Examiner’s comments

Leo is discussing social policies here and he does mention art and literature as well as music. His paragraph is rather descriptive though. He mentions a composer, but what about writers or poets or artists? There is not much supporting evidence here for his arguments. Also, he does not mention if there was a change of policy or whether it had any impact on the USSR. It may be that Leo has left his analysis of change for the conclusion, in which case, he will not score very well. It is important to refer to the question as you go along.

Student Answer B – Susan

Another area in which there was change in Soviet culture was in the arts. Stalin understood the importance of music, literature and art and how these could be used to create a ‘proletarian culture’. He approved of the music of Prokofiev and Shostakovich and encouraged their compositions. It is not very clear if these composers changed Soviet society in any way, but their music was considered to be very good, even outside the USSR. Also, concert ticket prices were cheap and everyone was encouraged to appreciate Russian composers, so it was also linked to encouraging nationalism. In literature, the works of Mikhail Sholokhov were available because they were written about the civil war and the revolution. Stalin did not like the poetry of Osip Mandelstam, though, because his verses spoke about the terror. By censoring such poetry, Stalin wanted to limit opposition. Stalin liked the people of the USSR to read novels and to look at paintings that were about the lives of workers and peasants, and the Writers’ Union, for example, made sure that novelists knew what they had to produce.

Examiner’s comments

Susan has written a much fuller paragraph about culture. She has also included the names of several composers and writers, so there is some supporting evidence. Furthermore, there is an attempt at analysis as she tries to assess the impact on Soviet society. She could have said more about censorship and how this helped to control the kind of culture that was made available, but she has kept a focus on the question.

What were Stalin’s aims?

Securing his own position as the leader of the party and the state

Stalin had removed his rivals from the Politburo by the end of the 1920s. This did not mean that he was in complete control, however, and criticism from Martemyan Riutin and associates in 1932 showed that Stalin’s policies were not always popular with the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Although the 17th Party Congress in 1934 was named the Congress of the Victors, Stalin knew that the Second Five Year Plan had huge difficulties in meeting its targets and the human cost of collectivization was devastating for the countryside. Even more important, others knew this too and were not afraid to voice their concerns.

Defending the USSR

In Stalin’s opinion, the USSR was a fragile state. It did not have a very developed industrialized economy and outside its borders there were many countries that feared the spread of communism. By the early 1930s, fascism was well-established in Italy and Nazism was on the rise in Germany. Both of these very similar ideologies had their roots in

Martemyan Ivanovich Riutin (1890–1937)

Riutin criticized Stalin’s overthrow of the collective leadership of the party, saying that this had led to ordinary people’s disillusionment with socialism. The radical nature of collectivization had also contributed to Stalin’s unpopularity with some leading cadres. Riutin was expelled from the party in 1930 and his associates were expelled in 1932, accused of trying to restore capitalism and of being kulaks. It is claimed that Stalin wanted the death penalty for Riutin, but that Kirov intervened. Riutin was sentenced to ten years’ solitary confinement, but was shot in 1937.
socialism, but were vehemently opposed to communism. In a war, the USSR would need to defend its borders and have a well-trained and well-equipped army.

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

**QUESTION**
Now you have seen Stalin's aims, how did he go about achieving them and to what extent was he successful?

**SOURCE G**

Stalin put the matter vividly in 1931: 'To lower the tempo means to lag behind. And laggards [lazy people] are beaten. But we don't want to be beaten. No, we don't want it! The history of old Russia consisted, amongst other things, in her being beaten continually for her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol khan. She was beaten by the Turkish beys. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal lords. She was beaten by the Polish-Lithuanian nobles. She was beaten by the Anglo-French capitalists. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. She was beaten by all of them for her backwardness.'


**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

**QUESTIONS**
In Source G here, Stalin makes many references to Russian history. He does not mention communism at all. What does this suggest to you about how Stalin viewed the USSR? Was it a new, revolutionary state, do you think, or the latest manifestation of the Russian Empire? How would you support your answer?

**Section III:**

**Stalin in power: Establishment and consolidation of authoritarian and single-party states**

**Methods: How did Stalin maintain power?**

**The Great Terror**

The Great Terror of 1937–39 wasn't a domestic policy of Stalin, but it was woven into every aspect of the planned economy and was one of the most important methods by which domestic policies were achieved and opposition suppressed. Punishment was meted out to peasants who resisted collectivization; to factory workers who did not work hard enough; to managers who did not meet targets; and to party members who were considered too passive.

For Stalin, terror was one of his methods of ruling the Soviet Union. It made people afraid, and people who were frightened were more likely to be obedient. If instilling fear was his aim, he certainly achieved it. Even those who were not afraid of Stalin would be frightened of the dangers he told them existed. These included the fear of invasion, the fear of a counter-revolution and the fear of Stalin being removed from power by his enemies. The terror grew as Stalin became more powerful and surrounded himself with supporters in the Politburo and the Central Committee of the party. During the early 1930s, he still had to be cautious and his recommendation in 1933 that Ruiitin be executed was opposed by
Sergei Kirov. Events such as Kirov's murder in 1934 gave Stalin opportunities to purge the Leningrad Party and to introduce new laws. These included, as we have seen, the authority to execute children over 12, and he also removed any system of appeal so that a death sentence would be carried out immediately. It is unlikely that Stalin, without some suitable excuse, would have been able to step up the terror as he did.

The following is a brief list of the purges that were carried out during the 1930s.

- The purge of engineers and managers included the Shakhty Trials. The aim was to instil labour discipline and to punish anyone who could be blamed for a failure to achieve quotas.
- The purge of the Communist Party intended to ensure that all members were loyal to Stalin. The purging of the party began after Ritsin's criticisms of Stalin's leadership.
- The purge of the leadership of the party that followed the death of Sergei Kirov.
- The purge of the military in 1937 that targeted the officers of the armed forces.
- Random quotas issued to local party branches with instructions that 'counter-revolutionaries', kulaks and 'Trotskyites' be imprisoned or executed. Party branches would receive orders to arrest a specific number of enemies of the state, whether these existed or not.

