The Collapse of Communism and the End of the Cold War (1945 – 1991)
Content Statement

• The collapse of the Communist governments in Eastern Europe and the USSR brought an end to the Cold War
Objectives

• Define or describe the following terms:
  – Détente
  – Reagan Doctrine
  – “Star Wars” Program
  – Mikhail Gorbachev
  – Commonwealth of Independent States
Objectives

• Explain how the collapse of Communist governments in Eastern Europe and the USSR brought an end to the Cold War era

• What role did the United States play in the collapse of Communism?
The Cold War

• The period from 1945 to 1991 saw a host of important events in the Cold War battle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

• There were multiple causes for the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

• The effect of this collapse was the reduction of tensions between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. that had characterized the Cold War period for 45 years.
Détente with the Soviet Union, 1972

• President Nixon believed in pursuing a policy of détente - a relaxing of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union

• Nixon sought to halt the build-up of nuclear weapons

• In 1972, he became the first President to visit Moscow, where he signed an agreement (SALT) with Soviet leaders
Détente with the Soviet Union, 1972

– The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) were two rounds of conferences and corresponding international treaties involving the United States and the Soviet Union on the issue of armament control.

– The two rounds of talks and agreements were SALT I and SALT II.
Détente with the Soviet Union, 1972

- The agreement limited the development of defensive missile systems
- Nixon further agreed to sell American grain to the Soviets to help them cope with food shortages
- In 1973, when war broke out in the Middle East, the United States and Soviet Union further cooperated in pressuring Israel and the Arab states to conclude a cease-fire
Détente with the Soviet Union, 1972

• Détente also allowed the United States to reduce its armed forces from 3.5 million to 2.3 million, and to withdraw U.S. forces from several Asian nations

Leonid Brezhnev & Richard Nixon, 1973

Leonid Brezhnev & Jimmy Carter, 1979
Re-Opening Relations with China, 1972

• Ever since the Communist Revolution in China in 1949, U.S. leaders had refused to establish diplomatic relations with China’s government.

• Although a strong anti-Communist himself, Nixon surprised the world by restoring diplomatic relations with Communist China.

• In 1972, he became the first President to visit mainland China.

• Reopening relations with China was looked upon as Nixon’s greatest foreign policy achievement.
Carter and the Soviets

• President Carter initially continued Nixon’s policy of détente with the Soviet Union
• However, in 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, this aggressive act brought a temporary end to détente
  – Carter halted grain sales to the Soviets
  – Carter boycotted the 1980 Olympics being held in Moscow
  – Carter postponed ratification of SALT II
The Cold War Under Reagan

• In 1983, President Ronald Reagan sent U.S. Marines to the Caribbean island of Grenada to protect Americans after Communists seized control.

• This intervention showed Reagan’s belief that the U.S. had to act as the world’s defender of freedom and democracy.
The Reagan Doctrine

• In 1985, Reagan announced the Reagan Doctrine, in which the United States would not simply confine itself to containing Communism.

• It would also attempt to “rollback” Communism by aiding anti-Communist rebels in Afghanistan, Angola, Nicaragua, and Cambodia.
The Reagan Doctrine

• Reagan strongly believed in a policy of Peace through Strength, feeling that the best way to prevent war was to make America’s enemies think that the U.S. had both the means and the will to stop aggression.
Reagan Brings Down the Soviet Union

• A key reason for the Soviet collapse was Reagan’s massive defense build-up

• He greatly increased defense spending, while also increasing the federal deficit

• Reagan proposed building an anti-ballistic defense system, called “Star Wars,” to shoot down Soviet missiles to prevent a nuclear attack
Reagan Brings Down the Soviet Union

• Struggling economically, the Soviet Union was unable to keep pace with this massive build-up of American defense spending.

“Star Wars” used lasers to shoot down missiles to prevent a nuclear attack.
Reagan Brings Down the Soviet Union

• Reagan’s “Star Wars” project was important in that it removed the Soviet nuclear threat to America

• It also demonstrated America’s technological superiority over the Soviet Union

• This superiority helped convince the Soviets to “throw in the towel” and de-escalate the arms race
The War in Afghanistan

• In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan

• Reagan’s support for the Afghans fighting against the Soviet invasion was also effective in destroying the Soviet Union

• Reagan supplied the Afghan fighters with surface-to-air Stinger missiles, which were able to devastate the Soviets’ air power
The War in Afghanistan

- While the war was costing the U.S. $1 billion a year, it was costing the Soviets eight times as much.
- This further helped to bankrupt the Soviet economy.
The Economic War

- Reagan also undermined the Soviet Union economically
- He cut off the flow of Western technology to the Soviet Union
- He supplied cheap natural gas to Western Europeans, undercutting the sale of Soviet natural gas exports to Western Europe
- This greatly weakened the Soviet Union’s economy by denying them large inflows of fresh Western currency
The Economic War

