

Unit 3 covers two themes on an extended period of at least 100 years, each with a focus on change, continuity, similarity and difference. You will show understanding of the main developments and turning points. The emphasis is on developing and interpreting a broad overview of the period studied. The examination tests this by asking two different types of question.

In Section A, in which you choose one of two questions, you are required to answer a question covering a shorter timeframe, usually about 15-40 years.

Questions can broadly be broken down into four parts:

1. The command term

2. The named issue

3. Areas of debate (leading to a judgement)

4. The required timeframe

Consideration of all of these is essential to a well-argued and historically justified answer.

Section A: specific events in a narrower timeframe

2019 Question 1: 'The lives of the Russian people were affected more by the reforms of Gorbachev than those of any other Russian leader during the period from 1953–1989.' Discuss.

The command term: discuss

The command term is **discuss**. So, in the context of this question, you will focus on the main idea in the question – the **reforms of Gorbachev** – and make an argument that considers these in relation to **reforms carried out by other leaders** during the period **1953-1989**. Your aim is to make a consistent and balanced judgement that is supported by factual evidence.

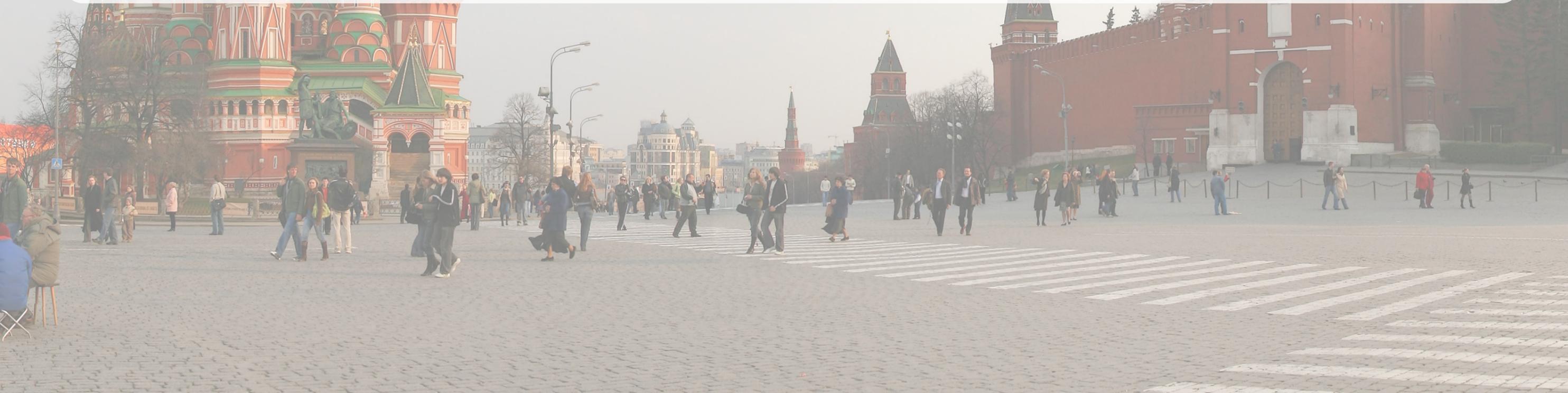
The named issue: how the lives of the Russian people were affected by the reforms of Gorbachev

- Gorbachev realised that the economic problems facing Russia in 1985 were serious and required addressing. His intention was to modify the state-controlled economy to allow for a measure of capitalism that would encourage growth in both industry and agriculture.
- *Perestroika* or 'reconstruction' was intended to encourage the production of better-quality goods, both for the consumer and the state-owned industries.
- Opposition from the 'gerontocracy' in the Politburo meant that Gorbachev needed to look for support elsewhere and allow for greater freedom for citizens to discuss political and economic issues. This led to *glasnost*, or 'openness' with more freedom for the press and radio. Gorbachev had also been influenced by the Chernobyl disaster of 1986 which, in many ways, encapsulated the inherent problems in a rigid system that had no room for change and reform. *Glasnost* led to political change with the introduction of greater democracy in the Constitution of 1988 that also allowed for parties other than the CPSU to be represented in the Supreme Soviet.

- All of these reforms had a significant impact on the lives of the Russian people. Mostly, changes to the political system and the easing of censorship were popular, but the economic changes were not well implemented, leading to shortages and hardship.