In June 1936, Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had been accused of having plotted Kirov's murder, were tried and executed. Stalin was now targeting influential Bolsheviks who had been members of the party leadership. Genrikh Yagoda, the head of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD - the internal security police), objected to the execution of party leaders and then was criticized by Stalin for having started the terror four years too late (Lewin, *The Soviet Century*, 2005). In September 1936, he was replaced by Nikolai Yezhov, a close admirer of Stalin, who followed instructions to prise out enemies within the party. According to Robert Service, 681,692 persons were executed during the two years from 1936 to 1938 (*A History of Modern Russia*, 2003). Bukharin and Rykov were put on trial in 1938 and executed, having confessed to betraying the party. Service considers the unbridled terror to have had a negative impact upon the USSR's economy and its military and that even Stalin recognized that events had gone beyond his control by 1938. Slowly, the 'quotas' were reduced and, finally, Yezhov was demoted, imprisoned and executed in February 1939. It is not clear why Stalin slowed down the process of disposing of imagined enemies, but it is possible that the worsening situation in Europe meant that he had to shift his attention to foreign policy. Yezhov was executed as though to indicate that he had been over-zealous, and the Great Terror was described as the period of *Yezhovchina*.

Historians have argued over the numbers killed as well as the motivation that sparked the process. Mary McAuley, for instance, notes the difficulty of assessing the impact of the terror when the statistics are so unreliable. She also considers the difficulty of accumulating eye-witness memoirs when most people who wrote about their experiences were intellectuals. What, she asks, 'of the peasants and workers and the criminals' who were also imprisoned (McAuley, *Soviet Politics* 1917-1991, 1992)? She notes that Solzhenitsyn argued that the purges were symptomatic of Bolshevik ideology.

**SOURCE A**

Solzhenitsyn argues ... if one believes that class origin determines behaviour and consciousness, if one believes that individuals' actions and ideas are determined by their social origins and that therefore members of the bourgeoisie cannot act in a particular way, it is only logical to argue that they should be eliminated ... the belief that revolutionary justice should be administered by those with a proper proletarian consciousness, and little else, allowed the riff-raff and sadists of society to staff the penal institutions.

*From Mary McAuley, Soviet Politics 1917-1991, 1992*
She then quotes Stanislaw Swianiewicz, a Polish economist who:

**SOURCE B**

...offers us a materialist explanation... Economic development necessitates the finding of resources for investment, for holding back consumption. How could this be done? One way to reduce consumption was to withdraw consumers from the market, place them in labour camps where they worked and consumed almost nothing... The labour camps, Swianiewicz argues, had an economic rationale.


Other historians such as Orlando Figes researched the 1930s in depth, accessing the archive of memoirs collected 'in collaboration with the Memorial Society organised in the late 1980s to represent and commemorate the victims of Soviet repression' (*The Whisperers*, 2007). He estimated that '25 million people were repressed by the Soviet regime between 1928... and 1953. These 25 million — people shot by execution squads, Gulag prisoners, “kulaks” sent to “special settlements”, slave labourers of various kinds and members of deported nationalities — represent about one-eighth of the Soviet population...'. Figes also comments on how, inevitably, in a regime that was so repressive, one survival method was for people to identify so strongly with Stalin that even their punishment could not shake their belief in his righteousness.

**SOURCE C**

Immersion in the Soviet system was a means of survival for most people, including many victims of the Stalinist regime, a necessary way of silencing their doubts and fears, which, if voiced, could make their lives impossible. Believing and collaborating in the Soviet project was a way to make sense of their suffering, which without this higher purpose might reduce them to despair. In the words of (another) 'kulak' child, a man exiled for many years as an 'enemy of the people' who nonetheless remained a convinced Stalinist throughout his life, 'believing in the justice of Stalin... made it easier for us to accept our punishments, and it took away our fear'.

From Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers*, 2007

**SOURCE D**

'... a true Bolshevik will readily cast out from his mind ideas in which he has believed for years. A true Bolshevik has submerged his personality in the collectivity, "the Party", to such an extent that he can make the necessary effort to break away from his own opinions and convictions... He would be ready to believe that black was white and white was black, if the Party required it.'


**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

**QUESTIONS**

a) How could you use Source C to support an argument that Stalin continued to be revered even by those he punished?

b) Why, do you think, did this happen?

c) How could you use Sources C and D to agree/disagree with the following assertion, 'Stalin had total control over the population of the Soviet Union'?
The constitution of 1936

In 1936, Stalin revised the constitution of the USSR. It was, on paper, a document that was very democratic, as it guaranteed freedom of the press, freedom of thought, the right to public assembly and all other basic human rights. It also stated, however, that these rights would be guaranteed as long as they were in accordance with the interests of the workers. In this way, anything that was against 'the interests' of the workers' state was forbidden. In fact, everything that was not specifically allowed was forbidden. Even so, the constitution gave the impression or illusion that the USSR was a liberal state at a time when Stalin was increasingly concerned about its image abroad.

Popular policies

Many of Stalin's policies were popular and did buy him support. Stalin's rejection of the NEP in 1927, for example, struck a chord with workers, who felt that the Soviet Union had slipped back into capitalism. His punishment of kulaks was probably supported by peasants, who resented their richer neighbours, and many did not question the execution of leading Bolsheviks when they publicly confessed their guilt. The 1930s were also the decade when the population of the cities increased, and there were more opportunities for education and for job promotion. In 1926, 17.4 per cent of the population lived in cities, but this had increased to 32.9 per cent by 1939 (Lewin, The Soviet Century, 2005). Social mobility was a fact of life in Stalin's state, and the terror brought employment opportunities and even promotion for those who were not shot or sent to the gulags. In this way, the terror contributed to social mobility.

