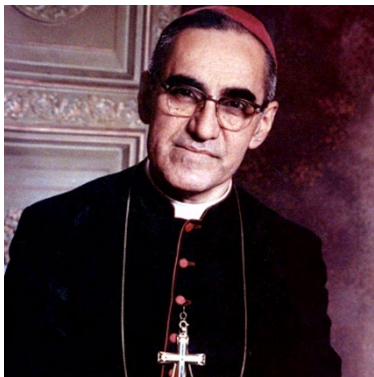


# DID ANYONE WIN THE COLD WAR?



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Q U E S T I O N   F I F T E E N

# DID ANYONE WIN THE C O L D W A R ?

EXPLORING AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH COMPELLING QUESTIONS

## S U P P O R T I N G   Q U E S T I O N S

- 1   WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?
- 2   WAS CONTAINMENT THE RIGHT WAY TO  
DEAL WITH THE SPREAD OF COMMUNISM?
- 3   DID AMERICAN LEADERS RESPOND WISELY  
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D E V E L O P E D   A N D   C O M P I L E D   B Y  
J O N A T H A N   L O O M I S

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## Q U E S T I O N   F I F T E E N

# DID ANYONE WIN THE C O L D W A R ?

World War II was an absolute victory for the United States and its allies over the totalitarian, fascist regimes of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Hideki Tojo. However, as the elation of V-E and V-J Days passed, and thousands of American troops started coming home, the joy of victory was tempered by a new reality.

It is said that war produces strange bedfellows, and indeed the common struggle against Nazi Germany had brought the United States and Josef Stalin's communist Soviet Union together as partners, if only for a few years. Now, with their common enemy defeated, the two nations looked in 1945 at each other with distrust.

From the American perspective, the war had resulted in only partial freedom for humankind. As Americans saw it, for all those who lived under Josef Stalin's rule, communism was little better than Nazism. From their perspective on the other side of the world, the Soviets looked out at the awesome power of the United States – power, which had been wielded during the war as the Arsenal of Democracy – and saw a threat even greater than Hitler's Germany. The Soviet Union lost more of its soldiers and civilians in the war than any other nation and they faced a nuclear-armed United States.

So, as the Second World War was ending, a new war was beginning. This war would not include direct combat between the two superpowers, but it raged around the world and into space. Millions of people would die, billions of dollars were spent and the prospect of nuclear holocaust would hang over everyone for 50 years. This new conflict was the Cold War. The United States and the Soviet Union may never have gone head-to-head on the battlefield, but it was unquestionably a war nonetheless.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated and the Cold War ended nearly a half century after 1945 it would seem that United States and the free market economic system had again survived the judgement of history while communism had failed, just like fascism before it. But can you win a war you don't fight on the battlefield? Can you claim victory if it takes 50 years to achieve your goal? If winning means filling the world with nuclear weapons, is that really a victory? With so many lives lost and disrupted, did anyone really win the Cold War?



# 1

## F I R S T Q U E S T I O N WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



### INTRODUCTION

We often think of history as destiny: It happened, so it must have been unavoidable. However, looking at the present makes us question this assumption. How many of the events in the news this week are the result of destiny, and how many are the result of choice? Natural disasters might be unavoidable, but political choices, the winning play in last night's game, and the latest social trend are clearly the results of human choice.

It's worth considering this element of choice when we study the Cold War. If this struggle that divided the world and upended lives for more than four decades was a matter of human choice, why didn't the people in 1945, when it began, make a better choice? If they could have, why didn't they prevent the Cold War from starting in the first place?

On the other hand, sometimes events spiral out of anyone's ability to control. If that's the case, what were the circumstances that made the Cold War happen? What wheels were in motion that were too powerful for humans to stop?

This is the question to consider here at the start of our study of the Cold War. As World War II was ending, there was chaos in many parts of the world. Could political leaders, military leaders and everyday people have made choices that prevented the Cold War standoff between East and West? Or was the Cold War unavoidable?

