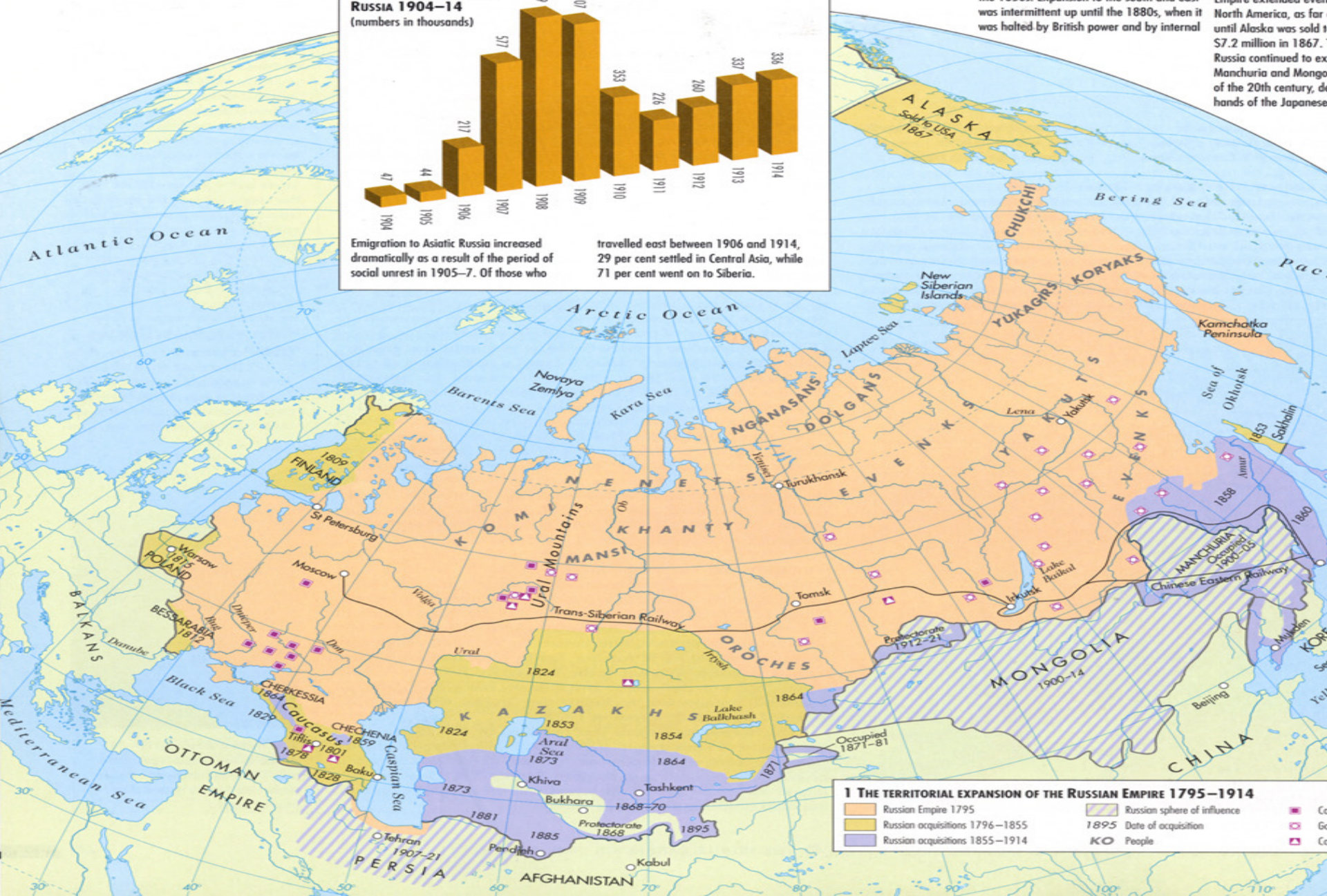


Between 1795 and 1914 Russia sought to expand its territory in all possible directions but met with resistance from Austria, Britain and France when it threatened their interests in the Balkans in the 1850s. Expansion to the south and east was intermittent up until the 1880s, when it was halted by British power and by internal

financial difficulties. To the west, the Russian Empire extended even to North America, as far as Alaska, which was sold to the USA in 1867 for \$7.2 million. Russia continued to expand to the east, acquiring Manchuria and Mongolia in the 20th century, the hands of the Japanese.



Collapse of the USSR

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What is it that Collapsed in 1991?