Stalin's cult of personality was also important in ensuring that his image and words were familiar to all Soviet citizens. Paintings, photographs and statues made Stalin recognizable throughout the Soviet Union and his speeches and messages were carried to the people by radio broadcasts and Pravda.

The use of language was also an integral part of the Stalinist system. Enemies were defined as kulaks and Trotskyists even if the former were not, by any stretch of the imagination, rich peasants or if the latter had never had any connection with Trotsky. This twisting of language didn't matter, because all that was important was to identify these people as counter-revolutionaries. Getty and Naumov stress that the same language was used in private as was used in public. Officials 'spoke Stalinist as a matter of group conformity and even individual survival' (J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, The Road to Terror, 1999).

Was Stalin a totalitarian leader?

To be a totalitarian leader implies total power and total control over the state. When Stalin ordered the purges of the party and the military, did he really have complete control over exactly what took place?

**SOURCE E**

*Although by the end of the decade he was unquestionably the supreme leader, he was never omnipotent, and he always functioned within a matrix of other groups and interests.*

From J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, The Road to Terror, 1999

Getty and Naumov note that Stalin could not have acted alone in the purges; he had to have the cooperation of society, or at least, its tacit acceptance of these punishments. Having survived the upheavals of the famine, collectivization and rapid industrialization in the
early 1930s, the leadership of the party may have congratulated itself at the Congress of Victors but, nevertheless, Stalin was dismayed by the votes cast for Kirov and began to doubt the continued support of his colleagues.

Getty and Naumov stress that communication was very difficult when all the regions of the Soviet Union did not have a telephone connection. Party officials had to struggle along poor roads on motorbikes carrying messages from the centre. What hope was there, then, of maintaining a close eye on what went on locally? This argument suggests that Stalin may have been a ‘totalitarian’ leader by aspiration, although practical problems meant that on occasions he fell short of being totalitarian in actuality.

Nature, extent and treatment of opposition,

Stalin believed that he encountered a great deal of opposition and once stated that he trusted no one: ‘I trust no one, not even myself.’ It was also said that he had an inferiority complex and thought he was less educated, less intellectual and less popular than the other Bolsheviks. It is possible to dismiss Stalin as paranoid, imagining enemies around every corner, but was there real opposition to his bid for power and to his policies?

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

**QUESTION**

What was the extent of the opposition that Stalin faced?

Using the following list, consider what kind of opposition Stalin faced and when. Did Stalin respond to opposition or did he create it, do you think?

- Lenin
- Nadezhda Krupskaya (Lenin’s wife)
- Trotsky
- Kamenev and Zinoviev
- Bukharin
- Riiulin
- Kirov
- Ordinary party members
- Workers
- Peasants

Don’t forget to consider extent, so think about how much opposition there was and where it came from.

Another kind of essay question could ask how Stalin actually dealt with opposition.

**QUESTION**

In what ways and with what success did Stalin deal with internal opposition to his regime?

To answer a question like this, it is a good idea to write a detailed plan, first outlining all the different kinds of opposition to Stalin. These could include the following:

- Opposition from within the party
- Opposition from the peasants
- Opposition from the workers
- Opposition from the Church

Then consider the methods used to deal with each one and how successful they were.

Also notice that the question has two parts: ‘In what ways and with what success.’ You need to address both parts and so can structure your answer accordingly. Begin by mentioning the kinds of opposition Stalin had to deal with and then go on to discuss the ‘ways before ending with an assessment of how successful he was. Alternatively, you can begin by mentioning the kinds of opposition going on to discuss how and with what success he tackled each one. As long as you answer the question (both parts), you can use whatever structure you prefer.
Form of government and ideology

The USSR followed the left-wing ideology of communism, although this was adapted by both Lenin and Stalin according to what they perceived to be the needs of the state. Stalin had become a committed Bolshevik as a young man. He had been prepared to break the law for his political beliefs and to spend many years in exile. He was a staunch advocate of the October Revolution and he fought to save the revolution during the civil war.

Furthermore, regarding how the Communist Party planned to run the country, Service mentions how Lazar Kaganovich produced a pamphlet ‘on the party workings’. Kaganovich, ‘already one of Stalin’s close associates, spelled out the system of vertical command needed in the party-state if the communists were to enhance their power...’ (Comrades, 2007).

According to Marxism, the proletariat were meant to rule, but in the Soviet Union this can hardly be said to have been true when the Communist Party had so much control. The excuse given for the ‘dictatorship of the party’ was that Russia was too backward and that the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ could not take place until people had been educated to have the correct values. This policy, of course, would require social engineering. Proletarians would have to be made and quickly!

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

- In the Secret Speech given at the 20th Party Congress in 1956, Nikita Khrushchev said that Stalin was not a ‘Maoist’.
- Trotsky referred to Stalin as ‘the gravedigger of the revolution’.
- Simon Sebag Montefiore wrote a book about Stalin and called it The Court of the Red Tsar.
- Robert Service stated that Stalin knew his Marxism and he was a dedicated Leninist (Comrades, 2007).

QUESTIONS

a) Four opinions have been expressed here about Stalin’s political beliefs. See if you can find evidence in this chapter to support and/or oppose each one.

b) To what extent can Stalin be considered a Marxist?

c) To what extent can Stalin be considered a Leninist?

d) Is there a difference between a Marxist and a Leninist? How would you explain the difference?

SOURCE F

Robert Service in Comrades mentions how Alexander Herzen, a 19th-century Russian essayist, ‘... expressed fear of bloody revolution in his country. He thought that, if ever the peasantry rose against their masters, they might be led by some “Genghis Khan with the telegraph.”’ Service goes on to describe the Bolsheviks as ‘Jacobins with the telephone and the machine gun’.

