

When politicians make foreign policy, they are influenced by a number of different factors. For any given country, some factors are relatively constant while others vary according to the individuals involved and the circumstances in which they were operating. Here are some of the factors influencing Soviet foreign policy in the 1920s and 1930s.

Ideology
 Orthodox Marxism stressed the need for revolution in other countries if socialism was to survive in the USSR. The USSR's desire to spread the revolution both at home and abroad threatened the West. Ideological differences did not rule out normal diplomacy, but they did provide the basis for mistrust. The existence of the Comintern and foreign intervention in the Civil War produced mistrust from the outset.

Security – fear of invasion
 Worries about security were increased by Russia's geography. Its frontier in the north-west and west was 3200 km long and lacked natural boundaries. As the only Communist state it was not unnatural for the Russians to fear invasion by the capitalist states. The list of invaders of Russia over the previous 800 years read like a Who's Who of military aggression and was referred to by Stalin to justify the need for rapid industrialisation under the Five-Year Plans.

Economic backwardness
 Soviet leaders were well aware of the perceived and actual technological inferiority of the Soviet state and the need for Western technological help in building Soviet industry.

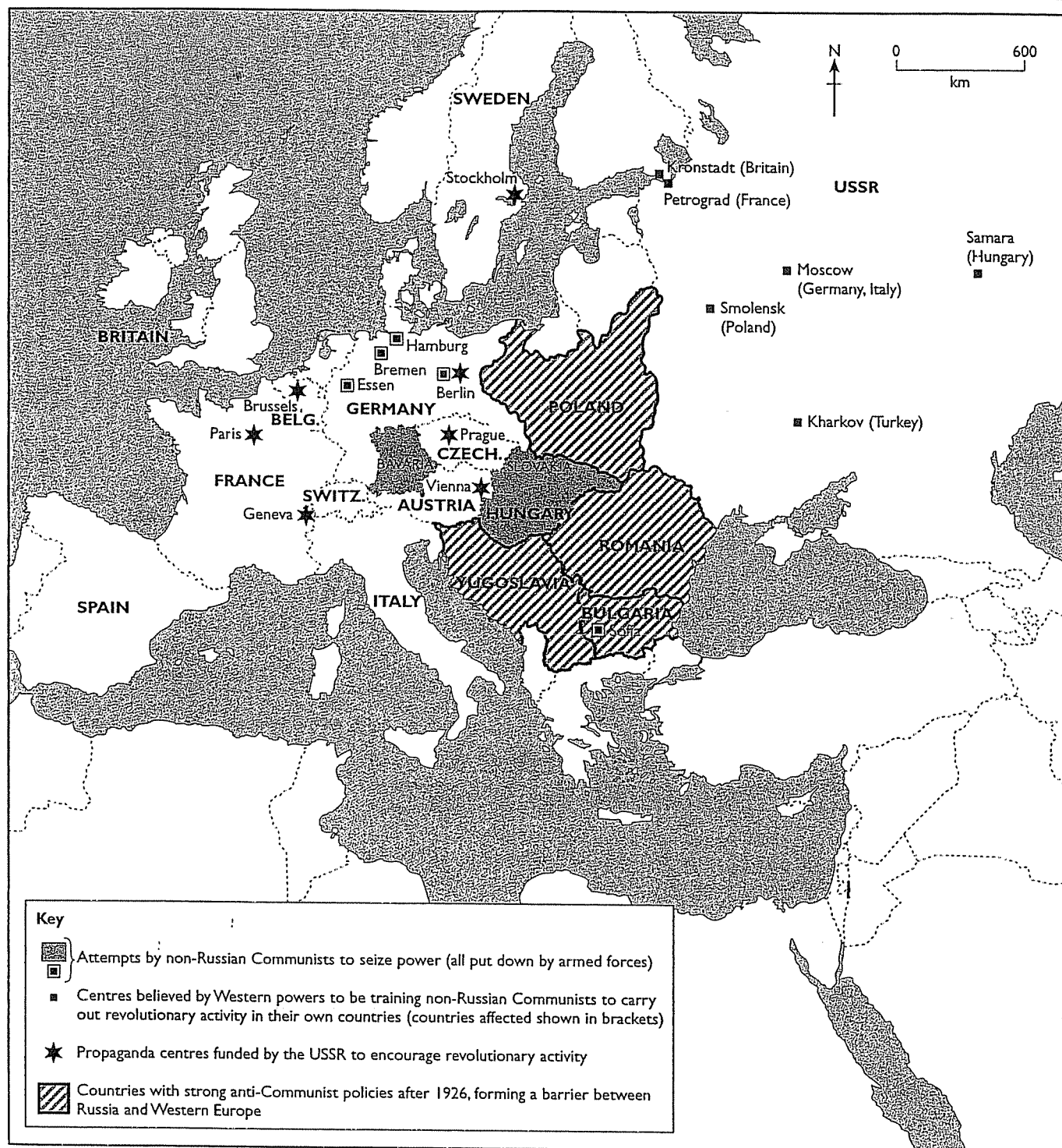
FACTORS DETERMINING SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE INTER-WAR YEARS

Attitudes of other countries
 Not even the most powerful country can make policy totally uninfluenced by the actions of other countries. Foreign intervention in the Civil War left a legacy of suspicion, and the rise of Hitler and the failure of the British and French to act against him could not be ignored.