- In June 1987, Reagan gave a speech near the Berlin Wall
- Many saw his address as the beginning of the end of the Cold War and the fall of Communism
The Economic War

• In his speech, Reagan delivered one of the most memorable statements of his Presidency when he said, “General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall! . . . ”

• Video
Bringing an End to the Cold War

- President Reagan ratcheted up the pressure on the Soviet Union:
  - He approved a series of national security decisions that launched economic warfare campaigns against Moscow.
  - He introduced political warfare programs intended to loosen the Soviets’ control of its satellite empire.
  - He made the collapse of the Soviet empire America’s primary foreign policy goal.
Bringing an End to the Cold War

• Reagan’s second term saw the triumph of democracy in the Philippines and Latin America, and the fall of military governments were replaced by democratically-elected civilian governments.

• By the end of his Presidency, Reagan saw the start of the end of the Cold War.

• In the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere, Communism came to an abrupt end.
Bringing an End to the Cold War

• The Berlin Wall came tumbling down, and new democracies emerged in the last decade of the 20th century

• The post-Cold War period proved to be a time of great optimism, even though new problems have appeared on the horizon

• Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the Communist Party, sought to preserve Communism
Bringing an End to the Cold War

• Gorbachev introduced several reforms, such as
  – a greater “openness” in Soviet society, lifting restrictions on speech and the press
  – Dissidents were released from Soviet prisons
  – Restrictions on Soviet Jews emigrating to Israel and the West were ended
  – Withdrew troops from Afghanistan
  – Entered into negotiations with the U.S. to reduce nuclear arms
  – Allowed the states of Eastern Europe to introduce democratic, non-Communist governments
Gorbachev’s Reforms Fail

- Gorbachev’s policies failed to resolve the Soviets’ economic problems.
- His new openness unleashed forces of ethnic nationalism and social discontent.
- The Soviet Union, which had consisted of fifteen separate Russian and non-Russian republics, collapsed.
- The non-Russian republics, joined to the Soviet Union by force, suddenly began demanding independence.
- The spirit of nationalism even spread to the Russian Republic itself, the very heart of the Soviet Union.
The Break-up of the Soviet Union (1991)

• In 1991, Gorbachev recognized the independence of Lithuania and the other Baltic States
• He attempted to negotiate a new arrangement within the Soviet Union, but Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine also declared their independence
  – These three formed the basis of a new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
  – Each state was to be independent
The Break-up of the Soviet Union (1991)

- Other former Soviet republics quickly joined the Commonwealth
- The former Soviet Union was dead
- Gorbachev resigned at the end of 1991
Eastern Europe and the Unification of Germany

• Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev had allowed important changes in Eastern Europe

• These changes led to a lifting of the “Iron Curtain” between Western and Eastern Europe

• The Berlin Wall, which had separated East and West Berlin since 1961, was taken down
Eastern Europe and the Unification of Germany

- Throughout most of Eastern Europe, free elections brought non-Communist governments to power
- These governments struggled as they transitioned to free market economies
- One important event of the post-war period was the reunification of Germany
- West Germany’s leaders helped negotiate the reunification, which became official at the end of 1990
Eastern Europe and the Unification of Germany

• After a half a century of division, Germany was once again a unified nation
Eastern Europe and the Unification of Germany

• The most important event of the Bush Presidency was the official end of the Cold War as the Soviet Union dissolved.

• Bush recognized Russia and the other newly independent republics, and offered them economic assistance.
The U.S. in the Post-Cold War Era

• Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has furnished foreign aid as part of its attempt at peacemaking in the Balkans, Northern Ireland, and parts of Africa.

• The political and economic turmoil occurring in some of the new governments posed new challenges for the United States.
The U.S. in the Post-Cold War Era

• One particular hot spot in the post-Cold War era that saw renewed ethnic fighting was in Yugoslavia, which divided into several separate states.

• The dissolution of Yugoslavia was accompanied by fierce fighting between Muslim Bosnians and Christian Serbs.

• President Clinton helped negotiate a peace in Bosnia and spearheaded the use of NATO air strikes against Serbia.
The U.S. in the Post-Cold War Era

• President Clinton’s intervention led to a compromise peace and an end to the bloodshed and ethnic killing.
The U.S. in the Post-Cold War Era

• Clinton followed Bush’s policy of maintaining friendly relations with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the first democratically elected president in that nation’s history
• Clinton also encouraged the growth of free markets in Russia
• Foreign aid also helped promote the transition to democracy and capitalism in several former Communist countries, most notably Russia
The U.S. in the Post-Cold War Era

- Beginning in the late 20th century, humanitarian assistance has been provided to Asian, Latin American, and African countries.
- Increasing amounts of assistance have been sent to reduce suffering from natural disasters and destructive civil wars.
- Foreign aid programs in the post-Cold War era have changed to reflect the new realities of international relations.