Adapted from Robert Service, Comrades, 2007

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

QUESTIONS

a) What was meant, do you think, by the phrase, ‘Genghis Khan with the telegraph’? (A better way to describe it today, perhaps, would be ‘Genghis Khan with a mobile phone’)

b) Who were the Jacobins? Why, do you think, does Service compare the Bolsheviks to them?
The structure and organization of government and administration

The governmental structure of the USSR was established by the constitution of 1922 and amended slightly by the constitution of 1936. In both, the hierarchical structure for both the soviets and the party were outlined. Each republic had a Congress of Soviets, which sent representatives to the Union Congress of Soviets that elected the Central Executive Committee. This body, divided into the Congress of the Union and the Congress of Nationalities, appointed the members of Sovnarkom. Similarly, the Communist Party had local branches that sent representatives to the Central Committee from which the Politburo was elected. It was imperative that members of the soviets, even at a local level, were members of the party and so the party dominated the government. It was the Politburo that was the policy-making organ and Lewin mentions that by the late 1930s, the Politburo in practice had become limited to a ‘quintet’ of Stalin, Molotov, Mikoyan, Beria and Malenkov. Indeed, it was often reduced to Stalin and Molotov consulting only each other (Lewin, The Soviet Century, 2005).

Section IV:
Stalin after 1939 – the Great Patriotic War; the Cold War; domestic policies

Stalin’s foreign policy up to 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline – 1930–1941</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1930s were a decade of great tension in Europe and the Far East. Authoritarian states had emerged across Eastern Europe as well as in Germany, Italy and Japan, although these three countries also had ambitions to expand into neighbouring, and more distant, countries to acquire empires. Stalin was not unaware of the threat posed by Germany and Japan to the security of the Soviet Union. In particular, Stalin feared a two-front war waged against Germany and Japan, and this became a real threat after these two countries signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936.
Stalin's economic policies were certainly driven in part by his determination to re-arm his military forces and to prepare for war. The military leadership was also thoroughly purged, probably because he did not trust his officers and also because executions and imprisonment would instil fear and so guarantee loyalty in the event of war.

Maxim Litvinov was appointed the Commissar for External Affairs in 1930, and until he was replaced in 1939 he was the architect of Soviet foreign policy. At first glance, Litvinov had many of the characteristics of Stalin's victims; he was an 'old Bolshevik' who had joined the party in 1903; he was well-travelled and spoke many languages; he was married to an Englishwoman; and he was Jewish. Yet Litvinov survived possibly because his skills were needed in determining foreign policy, not an area of expertise for Stalin. It was Litvinov who proposed collective security for the USSR, resulting in its joining the League of Nations in 1934. He also favoured closer cooperation with anti-fascist governments, a policy approved by the Comintern in 1935, after which Popular Front governments were established in France and Spain and the Second United Front was set up in China.

The weakness demonstrated by the League of Nations over the Manchurian Crisis of 1931 and the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 damaged the reputation of 'collective security'. Perhaps a closer relationship with Britain and France was never very realistic, as Britain in particular did not relish an alliance with the USSR. The likelihood of such an alliance was also undermined by the events of 1938, when Stalin was not invited to attend the Munich Conference, although the USSR had an alliance with Czechoslovakia.

**SOURCE A**

Litvinov explicitly told the British delegation to the League [of Nations] that, if the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia, the 'Czechoslovak–Soviet Pact would come into force', and proposed a conference between Britain, France and the Soviet Union to 'show the Germans we mean business'.


**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

**QUESTION**

How reliable, do you think, is Litvinov as a source for what the Soviet Union intended if Germany invaded Czechoslovakia?
and criticism that greeted his unexpected elevation to the presidency. From the outset, the controversial cartoon of Dali Low reflected some of the disquiet that surrounded him. The cartoon, which appeared in August 1939, is a decade that saw the rise of fascism in Europe.

The cartoon (below) was created in August 1939 by David Low and depicts Hitler. It was first published in the London Daily Express.

By 1939, a sense of foreboding over the fate of Spain and the threat of fascism became discernible in Britain. The cartoon is a powerful expression of these sentiments.
**QUESTIONS – SOURCE C**

This is another cartoon by David Low. It shows Stalin arm in arm with Peter the Great, one of the most well-known Russian Tsars. Look carefully at the boatman rowing the boat and see if you can recognize him.

a) What was David Low implying here about Stalin’s ambitions?
b) What does it suggest about the terms of the Nazi–Soviet Pact?

**War on the Eastern Front**

For Stalin, the Nazi–Soviet Pact signed on 23 August 1939 could be seen as a win-win situation. Not only was there a guarantee of ten years peace with Germany, the USSR also regained the land it lost in 1918 to Germany and in 1921 to Poland. This must have seemed a far better deal to Stalin than signing a treaty with two reluctant allies (France and Britain), receiving no territory and possibly being dragged into a war against Nazi Germany. Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939 and was followed by the Red Army on 17 September. Just over a week later, on 27 September, the Boundary and Friendship Treaty with Germany handed Lithuania over to the Soviet Union in exchange for some of eastern Poland.

Soviet rule over conquered or annexed territories was brutal and Stalin was determined to ‘decapitate’ Polish society. Niall Ferguson points out how, after experiencing life under Soviet rule, many Poles who had sought refuge in the east now asked to be sent home, believing that life under the Nazis could hardly be worse than under Soviet occupation (The War of the World, 2006). For many Poles, however, the choice was between ending up in a concentration camp under the Nazis or a gulag under the Soviets.

Source D gives some indication of the nature of the ‘terror’ that was carried out in Soviet-occupied Poland.

**SOURCE D**

Beginning on the night of February 10th, 1940, the NKVD unleashed a campaign of terror against suspected ‘anti-Soviet’ elements. The targets identified... were ‘those frequently travelling abroad, involved in overseas correspondence or coming into contact with representatives of foreign states; Esperantists; philatelists; those working with the Red Cross; ... priests and active members of religious congregations; the nobility, landowners, wealthy merchants, bankers, industrialists, hotel [owners] and restaurant owners.’

From Niall Ferguson, The War of the World, 2006

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

**QUESTIONS**

Look carefully at all the different categories of people targeted in Source D.
a) What might they all have in common, do you think?
b) What threat might they pose to Soviet occupation?

