



# Cold War: Superpowers Face Off

MAIN IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS NOW	TERMS & NAMES
<b>ECONOMICS</b> The opposing economic and political philosophies of the United States and the Soviet Union led to global competition.	The conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union played a major role in reshaping the modern world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• United Nations</li><li>• iron curtain</li><li>• containment</li><li>• Truman Doctrine</li><li>• Marshall Plan</li><li>• Cold War</li><li>• NATO</li><li>• Warsaw Pact</li><li>• brinkmanship</li></ul>

**SETTING THE STAGE** During World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union had joined forces to fight against the Germans. The Soviet army marched west; the Americans marched east. When the Allied soldiers met at the Elbe River in Germany in 1945, they embraced each other warmly because they had defeated the Nazis. Their leaders, however, regarded each other much more coolly. This animosity caused by competing political philosophies would lead to a nearly half-century of conflict called the Cold War.

## Allies Become Enemies

Even before World War II ended, the U.S. alliance with the Soviet Union had begun to unravel. The United States was upset that Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader, had signed a nonaggression pact with Germany in 1939. Later, Stalin blamed the Allies for not invading German-occupied Europe earlier than 1944. Driven by these and other disagreements, the two allies began to pursue opposing goals.

**Yalta Conference: A Postwar Plan** The war was not yet over in February 1945. But the leaders of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union met at the Soviet Black Sea resort of Yalta. There, they agreed to divide Germany into zones of occupation controlled by the Allied military forces. Germany also would have to pay the Soviet Union to compensate for its loss of life and property. Stalin agreed to join the war against Japan. He also promised that Eastern Europeans would have free elections. A skeptical Winston Churchill predicted that Stalin would keep his pledge only if the Eastern Europeans followed “a policy friendly to Russia.”

**Creation of the United Nations** In June 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union temporarily set aside their differences. They joined 48 other countries in forming the **United Nations** (UN). This international organization was intended to protect the members against aggression. It was to be based in New York.

The charter for the new peacekeeping organization established a large body called the General Assembly. There, each UN member nation could cast its vote on a broad range of issues. An 11-member body called the Security Council had the real power to investigate and settle disputes, though. Its five permanent members were Britain, China, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Each could veto any Security Council action. This provision was intended to prevent any members of the Council from voting as a bloc to override the others.

**Differing U.S. and Soviet Goals** Despite agreement at Yalta and their presence on the Security Council, the United States and the Soviet Union split sharply after the war. The war had affected them very differently. The United States, the world's richest and most powerful country, suffered 400,000 deaths. But its cities and factories remained intact. The Soviet Union had at least 50 times as many fatalities. One in four Soviets was wounded or killed. Also, many Soviet cities were demolished. These contrasting situations, as well as political and economic differences, affected the two countries' postwar goals. (See chart below.) **A**

**MAIN IDEA**

**Summarizing**

**A** Why did the United States and the Soviet Union split after the war?

Interactive Feature

**Superpower Aims in Europe**

**INTERACTIVE**

**United States**

- Encourage democracy in other countries to help prevent the rise of Communist governments
- Gain access to raw materials and markets to fuel booming industries
- Rebuild European governments to promote stability and create new markets for U.S. goods
- Reunite Germany to stabilize it and increase the security of Europe

**Soviet Union**

- Encourage communism in other countries as part of a worldwide workers' revolution
- Rebuild its war-ravaged economy using Eastern Europe's industrial equipment and raw materials
- Control Eastern Europe to protect Soviet borders and balance the U.S. influence in Western Europe
- Keep Germany divided to prevent its waging war again

