

Module 11: The End of the Cold War

Topic 1 Content: Reagan's Policies and Challenges to the Soviet Union Notes

Introduction

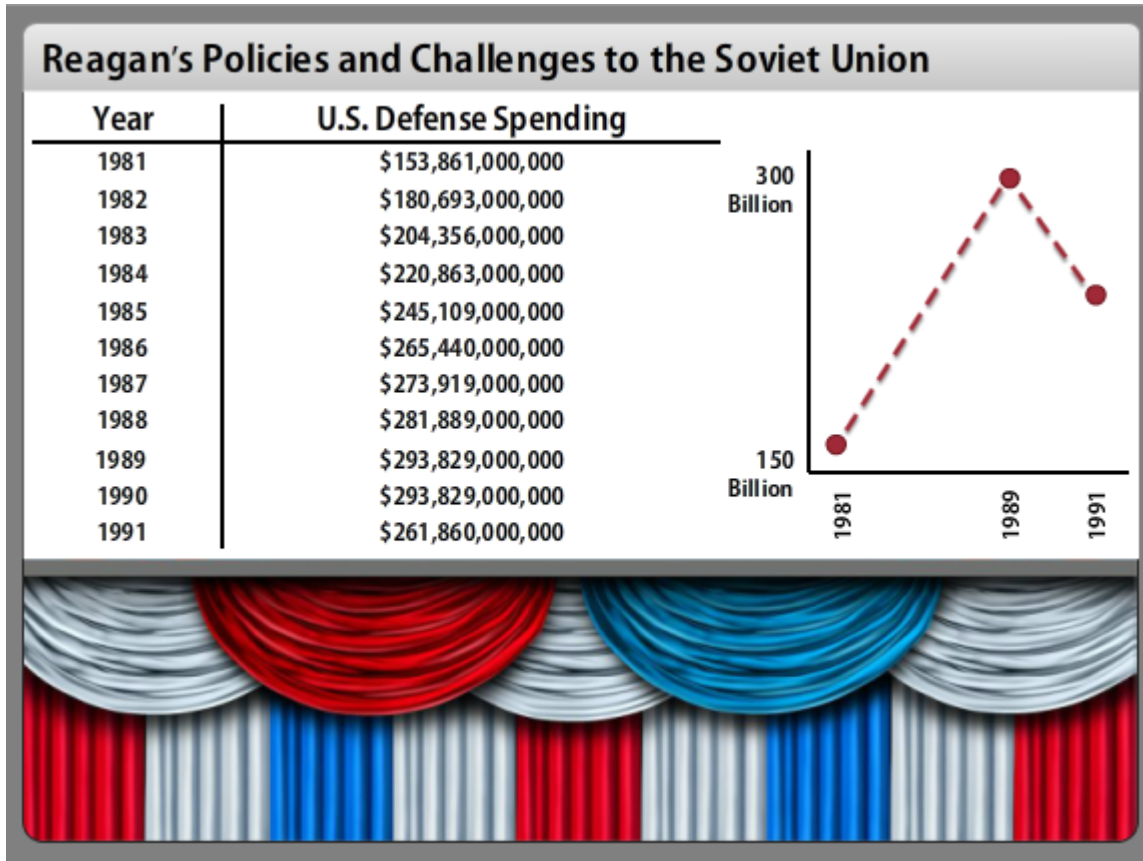


When Ronald Reagan became the fortieth president of the United States on January 20, 1981, the Cold War had been raging for over thirty years. President Reagan felt it was time to take a different approach toward the Soviet Union. He thought the goal of the United States should be to defeat communism, not contain communism through the policy of containment. President Reagan described the Soviet Union as “an evil empire” and sought “peace through strength.” Click **Start** to learn about the policies of Reagan and his challenge to the Soviet Union.