One of the most widely known wartime atrocities carried out by the NKVD was the Katyn Massacre of 1940. More than 4,000 Polish Army officers, as well as police officers, prison guards, government officials and other ‘leaders’ of society, were taken into the Katyn forest in Russia, shot and buried in mass graves. Meanwhile, in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, government representatives were required to sign ‘defence treaties’ and, in 1940, to ‘request’ that they be incorporated into the USSR.
Stalin was also concerned about security to the north and demanded that Finland relinquish territory to the USSR. When Finland refused, the Winter War broke out in November 1939 and, although some Finnish territory was lost, more than 200,000 Red Army soldiers were killed. The weakness of the post-purge Red Army had been revealed and this was noted by Hitler.

Stalin’s foreign policy from 1941

Operation Barbarossa

Hitler’s policy of Lebensraum led to the invasion of the Soviet Union and the planned colonization of its territory by the German/Aryan race. According to Niall Ferguson, the timing of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941 may have been influenced by Hitler’s concern about Stalin’s encroachment on Romania and the Balkans. In the summer of 1940, Stalin demanded that Romania hand over northern Bukovina and Bessarabia (Moldova today) and this demand was followed by a ‘promise of security’ for Bulgaria. Hitler started to plan the invasion at this point, beginning with a meeting of his military chiefs in June 1940. Stalin was alerted many times to German invasion plans by Richard Sorge, a double agent working in the German embassy in Tokyo; by the British who had cracked the German military ENIGMA code; and by German informants who swam across the River Bug (the border between German and Soviet-occupied Poland), but were shot as enemy agents. Ferguson estimates that there were 84 warnings in all sent to Moscow and that Stalin ignored them all. It seems Stalin trusted no one except Hitler, and was afraid that any defensive action by the Red Army would be interpreted by the Germans as preparation for an attack.

The siege of Leningrad, 1941–44

Among the most famous events of World War II on the Eastern Front were the long-drawn out efforts of the Nazi invaders to force the surrender of Leningrad and Stalingrad. Leningrad was the cradle of the Bolshevik Revolution as well as being the ‘Venice of the North’, a reference to its architectural and cultural prominence. It was considered imperative that the city be saved, and from 1941 to 1944 its population suffered bombardments and starvation to win through a 900-day siege. It is estimated that more than 600,000 people died out of a population of approximately 2,500,000.

The battle of Moscow, October 1941–January 1942

Known as Operation Typhoon, the occupation of Moscow was considered by Hitler to be vital to the success of Operation Barbarossa. The defence of Moscow was led by General Zhukov and, aided by extremely harsh winter conditions, he was able to prevent German victory.

The battle of Kursk, 4 July–23 August 1943

One of the largest land battles of the 20th century, the battle of Kursk was fought between the Red Army fielding 3,600 tanks and 1,300,000 soldiers and the German Army fielding 2,700 tanks and 800,000 soldiers. Although the Red Army lost 1,500 tanks and suffered 860,000 casualties, this engagement was their victory and the battle of Kursk led the way to the recovery of the city of Kharkov.

The siege of Stalingrad, 1942–43

Stalingrad could not be sacrificed because its original name, Tsaritsyn, had been changed to Stalingrad in honour of Stalin. (Today, it is Volgograd.) Sitting astride the River Volga, the city, if it could be captured, offered the Germans the possibility of severing Soviet oil supplies from the Caucasus to the Red Army force further north. The German Army
Group B nearly succeeded in capturing the city, but a Soviet counter-offensive encircled, trapped and destroyed the German Sixth Army and much of the Fourth Army. The German defeat at Stalingrad in early 1943 was seen as the turning point of the war, the beginning of Germany’s retreat back to the Reich. Hitler had refused permission for General Friedrich von Paulus, the commander of German forces at Stalingrad, to break out from the encirclement in a timely manner, and thus consigned hundreds of thousands of men to either death or capture.

**Figure 4.1**
The German advance during Operation Barbarossa.

**Key**
- German advance
- Farthest extent of German advance

1. The German Army Group North attacks north through the Baltic states and into northern Russia, its ultimate objective being the city of Leningrad.
2. Army Group Centre attacks through Belarus and into central Russia, its goal being the Russian capital, Moscow.
3. Army Group South attacks into the Ukraine, driving east towards the oil-rich Caucasus.

**SOURCE E**

Cartoon by David Low.
Total war

Total war is a term used to describe a war in which all the resources of the state are put at the disposal of the government to achieve victory. This will often entail the taking over of vital industries for the duration of the war; the rationing of food and other necessities; the conscription of men (and women in some cases) into the army or into factories; restrictions on access to information, on travel and so on.

Examiner’s hint

Just as it is a good idea to consider why victorious countries win wars, it is also worth asking why the defeated countries lose. This kind of essay question is quite common. Here, it is worth reflecting on why the USSR, with its purged armed forces and its relatively recently industrialized economy, was able to hold off the German invasion. It is also worth asking why a vast land mass where the people had endured so much hardship in the name of ‘socialism’ would be prepared to wage war to save a regime that was so brutal. Some possible reasons are listed below in this chapter.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

QUESTIONS

a) What does this cartoon suggest about the nature of the wartime alliance?
b) What is the significance of the objects held by Stalin and Churchill?
c) How does the depiction of Stalin in Source E compare with his depiction in Sources B and C?

The end of the war

The tide turned against Germany in 1943, and over the next two years the Red Army marched westwards in the wake of the retreating Germans. The Red Army claimed to have ‘liberated’ the Baltic States, Poland and much of Central and Eastern Europe. Post-1989 interpretations in these countries, however, would argue that although the German Army was driven out, what followed was another occupation. Meanwhile, an estimated two million German women were raped in the areas occupied by the Red Army. The wartime conferences at Tehran, Moscow and Yalta all dealt with the borders of post-war Europe and Stalin was adamant that the next war must not be fought on Soviet soil. The German surrender to the Soviet Union took place on 8 May 1945. It was not until 9 August that the Soviet Union joined the war on Japan, occupying northern Manchuria and acquiring the Kurile Islands and South Sakhalin.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

QUESTION

Why did the Red Army defeat Germany?