- We will go back to 1977 to get an idea. In that year, Brezhnev was the Soviet Communist Party Secretary General. He revised the Soviet Constitution for the third and last time. Compared with the previous revisions of 1924, and 1936, the number of constituent Republics of the Soviet Union had risen to fifteen as detailed in Article 71, see next page.
- I have highlighted the names of the Republics that joined the list after the first revision of 1924.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SOVIET STATE (Constitution of 1977):

[Article 71. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics unites:](#)

the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Moldovian Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic,

the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Article 72. Each Union Republic shall retain the right freely to secede from the USSR.

Beyond this, the Soviets exercised control over bordering Eastern Europe states shown in the map on the next slide.



IRELAND

UNITED KINGDOM

DENMARK

ATLANTIC OCEAN

NETHERLANDS

Baltic Sea

SOVIET UNION

EAST GERMANY

POLAND

BELGIUM

LUXEMBOURG

WEST GERMANY

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

FRANCE

AUSTRIA

HUNGARY

SWITZERLAND

ROMANIA

Black Sea

PORTUGAL

YUGOSLAVIA

SPAIN

ITALY

BULGARIA

ALBANIA

TURKEY

Mediterranean Sea

AFRICA

GREECE

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EUROPE DURING THE COLD WAR (1960)

Stalin Constitution 1936

- This is how Lenin introduced his constitution on November 25, 1936, and compared it with the situation in 1924,

“What was the situation in 1924? At that time, we were in the first period of the New Economic Policy, the beginning of NEP, the period of a certain revival of capitalism; now, however, we are in the last period of NEP, the end of NEP, the period of the complete liquidation of capitalism in all spheres of the national economy.

And what does this mean?

It means that the exploitation of man has been abolished, eliminated, while the Socialist ownership of the implements and means of production has been established as the unshakable foundation of our Soviet society.”

Stalin Constitution 1936

Stalin continued,

“...the draft of the new Constitution of the USSR proceeds from the fact that the capitalist system has been liquidated and that the Socialist system has triumphed in the USSR. The main foundation of the draft of the new Constitution of the USSR is the principles of Socialism, whose main pillars are things that have already been achieved and realized: the Socialist ownership of the land, forests, factories, works, and other instruments and means of production; the abolition of exploitation and of exploiting classes; the abolition of poverty for the majority and of luxury for the minority; the abolition of unemployment; work as an obligation and an honorable duty for every able-bodied citizen, in accordance with the formula; “He who does not work, neither shall he eat”; the right to work, i.e., the right of every citizen to receive guaranteed employment; the right to rest and leisure; the right to education, etc. The draft of the new Constitution rests on these and similar pillars of Socialism. It reflects them, it embodies them in law...”

Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, 1985

- Gorbachev encountered a different situation when he became the Communist Party Secretary General in 1985. He resolved to change things and introduced Glasnost and Perestroika to move the Soviet Union out of the stagnation that afflicted its economy and productive sector.
- The Soviet Union sustained its superpower status at a heavy cost and with the most undesirable image of a totalitarian state despite her indispensable sacrifices to defeat Nazism and fascism during the Second World War.

Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, 1985

- The defeat in the Second World War eliminated the Nazi hold over power mechanisms. Stalinist totalitarianism, on the other hand, was able to benefit from the war, both externally and internally.
- Externally, the Stalinist regime held on to most of the booty the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact had stipulated. The Allies also recognized the realities the Soviets had created on the ground as the Red Army marched through Eastern Europe to Berlin. The Soviets as such succeeded in expanding their version of totalitarianism up to the Berlin Wall until Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika empowered East Europeans to fold it back by 1991.

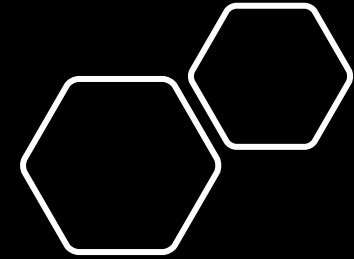
Cultural Memory in the Present

Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied

Warped Mourning



ALEXANDER ETKIND



Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, 1985

- Internally, paranoid authoritarianism had deep roots in the Soviet regime. The Gulags emerged as major symbols of Soviet inhumanity. The Stalinist Soviet Union used the Gulags, the chief administration of correctional labor camps, as sites of dehumanizing its citizens within its territory, a technology they shared with the Nazis. Historian Alexander Etkind highlights it with the story of Olga Bergglots, a survivor of the Gulag system. Following her arrest in 1938, she lamented, “They removed my soul, dug around inside it with their stinking fingers, spat on it, shat on it, then stuffed it back in and said, ‘Carry on with your life.’” Though alive, the Gulag survivors had to deal with the imprints of these “stinking fingers,” on their souls (Etkind, *Warped Mourning*, 72).