# 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



## COMMUNISM AND CAPITALISM

At its core, the Cold War was a conflict between two competing ideas about how the world should work. It was not a war about religion the way Hitler's hatred of Jews had fueled the Holocaust, or a war about raw materials and power like the Spanish-American War. It was not really even a war about territory like the Indian Wars of the late 1800s.

The Cold War was definitely a struggle for territory, but not because of the raw materials or markets for manufactured products that those territories offered. Instead, the quest for territory was a quest to control the destinies of the people who lived in those territories.

The Cold War was a long, often violent, struggle to bring the people of the world into either a free market economic system, or communism. These competing ideas were not new. In fact, the struggle between the supporters of these two worldviews had been going on for generations.

A free market system is what we have in the United States today. Sometimes we call this system **capitalism**. In a capitalist system, all of your choices are free, but everything costs money, or **capital**. For example, you are free to choose what to buy, where, and how much to spend. Of course, you have to pay for what you buy. Likewise, the store owner has a choice about what to produce and sell, and how much to charge. The owners also had a choice about who to hire to work for them, and how much they were willing to pay their workers. No one forced the workers to take the job, and they could quit if they wanted. It is their choice. We call capitalism a **free market economy** because everyone is free to make whatever choices he or she wants. Notice that in a free market economy the government is not involved in any way.

Capitalism may be simple because it requires no one to plan it, but it is not perfect. Some people will come up with brilliant ideas, or be particularly cunning, or hard work will pay off and they may become wealthy. And, some people who are lazy, or just have back luck, will end up poor. In a free market world, there are classes: the upper class who owns businesses and controls most of the wealth, and the middle and lower classes who provide the labor.

**Communism** is entirely different. In the 1800s, two German intellectuals, **Karl Marx** and **Friedrich Engels** saw the suffering of millions of people who toiled every day in factories owned by a few wealthy men who had so much money they couldn't possibly spend it in a lifetime. Marx and Engels believed they knew a better, more just way to make the world work. In 1848, they wrote their ideas down into a short book and published it with the name "**The Communist Manifesto**."



**Capitalism:** An economic system in which people are free to make choices about how to spend money, where to work, etc.



**Capital:** Money



**Free Market Economy:** Another term for capitalism.



Read the Communist Manifesto



**Communism:** An economic systems in which the government controls all production and distribution. In theory, everyone works and everyone shares.



**Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:** German intellectuals who promoted the ideas of socialism and communism and wrote the Communist Manifesto.



**The Communist Manifesto:** The book by Marx and Engels that explained communism.

## 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



In Marx and Engels's view, the wealth of the world should be shared by the workers who make that wealth possible. Farmers should share the profits of the food they grow. Factory workers should share in the profits of the goods they produce. There should be no owners, only workers. If their ideas were put into practice, they argued, there would be no poverty. Anyone who wanted a job and was willing to work, could have a job. The goods and food the people produced would be shared by all the people who worked. Marx, Engels, and their followers had a saying: **"From everyone according to his ability, to everyone according to his need."** In other words, everyone would do their best at whatever they were best at for the good of the nation, and everyone would share the nation's wealth.



**From everyone according to his ability, to everyone according to his need:** A slogan that explains how a

communist economy works. Everyone contributes and everyone shares in the profits.

### Primary Source: Document

Propaganda such as this poster from the Soviet Union was common in the communist world. Advertising is a characteristic of a free market economy. So, instead, the government used propaganda to encourage the people to work hard for the good of the country.



View a slideshow of Soviet propaganda

## 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



Communism sounded good on paper, but in the real world people with money – the upper classes – used their wealth to influence government officials and had no desire to see communist ideas implemented. Imagine how John D. Rockefeller or Andrew Carnegie must have felt about communism! Marx and Engels had followers in both Europe and the United States. Famously, the International Workers of the World, a union that wanted to organize a communist revolution in America, agitated for the working classes to rise up and overthrow the government, but naturally, they faced tremendous opposition. Dubbed the “Wobblies,” their most outspoken leader, Frank Little, was murdered in Butte, Montana when he went there to lead a strike of copper miners. In the United States fear of communism was so strong that in the years after the First World War, a Red Scare swept the nation and restrictions on immigration were passed – in part to keep out European immigrants who might harbor communist sentiments.

