

The Beginnings of the Cold War

Background:

When the US was attacked in December, 1941 the Soviet Union and the Allied powers formed an alliance of convenience against the Fascist powers. While the United States supplied both the British and the Soviet militaries, Stalin remained highly suspicious and believed that the British and the Americans had conspired to ensure the Soviets sustained the worst of the fighting against Nazi Germany. The Soviets believed that the Western Allies had deliberately delayed opening a second anti-German front in order to step in at the last moment and shape the peace settlement. Thus, Soviet opinions of the West left a lot of tension and hostility between the Allied powers.

The name "Cold War" comes from the English writer George Orwell, after the dropping of the first atomic bombs in 1945. It described a world where the two major powers—each possessing nuclear weapons and thereby threatened with mutually assured destruction—never met in direct military combat. Instead, in their struggle for global power and influence, they engaged in ongoing psychological warfare and in regular indirect confrontations in other regions of the world. Cycles of relative calm would be followed by high tension, which could have led to world war.

1. Why do the Soviets distrust the US and its Allies?
2. Instead of fighting directly with each other, how are the two Superpowers going to combat each other?

Document 1: Excerpt from Winston Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech, March 5, 1946

"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.



3. How is the “iron curtain” a dividing line?

Document 2: Excerpt from Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech, March 5, 1946

The Communist parties, which were very small in these Eastern European nations, have been raised to power far beyond their numbers and are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control. Police governments are prevailing in nearly every case, and so far, except in Czechoslovakia, there is no true democracy. This is certainly not the liberated Europe we fought to build up. Nor is it one which contains the essentials of permanent peace.

4. Describe the type of governments that Churchill believes are governing Eastern Europe and how this contrasts with why the Allies fought in WWII.

Document 3: Excerpt from U.S. Secretary of State Marshall's speech explaining his plan to help European countries rebuild after WWII, June 5, 1947 (Marshall Plan)

"I need to say that the world situation is very serious. . . . Europe must have a great deal of additional help, or face heavy economic, social, and political damage. This would have a harmful effect on the world at large. There are also possibilities of disturbances because of the desperation of the people concerned. The effect on the economy of the United States should be clear to all. The United States should do whatever it can to help restore normal economic health to the world. Without this, there can be no political stability or peace. Our policy is directed . . . against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos [disorder]. Its purpose is to revive a working economy in the world."

5. Why did Secretary of State Marshall suggest this plan for European recovery?

Document 4: Excerpt from President Truman's speech to Congress, March 12, 1947. (Truman Doctrine)

"I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation [domination] by armed minorities or by outside pressure. Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far-reaching to the West. The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. Therefore, I propose giving Greece and Turkey \$400 million in aid.

6. Explain the policy President Truman suggested in this speech.

Document 5: Excerpt from the North Atlantic Treaty, which was signed by the United States, Canada, and ten nations of Western Europe in 1948.

"The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or in North America shall be considered as an attack against them all. They agree that if such an armed attack occurs, each of them will assist the party or parties so attacked. Each will immediately take whatever action it considers necessary to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. It will, if necessary, use armed force.

7. What is the purpose of NATO?

Document 6: The Soviet Union responded to NATO by creating a new alliance, the Warsaw Pact.

Warsaw Pact Members: E. Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Soviet Union

Other Communist Nations: Yugoslavia

NATO Members: Great Britain, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, W. Germany, France, Italy, Portugal, Turkey, Greece, Iceland