THE AGE OF EXTREMES

A HISTORY OF THE WORLD, 1914-1991

AUTHOR OF *THE AGE OF EMPIRE*

ERIC HOBSBAWM

READ BY HUGH KERMODE

What Was Wrong?

- Gorbachev was not alone in asserting that Soviet political and economic systems were inefficient and had to be reformed.
- Historian Hobsbawm believes that the situation he faced could be traced back at least to the 1970s. He points to the decline in the rate of growth steadily from one five-year period to the next in all quantifiable indicators such as gross domestic product, industrial output, farming output, capital investment, productivity of labor, and real income per head.

What Was Wrong?

- Hobsbawm also refers to the internationally regressing profile of the Soviet trade. Its export structure reversed in three decades. In 1960, its major exports were machinery equipment, means of transport, and metals or metal articles. By 1985, energy, oil, and gas constituted 53% of its exports. Conversely, almost 60% of its imports consisted of machinery, metals, and industrial consumer articles.
- USSR thus became “an energy-producing colony of more advanced industrial economies” like Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic.
- The basic social indicators such as mortality also ceased to improve.

What Was Wrong?

- Brezhnev era oil bonanza encouraged higher spending on the military, an arms race with the West, and higher import bills, but hampered possible reforms to fix the state's productive apparatus.
- The price of Russian oil, like OPEC producers, almost quadrupled in 1973 and increased again at the end of the 1970s in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution. In 1970, oil was selling at an average price of \$2.53 a barrel but in late 1980 a barrel was worth about \$41.00.
- The oil exports generated enough revenue for the State, but the Soviet economy continued to stagnate.

Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, 1985

- The historical problem we are looking at is how you reform a centralized political, governmental, and economic structure.
- We know in retrospect that Gorbachev failed to keep the centralized structure intact. Despite his many efforts, the Union collapsed as did its satellite subunits that existed outside its Constitution but within the ambit of its influence and control.
- The unanswered question is why did a reformer fail?

Reform: The People

- Did the Soviet people in the core areas of the Republic want a change?
- Historian Hobsbawm opts to say no for several reasons. First, the level of comparative awareness. Most Soviets had no idea of an alternative. The Soviet state had an unbroken continuity stretching back to the end of the civil war. The country itself had an unbroken or virtually unbroken continuity stretching back even longer to the Czarist period.

Reform: The People

- Second, average citizens enjoyed multiple advantages despite nomenklatura inefficiencies. The system continued to provide livelihood and comprehensive Social Security in an egalitarian society.
- Hobsbawm argues that Whatever the pressure to change came from in the USSR, it was not from the grassroots. In fact, it came as it had to come from the top.

Glasnost and Perestroika

- The change came from the top. Gorbachev launched his campaign to transform Soviet socialism with the two slogans of Glasnost and Perestroika.
- Hobsbawm maintains that conceivably transformation was possible only if the command structure of the party implemented it. It turned out to be the chief obstacle to transforming a system that it had created and in which it had a large, vested interest. The party apparatus greeted any major reform with inertia.

Glasnost and Perestroika

- Hobsbawm draws a comparison between the Soviet Communist Party and an organized military. He argues that the structure and functioning of the Soviet system were essentially military. According to him, democratizing armies does not necessarily improve their efficiency. On the other hand, if a civilian alternative is not available before the military system is destroyed, reform efforts may lead to collapse instead of reconstruction.
- Hobsbawm believes that the USSR under Gorbachev fell into this trap between Glasnost and Perestroika, resulting in its eventual downfall.

Glasnost and Perestroika

- Glasnost viewed the essentials of this theory as materialized in the new constitutional system. The constitutional reform, however, merely dismantled one set of political mechanisms and replaced it with another. The change had its pitfalls.
- The Communist Party had a functional, besides official, ideological side to it. Functionally, the territorial chieftains operated through networks of bilateral relations, independent of the center, making barter arrangements and exchanges of favors. In a centrally commanded economy, they had to be replaced if the system were to work. The reforms left the country in a void.