However, in Russia in 1917 things turned out differently. The king, or Czar of Russia, **Nicolas II** was unpopular. Russia’s millions of impoverished peasants hated him and the rest of the royal family. Moreover, in 1917 Russia was losing to Germany in the First World War. With their husbands, sons and fathers dying on the battlefield, Russians were ready for a change. **Vladimir Lenin** seized the opportunity. His followers, called **Bolsheviks**, organized a rebellion, and established the world’s first communist nation, changing their country’s name in 1922 to the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)**, or the **Soviet Union** for short.



**Nicolas II:** The last czar, or king of Russia. He and his family were murdered by the Bolsheviks.



**Vladimir Lenin:** Leader of the Bolsheviks and first communist leader of the Soviet Union.



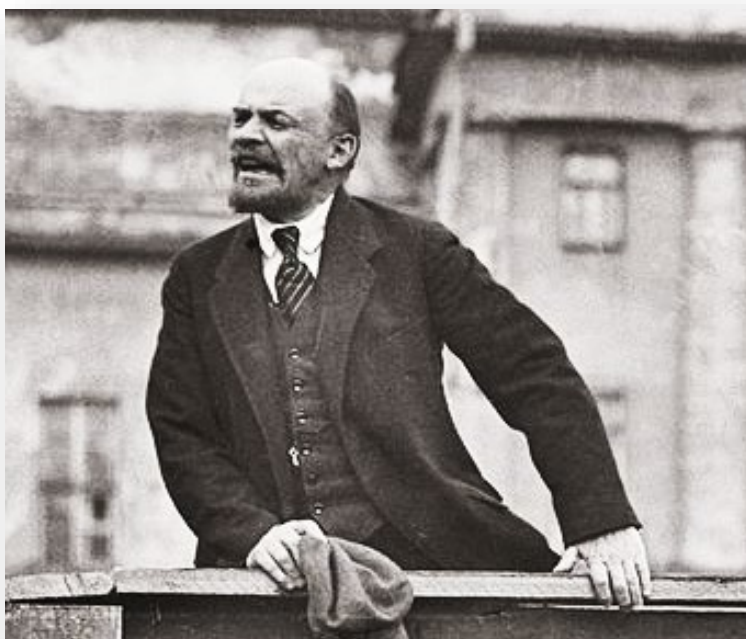
**Bolsheviks:** The communist revolutionaries in Russia.



**Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR):** The official name of the Soviet Union.

### Primary Source: Photograph

Vladimir Lenin led the successful revolution in Russia in 1917 and established the Soviet Union as the world’s first communist nation.



# 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



When Lenin died in 1924, one of his lieutenants took power. The new Soviet leader was **Josef Stalin**, a ruthless, murderous man who imprisoned and exterminated tens of thousands of his own citizens. In many ways, Stalin was just as terrible as Hitler, but during World War II the United States was at war with Germany and so was Stalin's Soviet Union, which made the United States and the Soviets allies. Being on the same side, however, did not make the Soviets or the Americans any more understanding of one another's ideologies.



**Josef Stalin:** One of Lenin's supporters and the second leader of the Soviet Union from 1922-1953.

Americans had seen what communism meant in the real world. Lenin, Stalin and the Soviet leaders had taken away the property of the wealthy. They had forced millions of people to give up their land, moved thousands of people to work on state-run farms and in government factories. They killed or jailed protesters. Communism had not proven to be the utopia Marx and Engels had described a century before and Americans had no desire to join in the communist experiment. Furthermore, they did not want anyone else in the world to have to endure Soviet style communism.