Areas of debate: the reforms introduced by other leaders

- During the 1950s, Khrushchev considered the needs of consumers, encouraging the production of more consumer goods. This was a shift away from Stalin's focus on heavy industry. Also significant was the attempt to address the housing shortage with the construction of prefabricated tower blocks. In practical terms, this had a major impact on people's lives. Khrushchev's attempts to increase meat production led to the disastrous 'virgin lands' scheme, however, and his campaign to increase the production of corn (maize) led to food shortages in some regions of the USSR.
- During the 1960s, Premier Kosygin attempted to improve the efficiency of the Russian economy, but he was not strongly supported by General Secretary Brezhnev, whose focus was on foreign policy. Some of the reforms brought in by Khrushchev such as an easing of censorship were also rolled back.
- By the 1970s, despite the reforms attempted, the lives of the Russian people had not changed much. In the countryside, collective farms or *kolkhozy* continued to be run mostly by female labour with rural communities having few of the benefits or amenities that were available in the cities.
- It may be argued that no reforms were possible in a rigid, ideology-led system where the structure of the state did not allow for change. Only Gorbachev was willing to address the need for fundamental political reform and break the system and the state.



The required timeframe: 1953-1989. Make sure you utilise details from across the timeframe. The following is an example of some events you may wish to include. However, other information can be used in addition to – or instead of – this material:

1953: Stalin dies in March leading to a period of collective leadership, although by 1955 Khrushchev, as General Secretary, is dominant.

1956: Khrushchev begins 'de-Stalinisation' that leads to the closure of GULAGS and an easing of censorship. *Khrushchyovkas* are built, and although the construction is of poor quality, the flats are a major reform for ordinary people who had lived in cramped rooms, sharing kitchens and bathrooms with other families.

1964: Khrushchev is removed from power. In part, this was because of his unpredictable foreign policy, but also his stance on de-Stalinisation was not supported by all his colleagues. Leonid Brezhnev succeeds Khrushchev as General Secretary.

1960s: Led by Prime Minister Alexi Kosygin, reforms are introduced to allow more accurate economic planning, improved production levels and more realistic pricing of goods. All are difficult to achieve in a state-run economy. Brezhnev does not support either political or economic reform.

1982: Brezhnev is succeeded by Yuri Andropov who, wanting to increase productivity, makes it mandatory for workers to remain at work during their shift rather than leave to queue for scarce goods or to 'moonlight' as plumbers, electricians etc. This unpopular reform makes people's lives more difficult and further reveals the many problems that underlie the Russian economy.

1984: Yuri Andropov, ill for most of his time in office, dies and is succeeded by Konstantin Chernenko who is also in ill-health and dies a year later.

1985: Mikhail Gorbachev becomes General Secretary.

1986: The Chernobyl disaster reveals the poor state of Russian infrastructure and the difficulty of introducing reforms in a rigidly hierarchical system. Gorbachev begins the process of reforms: *perestroika*; *glasnost*; *democratisation*.

1988: Gorbachev's electoral reforms introduce a limited choice of non-CPSU candidates. The Supreme Soviet would now meet every few months rather than annually. These reforms are popular and weaken the control of the CPSU over the USSR.

1989: The Donetsk miners' strike highlights some of the consequences of economic reforms on workers in the USSR.

In Section B, there is one compulsory question. It covers the duration of the timeframe or a period of at least 100 years. You will need to draw on material from across the timeframe.

Questions can broadly be broken down into four parts:

1. The command term

2. The named issue

3. Areas of debate (leading to a judgement)

4. The required timeframe

Consideration of all of these is essential to a well-argued and historically justified answer.

Section B: developments across a prolonged timeframe

2019 Question 1: How effectively did Russian leaders deal with the political challenges they faced in the period from 1881 to 1989?

The command term: how effectively

The command term is **how effectively**. So, in the context of this question, you will be required to offer an analysis and evaluation of the main idea – **how effectively Russian leaders dealt with the political challenges they faced** – and reach a substantiated judgement about this issue. Your aim is to make a consistent and balanced judgement that is supported by factual evidence.

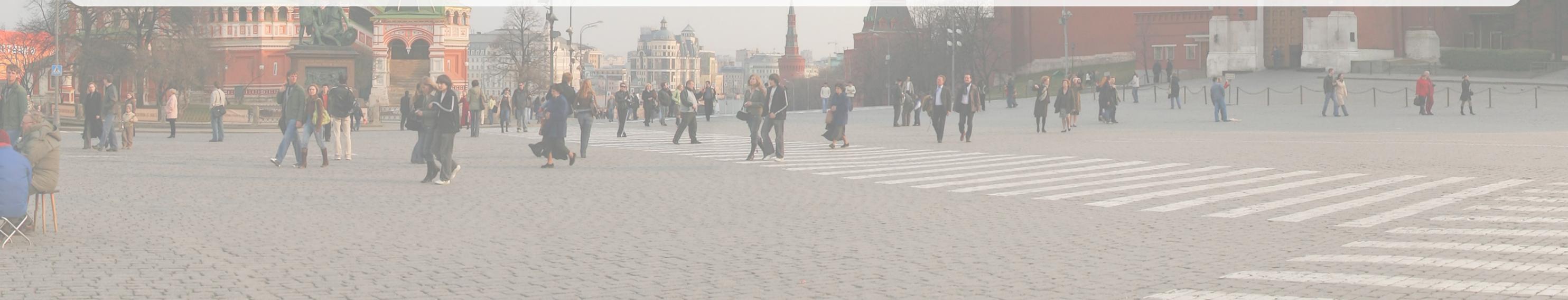
The named issue: how Russian leaders dealt with the political challenges they faced