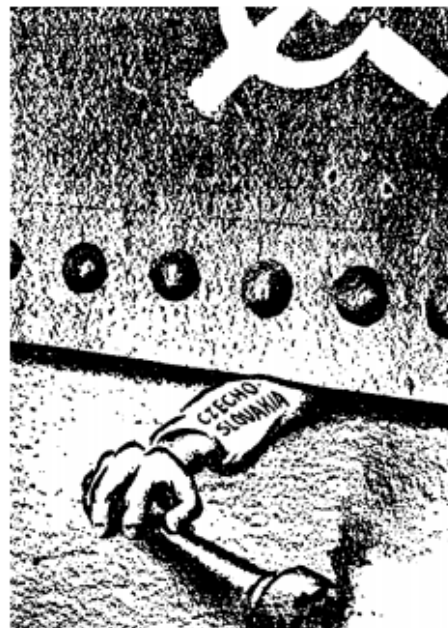


**Eastern Europe's Iron Curtain**

A major goal of the Soviet Union was to shield itself from another invasion from the west. Centuries of history had taught the Soviets to fear invasion. Because it lacked natural western borders, Russia fell victim to each of its neighbors in turn. In the 17th century, the Poles captured the Kremlin. During the next century, the Swedes attacked. Napoleon overran Moscow in 1812. The Germans invaded Russia during World Wars I and II.

**Soviets Build a Buffer** As World War II drew to a close, the Soviet troops pushed the Nazis back across Eastern Europe. At war's end, these troops occupied a strip of countries along the Soviet Union's own western border. Stalin regarded these countries as a necessary buffer, or wall of protection. He ignored the Yalta agreement and installed or secured Communist governments in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, and Yugoslavia.

The Soviet leader's American partner at Yalta, Franklin D. Roosevelt, had died on April 12, 1945. To Roosevelt's successor, Harry S. Truman, Stalin's reluctance to allow free elections in Eastern European nations was a clear violation of those countries' rights. Truman, Stalin, and Churchill met at Potsdam, Germany, in July 1945. There, Truman pressed Stalin to permit free elections in Eastern Europe. The Soviet leader refused. In a speech in early 1946, Stalin declared that communism and capitalism could not exist in the same world.



▲ The Iron Curtain is shown dropping on Czechoslovakia in this 1948 political cartoon.

**An Iron Curtain Divides East and West** Europe now lay divided between East and West. Germany had been split into two sections. The Soviets controlled the eastern part, including half of the capital, Berlin. Under a Communist government, East Germany was named the German Democratic Republic. The western zones became the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. Winston Churchill described the division of Europe:

**MAIN IDEA**

**Analyzing Primary Sources**

**B** Why might Winston Churchill use “iron curtain” to refer to the division between Western and Eastern Europe?

**PRIMARY SOURCE B**

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. . . . All these famous cities and the populations around them lie in the Soviet sphere and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and increasing measure of control from Moscow.

**WINSTON CHURCHILL**, “Iron Curtain” speech, March 5, 1946

Churchill’s phrase “**iron curtain**” came to represent Europe’s division into mostly democratic Western Europe and Communist Eastern Europe.

## United States Tries to Contain Soviets

U.S.-Soviet relations continued to worsen in 1946 and 1947. An increasingly worried United States tried to offset the growing Soviet threat to Eastern Europe. President Truman adopted a foreign policy called **containment**. It was a policy directed at blocking Soviet influence and stopping the expansion of communism. Containment policies included forming alliances and helping weak countries resist Soviet advances.

**The Truman Doctrine** In a speech asking Congress for foreign aid for Turkey and Greece, Truman contrasted democracy with communism:

**PRIMARY SOURCE**

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions . . . free elections . . . and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression . . . fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free people . . . resisting attempted subjugation [control] by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

**PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN**, speech to Congress, March 12, 1947

Truman’s support for countries that rejected communism was called the **Truman Doctrine**. It caused great controversy. Some opponents objected to American interference in other nations’ affairs. Others argued that the United States could not afford to carry on a global crusade against communism. Congress, however, immediately authorized more than \$400 million in aid to Turkey and Greece.

**The Marshall Plan** Much of Western Europe lay in ruins after the war. There was also economic turmoil—a scarcity of jobs and food. In 1947, U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall proposed that the United States give aid to needy European countries. This assistance program, called the **Marshall Plan**, would provide food, machinery, and other materials to rebuild Western Europe. (See chart.) As Congress debated the \$12.5 billion program in 1948, the Communists seized power in Czechoslovakia. Congress immediately voted approval. The plan was a spectacular success. Even Communist Yugoslavia received aid after it broke away from Soviet domination. **C**

**The Berlin Airlift** While Europe began rebuilding, the United States and its allies clashed with the Soviet Union over Germany. The Soviets wanted to keep their former enemy weak and divided. But in 1948, France, Britain, and the United States decided to withdraw their forces from Germany and allow their occupation zones to form one nation. The Soviet Union responded by holding West Berlin hostage.