## PLANNING THE POST-WAR WORLD

President **Franklin D. Roosevelt** was first elected in 1932 at the height of the Great Depression. His New Deal programs had made him so popular that Americans reelected him again and again – four time in total.



**Franklin D. Roosevelt:** President of the United States during the Great Depression and most of WWII.

As World War II was drawing to a close, Roosevelt was in his fourth term and one of his most important tasks was to represent the United States at international conferences between the wartime allies. At first, the conferences were meant to help the allies coordinate their strategies for defeating the Axis Powers, but in 1945 it was clear that the Allies had the upper hand on the battlefield and the leaders met to plan for the future. After all the destruction of the war, what sort of world would they build out of the wreckage?

The **Yalta Conference**, held in February of 1945, in the Livadia Palace near the Soviet resort town of Yalta was one of these great meetings. In attendance were President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union's Josef Stalin. Each leader had his own agenda for the meeting. Roosevelt wanted Soviet support in the Pacific to finish the fight against Japan, especially since at the time it seemed like an invasion of Japan was likely. Roosevelt also wanted Stalin to commit to joining a new United Nations. Churchill pressed for open elections and democratic governments in Eastern and Central Europe. In contrast, Stalin demanded a Soviet sphere of political influence in Eastern and Central Europe that the Soviets believed would provide a buffer against future invasions. The Yalta Conference ended with general agreement between the leaders, but since the war was not over, they would need to convene again.



**Yalta Conference:** February 1945 meeting between President Roosevelt, Josef Stalin, and Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill to make agreements about the post-WWII world.

## 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?

DID ANYONE  
WIN THE  
C O L D  
W A R ?



Primary Source: Photograph

Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at the Yalta Conference.

The next meeting of the Allied leaders, however, featured a change of cast. On March 29, 1945, President Roosevelt passed away from a stroke. Roosevelt's death was met with shock and grief across the United States and around the world. The public had not known of his declining health. On May 8, less than a month after his death, the war in Europe ended. America's new President, Harry S. Truman, who turned 61 that day, dedicated Victory in Europe Day and its celebrations to Roosevelt's memory. Truman said that his only wish was "that Franklin D. Roosevelt had lived to witness this day." In the United Kingdom, voters ousted Prime Minister Winston Churchill and replaced him with Clement Attlee.

When Stalin met his new counterparts in **Potsdam**, Germany in July of 1945, the state of the war had changed significantly. Germany had surrendered. Hitler was dead. Although he did not announce it, Truman was about to use the nuclear bomb to end the war with Japan. The decisions the leaders made at the Potsdam Conference would have a lasting effect on the map of Europe, especially for defeated Germany.

The Soviet Union, it was agreed, would have control over Eastern Europe including Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Albania, and Bulgaria. Germany would be split into four zones, administered by the Soviet Union, United Kingdom, the United States and France. Germany's capital city, Berlin, was inside of the Soviet zone, but would itself also be divided into four zones. In the coming years, the western allies unified their zones to create West Germany and the city of West Berlin. The Soviet Union, however, established communist governments in each of the nations they had overrun and created East Germany and the city of East Berlin.



**Potsdam Conference:** A conferences in July and August 1945 between President Truman, Josef Stalin and Great Britain's Clement Attlee in which the leaders agreed to divide Germany into four zones of occupation.