The reasons for Stalin’s victory

The USSR was already a planned economy in 1941, and it made a seamless transition to ‘total war’ conditions in which the government controls the production and distribution of resources. Stephen Lee in Stalin and the Soviet Union mentions, however, that further study of the production levels in the USSR demonstrate that with the loosening of centralized control in 1943 production levels escalated, indicating that local control of production proved more effective than central planning.

The State Committee of Defence (GOKO) was set up on 30 June 1941, with Stalin as its Chairman. He was an indefatigable war leader, taking charge of every aspect of the defence of the Soviet Union. He rarely visited the frontline, but he followed the actions of his generals closely and made it clear to them that retreat or defeat in battle was not an option. Order No. 270 of the State Committee of August 1941 decreed that ‘those who surrendered to the Germans “should be destroyed by all means available, from the air or from the ground, and their families deprived of all benefits”, while deserters should be shot on the spot and their families arrested’ (Brown, The Rise and Fall of Communism, 2009).

Stalin used propaganda very effectively during the war, and the Orthodox Church was restored to a position of prominence in Russia. The conflict was labelled the ‘Great Patriotic War’, fought to save Mother Russia rather than an ideological war to save communism. Stalin understood that nationalism would appeal to the emotions of the people, who would fight to save their country when they may not have been inspired to fight for an ideology.
For Hitler, his was a racial war against an enemy that was considered to be ‘sub-human’. It was too be a war of extermination and this was demonstrated by the brutality of the Nazi forces as they swept towards Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad. This treatment of the Slav population was in keeping with Nazi ideology, but strategically it was a huge error. There was support for the Germans in areas of Ukraine and in the Baltic States, for instance, as the German soldiers were often seen as liberators. This welcome soon changed, however, as the death toll of civilians mounted from German policies of extermination and eviction. Even so, an estimated two million Soviet citizens fought on the side of the Germans. To prevent any risk of further internal disturbance, Stalin ‘re-settled’ large numbers of Chechens, people from the Balkans, Karachais, Meskhetians, Crimean Tatars, Balts, Ukrainians and Cossacks. Lee considers that this possibly thwarted the risk of more serious rebellion within the Soviet Union (Lee, Stalin and the Soviet Union, 1999).

The Wehrmacht (German armed forces) made swift progress towards Moscow in the first five months of the war, but stalled just short as ‘General Winter’ brought rain followed by frost and snow. The severe climate may not have been the main reason for the defeat of the German Army, but it halted their advance in 1941 and gave the Red Army a breathing space in which to recover. The huge expanse of the Soviet Union was also an advantage. The Soviet forces could sacrifice territory to the advancing Germans and retreat eastwards. Also, many factories could be dismantled and the infrastructure, along with the workforce, shipped east of the Ural, re-assembled and brought back into production.

External help was also important, as Stalin received very substantial aid, especially lorries and jeeps, from the US Lend-Lease arrangement that was extended to the USSR as early as the summer of 1941. Britain’s Royal Navy also shipped vast quantities of equipment to the USSR along the treacherous Arctic passage to Murmansk.

The end of the siege of Stalingrad nearly coincided with the defeat of the German forces at El Alamein in North Africa. The Allied invasion of Sicily took place at the same time as the battle of Kursk, requiring German forces to be diverted to Italy. Although there can be no doubt that the brunt of the fighting in Europe took place on the Eastern Front, some of the more momentous turning points need to be placed within the context of World War II as a whole.

More than 27 million Soviet citizens (of whom at least 20 million were civilians) were killed during World War II. This was a tremendous sacrifice and made the losses of Britain and the USA seem small by comparison. This fact was not lost on Stalin, who used it to his advantage at meetings he had with Churchill and Roosevelt. Stalin’s leadership, the fear of failure and the groundswell of Russian (Russian rather than Soviet, perhaps) nationalism all played an important part in the victory of the USSR.

**The Soviet Union after 1945**

Stalin emerged from the Great Patriotic War as the undisputed vozhd (leader) of the USSR. It was Stalin who, according to state propaganda, had saved the Soviet Union from the Nazi invaders. Even though Stalin visited the front only once, in 1943, he made a great deal of this theatrical appearance and referred to it in correspondence with Roosevelt. Posters and postcards were produced to herald his untiring commitment to the war effort; statues were raised to praise his role as ‘liberator’; articles and books placed Stalin in the pantheon of Great Russian leaders, such as Peter the Great. Less was known inside the Soviet Union of the ‘smaller fronts’, as they were called, such as the hard-fought battles in the Pacific, North Africa or Western Europe following the Normandy landings in June 1944.
The Soviet Union emerged from World War II with territorial gains that had restored the losses suffered in 1919. Stalin was a world statesman and the USSR was a world superpower. Despite this, its economy was devastated and Stalin lost no time in demanding more sacrifice, more unrelenting hard work and promising more lean years with no hope yet of a better standard of living for Soviet citizens.

**Figure 4.2**
The East-West divide after 1949.

---

To access Worksheet 4.4 on European right-wing governments, please visit www.pearsonbac.com and follow the on-screen instructions.

---

**Economic recovery after 1945**
The devastation suffered during the war meant that the recovery of the Soviet economy was a gargantuan task. Some indication of the scale of the challenge is given in a book written by John Fischer, a member of the United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Agency (UNRRA) mission to Ukraine in 1946. He wrote about his experiences in *The Scared Men in the Kremlin*, published in 1947. He described daily life both in the cities and in the rural areas that he visited and repeated many times that he was at liberty to ask any questions he liked and to mix freely with ordinary members of the public as well as party officials.
His account provides a fascinating insight into post-war Ukraine and he recognizes the enormous hardship experienced in simply finding enough food, clothing and shelter in a region devastated by war.