8. How do these “satellites” in the Warsaw Pact provide a buffer for the Soviet Union?

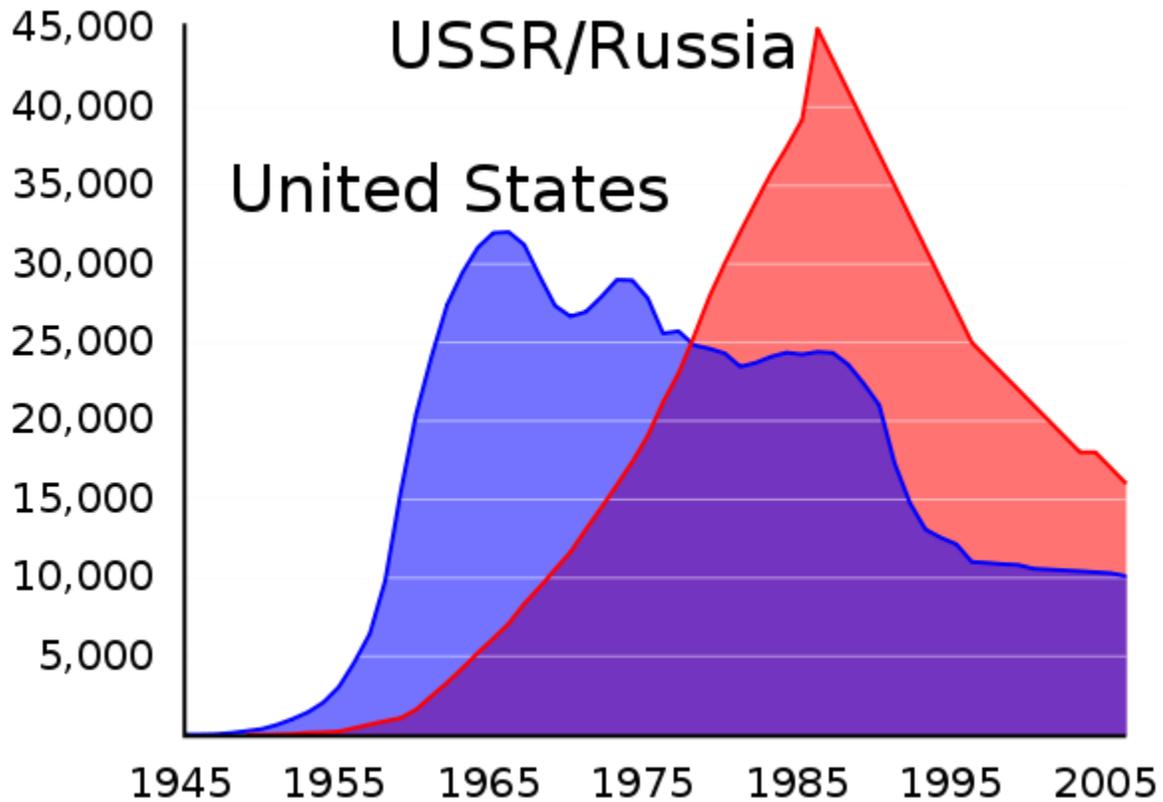
Document 7: Excerpt from a speech by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in 1956 in which he explains his point of view on U.S. actions.

The inspirers of the “cold war” began to establish military alliances like the North Atlantic bloc (NATO), and SEATO (protection for Southeast Asian nations). [They claim] they have united for defense against the “communist threat.” But this is sheer hypocrisy! We know from history that when planning a re-division of the world, the imperialist powers have always lined up military blocs. Today the “anti-communism” slogan is being used as a smoke screen to cover up the claims of one power for world domination. The United States wants, by means of blocs and pacts, to secure a dominant position in the capitalist world. The leaders want a “position of strength” policy. Furthermore, they assert that it makes another way impossible because it ensures a “balance of power” in the world. Western leaders offer the arms race as their main recipe for the preservation of peace! It is perfectly obvious that when nations compete to increase their military might, the danger of war becomes greater, not lesser. Capitalism will find its grave in another world war.

9. What is Khrushchev’s view of U.S. actions? According to Khrushchev what will happen?

Document 8: Graphs of Nuclear Weapons

The arms race was an important part of the Cold War. Both superpowers developed technology and used their nuclear power to build as many weapons as possible. This nuclear buildup led to a “balance of terror,” which some saw as a deterrent to war. But others feared the use of these weapons. These charts show the buildup of ICBM’s (intercontinental ballistic missiles) and long-range bombers between 1966 and 1974.



(Cut and Paste graph)

10. What impact did this arms race have on the world?

Beginning of the Cold War DBQ

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