# 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



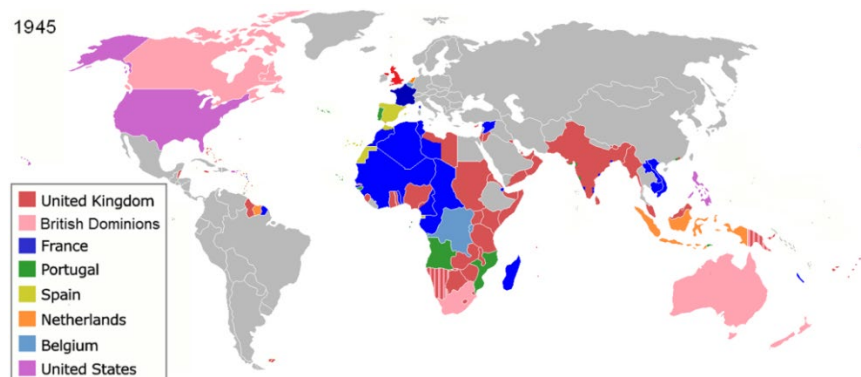
## DECOLONIZATION

As much as World War II reshaped the map of Europe, the rest of the world also saw major changes. Since the 1800s, vast regions of Africa and Asia had been ruled as colonies by the great powers of Europe. In the two decades after 1945, most of these colonies asked for, fought for, or were granted independence in a global process known as **decolonization**.

India, the second most populous nation on earth won its independence from the United Kingdom in 1947 under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. In Africa, dozens of nations emerged, as did the nations of the Middle East that are familiar to us today. It was there that Jews from Europe who survived the Holocaust established the new nation of **Israel** along the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea in the ancient lands of the Bible.

Most of the former colonies were terribly poor. For generations the Europeans had extracted their wealth – oil, minerals, diamonds, rubber – and given very little back in return. Europeans hadn't invested in the infrastructure, or in the people of their colonies. In the Congo, a colony of 13 million people, only 16 people had a college degree when it gained its independence from Belgium in 1965. Lacking an educated class, many of these newly independent nations faced an enormous challenge creating stable governments that could manage vast territories and rich natural resources.

Both the United States and Soviet Union were interested in the future of this newly independent **Third World**. For the Soviets, the former colonies were ripe territory to spread communism. Americans believed stopping the spread of communism was essential to the preservation of freedom. For both superpowers, access to the natural resources of the Third World would be a significant advantage in their race for technological superiority.



## THE UNITED NATIONS

An examination of the decades between the two world wars showed a lack of commitment to the spirit of internationalism. Without the participation of the United States, the old League of Nations proved too weak to stop



**Decolonization:** The process by which former colonies in the Third World gained independence from European powers in the first few decades after WWII.



**Israel:** Nation created in the Middle East after WWII largely by Jews who escaped the Holocaust. Israel and the United States are strong allies, but Israel has a history of violent confrontation with its Arab neighbors.



**Third World:** The traditionally poorer regions of the world including Central and South America, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

### Secondary Source: Map

Most of the former colonies were located in Africa and South and Southeast Asia. Together with the Middle East as well as Central and South America, these regions make up the Third World.

# 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



Germany and Japan's expansionist dreams. Perhaps a stronger international body, as envisioned by Woodrow Wilson, was necessary to keep the great powers from tearing the world apart.

Despite the ideological animosity between the Soviet Union and the western allies, a new spirit of globalism was born out of World War II. It was based, in part, on the widespread recognition of the failures of isolationism. The incarnation of this global spirit came to life with the establishment of the **United Nations (UN)** in 1945 with its headquarters in New York City.

Delegates from around the world convened in San Francisco in 1945 to write a charter. Representing the United States, Franklin Roosevelt's widow Eleanor addressed the delegates. Despite considerable enmity and conflicts of interest among the attending nations, the charter for the new international body was ultimately ratified by unanimous consent.

The UN charter called for the establishment of a **Security Council**, which serves as the executive branch of the United Nations. The Security Council must authorize any actions, such as economic sanctions, the use of force, or the deployment of peacekeeping troops.

Each of the Great Powers — the five victorious nations in World War II: the United States, Great Britain, France, China, and the Soviet Union (now Russia) holds a permanent seat on the Security Council. Ten more seats are held by other nations elected to two-year terms by the General Assembly. The five permanent members hold the power of **veto**. No action can go forth if any one of the five objects. As the Cold War crystallized, the countervailing veto powers of the United States and the Soviet Union often served to inhibit the Security Council from taking any forceful or meaningful action in times of crisis.

