**United States History Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Unit 13 Arguments: The “To What Extent” Prompt Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period:\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**In history, rarely does any event have a single cause, especially one as complicated as the end of the Cold War. What caused the fall of the Soviet Union? Historians have debated the issue and have focused on two possible answers: the military buildup under President Reagan and the policies of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. So, to what extent (or how much) is Reagan responsible for the end of the Cold War versus Gorbachev?**

**Read the following excerpts and make notes for each side of the argument. Then decide: does Reagan get more credit or does Gorbachev?**

**SOURCE A: The Gorbachev Era (from McKay, *A History of World Societies*)**

The Soviet Union had serious problems by 1982. The economy was inefficient, workers were absent, and corruption was widespread at high levels. By 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev emerged as the leader. Smart, charming, and tough, Gorbachev believed in communism, but believed it was failing. Gorbachev also realized full well that success at home required better relations with the West, for the wasteful arms race had a disastrous impact on Soviet Union living standards. Gorbachev attempted to save the Soviet system by reforming it. He called his reforms “socialism with a democratic face.”

The first reforms were geared towards restructuring the economy, a concept Gorbachev called *perestroika*. He allowed prices to be set more by the market and allowed more independence for corporations. Gorbachev’s campaign of *glasnost*, or openness, was designed to improve public relations. Gorbachev encouraged free speech and expression by relaxing censorship and the emphasis on conformity. Gorbachev also allowed the first free elections in the Soviet Union since 1917. Opening up the possibility of democracy meant that Soviet satellites—most of Eastern Europe—also wanted more political freedom.

Finally, Gorbachev withdrew Soviet troops from Afghanistan and tried to reduce tensions with the United States.

**SOURCE B: Foreign Policy (from Beck, *Modern World History*)**

Under Gorbachev, Soviet policy changed. To compete military with the Soviet Union, President Ronald Reagan had begun the most expensive military buildup in peacetime history, costing more than $2 trillion dollars. Under pressure from U.S. military spending, Gorbachev realized that the Soviet economy could not afford the costly arms race. Arms control became one of Gorbachev’s top priorities. In December 1987, he and Reagan signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. This treaty banned nuclear missiles with ranges of 300 to 3400 miles.

**SOURCE C: A Post-Cold War Foreign Policy (from DeLay, *Experience History: Interpreting America’s Past*)**

To the astonishment of most Western observers, Mikhail Gorbachev’s reform policies led not only the collapse of the Soviet empire but also the breakup of the Soviet Union itself. In December 1988, Gorbachev spoke in the United States of a “new world order.” The last Russian troops began leaving Afghanistan and then Eastern Europe. Eastern Europeans soon began to test their freedom. In Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and, most violently, Romania, Communist dictators fell from power. Nothing more inspired the world than the stream of celebrating Eastern Germans pouring through the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Although Gorbachev struggled to keep together the 15 republics that made up the U.S.S.R., the forces of nationalism and reform pulled the Soviet Union apart.

**SOURCE D: A Thaw in Superpower Relations (from DiBacco, *History of the United States*)**

The dominant foreign policy issue during Reagan’s second term was the improving Soviet-American relationship. Reagan’s approach to the Soviet Union changed dramatically in those yars. For almost five years in office Reagan had not met with a Soviet leader. And his anti-Soviet speeches gave little hope of improved relations. Yet, by the end of 1985, he was off to Geneva, Switzerland, to talk to a new Soviet leader with startling new ideas.

Mikhail Gorbachev, who became the Soviet leader in March 1985, inherited a host of problems. Many of them revolved around the stagnant Soviet economy. But in fact the entire Soviet system suffered from inefficiency. Gorbachev called for changes in Soviet society that were the most significant since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. He called for *glasnost* (openness) in Soviet life and *perestroika* (restructuring) in the Soviet economy.

**SOURCE E: Reagan’s Cold War Revival (from Henretta, *America’s History*)**

Conservatives did not believe in détente. Neither did they believe in the containment policy that had guided U.S. Cold War strategy since 1947. Reagan and his advisors wanted to *defeat* the Soviet Union. His administration pursued a two-pronged strategy toward that it. First, it abandoned détente and set about rearming America. This building in American military strength would force the Soviets into an arms race that would strain their economy and cause domestic unrest. Second, the President supported CIA initiatives to roll back Soviet influence in the developing world by funding anticommunist movements.

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| **Arguments for the Cold War coming to an end because of what Mikhail Gorbachev did.** | **Arguments for the Cold War coming to an end because of what President Reagan did.** |
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**Who should get most of the credit for the end of the Cold War? Why?**