Although Berlin lay well within the Soviet occupation zone of Germany, it too had been divided into four zones. (See map on next page.) The Soviet Union cut off highway, water, and rail traffic into Berlin’s western zones. The city faced starvation. Stalin gambled that the Allies would surrender West Berlin or give up

**MAIN IDEA**

**Making Inferences**

**C** What was Truman’s major reason for offering aid to other countries?

**MAIN IDEA****Summarizing**

**D** What Soviet actions led to the Berlin airlift?

their idea of reunifying Germany. But American and British officials flew food and supplies into West Berlin for nearly 11 months. In May 1949, the Soviet Union admitted defeat and lifted the blockade. **D**

## The Cold War Divides the World

These conflicts marked the start of the **Cold War** between the United States and the Soviet Union. A cold war is a struggle over political differences carried on by means short of military action or war. Beginning in 1949, the superpowers used spying, propaganda, diplomacy, and secret operations in their dealings with each other. Much of the world allied with one side or the other. In fact, until the Soviet Union finally broke up in 1991, the Cold War dictated not only U.S. and Soviet foreign policy, but influenced world alliances as well.

**Superpowers Form Rival Alliances** The Berlin blockade heightened Western Europe's fears of Soviet aggression. As a result, in 1949, ten western European nations joined with the United States and Canada to form a defensive military alliance. It was called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (**NATO**). An attack on any NATO member would be met with armed force by all member nations.

The Soviet Union saw NATO as a threat and formed its own alliance in 1955. It was called the **Warsaw Pact** and included the Soviet Union, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania. In 1961, the East Germans built a wall to separate East and West Berlin. The Berlin Wall symbolized a world divided into rival camps. However, not every country joined the new alliances. Some, like India, chose not to align with either side. And China, the largest Communist country, came to distrust the Soviet Union. It remained nonaligned.

**The Threat of Nuclear War** As these alliances were forming, the Cold War threatened to heat up enough to destroy the world. The United States already had atomic bombs. In 1949, the Soviet Union exploded its own atomic weapon. President Truman was determined to develop a more deadly weapon before the Soviets did. He authorized work on a thermonuclear weapon in 1950.

The hydrogen or H-bomb would be thousands of times more powerful than the A-bomb. Its power came from the fusion, or joining together, of atoms, rather than the splitting of atoms, as in the A-bomb. In 1952, the United States tested the first H-bomb. The Soviets exploded their own in 1953.

Dwight D. Eisenhower became the U.S. president in 1953. He appointed the firmly anti-Communist John Foster Dulles as his secretary of state. If the Soviet Union or its supporters attacked U.S. interests, Dulles threatened, the United States would "retaliate instantly, by means and at places of our own choosing." This willingness to go to the brink, or edge, of war became known as **brinkmanship**. Brinkmanship required a reliable source of nuclear weapons and airplanes to deliver them. So, the United States strengthened its air force and began producing stockpiles of nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union responded with its own military buildup, beginning an arms race that would go on for four decades. **E**

**The Cold War in the Skies** The Cold War also affected the science and education programs of the two countries. In August 1957, the Soviets announced the development of a rocket that could travel great distances—an intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM. On October 4, the Soviets used an ICBM to push *Sputnik*, the first unmanned satellite, above the earth's atmosphere. Americans felt they had fallen behind in science and technology, and the government poured money into science education. In 1958, the United States launched its own satellite.

In 1960, the skies again provided the arena for a superpower conflict. Five years earlier, Eisenhower had proposed that the United States and the Soviet Union be able to fly over each other's territory to guard against surprise nuclear attacks. The Soviet Union said no. In response, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) started secret high-altitude spy flights over Soviet territory in planes called U-2s. In May 1960, the Soviets shot down a U-2 plane, and its pilot, Francis Gary Powers, was captured. This U-2 incident heightened Cold War tensions.

While Soviet Communists were squaring off against the United States, Communists in China were fighting a civil war for control of that country.

**MAIN IDEA****Recognizing Effects**

**E** How did the U.S. policy of brinkmanship contribute to the arms race?