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Foreign Policy

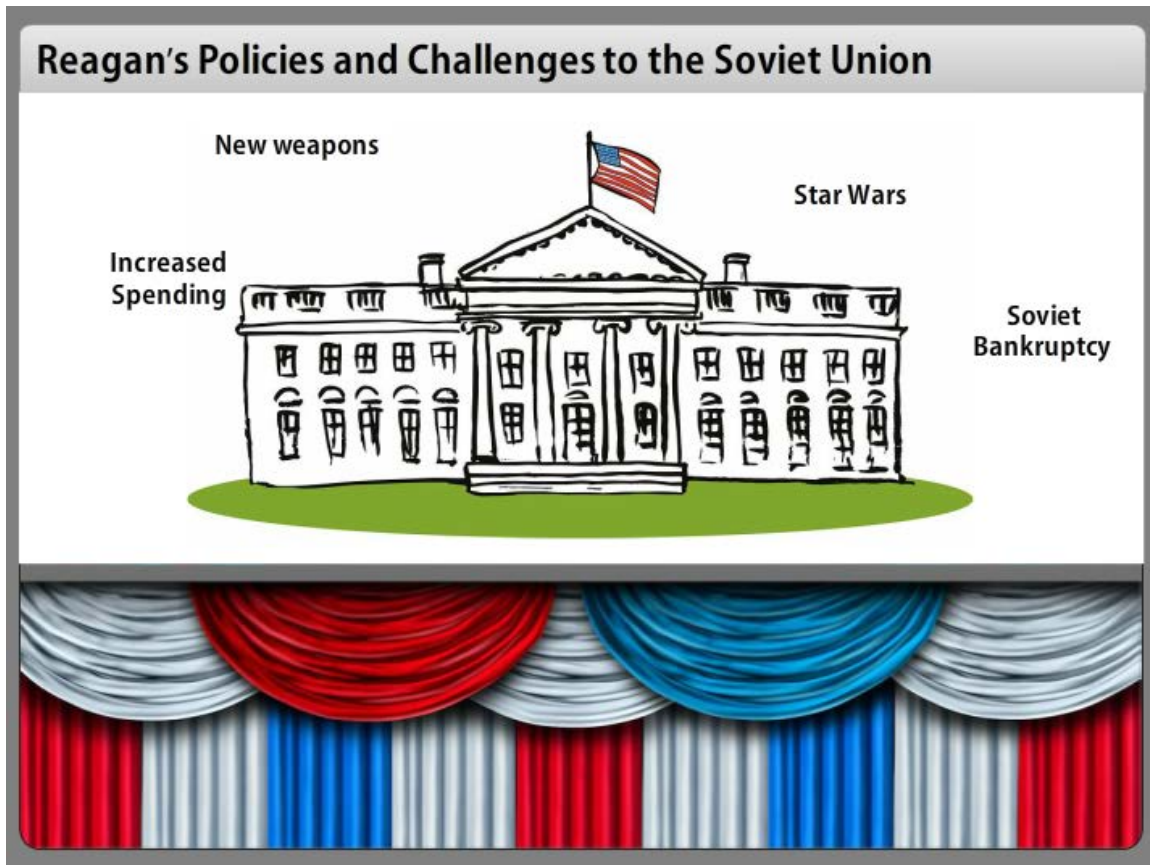


President Reagan's foreign policy was to increase the military and economic pressure on the Soviet Union. The table shows U.S. defense spending from 1981 until 1991. President Reagan was in office from 1981 until 1989. During this time defense spending went from roughly \$180,000,000,000 to \$294,000,000,000. When Reagan left office in 1989, defense spending declined considerably. It was Reagan's goal to increase military spending to put economic pressure on the Soviet Union and increase the size of the United States military during a time of peace.

