

10.5 During the Cold War, relations between the Soviet Union and the United States swung back and forth between confrontation and détente. The superpowers confronted each other over issues such as the Berlin Wall, Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe, and Cuba. However, in the 1970s, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev pursued détente and disarmament with the United States.



>> Missiles are paraded in Red Square in Moscow. The heavy military commitments of the Soviet Union was one of the factors that led to its decline.

 **Interactive Flipped Video**

The Cold War Ends

The Soviet Union Declines

Détente came to an abrupt end in 1979, after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to ensure its influence in that neighboring nation. Like the Vietnam War in the United States, the Afghan War drained the Soviet economy and provoked a crisis at home.

The Soviets in Afghanistan The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late 1979 to support an Afghan communist government that had seized power a year earlier. The new government's efforts to introduce social reforms and redistribute land roused bitter resentment among the anti-communist, devoutly Muslim Afghan people. As insurgencies, or uprisings, threatened the government, the Soviet Union stepped in. For ten years, Soviet forces battled widely scattered groups of **mujahedin** (moo jah heh DEEN), or Muslim guerrilla fighters. Despite 100,000 troops, the Soviets controlled only the cities, not the countryside. When the Soviets turned to bombing rural areas, millions of Afghan refugees fled into neighboring Pakistan. The United States funneled weapons and other military supplies to help the insurgents battle Soviet troops.

By the late 1980s, the Afghan War had become a quagmire for the Soviet Union. It was draining badly needed resources and costing many casualties. In 1989, the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan to focus on troubling issues at home.

>> Objectives

Understand why the Soviet Union declined.

Identify the reforms introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev.

Describe the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Evaluate how the end of the Cold War affected the remaining communist nations and the United States.

>> Key Terms

mujahedin
Mikhail Gorbachev
glasnost
perestroika
Lech Walesa
Solidarity
Václav Havel
Nicolae Ceausescu

The Command Economy Stagnated
Soviet economy faced severe problems. Unlike the economies of Western Europe and the United States, which experienced booms during the Cold War, the communist economies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union stagnated. Central economic planning led to inefficiency and waste. In competition with free market economies of the West, the Soviet command economy began to collapse. It could not match the West in production of quality consumer goods. People saw little improvement in their lives and envied their western neighbors.

The arms race put an additional strain on the Soviet economy. By the 1980s, both superpowers were spending massive sums on costly weapons systems. U.S. President Ronald Reagan began a massive military buildup, partly because he believed that the Soviet Union could not afford to spend as much on defense as the United States. When Reagan launched a new round of missile development, it was clear that the Soviet economy could not afford to match it.

Gorbachev Tries Reform In 1985, an energetic new leader, **Mikhail Gorbachev** (GAWR buh chawf), came to power in the Soviet Union. In foreign policy,



>> Gorbachev struggled at home, but the United States welcomed Soviet reforms. President Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev shake hands before a summit near Geneva in 1985. In a 1987 speech near the Berlin Wall, Reagan urged Gorbachev to "tear down this wall!"

tensions, Gorbachev renounced the Brezhnev Doctrine, which had asserted the Soviet Union had a right to intervene militarily in any Warsaw Pact nation.

He signed arms control treaties with the United States and eventually pulled Soviet troops out of Afghanistan.

At home, Gorbachev launched a two-pronged effort at reform. First, he called for **glasnost**, or openness. He ended censorship and encouraged people to talk openly about the country's problems.

Second, he urged **perestroika** (pehr uh STROY kuh), or the restructuring of government and the economy. Gorbachev's reforms also included a lessening of restraints on emigration. Natan Sharansky, a Soviet scientist and human rights activist, had been imprisoned for ten years for treason. Long denied permission to emigrate, he was released in exchange for a Soviet spy in 1986 and settled in Israel.

Streamlining government and reducing the size of the bureaucracy, he hoped, would boost efficiency and output. He backed some free-market ideas, including limited private enterprise. But he still wanted to keep the essence of communism.

Corrupt or inefficient officials were dismissed. To produce more and higher-quality goods, factory managers, instead of central planners, were made responsible for decisions. To increase food supplies, farmers were allowed more land on which to grow food to sell on the free market.

? IDENTIFY SUPPORTING DETAILS What economic problems did the Soviets face in the 1970s and 1980s?

The Soviet Union Collapses

Gorbachev faced a host of problems. His policies brought rapid change that led to economic turmoil. Shortages grew worse, and prices soared. Factories that could not survive without government help closed, throwing thousands out of work. Old-line Communists and bureaucrats whose careers were at stake denounced the reforms. At the same time, other critics demanded even more changes.