- The assassination of Alexander II meant that the reign of Alexander III began with a determination to crack down on revolutionary groups plotting to end the autocratic rule of the Tsars. Nicholas II continued his father's resolve to maintain the autocracy but, after the 1905 Revolution, he was advised to publish The October Manifesto that allowed the formation of a national Duma. The Fundamental Laws of 1906 rescinded some of the reforms, however, and limited the franchise.
- Many factors, including the First World War, led to a crisis in 1917 when Nicholas II was asked to abdicate in favour of his son and, later, his brother. This led, perhaps unintentionally, to the end of the Romanov dynasty and the emergence of the Provisional Government and local Soviets. The events of the summer of 1917 demonstrated the failure of the Provisional Government to address the challenges it faced and led to the Bolshevik Revolution.
- The Cheka was set up to forestall any threat of counter-revolution. The Russian civil war, as well as the suppression of the Kronstadt Rebellion in 1921, may be viewed as the Bolshevik response to political challenges to their rule. The Resolution on Party Unity, approved at the 10th Party Congress, led to the ban on factionalism and, in theory, an end to political challenges within the one-party state. Lenin's death in 1924 led to political wrangling between supporters of the NEP and its opponents who thought it a step back towards capitalism. Described by Stalin as an example of 'factionalism', this, among other factors, resulted in his emergence as leader.

- Under Stalin, measures were taken to prevent any political challenge from rivals, real or perceived. The murder of Kirov in 1934 led to the purge of the Leningrad Party and opponents were denounced as 'Trotskyites'. The Great Terror of 1936-38 was implemented to rid the Soviet Union of any potential challenge to Stalin's rule. By the mid-1930s, the Cheka had been replaced by OGPU and then the NKVD to ensure there would be no political challenge to the authoritarian rule of Stalin.
- A coup was attempted against Khrushchev in 1957 but, as General Secretary, he was able to pre-empt this with the support of the Central Committee and the army.
- In 1991, a coup was attempted against Gorbachev, then President of the USSR, but the support of Yeltsin, then President of Russia, ensured its failure. This was, however, followed by the break-up of the USSR.

Areas of debate: how effective was the response to political challenges?

- It may be argued that the response of Alexander III and of Nicholas II to political challenges was successful in the short term but not in the long term. Harsh policies and the actions of the Okhrana meant that political revolutionaries could be imprisoned or exiled, but this did not end growing support for the Cadets, Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks and other political groups.
- Lenin seized power and instituted the Cheka to prevent a counter-revolution. He allowed elections to take place in December 1917 but shut down the National Assembly when it met in January 1918. Political challenges from within the Bolshevik Party continued despite the Resolution on Party Unity.
- Once established in power, Stalin effectively dealt with political challenges by purging, imprisoning, and executing opponents.
- Khrushchev survived an attempted coup but, ultimately, was ordered to retire to the countryside.
- Gorbachev tried to deal with political challenges from within the Politburo by broadening the base of support through instituting political reform, but this resulted in an upsurge of nationalism that threatened the unity of the USSR.



The required timeframe: make sure you utilise details from across the timeframe. The following is an example of some events you may wish to include. However, other information can be used in addition to – or instead of – this material:

1881: Alexander III ascends to the throne when his father, Alexander II, is assassinated by political revolutionaries. Alexander III tries to undo many of the political reforms carried out by his father.

1894: Nicholas II ascends to the throne. His education has ensured he will defend the autocracy inherited from his father.

1905: Triggered by Bloody Sunday, protests, strikes and uprisings take place. Known as the 1905 Revolution, this led to the establishment of a national Duma and the introduction of male suffrage. These policies were modified in 1906, although the Duma remained in place.

1914: Russia enters the First World War on the side of Britain and France. Heavy casualties and the failure of most campaigns contribute to Nicholas II's abdication in 1917 and the Duma is replaced by the Provisional Government. Political exiles, including Lenin, return to Russia.

1917: The Bolshevik Revolution takes place and, by 1922, has led to the establishment of the USSR.

1924: Lenin dies and a struggle for power ensues with Stalin emerging as leader by 1929.

1953: Stalin dies and, by 1958, Khrushchev has overcome all opposition to become both General Secretary and Prime Minister.

1989: Gorbachev attempts to reform the economy of the USSR and, facing opposition from the Politburo, introduces political reforms that result in a weakening of the CPSU.

Think like a historian

To reach a valid – and supported – conclusion, you must consider a range of evidence, and a range of viewpoints, weigh them up and make a judgement on their worth.

Key words

Analyse ★ Concepts and perspectives ★ Key issues and content
★ Debate ★ Continuity and change ★ Similarity and difference
★ Evidence ★ Judgement