

### Overview

**Background:** The Soviet Union was a federal socialist state composed of multiple republics, dominated by the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR).

**Collapse of the USSR:** A series of political, economic, and social pressures in the late 1980s led to the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

### Causes of Independence Movements

**Gorbachev's Reforms** **Perestroika (Restructuring):** Economic reforms aimed at decentralizing the economy, leading to increased autonomy for republics.

**Glasnost (Openness):** A policy promoting transparency and freedom of expression, which allowed suppressed nationalist sentiments to resurface.

**Democratization:** Introduction of competitive elections, which gave rise to nationalist and independence movements in various republics.

**Economic Decline** **Economic Stagnation:** The Soviet economy was in decline, leading to shortages, inefficiency, and widespread dissatisfaction.

**Increased National Debt:** Attempts to reform the economy exacerbated the financial crisis, weakening the central government's control.

### Causes of Independence Movements (cont)

**Nationalism and Ethnic Tensions** **Revival of National Identities:** Historical grievances and national pride fueled desires for independence, especially in the Baltic States, Caucasus, and Central Asia.

**Ethnic Conflicts:** Disputes between ethnic groups within and between republics intensified, further destabilizing the region.

**Role of International Pressure** **End of the Cold War:** Reduced external support for maintaining the Soviet system.

**Western Influence:** Encouragement from Western countries for the independence movements, especially in the Baltic states.

### The Path to Independence

**Baltic States Lead the Way** **Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania:** These republics were the first to declare independence, driven by strong national movements and historical grievances against Soviet occupation.

**The Role of the Russian Federation** **Boris Yeltsin:** The Russian leader's push for greater sovereignty from the Soviet Union weakened the central authority, setting a precedent for other republics.

### The Path to Independence (cont)

**Russian Declaration of Sovereignty:** On June 12, 1990, Russia declared sovereignty, undermining the USSR's unity.

**Other Republics Follow** **Caucasus:** Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan declared independence amidst regional conflicts and ethnic tensions.

**Central Asia:** Republics like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan initially hesitated but eventually declared independence as the USSR unraveled.

**Eastern Europe and Moldova:** Ukraine and Belarus played pivotal roles, with Ukraine's independence vote being particularly decisive.

### The Final Collapse of the Soviet Union

**Failed August Coup (1991)** **Hardliners' Attempt:** A failed coup by hardline communists to restore the Soviet order accelerated the disintegration process.

**Public and International Reaction:** The coup's failure discredited the Soviet government and emboldened independence movements.



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### The Final Collapse of the Soviet Union (cont)

**Belavezha Accords (December 1991)** **Agreement:** Leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus met in Belarus and signed an agreement effectively dissolving the Soviet Union.

**Formation of the CIS:** The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was created as a loose association of former Soviet republics.

**Official Dissolution (December 25, 1991)** **Gorbachev's Resignation:** Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as President of the Soviet Union, marking the official end of the USSR.

**End of the Cold War:** The dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War era, reshaping global geopolitics.

### Aftermath and Legacy

**Formation of New States** **Post-Soviet States:** 15 independent republics emerged, each facing challenges related to nation-building, economic transition, and governance.

**Economic and Political Transition** **Market Reforms:** Most former Soviet republics transitioned from centrally planned economies to market economies, with varying degrees of success.

### Aftermath and Legacy (cont)

**Political Instability:** Many newly independent states faced political instability, conflicts, and struggles to establish democratic institutions.

**Ongoing Regional Conflicts** **Ethnic and Territorial Disputes:** Conflicts persisted in regions like Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, and Chechnya, highlighting the legacy of Soviet-era boundaries.

**Influence of Russia:** Russia continued to exert influence over the former Soviet republics, leading to tensions in regions like Ukraine and Georgia.

**Legacy of Independence Movements** **National Identity:** Independence movements solidified national identities and contributed to the development of distinct national cultures and languages.

**Impact on Global Order:** The end of the Soviet Union significantly altered the global balance of power, leading to a unipolar world dominated by the United States, but also setting the stage for new regional powers to emerge.



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