The background and views of those making Soviet policy
 The leaders of the country – Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin – and their Commissars for Foreign Affairs – Chicherin, Litvinov and Molotov – had an influence on policy.

The internal situation
 At any given time, the internal situation was bound to impact on foreign policy. Thus the state of the country at the end of the Civil War, the power struggle to succeed Lenin, the Five-Year Plans and collectivisation all had an influence on foreign policy.

15A The failure of attempts to spread Communism



Here are two examples of how the activities of the Comintern damaged diplomatic relations with Britain.

- In 1923, the British Foreign Secretary, Curzon, infuriated by the activities of Soviet agents in Persia, Afghanistan and India, threatened to cancel the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement of 1921 unless the Soviets abandoned these activities. The Soviets agreed to the 'Curzon ultimatum'.
- In 1924, the 'Zinoviev letter' – a letter supposedly from the Comintern to the British Communist Party instructing the latter to conduct propaganda in the armed forces and elsewhere – was published just before the British general election. It was a forgery, but it indicated how British opinion perceived the threat presented by the Comintern. The new Conservative government virtually suspended all dealings with the Soviet government throughout 1925.

Soviet Foreign Policy Timeline

- Put the following important dates in Soviet Foreign Policy into correct chronological order on a separate sheet of paper.

October 1917: Decree on Peace	April-October 1920: Russo-Polish War. Soviet attempt to spread world revolution by arms defeated outside Warsaw in August
1936-1939: Soviet Union intervenes and supports the Popular Front in the Civil War	1926: Treaty of Berlin with Germany extends the Treaty of Rapallo
March 1934: Trade agreement with Germany	August 1939: Soviet-Anglo-French talks in Moscow, nothing is settled
April 1918-September 1919: Foreign Intervention in the Civil War	1924: Official recognition of the USSR by Italy, France and Britain
September 1934: Soviet Entry into the League of Nations Litvinov promotes a "collective security" policy	May 1935: Mutual Defence Pacts signed with France and Czechoslovakia
1927: Diplomatic relations between Britain and the USSR suspended (restored by Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald in 1929)	September 1938: Munich Agreement signed dismembering Czechoslovakia, USSR not even invited to the Conference
August 23, 1939: Ribbentrop and Molotov sign the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact and a secret protocol dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence	1921: Secret discussions with Germany on military and economic co-operation. Also the Anglo-Soviet Trade agreement
March 1919: Comintern (Third Communist International) established	November 1936: Anti-Comintern Pact involving Germany and Japan and a year later Italy joins
February 1918: Bolshevik cancellation of foreign debts	1918-1920: Russian Civil War is being fought
1938-39: Japan attacks Soviet territory in the Far East	April 1939: Litvinov proposes a triple military alliance between the Soviet Union, Britain and France
May 1939: Molotov replaces Litvinov as Commissar for Foreign Affairs	March 1918: Treaty of Brest-Litovsk Signed
1922: Treaty of Rapallo signed between Germany and USSR, countries recognize each other diplomatically and there is also secret military cooperation	

Block: _____

2. After you have finished your timeline, begin activity two. Historians have argued that events in Soviet Foreign Policy between October 1917 and August 1939 can be divided into clear phases that mark a clear change in policy.

Your task is to organize the events in Soviet Foreign Policy into phases that accurately describe the different directions Soviet Foreign Policy has taken. There may only be two phases or there may be five

Each phase has the following characteristics:

- a chronological starting and end date. Events that happened outside of this window of time cannot be included
- includes events that have similar characteristics, motivations and outcomes
- indicates a clear change of direction in policy
- a title or heading that explains the dominant characteristics of that period of time

Complete the following outline for each phase that you break Soviet Foreign Policy into.

Name or Heading of Phase:

Opening Event in Phase and Date of that Event:

Opening Event in Phase and the Date of that Event:

Important Characteristics/Similarities of the events that fit into this phase:

Explain why you think this was a phase in Soviet Foreign Policy:

Marking Rubric

Categories	Does not Meet Expectations 1	Somewhat Meets Expectations 2	Fully Meets Expectations 3
Timeline is put into proper chronological order	Several mistakes are made putting timeline into proper order	One or two mistakes are made putting the timeline into proper order	Timeline is put into proper chronological order
The names of phases created plausibly describe the period of Soviet Foreign Policy	The names of the phases do not plausibly describe the period of Soviet Foreign Policy	Some of the names of the phases plausibly describe the period of Soviet Foreign Policy	All of the names of the phases plausibly describe the period of Soviet Foreign Policy
A detailed explanation and listing of the Characteristics/Similarities of the phases is provided	A detailed explanation of the characteristics/similarities of the phases is not provided	Some of the explanations of the characteristics/similarities of the phases are not detailed	Detailed explanations of the characteristics/similarities of the phases are provided