CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOVIET UNION'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

– Formal organization of state power in the soviets
  – pyramid of elected legislative bodies to the Supreme Soviet
  – executive branch at each level accountable to the soviet
  – executive branch at national level -- Council of Ministers

– Ethnic federalism -- unitary state in fact, federal in form
  – 15 republics in the union, each with an ethnic base
  – republics all functions except military, foreign affairs, and money supply
  – in the Russian Republic state branches of the Communist Party, the KGB, and
    the trade unions doubled as Russian ones..

– Russian dominance
  – centralization
  – penetration of union-wide institutions such as the party, military, KGB,
    bureaucracy into the republics

– State Ownership of the Means of Production
  – economic power intertwined with political power
  – all lines of advancement converged in the party
  – reliance on the enterprise for benefits to the populace
  – coalition shared interest in status quo -- ministries, regional bureaucracies,
    enterprise managers, and the workers
  – job security, social benefits, and relative income equality for worker compliance
    was the "social contract"

– Political Dominance of the Communist Party
  – organization parallel that of government from soviet to Supreme Soviet, from
    executive committee to the Council of Ministers
  – policy decided at the CPSU Politburo -- usually twelve powerful men
  – Politburo supported by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CP
    — monitored policies
    — managed party careers
    — determined ideological line
    — supervised bureaucracy, the military, the KGB, and republic
      governments