czechoslovakia, however, Gorbachev refused to act.[14] During this time Reagan did not implement any policies or treaties of his own apart from the existing ones that Gorbachev and Reagan continued to discuss prior to 1991 but after 1988. Nonetheless, Gorbachev's policy was more effective as it "cancelled" the ideology of expanding communism and created a domino effect in communism as shortly all the Baltic States and the Central Asian States declared independence from the S. U.

In light of all the treaties, policies, and doctrines created by Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, evidently the CW came to an end on the terms of Mikhail Gorbachev. The INF Treaty disclosed long-existing fears of nuclear attacks, The Glasnost and Perestroika helped promote a booming eastern European economy, which in turn resulted in more relations with the Western "enemies", and the Sinatra Doctrine created a turning point in Soviet beliefs, where people were able to choose their governments as

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opposed to being forced into one. Though Reagan did implement the Reagan Doctrine and NSDD-75, both policies came to a close shortly after the inauguration of Gorbachev as they were not fit for the changes that Gorbachev imposed. As a result, the Cold War came to an end due to Gorbachev's modernized thinking.

Part C: Reflection

Reflection Prompt: *What challenges in particular does archive-based history present? How can the reliability of the sources be evaluated?*

Since it has been 27 years since the Cold War has come to an end, much of the events that took place from 1981 to 1990 are archived within US government libraries. One challenge historians face is paper deterioration. Prior to the twenty-first century many documents such as the ones in the Library of Congress were written on carbon papers. These documents have now been subjected to fading away due to the type of typewriter ink and dyes used on the carbon paper.[15]For example, in my IA I used a CIA document and some of the words were faded and illegible. As a way to preserve existing documents, historians now de-acidify documents by using aqueous or solvent-type solutions applied by immersing the document or keeping them in low temperature storage.[16]However, many historians are now storing them in online archival bases to ensure the documents longevity.

Another challenge is the standard to which the information was collected. In the 80's and 90's technology wasn't available, therefore everything was written down by hand, as a result many documents lack clarity and details.

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This was very prevalent when going over the President's notes from conferences and CIA documents as it was hard to decipher their thinking process during that moment and their objective of certain issues. For this challenge there is no solution, because if one were to change or add on to the original documentations, that would compromise the originality of the document.

One method researchers use to evaluate the reliability of archive-based history is cross-referencing. Cross-referencing documents allows historians to check the validity of the information. For example in my IA investigation, I came upon an online archive called Wilson Center Digital Archive, at first I was skeptical so I cross-referenced the information I got from most of the sources with criticism from the Gail Library as it was a scholarly platform.

Another method historians use when verifying the reliability of a source is understanding the perspective by asking questions such as "Why did they report this?" In addition, a historian will read another source from the same time period by the same author to give way to their style of writing. Finally, a historian will see if the date in which the source was written around the same time span the event happened.

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