

**What were Lenin's economic objectives 1918-24**

Lenin had two main economic objectives

1. To improve economic performance in industry and agriculture
2. To use economic policy as a means of reinforcing Bolshevik political power

Important Point: for the Bolsheviks economic and political objectives were inter-twinned - economic policy was used to reinforce political objectives. Economic success usually came second to the primary objective of retaining and consolidating political power. As a result, economic policies changed to suit political needs

Between 1918-24 the Bolsheviks had 3 distinct policies, each of which was designed to meet one or both of the two objectives above

1. 1917-18 State Capitalism

The main objective of this policy was to win political support for the Bolsheviks, whose position was still very insecure

This was achieved by ...

1. Land Decree - abolished private ownership, land redistributed to the peasants via land committees. This simply recognised what was already happening in the countryside.
2. Worker control in the factories. This also simply recognised what was already happening

State Capitalism was successful in one way - political: it fulfilled the political objective of making the Bolsheviks more popular e.g. it was popular among the workers and peasants

State Capitalism was a failure in another way - economic: it led to economic chaos, which meant it would be difficult for the Bolsheviks to win the coming Civil War

2. 1918-21 War Communism

The main objective of this policy was to help the Bolsheviks win the Civil War (so is clearly linked to political objectives)

This was achieved by ....

1. Nationalisation of industries / private trade banned
2. Requisitioning of food from the peasantry to feed the Red Army

War Communism was successful in one way - political: it enabled the Bolsheviks to win the Civil War

War Communism was a failure in another way - economic: it failed to improve economic productivity

Industry ground to a standstill. Production of heavy industry fell drastically

Peasants resented requisitioning and resisted it by returning to subsistence farming

Evidence for the unpopularity of War Communism can be seen in the Tambov Rising 1920-21

3. 1921-28 New Economic Policy

The main objectives of this policy were 1) economic: to improve economic productivity (Lenin recognised the need to kick-start the peasant economy in order to increase grain production). The money made from increased grain production would also help to fund industrialisation 2) political: reduce political opposition to the Bolsheviks (such as Tambov Rising)

This was achieved by ....

1. Returning ownership of small-scale industries to private hands
2. Ending grain requisitioning

NEP was successful in two ways - 1) Economic: agricultural and industrial productivity increased. Living standards rose. (fulfilling economic objectives) 2) Political: Peasants and workers were happier (fulfilling political objectives)

NEP was unsuccessful in other ways - 1) Political concerns: Left-wing Bolsheviks saw it as a betrayal of the Marxist ideal. As Marxists, Bolsheviks believed in a proletarian society. So the focus should be on industrialisation. Also concern about growth of NEPMEN (seen by left-wing Bolsheviks as 'capitalist exploiters'). Also, concern at growth of Kulaks (creating two-tier peasant class system). The increase in social inequality was in conflict with Bolshevik ideas about equality 2) Economic concerns: although productivity had increased it was not as high as pre-WW1 levels. Also there was a resurgence of the peasant commune system and of traditional (and backward) farming methods, which was seen as a backward step by the Bolsheviks

Lenin: 'Socialist Russia will come from NEP Russia' i.e. NEP may not be ideal but we are slowly moving towards a socialist state. We must be patient.

This is usually asked as an 8 mark question (but it has been asked as a 22 mark question). It is a difficult question because most students simply start describing Bolsheviks economic policies rather than focusing on the objectives behind the policies.

A 22 mark question is more likely to ask you 'How successful were Bolshevik economic policies? - in which case, you would explain what the objectives were, but spend more time describing what the policies involved and the ways they were successful / not successful