Glasnost and Perestroika

- The radical reformers looked for support against the entrenched party hierarchies of the nationalists in the republics and in doing so strengthened these. In Russia itself, Yeltsin appealed to Russian interests against the peripheral republics. He had been transforming Russia into a Republic like the others. Yeltsin de facto favored the disintegration of the union which a Russia under his control would in effect supplant.
- In 1991, economic disintegration helped to advance political disintegration.

Glasnost and Perestroika

- Perestroika posed more problems. Announced in 1987, its aim was to revive a long-suffering economy, move away from a centrally planned system, and allow more private enterprise.
- Although the reformers legalized a role for private enterprise and cooperatives as the second economy and allowed permanent loss-making state enterprises to go bankrupt, the gap between the rhetoric and implementation of economic reform remained unbridgeable.
- The criterion of Perestroika's success could only be how most Soviet citizens experienced it in their real incomes.

Glasnost and Perestroika

- The reformers wished to have the advantages of capitalism without losing those of socialism. Nobody had the slightest idea of how in practice the transition from a centralized state command economy to the new system was to be made. How would a dual, state, and non-state economy for the foreseeable future work?
- The experience of Lenin's New Economic Policy, 1921-1928, and the Chinese market liberalization and decentralization since the end of Maoism did not help.

Glasnost and Perestroika

- Perestroika dismantled the Soviet Union's system without providing an alternative, resulting in a collapse of citizens' standard of living. Russia had no five-year plan in 1989, with only party, army, and security forces holding the country together.

Collapse: The Republics

- USSR held multi-candidate elections on March 26, 1989.
- It was the USSR's first popularly-elected national Congress of People's Deputies. This legislature of 2,250 members — elected by 170 million voters — would meet from May 25 through June 9 and elect a standing legislature — the new 542-member Supreme Soviet.

Collapse: The Republics

- Two days later, Gorbachev discussed the results with the Politburo. [The minutes have since become available.](#)
- Here is part of what he said, “The majority of the people understand the state the country is in right now and because of that they support the perestroika policies. But they believe that in four years more could have been achieved. They see how ineptly issues are resolved sometimes; how good initiatives come to naught. They understand that perestroika’s goals require more time. Yet they know that there are issues that can be resolved right now. But they often come across the old atmosphere, when [the leaders] listen to them for a while but do nothing, and sometimes even reprimand them. Now people do not want to accept this anymore. Our people are prepared to forgive and understand a great deal if they are treated with respect...”

Collapse: The Republics

- Gorbachev pursued his resolve to reduce the Communist Party's control.
- On February 7, 1990, Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, referring to the leading role of the Communist Party, was abolished.

Collapse: The Republics

- On March 17, 1991, a referendum on the future of the Soviet Union was held. The idea was to transform the country into a federation of independent republics with broad autonomy.
- Six republics (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) refused to participate.

Collapse: The Republics

- At the end of April 1991, Gorbachev supported by the nine major republics, negotiated a Treaty of Union. It was to preserve the existence of a central federal power with a directly elected federal president in charge of the armed forces, foreign policy, the coordination of Financial Policy, and economic relations with the rest of the world.
- The treaty was to be signed on the 20th of August 1991.

Collapse: The Republics

The old party and Soviet establishment viewed the end of the USSR in the Treaty of Union. Two days before the treaty was due to come into force, the old guard staged a coup against Gorbachev.

Short-lived, the Coup attained its objective. It killed the Treaty.

Yeltsin challenged the coup makers and foiled it, but the dissolution moved ahead.

The republics had been declaring sovereignty since November 1988 under the Soviet Constitution. Independence followed a year or so later for all of them.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SOVIET STATE (Constitution of 1977):

Article 71. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics unites:

the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, June 1990

the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, July 1990

the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, July 1990,

the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, June 1990

the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, October 1990,

the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, November 1989,

the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, September 1989,

the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, May 1989,

the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, June 1990,

the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic, July 1989

the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic, December 1990,

the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, August 1990

the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, August 1990,

the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, August 1990

the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic., November 1988

Article 72. Each Union Republic shall retain the right freely to secede from the USSR.

Collapse: The East European Satellites

- The Cold War era Soviet bloc within Europe reacted to forces of change differently given its geography and historical background. The Soviets had maintained their control over the satellites, through a combination of military presence, Communist Parties, and a surveillance and enforcement system that multiple secret agencies operated. Dissent could be oppressed.
- The change was, however, palpable since the late 1970s when an organized working class in Poland felt rejuvenated with the 1978 election of the first Polish Pope.
- The trade union movement Solidarity demonstrated that the Communist Party regime in Poland was at the end of its tether but also that it could not be overthrown by mass agitation.

