

1(a) Compare and contrast the evidence provided in Sources A and B on Soviet and Western approaches to foreign policy toward Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. [10]

Sources A and B are similar in showing Gorbachev's shift away from traditional Soviet control over Eastern Europe. Source A suggests that Gorbachev agreed with Thatcher's observation that he was in "favour of each country choosing its own road of development so long as the Warsaw Treaty is intact." Similarly, Source B reinforces the idea of a major turn-around in foreign policy when Gorbachev announced plans to unilaterally reduce the massive Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe, as suggested in the line "Today I can inform you of the following: The Soviet Union has made a decision on reducing its armed forces" showing how the USSR sought to reduce Soviet military presence and aggression in Eastern Europe. Hence both Source A and B show that Gorbachev sought to loosen Soviet control over Eastern Europe.

Sources A and B share similar views regarding the abandonment of an interventionist approach backed up by the threat of force towards Eastern Europe due to similarity in context. Gorbachev sought to reform and restore Soviet economy and society. Gorbachev was determined to alleviate economic stagnation and address political challenges within the Soviet Union via glasnost and perestroika. Their desire to focus on domestic developments led Gorbachev to introduce New Political Thinking to reduce Cold War competition with the US and in turn alleviate the financial burden of maintaining a huge military presence within the Eastern Bloc states. This would in turn allow the Soviet Union to focus its energies on internal domestic reforms and ultimately save its economy.

However, Sources A and B are different in terms of portraying the differing receptivity towards change in Eastern Europe between Thatcher and Gorbachev. Thatcher in Source A had cautioned Gorbachev about changing the status quo in Eastern Europe, especially with regards to the reunification of Germany. On the other hand, Gorbachev in Source B spoke with conviction that demilitarization was necessary, as suggested by the line "It is obvious, for instance, that the use or threat of force can no longer, and must no longer, be an instrument of foreign policy." This means that Gorbachev was willing to embrace making drastic changes and make major departures from his predecessors with regard to Soviet policy in the region.

Sources A and B are different in their opinion on change because of their different target audience and purpose. Source A was a private conversation between Thatcher and Gorbachev so she was able to share her earnest thoughts and concerns with Gorbachev and advise him against endorsing drastic changes in Eastern Europe. As this was conducted away from public scrutiny, she could afford to abandon making politically correct statements. Given the improved relations between the USSR and the West because of arms reduction efforts and diplomatic engagements, the West came to view Gorbachev's leadership as less threatening in comparison to previous Soviet leaders. Furthermore, it was also strategic that revolution would not take place so rapidly as it would undermine regional stability. Source B was a speech made at the UN, to impress upon the rest of the world the USSR's commitment to peace and arms reduction. Given that prevailing attitudes of the Soviets, particularly

with Soviet willingness to bring an end to the Cold War, and not just the arms race was not evident, this would also buy the USSR goodwill and trust, two elements vital for the revitalisation of the Soviet economy since Gorbachev was eager to boost economic ties with the West and the non-communist world.

1(b) How far do Sources A-E support the assertion that Eastern European communist governments collapsed primarily due to popular movements in Eastern Europe? [30]

Sources C and D support the assertion by showing that Soviet satellite states such as East Germany and Poland caved in to political pressure exerted on them by their citizens while Sources A, B and E challenge the assertion by arguing that actions at the top echelons of the Communist leadership, particularly that of Gorbachev, mattered more since their actions led to the belief that the Soviets would not intervene to crush the popular movements. **Overall, the challenge sources are preferred.**

Sources C and D, and to some extent E, support the assertion by suggesting that the Eastern European popular movements undermined the credibility of the incumbent communist government and utilised opportunities to bring about the demise of the Communist regimes. Source C states that “a thirst for freedom alone cannot overthrow a dictatorship unless it is translated into concrete action” and that “the communist dictatorship did not collapse of its own accord - rather it had to be pushed by mass demonstrations in order to agree on free elections and the return of democracy.” This means that the action undertaken by the masses pressured the Communist leaders to give up on their monopoly over power. This claim of mass demonstrations taking place is reinforced by Source D, which shows a picture of East German demonstrators demanding for free elections and the resignation of the government in 1989. From this picture that the fall of the East German government faced intense pressure exerted by the popular movements that weakened its credibility and legitimacy. Source E provides further evidence of how the Polish Solidarity movement helped to pressure the incumbent communist government resulting in the government acceding to ‘strikers’ demands and agreed to Round Table negotiations’ suggesting that popular movements in Poland had pressured the government significantly enough to pressure cooperation to work towards reform and eventual elections.