The Soviet Empire Crumbles Glasnost encouraged unrest in the multinational Soviet empire. The Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which had been seized by the Soviet Union in 1940, broke away in 1990, declaring independence soon after. In Eastern Europe, countries from Poland to Bulgaria broke out of



Analyze Maps The Soviet Union officially dissolved in 1991, and many former republics gained independence. Which of the former Soviet republics is the largest?

Interactive Map

the Soviet orbit, beginning in 1989. Russia's postwar empire seemed to be collapsing.

In mid-1991, Soviet hardliners tried to overthrow Gorbachev and restore the old order. Their attempted coup failed, but it further weakened Gorbachev. By year's end, as other Soviet republics declared independence, Gorbachev resigned.

End of the Soviet Union In December 1991, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was officially dissolved after almost 70 years. Its 15 republics became separate independent nations. Russia, the largest republic, had dominated the Soviet Union.

After the breakup, Russia and its new president, Boris Yeltsin, faced a difficult future. They struggled to build a market economy and prevent violent conflict between pro-democracy and pro-communist groups. Like Russia, the other former Soviet republics like Ukraine and Kazakhstan faced hard times. They wanted to build stable governments and improve their standards of living. But ethnic violence and economic troubles proved obstacles. Some republics had stores of nuclear weapons, which they agreed to give up in exchange for aid and investment from the West.

SUMMARIZE How did Gorbachev's reforms lead to a new map of Europe and Asia?

Eastern Europe Transformed

During the Cold War, Eastern Europe lay in the Soviet orbit. Efforts to resist Soviet domination were met with harsh repression. Despite the Soviet threat, some nations in Eastern Europe slowly made reforms. After Mikhail Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union would no longer intervene in Eastern Europe, a "democracy movement" swept the region, and the nations of Eastern Europe were remarkably transformed.

Poland Struggles Toward Democracy Poland was the Soviet Union's most troublesome satellite. In 1956, protests had led to some reforms, but dissatisfaction with communism remained strong. The Roman Catholic Church, which often faced persecution, became a rallying symbol for Poles who opposed the communist regime.

In 1980, economic hardships ignited strikes of shipyard workers. Led by **Lech Walesa** (lek vah WEN suh), they organized an independent labor union, called **Solidarity**. It soon claimed millions of members, who pressed for political change.

Under pressure from the Soviet Union, the Polish government outlawed Solidarity and arrested its leaders, including Walesa. Still, unrest simmered.



>> Lech Walesa traveled to Italy in 1981 to meet Pope John Paul II, the first Polish pope. The pope was a great supporter of the Solidarity movement.

 Interactive Timeline



>> Residents of East and West Berlin walk atop the Berlin Wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate on November 11, 1989. The wall was torn down shortly after.

Walesa became a national hero and the Polish government eventually released him from prison.

Pressure from the world community further strained Poland's communist government and helped hasten its collapse. Pope John Paul II visited Poland, met with Solidarity leaders, and criticized communist policies. The pope was the former Karol Wojtyla, archbishop of the Polish city of Cracow.

In the late 1980s, Poland—like the Soviet Union—began to introduce radical economic reforms. It legalized Solidarity and in 1989 sponsored the first free elections in 50 years. Lech Walesa was soon elected president of Poland. The new government began a difficult but peaceful transition from socialism to a market economy. It helped mark the start of the collapse of Soviet domination and communism in Eastern Europe.

Revolution and Freedom By 1989, the “democracy movement” in Eastern Europe was sweeping out old governments and ushering in new ones. People took to the streets, demanding reform.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Hungary had quietly introduced some modest economic reforms. Later, in the spirit of glasnost, Hungarians began to criticize their government more openly. Under growing pressure, the communist government allowed other political parties and opened its border with Austria.

That move allowed thousands of East Germans to escape into Hungary, and from there, to the West. Within a few months, Germans tore down the Berlin Wall, a move that would soon lead to the reunification of Germany.

One by one, communist governments fell across Eastern Europe. In Czechoslovakia, **Václav Havel** (VAHTS lahv HAH vul), a dissident writer and human rights activist, was elected president. Most changes came peacefully, but when **Nicolae Ceausescu** (chow SHES koo), Romania's long time dictator, refused to step down, he was overthrown and executed.

For the first time since 1945, Eastern European countries were free to settle their own affairs. They withdrew from the Warsaw Pact and requested that Soviet troops leave. By then, Soviet power itself was crumbling.

Ethnic Tensions in Eastern Europe Centuries of migrations and conquest left most Eastern European nations with ethnically diverse populations. Most countries had a majority population with one or more ethnic minorities that asserted their own identities. Nationalism helped unite some countries such as Poland and Hungary, but it was also a divisive force.