**SOURCE F**

In Kiev, least damaged of the big cities, each person was supposed to have six square metres of living space. That means a strip of floor about ten feet long and six feet wide—somewhat larger than a grave—on which to sleep, cook, eat and store one’s possessions. In Kharkov...the official allocation was 4.8 square metres...If you really want to know how a typical Ukrainian family lives, pick the smallest room in your house or apartment and move your wife and children into it. Then pack in the beds, spare clothes, and furniture which you regard as absolutely indispensible. Knock off a few chunks of plaster and most of the paint...Scrap the radiators and cooking range and substitute for both a brick stove which seldom raises the winter temperature much above freezing. Break off the hot water tap in the bathroom, which you will share with several other families. Finally, invite your widowed cousin Sophie and her four youngsters to move in with you.

From John Fischer, *The Scared Men in the Kremlin*, 1947

John Fischer also explained how difficult it was for ordinary people to find fresh food, beyond the small pieces of meat, limited array of vegetables or the few eggs brought into markets by peasants who were able to cultivate small private plots. When the Fourth Five Year Plan was announced in 1946, however, it called upon the citizens of the Soviet Union, once again, to put aside any hope of increased production of consumer goods and to focus on industrial and agricultural production.

**SOURCE G**

Just how bad this news was did not dawn on the Russians until March 15th 1946, when the government announced the details of the first of its new Five Year Plans. This document outlined a truly back-breaking task. It called for the restoration of all industries wrecked in the war, plus an increase in output nearly fifty per cent above the pre-war level.

From John Fischer, *The Scared Men in the Kremlin*, 1947

**SOURCE H**

The losses were so immense that they were almost incalculable: 70,000 villages, 98,000 kolkhozi completely or partly destroyed, 1,876 sovkhazi, 17 million head of cattle and 7 million horses driven away; 65,000 kilometres of railway track, half of all railway bridges in occupied territory, over half all urban living space, 1.2 million houses destroyed as well as 3.5 million rural homes. And then, there was the greatest loss of all, the 20 million dead, as well as the maimed in body and mind.


Despite the enormous task that lay before the Soviet people, and despite the immense difficulties of restoring infrastructure and repairing factories and mines, the official claim was that by 1950 industrial production was 75 per cent higher than in 1940. The re-arming of the Red Army remained a priority that increased in importance as the Cold War took hold. Labour and resources were also diverted to the building of the atomic bomb, tested in 1949. Agriculture was far slower to recover and by 1950 the grain harvest amounted to only 40 per cent of that of 1940 (McCauley, *The Soviet Union 1917–1991*, 1993). The recovery of numbers of farm animals was also slow and was hampered by the pseudo-science of Lysenkoism.
Domestic policies after 1945

Stalin continued to push forward his plan for 'Russification', as he wanted to introduce Russian settlers into the Baltic States and so weaken nationalism and impose Russian culture and language. This plan extended to the Baltic States and to Moldova, where the purging of the local population and the 'planting' of ethnic Russians took place. Antisemitism also surfaced with a crackdown on Jewish literature, journalism and culture, as well as a purging of Jewish officials from the higher levels of the party leadership.

Known as the Zhdanovshchina, a campaign was led by Andrei Zhdanov, the Leningrad Party leader, to remove all 'Western' influence from music and literature. Prokofiev and Shostakovich were among the composers whose music was now criticized, along with the poetry of Anna Akhmatova. There was even criticism of Einstein's theory of relativity, which was declared to be 'bourgeois' and 'reactionary'.

After Zhdanov's death in 1948, Stalin carried out a purge of the Leningrad Party known as the 'Leningrad Affair'. This was followed by another purge known as the 'Doctor's Plot' in November 1952, when the mostly Jewish doctors in the Kremlin were arrested and accused of killing their patients, including Zhdanov. It was probably Stalin's death in March 1953 that saved the lives of his closest comrades, including Beria, Molotov, Mikoyan and Malenkov. The declining health of Stalin led to increasing paranoia and he was overheard to say, 'I am finished, I trust no one, not even myself.'

Terror and propaganda after 1945

The purges of the 1930s were not repeated on the same scale after 1945, although returning prisoners of war, along with White Russians and Cossacks who Stalin had insisted be returned to the Soviet Union, were often shot or sent to a distant gulag. Stalin did not want to risk knowledge of the outside world penetrating the walls of the Soviet Union. Norman Lowe notes that an estimated 2.8 million soldiers who had survived imprisonment in German camps returned to the Soviet Union 'to be arrested and interrogated by the NKVD' (Lowe, *Mastering Twentieth Century Russian History*, 2002). Of these, some were shot, others sent to labour camps but only around 500,000 (or one-sixth) were allowed to return home.

New labour camps were built mostly to hold 'bandits', which is how Stalin referred to nationalists in Ukraine and in the Baltic States. Dmitri Volkogonov in *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire* estimates that more than 90,000 'kulaks and their families, bandits, nationalists and others' were deported from the Baltic States alone. By 1947 there were more than 20 million prisoners in the gulags and 27 additional camps had been built. A law was passed 'imposing twenty years hard labour for anyone attempting to escape from exile' (Volkogonov, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 1999). In all likelihood, however, the Great Terror was a grim memory and few people would have dared plot to overthrow or even to criticize Soviet rule. The show trials and the purges were resurrected in Central and Eastern Europe, however, where local communist parties were ruthlessly purged with the same random selection of victims as had plagued the USSR in the 1930s.

Within the Soviet Union, gratitude for victory in the Great Patriotic War boosted Stalin's popularity further and the suffering undoubtedly led people to believe that whatever hardship came with peace, it did not begin to compare with the suffering endured during the war.