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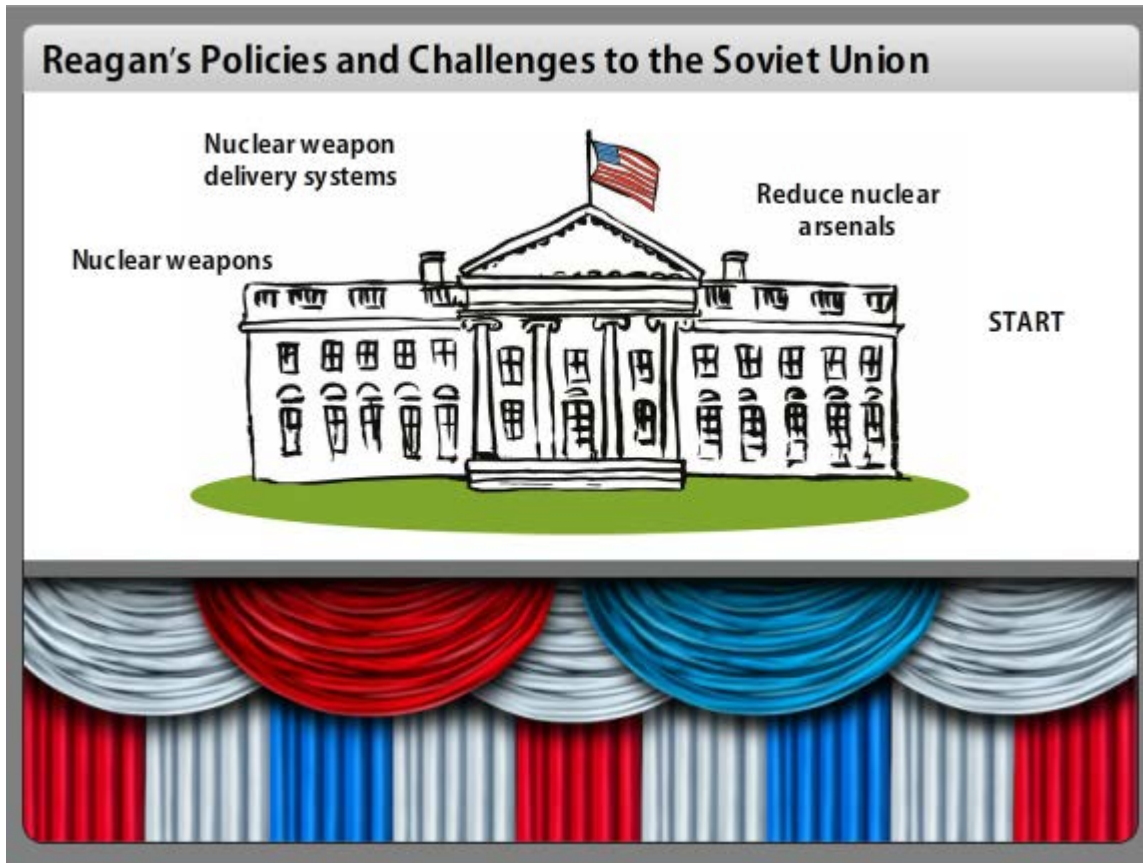
New Technology



One way he increased costs was to focus the United States military efforts on developing new weapons. An example of this was a program that tried to develop a weapon that could intercept nuclear missiles. This program was called the Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI. It was nicknamed "Star Wars" by the media after the popular film which came out in 1977. President Reagan increased military spending in order to try to force the Soviet Union to do the same. He knew that if the Soviet Union tried to keep up, the economic inefficiencies of communism would cause the country to go bankrupt.

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Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Weapon Delivery System




Both the Soviet Union and the United States had many nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon delivery systems. President Reagan proposed that both countries agree to reduce their nuclear arsenals. Eventually, Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to this reduction in the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty or START.

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Challenges to the Soviet Union

Reagan's Policies and Challenges to the Soviet Union



"Tear Down This Wall!"

Reagan spoke in front of the Berlin Wall on June 12, 1987.

Click play to listen to a portion of Reagan's speech that challenges Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to remove the Berlin Wall.

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Next

President Reagan also challenged the moral legitimacy of the Soviet Union through strong rhetoric or speech. On June 12, 1987, in Germany, he gave a speech in which he said a famous line: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." Watch, listen, and follow along as you hear President Reagan speak these words in front of the Berlin Wall. Click the player button to begin.