The main body of the United Nations is the **General Assembly**. Every member nation holds a seat in the General Assembly, which is often described as a town meeting for the world. The General Assembly has standing committees to address ongoing issues such as financial, social, cultural, legal and humanitarian concerns. The General Assembly passes resolutions and has the power to make recommendations to the Security Council, but has no power to require action.

Overseeing the operations of the United Nations is a **Secretary General** who is appointed by the Security Council. The United Nations charter did not describe the role of the Secretary General in detail, but the people who have held the position have used it to promote peace by helping to mediate conflicts and to promote human rights. By tradition, the Secretary General is never from one of the five permanent members. The Secretary Generals over the past six decades have hailed from such nations as Norway, Peru, South Korea, Thailand, Egypt, Ghana and Spain.



**United Nations (UN):** An organization in which the nations of the world meet to cooperate and solve disputes. The headquarters is in New York City.



**Security Council:** The small group of nations that has the authority to set policy for the United Nations. It includes five permanent members: the US, UK, France, Russia and China.



**Veto:** The right to reject a law. In the case of the United Nations, each of the five permanent members of the Security Council can veto a measure.



**General Assembly:** The body of the representatives of every nation that is a member of the United Nations. This group can pass resolutions to express opinion but does not have the authority to set policy.



**Secretary General:** The administrator of the United Nations. The Secretary General traditionally plays a peace-keeping role in the world.

## 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



In addition to the Security Council and General Assembly, the United Nations operates an International Court of Justice and works to help refugees, women and children, and to end disease and hunger through programs such as UNICEF and the World Health Organization.

One of Eleanor Roosevelt's personal missions was to convince the United Nations to adopt an international Declaration of Human Rights. While it has certainly been violated time and time again, the declaration she helped write serves as a noble goal for which nations can aspire, and also as a benchmark to measure governments that fall short.

Unlike its failed predecessor the League of Nations, the United Nations can point to many solid accomplishments including sending peacekeepers to war-stricken areas, raising literacy and health rates in the Third World, and authorizing the use of force against aggressor nations.

In 1945 as well as today, the United Nations gives us cause to believe that nations can get along together. Although it is far from perfect, in a world with conflicting histories, agendas, and political posturing, the United Nations continues to offer a way for nations to peacefully coexist and better all of humankind.



Primary Source: Photograph

Eleanor Roosevelt holding a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, her crowning achievement as a humanitarian.



Read the Universal Declaration  
of Human Rights

### THE IRON CURTAIN

"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. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and

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the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow.” – Winston Churchill, March 5, 1946

The **Iron Curtain** as described by Churchill at Westminster College was both a physical and mental boundary between the East and the West – between freedom and communism. The physical manifestation of the boundary, the border fences and armed guards, and especially the Berlin Wall, were potent symbols of the deep divide between the two great powers and their allies during the Cold War.

The exact location of the Iron Curtain was a product of World War II. As Nazi Germany fell, and Hitler’s armies retreated from territory they had conquered, the Allies advanced, eventually converging in Germany itself. The British and Americans moved across France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy, they took over the job of governing those nations. It was not feasible, however, to have troops who were needed on the front to continue the work of policing, so the Allies made an effort to return control to the people. This worked well in places that had been conquered by Germany and welcomed the Allies as liberators.

Germany was different. There was no question that the Allies were going to stay in Germany and rebuild it themselves. As Truman, Stalin and Attlee had planned at Potsdam, the division of Germany was a way to share the work of this tremendous undertaking.



**Iron Curtain:** The division between Eastern and Western Europe marking the separation between the communist and free worlds.



**Primary Source: Photograph**

In most of Europe, the border between East and West was marked by fences and border guards.

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For Stalin, the division of Germany was an opportunity. The Soviet Army in the portion of Germany under his control – East Germany – actively supported Germany's small communist party. Since the days of Marx and Engels, there had been communists in Germany, but during Hitler's reign they were persecuted by the Nazis. Now with the communist Soviet Union in charge, the German communists were elevated and took control of government.