**STUDENT STUDY SECTION**

In Topic 3 of Paper 3, it is not required that you study the foreign policy of single-party leaders. This means that there will not be a specific question asked about the foreign policy of Stalin; for instance, it is quite a good idea, however, to know something about this area of policy as
it is bound to influence events at home. There is no doubt that the Cold War had a decisive influence on Stalin's decision to push for a rapid recovery for the war-torn USSR and to divert resources towards the building of an atomic bomb. He feared the West and galvanized the Soviet population, once again, to re-arm and to rebuild the economy.

It is also worth considering where Soviet policy towards Central and Eastern Europe fits in. Is this domestic or foreign policy? Countries such as Poland, Romania, and Hungary are not within the USSR and so need not be discussed in an answer to an exam question that asks about Stalin's post-war domestic policy. Even so, via Cominform and Comecon the USSR did have a very significant impact upon the internal policies of foreign countries and, to a lesser extent, vice versa.

For example, consider the following question:

**QUESTION**

Assess the success and failure of the domestic policies of two single-party leaders, each chosen from a different region.

*If you chose Stalin as one of your leaders, you could go beyond 1941 (unless the question states otherwise) and you could make a reference to the extension of Soviet influence to Central and Eastern Europe (using some specific examples), linking this to Stalin's concerns about security.*

---

**Stalin's role as a world leader**

Even before the end of World War II, Stalin was already a recognized world leader and his meetings with Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt to determine post-war arrangements have been well documented. Unlike allies, the 'Big Three' were in close contact throughout World War II. Historians have discussed the nature of their pre-, wartime and post-war relationships extensively, and it is still open to debate at what stage the wartime allies became post-war enemies.

**How did Stalin influence the Cold War?**

There is a great deal of historiography concerning the role of Stalin as one of the most important leaders at the beginning of the Cold War. His actions and motives have been carefully scrutinized by many historians. How far Stalin was responsible for the ending of the wartime alliance and the evolution of a hostile relationship with the USA is still open to debate, but the following events are worthy of investigation.

- In 1945, Soviet expansion into Central and Eastern Europe aroused the fears and suspicion of the USA. There was concern that Stalin was intending to extend Soviet influence over the whole of Europe.
- After the Potsdam conference in July 1945, Stalin did not meet again with the Western leaders and this contributed to a climate of suspicion. Unlike Franklin Roosevelt, President Truman did not seem to want to cooperate or compromise with Stalin.
- Stalin's 'election speech' of 1946 suggested that the USSR was, once again, using anti-Western rhetoric and this implied that the post-war peace was fragile.
Historiography of the Cold War

The three interpretations of the origins of the Cold War include the following:

a) The Orthodox view sees US actions to be a response to the expansionist policies of the USSR.

b) The Revisionist view blames the USA for over-reacting to Soviet concerns about its security.

c) The Post-Revisionist view sees both the USA and the USSR reacting with fear and suspicion towards each other.

- Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought in the atomic age and although Stalin had placed Beria in charge of a project to build a Soviet atom bomb, this was not tested until 1949. Meanwhile, the Baruch Plan of 1946 was proposed but rejected by Stalin, who was not content to have UN control over nuclear arms.

- The Marshall Plan of 1947 (European Recovery Programme) was condemned by the USSR as ‘dollar imperialism’ and Poland and Czechoslovakia were prevented from taking part in this US-led plan for economic recovery. The communist takeover of Czechoslovakia was prompted by this.

- When the USA and Britain united their zones of Germany in 1946, calling it Bizonia, Stalin objected as he argued that this was contrary to agreements on the administration of occupied Germany. France was persuaded to attach its zone to Bizonia in 1948, making it Trizonia. The Marshall Plan also made it imperative that the economy of the Western zones was placed on a sound footing, leading to the introduction of a new currency. Whether or not this could also be introduced into the Western sectors of Berlin led to a difference of opinion with the USSR and prompted what became known as the Berlin Blockade of 1948–49. Although Stalin’s intention was to push the Western powers out of Berlin, this strategy rebounded on him, and he had to lift the blockade in May 1949.

- In many of the Central and Eastern European states that came under Soviet control, free elections were held in the post-war period. Gradually, however, ‘salamis tactics’ (cutting something slice by slice) enabled the communist parties, which were often part of coalition governments, to control the police or the justice system. Little by little, the communists would end up in power and these countries became known as the ‘satellite states’.

- The Cold War turned into a ‘hot war’ in 1950 with the invasion of South Korea by North Korea. At the time, the USA suspected that this had been instigated by the USSR, although later research showed quite clearly that Kim II Sung, the leader of communist North Korea, had been the one to approach Stalin to ask for support.

Examiner’s hint
This is a very brief overview of some of the main features of the origins of the Cold War. If you already study the Cold War, then it is likely that you will be familiar with Stalin’s very significant contribution to post-war international relations. This belongs to another topic (Topic 5, The Cold War) on Paper 2, however, and so will not be discussed in detail here.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

ACTIVITY

The list above includes most of the main events that are discussed in relation to the origins of the Cold War. See if you can rewrite each one to reflect the different historiographical interpretations of the Cold War (see Interesting Facts box).

For example: ‘The USA misread Soviet concerns about security and believed that Stalin intended to expand Soviet influence beyond Central and Eastern Europe.’

The death of Stalin

Stalin ruled the Soviet Union from 1929 until 1953, longer than any other leader. He created the Soviet system of government and was the undisputed leader of world communism during his lifetime. Stalin had not been in good health for several years before his death, and in March 1953 he suffered a stroke that killed him. When he died, there was much relief but also anguish about the future of the Soviet Union. Stalin had gathered around him a small group of dedicated supporters who knew that not only their jobs but their lives depended on Stalin’s goodwill. He never ceased to tell those most likely to succeed him that when he was gone, the West would challenge the Soviet Union and ‘the capitalists will crush you like little kittens.’ In fact, the USSR maintained its role as a world superpower, but the legacy of Stalin continued through the all-powerful secret police, the lack of political freedom and the strictly controlled command economy.