Collapse: The East European Satellites

- Between October 1989 and May 1990, the world witnessed the unexpected collapse of satellite communist regimes in Europe. From August 1989 to the end of that year, communism lost power in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and the German Democratic Republic. Even Yugoslavia and Albania ceased to be communist regimes, and the former eventually broke out into a civil war. Outer Mongolia also chose to shed communist rule.
- Four communist regimes survived, namely China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba.

Collapse: The East European Satellites

- The regimes in Eastern Europe were not overthrown as they did not face any significant internal force, except in Poland, that posed a threat to their power. Poland, on the other hand, underwent a negotiation process that involved compromise and reform, similar to how Spain transitioned to democracy after the death of General Franco in 1975.
- Moscow signaled that it would no longer intervene militarily to rescue the satellite states.

Gorbachev legacy: Ending the Cold War

- Gorbachev had more success internationally. He viewed the Cold War as hemorrhaging the economy and decided to end it. Here are some highlights:
- Gorbachev signed three major disarmament treaties:
 - the Washington Treaty (8 December 1987), which provided for the destruction of all Soviet and American intermediate-range missiles based in Europe;
 - the Paris Treaty (19 November 1990) on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, agreed between the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact countries;
 - and the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), signed in Moscow (31 July 1991), which provided for the mutual reduction of strategic nuclear weapons.

Gorbachev legacy: Ending the Cold War

- At the same time, Gorbachev withdrew troops from Afghanistan.
- He exerted pressure on the Vietnamese to withdraw from Cambodia
- He ended Soviet support for the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia and for Cuban troops in Angola, economic aid to Cuba, and recalled Soviet troops from the island,
- Gorbachev also restored diplomatic relations with Israel and condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Gorbachev Legacy

- On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev dissolved the USSR. This is what he said in his last speech.
- “I cease my activities in the post of the U.S.S.R. president...
- Events went a different way. The policy prevailed of dismembering this country and disuniting the state, with which I cannot agree...
- Addressing you for the last time in the capacity of president of the U.S.S.R., I consider it necessary to express my evaluation of the road we have traveled since 1985,...”

Gorbachev Legacy

- “The process of renovating the country and radical changes in the world turned out to be far more complicated than could be expected. However, ...This society acquired freedom, liberated itself politically and spiritually,... work of historic significance has been accomplished. The totalitarian system which deprived the country of an opportunity to become successful and prosperous long ago has been eliminated. A breakthrough has been achieved on the way to democratic changes. Free elections, freedom of the press, religious freedoms, representative organs of power, and a multiparty (system) became a reality; human rights are recognized as the supreme principle.”

Gorbachev Legacy

Gorbachev continued:

- The movement to a diverse economy has started, equality of all forms of property is becoming established, people who work on the land are coming to life again in the framework of land reform, farmers have appeared, millions of acres of land are being given over to people who live in the countryside and in towns.
- Economic freedom of the producer has been legalized, and entrepreneurship, shareholding, and privatization are gaining momentum.

Gorbachev Legacy

Gorbachev concluded:

- “We live in a new world. The Cold War has ended, the arms race has stopped, as has the insane militarization that mutilated our economy, public psyche, and morals...We opened ourselves to the world and gave up interference in other people's affairs, and the use of troops beyond the borders of the country, and trust, solidarity, and respect came in response.
- The search for a democratic reformation of the multinational state brought us to the threshold of concluding a new Union Treaty... The old system collapsed before the new one had time to begin working, and the crisis in the society became even more acute...”

Conclusion

- Russia emerged as the successor state of the USSR while other Republics gained independence in their own right. By December 1991, twelve of them voluntarily joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).
- The Republics also cooperated with the United States under the [Nunn-Lugar Act 1991](#) to reduce the threats posed to nuclear weapons or materials in the wake of the USSR disintegration.
- Russian Federation has been an active player on the international scene. It enjoyed a tryst with the West as the eighth member of G7 for a while. It ended in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and aggravated with February 2022 aggression against Ukraine. Its current power structure has reconnected it to its Czarist/Stalinist Russian Empire-Soviet past. The international community has again felt the whiff of a Cold War.
- The Russian state has embraced formal structures of democracies and market economy, but de facto a Czarist-Stalinist streak permeates the totalitarian state institutions and their unchecked ambition for total control over decision-making, economic assets, and the influence they might carry.