What Ended It?

Weighing causes of the Cold War's end

9-12.US2.39 "Evaluate the factors that contributed to the end of the Cold War. These may include: • American diplomacy • Military build-up • Treaties • Iran-Contra affair • Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars) • Support of Afghanistan • Fall of the..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two pressures on Soviet leaders, circle two examples of reform or cooperation, and write 1 beside an event that showed Soviet control weakening.

The Cold War Unravels

1 In the 1980s, Cold War rivals faced a costly choice. President Ronald Reagan expanded U.S. military spending and proposed the Strategic Defense Initiative, a plan to research defenses against nuclear missiles. Its technology was uncertain, but it signaled continued competition. The Soviet Union already struggled with economic problems; scholars debate how much U.S. spending added to that strain. Meanwhile, the United States armed Afghan fighters resisting Soviet troops. That war drained Soviet resources and weakened support for the invasion.

2 Pressure alone did not end the conflict. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev tried to reform the economy and allowed more public criticism. He also sought less confrontation abroad. Reagan and Gorbachev met repeatedly, and their 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty eliminated a class of U.S. and Soviet missiles. Negotiation offered a way to reduce danger that military competition could not. Yet the Iran-Contra affair, in which Reagan officials secretly sold arms to Iran and diverted some proceeds to Nicaraguan rebels, damaged public trust in the administration.

3 In 1989, East Germans demanded freedom to travel, and the Berlin Wall opened. Gorbachev did not use Soviet forces to keep Eastern European communist governments in power, helping make change possible. The wall's fall showed that Soviet control of the region was breaking, rather than causing every earlier shift. In 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved after political and economic crises and independence movements. No single U.S. policy explains the Cold War's end; Soviet reforms, popular action, diplomacy, and pressure worked together in different ways.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did U.S. military spending and aid to Afghan fighters put different kinds of pressure on the Soviet Union?

2. Why did Gorbachev's approach make the missile treaty more useful than military competition alone?

3. How does the Iran-Contra affair complicate a claim that American diplomacy alone ended the Cold War?

4. Was the Berlin Wall's opening mainly a cause or a sign of Soviet control weakening? Explain using the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Which mattered more to the Cold War's end, Soviet reforms or U.S. pressure? Write a short argument using two passage details, and explain why the other factor still mattered.

ANSWER KEY

What Ended It?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two pressures on Soviet leaders, circle two examples of reform or cooperation, and write 1 beside an event that showed Soviet control weakening. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did U.S. military spending and aid to Afghan fighters put different kinds of pressure on the Soviet Union?	**Military spending signaled continued competition, potentially adding to Soviet economic strain. Aid to Afghan fighters prolonged a war that drained Soviet resources and support.**
2	Why did Gorbachev's approach make the missile treaty more useful than military competition alone?	**Gorbachev sought less confrontation, allowing negotiations that eliminated missiles and reduced danger rather than continuing competition.**
3	How does the Iran-Contra affair complicate a claim that American diplomacy alone ended the Cold War?	**Although U.S. leaders negotiated with Soviet leaders, the secret arms sales and diversion of proceeds damaged public trust in the Reagan administration.**
4	Was the Berlin Wall's opening mainly a cause or a sign of Soviet control weakening? Explain using the passage.	**It was mainly a sign. Soviet forces did not keep Eastern European communist governments in power, and the wall's opening showed control was breaking.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Soviet reforms mattered more because Gorbachev allowed public criticism and chose not to use Soviet forces to preserve communist governments in Eastern Europe. Those decisions made political change possible, as the Berlin Wall's opening showed. U.S. pressure still mattered: support for Afghan fighters helped drain Soviet resources. But pressure alone did not determine whether Soviet leaders would resist change or allow it.

Accept either ranking if the student supports it with two accurate passage details and explains the other factor's contribution. Do not require students to treat a debated cause, such as the effect of U.S. military spending, as certain.