Assess the impacts Bolshevik consolidation of power had on Russia (1917-1922)

The Bolsheviks throughout 1917-1922 consolidated their power creating severe impacts throughout Russia. This can be seen through many events such as the Civil war, creation of War Communism (WC) and the New Economic Policy (NEP) and, first decrees of SOVNARKOM. These impacted Russian civilians' lives, the Russian economy and international relations Russia had on several countries. The Bolsheviks through these events greatly impacted Russia whilst consolidating their power.

The Russian civil war (1918-1920) saw the Bolsheviks consolidating their power and create control around Russia whilst impacting Russian civilians and the economy in several ways. The Civil War saw the Bolshevik’s (Reds) fighting anti-revolutionaries, peasants and other European countries (Whites) in efforts to seize a greater control upon Russia. The involvement of European countries impacted on Russia’s relationships with countries such as France and the United Kingdom who supplied troops to prevent Bolshevik seizure. This caused Bolsheviks to prevent communication with Western European countries damaging future relationships. Furthermore, the contribution of troops from foreign powers impacted on the duration Civil due to the Whites having assistance from European economic powers. The Civil War also greatly impacted on the civilians within Russia with creation of War communism due to the war. War communism was a set of extreme policies made by Lenin in 1918 in wake of the Civil War in aims of focusing all efforts to winning the war. This saw Bolsheviks implementing complete control on workers and industry in aims of contributing all product towards the war, implementing grain requisitioning requiring peasants to give large percentage of grain to the armies to feed the army. This caused a depletion of resources among Russian civilians, the decline in grain produce due to peasants not wishing to contribute to the civil war and the assassination of many peasants due to lack of grain. This caused famine and food shortages throughout Russia declining the population and the change of political pressure among peasants to become against Bolsheviks. Consequently, the civil war impacted civilians and international relations within Russia.

The Bolsheviks created several economic policies that impacted on Russia between 1917-1922 in efforts of implementing control throughout the country. War Communism whilst in aims of winning the Civil War severely impacted the Economy between 1918-1920. Several policies within War communism aimed on abolishing the market economy with the state dictating production and abolishing money by causing hyper inflation of currency causing currency to become useless. This as well as grain requisitioning created severe economic impacts as selling of goods among civilians decreased, abundance of materials was severely reduced, and lack of money caused issues with bartering and creation of a black market. This all assisted in causing Russian economy to reduce to less than a tenth of its worth before 1913. This created a need for new economic action and triggered by the Kronstadt rebellion Lenin created the NEP in attempts of redeeming the economy. Created in 1921 the NEP was a temporary policy incorporating Capitalist ideals in aims of redeeming the Russian economy to pre-1913 standards. The NEP got rid of grain requisitioning, implementing a small grain tax allowing peasants to sell remaining grain to private...
businesses and small businesses where the ban was lifted. This created motivation to make profit increasing urban spending and causing a ‘money economy’ to reappeared. However, the NEP still allowed governmental control on large businesses like banks and coal whilst factories were running by trusts. The NEP allowed Russian economy to improve and by 1922 it saw the emergence of materials like coal and pig iron being manufactured in Russia. Whilst the NEP created several positive economic impacts it also allowed corruption and the creation of people called ‘NEP men’ where the system allowed them to buy and resell product cheating the system. These policies greatly impacted Russian economy between 1918-1922 as Bolsheviks attempted to consolidate their power.

Early decrees of the newly formed government after the October revolution of 1917 (SOVNARKOM) and the treaty of Brest-Litovsk impacted on Russian civilians and the economy in several ways. SOVNARKOM created several policies giving peasants land, allowing minorities to complete self-determination, marriage and divorce was made easier and workers could supervise their own managers. This was beneficial to peasants and the working class as it equalised the classes allowing them to rise in class rank. However, this negatively impacted the bourgeois as it took away their land and power within industry diminishing their class status. These early decrees also included the creation of CHEKA, restriction on media and the dissolution of the constituent assembly on 5 January 1918. This negatively impacted Russian civilians as it created a harsher governmental control which assisted the Bolsheviks and the foundation for a one-party rule within Russia.

SOVNARKOM also withdrew from World War One (WWI) in 1918 and as such created the treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Central powers to do so. This created several issues within Russia as the treaty required Russia to give 32% of agricultural land, 25% of industry, %90 of coal mines and lose 92 million people. This cause a drain on the already weak Russian economy minimising the ways to create product and reducing their population and land size. These decrees severely impacted on Russia impacting their economy and civilians as the Bolsheviks consolidated their power.

Consequently, as the Bolsheviks consolidated their power throughout 1917-1922 they impacted Russia in several ways. This was through the Civil war, War communism, the creation of the NEP and early decrees of SOVNARKOM. This impacted Russian civilians. International relations and the economy altering Russia and creating consequences for the Bolshevik party.
To what extent was Soviet foreign policy influenced by communist ideology throughout the period 1917-1941

Soviet foreign policy was minutely influenced by communist ideology throughout 1917-1941 due to the increasing influence of national interest caused by economic factors, internal factors and international relations. Whilst Bolshevik ideology was strongly promoted throughout 1917-1941 the Bolsheviks often ignored ideology in pursuit of national interest resulting in trends of increasing influence of national interest within foreign policy making. This is exhibited through the increasement of treaties with other countries within this period and involvement of national affairs accompanied by the weakening of the Comintern (communist international). Therefore, communist ideology had minute influence over Soviet foreign policy with its influence lessening throughout the period of 1917-1941.