And so it went across all of Europe. In the lands that the Soviets had retaken from Germany during the closing year of the war in the East – Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Albania, Hungary, Bulgaria and East Germany – communists were supported and took power. In the East, the new Soviet-supported governments and the occupying Soviet Army remade the economies in the Soviet model: state-run industries, farms, and no private ownership.

Meanwhile the West returned to the free market economy it had before the war. And, with the exception of Spain, Portugal and Greece which were dictatorships until the 1970s, the people of the West elected their leaders.

The Iron Curtain took physical shape in the form of border defenses between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe. These were some of the most heavily militarized areas in the world, particularly the so-called "inner German border" between East and West Germany. The inner German border was marked in rural areas by double fences made of steel mesh with sharp edges, while near urban areas high concrete barriers were built. While in the first decade after the end of the Second World War people travelled freely between the East and West, by the end of the 1950s it was nearly impossible, and after the **Berlin Wall** was erected in 1961, citizens of the communist nations of the East were shot and killed by their own border guards for trying to escape.



**Berlin Wall:** A wall built by the East German government in 1961 to prevent people from escaping to West Berlin. It became a symbol of the division between the free and communist worlds.

### Primary Source: Photograph

The Berlin Wall under construction in 1961. Eventually there would be two walls with a wide gap in between to make escape more difficult.



Watch a video tour of the Berlin Wall and Inner German Border

## 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



The division between the communist nations and those supported by the United States during the Cold War extended into Asia as well, but the term "Iron Curtain" was only used for the fortified borders in Europe. The border between North Korea and South Korea remains to this day comparable to the former inner German border, particularly in its degree of militarization.

While the Iron Curtain was an actual border of concrete and steel, patrolled by armies, it was even more so a boundary in the minds of people. Like a curtain that divides two halves of a room or separates the inside from the out, the Iron Curtain separated neighbors into two distinct worlds, at odds and distrustful.

### CONCLUSION

Clearly, there were powerful forces at work in 1945. The Soviets and Western Allies had very different ideas about what the post-war world should look like. Although the establishment of the United Nations is evidence that the world wanted an alternative to conflict, the young United Nations did not prevent the Cold War.

Perhaps, the start of the Cold War was a matter of leadership. If Stalin hadn't been in power in the Soviet Union, would the communist world have turned so resolutely away from cooperation with the West? If Truman hadn't used the atomic bomb to end World War II, would the Soviets have felt less threatened?

Or maybe it was a broader sense of distrust, brought about by years of war. Perhaps people just weren't ready to put their "us vs. them" mindset to rest.

Then again, the Cold War was a product of human action, so couldn't we have made the choice that would have prevented it? What do you think? Was the Cold War unavoidable?

# 1 WAS THE COLD WAR UNAVOIDABLE?



## SUMMARY

The Cold War was a 50-year struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. The two superpowers and their allies were trying to spread their ideas about the best way to run nations. The Soviet Union was the first communist nation, and wanted to spread communism. The United States believed communism was wrong, and wanted to promote a free market system.

Communism, which is now almost entirely gone in the world, is a system in which everyone works, and everyone shares in the wealth of the nation. The problem is that choice is taken out of the system, and therefore, incentive is also lost. People do not work hard, and the government becomes a dictatorship.

Before World War II ended, the leaders of the United States, United Kingdom and Soviet Union met multiple times to plan what the world would look like after the fighting ended.

After World War II, most of the nations in Africa and Asia that had been European colonies became independent. Many of these nations were poor, and both the United States and Soviet Union tried to win them as allies during the Cold War. Sometimes, this led to violence.

After World War I, Woodrow Wilson had tried to create a League of Nations to help prevent future war. After World War II, the United Nations was created. This time, the United States did join, and the UN has played an important role in the world as a peacekeeper and a forum for debate.