The assertion put for by the support sources is less convincing when considering the prevailing historical context. While persistent calls for change from popular movements helped to undermine the credibility of the communist governments in Eastern Europe, the ability of these movements to gain substantial momentum in 1989 was due to changes in Soviet foreign policy that shifted away from the Brezhnev Doctrine to the **Sinatra Doctrine** that allowed Eastern Bloc countries to determine their own internal affairs without the threat of Soviet intervention. This relaxation of control was what gave the demonstrators mentioned in Source C a chance to overthrow the communist regimes. This observation is supported when cross-referenced to Source E, which states that Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze promoted restraint and the “principles as non-aggression, respect for sovereignty and national independence, non-interference in internal affairs.” This again implies that the Soviets would not meddle with Eastern European domestic politics either through military means or otherwise. Source D is limited since it was merely a snapshot of a moment in time showing protesters demonstrating against the East German government. Although the communist government eventually collapsed, the picture does not give us sufficient basis or evidence to suggest that popular movements were the primary cause. By 1989, the legitimacy of the regime was already at its lowest ebb given the loss of credibility of weak East German government policies that worsened its economy and did not receive military intervention from the Soviets to address the growing challenge to the government which would ultimately lead to its collapse in 1989. When East German leader Enrich

Honecker asked Moscow for help against mass protests, Gorbachev was famously noted to have replied "Life punishes those who delay" suggesting an willingness to accept reforms taking place.

In contrast, Sources A, B and E provide evidence to challenge the assertion by showing that Gorbachev played a primary role in emboldening the popular movements as an inadvertent result of his devotion to openness and new approach to foreign policy. This is shown in Source E, when a strike called by Solidarity in August 1988 pressured the Jaruzelski government to organize the Round Table negotiations with Solidarity concerning democratic reforms when the hardline Polish leadership realized the Soviets would not come to their aid as suggested by the source which states that the Soviets intended to honour "principles as non-aggression, respect for sovereignty and national independence, non-interference in internal affairs." An official confirmation of this new line of thinking pertaining to the Soviet Union's relations with Eastern Europe: the abandonment of using military force as a form of intimidation in order to ensure client states follow the dictates of the Soviet Union, was announced by Gorbachev in Source B when he mentioned at the UN in December 1988 that "It is obvious, for instance, that the use or threat of force can no longer, and must no longer, be an instrument of foreign policy..." This approach no doubt had a cascading effect upon the popular movements in Eastern Europe, especially after what they observed happened in Poland: Solidarity emerging victorious in the semi-democratic elections in June 1989, which sounded the death knell for the communist party in Poland. This result was accepted by the Soviet Union, as suggested in Source A when Thatcher told Gorbachev "I noted that you calmly accepted the results of the elections in Poland, and in general, the processes in other East European countries." Hence showing a shift of Soviet foreign policy and an unwillingness to intervene in the affairs of Eastern Europe that enabled the popular movements in Eastern Europe to gain momentum and eventually undermine the communist governments in Eastern Europe.

The evidence in Sources A, B and E is more convincing compared to the assertion presented by the support sources. The desire to focus on reforming the USSR led Gorbachev to seek to alleviate the USSR from Cold War competition and one of the ways was to reduce Soviet commitment to Eastern Europe as supporting them would be extremely burdensome for the ailing Soviet economy. This explained the introduction of New Political Thinking which sought to end the Cold War and Sinatra Doctrine in 1989. The importance of the role of Gorbachev's policies was seen in Thatcher's concerns about the lack of Soviet intervention allowing for the revolutions taking place in Eastern Europe. This stemmed from how without the guarantee of Soviet military support to back him up, Jaruzelski was left with no choice but to negotiate with Walesa's Solidarity at the Round Table Talks. The talks led to the legalising of Solidarity and more importantly, the promise of elections in June 1989. The elections concluded with the total domination of Solidarity in the upper house and all seats that it was permitted to contest in the lower house. This ultimately set the stage for the eventual dissolution of the communist party itself and the election of Walesa as president in 1990. Further evidence of changes in Soviet foreign policy could also be seen when Gorbachev did not intervene when Hungary began opening its border with Austria, allowing thousands of East Germans to escape.

In conclusion, Sources C and D is not convincing to support the assertion since the East European mass movements would not have a chance to overthrow the communist regimes without the inadvertent assistance that was rendered by Gorbachev. In contrast, when taken together, sources A, B and E offer a more convincing argument to show that actions from the top had important ramifications. In other words, Gorbachev's reforms sent a strong signal that the Soviets had abandoned coercion and would

not intervene militarily to prop up the communist regimes in their client states. This in turn triggered the revolt of the masses in Eastern Europe against communist dictatorship. Thus, on balance, the sources that challenge the assertion are preferred