During November 1917 to 1921 there was a moderate influence of communist ideology within foreign policy making but national interest was also a key influence as seen by the signing of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk. During the early years of the Bolshevik government there were calls for world revolution and leaders such as Trotsky and Lenin believed revolution would spark within western countries for an extended period of time. This gave rise to the establishment of the Comintern with intentions of promoting and assisting in revolutions in other countries. Furthermore, outbreaks of revolution within Germany and Hungary were well received fuelling the idea of possibility of revolution in the West. However, national interest was also an influence during this time with the signing of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk with Germany to allow the Soviet to surrender from the war. This is against communist ideology as the Soviet is coming to negotiations with non-socialist countries instead of promoting revolution and therefore can be seen as an act for national interest as the Soviet believed they would lose the war. Furthermore, as the Russian civil war takes place and is won there is no intentions of launching a revolutionary war on western countries due to national needs. Therefore, whilst there were elements of communist ideology within soviet foreign policy national interest also had a moderate influence within foreign policy making.

Between 1921-1933 national interest is seen to have a larger influence than communist ideology within foreign policy making due to economic influences, the influence of Stalin and the need for recovery within the Soviet. Within the party a defeat of the left is seen which ensures that economic development has priority over ideology. This created a need for economic stability causing the Soviet to make treaty’s such the Treaty of Rapallo, the involvement in the Genoa Conference and the promotion of German relations. This in turn saw the Soviet have diplomatic relations with all major powers except the United States turning back on ideology of not supporting or siding with Capitalist powers. Furthermore, the communist coup attempt within Germany in 1923 is welcomed but not supported. This accompanied by the Zinoviev letter and the Comintern’s support for the British miners in the
General strike of 1926 which displayed wishful thinking clearly outlines the decrease in support for a permanent revolution within neighbouring countries a strong aspect of Bolshevik ideology. This was further assisted through the rise of Stalin as the new communist believer who unlike Trotsky promotes the idea of “socialism in one country”. This impacts the Comintern in the early 1930’s where Stalin orders the Comintern to avoid cooperation with other political parties in hopes of the Great Depression causing internal revolutions without the Soviet’s assistance. The Comintern also welcomes Fascist revolution within Germany as it is believed that it is the final stage before the worker’s revolution defying previous Bolshevik ideology. Consequently, as the influence of national interest within Soviet foreign policy increases communist ideology becomes less important on the decisions to do with foreign affairs during 1921-1933.

The Soviet saw an even further increase in the influence of national interest in foreign policy making due to the increasing threat of Germany and the weakening of the Soviet during 1933-1938. Collectivisation and the purges within the Soviet saw a weakening within the nation causing Stalin to decide that national interests are first priority over Communist ideology. This is done by commencing trade with capitalist countries in the west and peace with European nations to promote the security of the Soviet. The Comintern was also instructed to promote the interests of the Soviet Union within their affairs as to further promote national interest. Additionally, the threat of Nazism and Japanese militarism caused the Soviet to join the League of Nations and attempt to create military alliances with capitalist powers to see a united front against Germany. In aims of not wanting Spain to line up with Fascist Italy and Germany the Soviet involves themselves within the Spanish civil war to decrease the Fascist power within Italy as well as using it to purge Trotskyites within Spain but involvement increased by 1938. These actions are a clear violation of communist ideology as the Soviet is seen to be working with capitalist countries and involving themselves n capitalist affairs. Furthermore, the lack of support of the revolution and the change of the Comintern’s agenda clearly shows the change of ideology influencing foreign policy to the influence of national matters being the primary influence. Accordingly, the period of 1922-1938 saw a major decrease in the influence of communist ideology within foreign policy making as national interest became the key priority for the Soviet.

During 1938-1941 communist ideology had no influence over Soviet foreign policy as the risk of war causes the Soviet to prioritise national interest. Due to the threat of war 1938 saw the creation of the third five-year plan with the main focus being militarisation. This was accompanied by a rapprochement with Germany in hopes of securing national security and defence. Furthermore, as World War II commences within Europe all propaganda and ideological talk of sparking more communist revolutions cease as national interest becomes the only importance within the Soviet. This is further seen through a non-aggression pact with Germany as Stalin’s goal is to keep Russia out of the war. This clearly indicates the abandonment of communist ideology as focuses of war cause treaty’s to be signed and the cease of assisting in revolution in other countries both actions opposing Bolshevism. This indicates the abandonment of communist ideology in the influence of foreign policy as national interest is the only concern due to the impacts of World War II.
Soviet foreign policy was minutely influenced by communist ideology throughout 1917-1941 with the increasing influence of national interest due to economic factors, internal factors and international relations. Throughout this period national interest played an increasing role in foreign policy causing Bolshevik ideology to be abandoned. This was due to change in power, threat of war, economic failure and the need of recovery within the Soviet. This saw the incensement of treaties with other countries, partnership with capitalist nations and the decrease in the involvement of revolutions in other countries. Therefore, communist ideology had only a minute influence in foreign affairs as national interest became more important within 1917-1941.

Analyse the competing visions for the Bolshevik party and the USSR over time

Throughout 1917-1941 the Bolshevik party experienced a multitude of competing visions influencing both within the party and about the USSR with it lessening over time.

When Lenin was alive:

Civil war, NEP, purges

Within 1917 to 1923 there was a multitude of visions within the party, however, this was also contested and reduced during Lenin’s ‘purge’. During the Russian civil war there was competing visions of dictating the USSR; the Bolsheviks and the anti-Bolsheviks. The anti Bolsheviks consisted of

When Lenin died:

The 5 and their views, --- stalin’s power struggle

Stalin in power:

Lack of conflict, reign of terror and purges, ppl liked Stalin