When Germany fell and the war ended in Europe, the Americans, French, British and Soviets divided up Europe into East and West. In the lands in the East that the Soviet armies had occupied, communist governments were supported. In the West, democratic governments were encouraged. This led to a division of the continent that would last throughout the Cold War. Germany itself was divided into East and West, as was Berlin, its capital city.



## PEOPLE AND GROUPS

**Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:** German intellectuals who promoted the ideas of socialism and communism and wrote the Communist Manifesto.

**Nicolas II:** The last czar, or king of Russia. He and his family were murdered by the Bolsheviks.

**Vladimir Lenin:** Leader of the Bolsheviks and first communist leader of the Soviet Union.

**Bolsheviks:** The communist revolutionaries in Russia.

**Josef Stalin:** One of Lenin's supporters and the second leader of the Soviet Union from 1922-1953.

**Franklin D. Roosevelt:** President of the United States during the Great Depression and most of WWII.

**United Nations (UN):** An organization in which the nations of the world meet to cooperate and solve disputes. The headquarters is in New York City.

**Security Council:** The small group of nations that has the authority to set policy for the United Nations. It includes five permanent members: the US, UK, France, Russia and China.

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**Secretary General:** The administrator of the United Nations. The Secretary General traditionally plays a peace-keeping role in the world.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Capitalism:** An economic system in which people are free to make choices about how to spend money, where to work, etc.

**Capital:** Money

**Free Market Economy:** Another term for capitalism.

**Communism:** An economic systems in which the government controls all production and distribution. In theory, everyone works and everyone shares.

**From everyone according to his ability, to everyone according to his need:** A slogan that explains how a communist economy works. Everyone contributes and everyone shares in the profits.

**Veto:** The right to reject a law. In the case of the United Nations, each of the five permanent members of the Security Council can veto a measure.



## TEXTS

**The Communist Manifesto:** The book by Marx and Engels that explained communism.



## EVENTS

**Yalta Conference:** February 1945 meeting between President Roosevelt, Josef Stalin, and Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill to make agreements about the post-WWII world.

**Potsdam Conference:** A conferences in July and August 1945 between President Truman, Josef Stalin and Great Britain's Clement Attlee in which the leaders agreed to divide Germany into four zones of occupation.

**Decolonization:** The process by which former colonies in the Third World gained independence from European powers in the first few decades after WWII.



## LOCATIONS

**Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR):** The official name of the Soviet Union.

**Israel:** Nation created in the Middle East after WWII largely by Jews who escaped the Holocaust. Israel and the United States are strong allies, but Israel has a history of violent confrontation with its Arab neighbors.

**Third World:** The traditionally poorer regions of the world including Central and South America, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

**Iron Curtain:** The division between Eastern and Western Europe marking the separation between the communist and free worlds.

**Berlin Wall:** A wall built by the East German government in 1961 to prevent people from escaping to West Berlin. It became a symbol of the division between the free and communist worlds.

# 2

## S E C O N D Q U E S T I O N WAS CONTAINMENT THE RIGHT WAY TO DEAL WITH THE SPREAD OF COMMUNISM?



### INTRODUCTION

Once it became clear that Stalin was intent on pushing communist ideology as far as his armies could carry it, the leaders in the West had the difficult task of determining what to do. It seemed unthinkable to let Stalin have his way. Too many lives had been lost protecting freedom and democracy during the epic struggle of World War II to simply walk away and let the Soviets erase those victories. Nevertheless, the world was weary of war, so short of continuing the struggle on the battlefield, how else could the West stand up to communist expansion?

Containment, the solution the United States settled on, prevented open war – it made the Cold War cold instead of hot – but was containment the best choice?

## CONTAINMENT AND THE MARSHALL PLAN

When the Soviet Red Army began the long, slow process of pushing back the German war machine, it absorbed the nearby **Baltic States** of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania along the Baltic Sea into the Soviet Union. As they went, communist forces dominated the governments of Romania and Bulgaria. By the fall of 1945, it was clear that the Soviet-backed communists had complete control of Poland, violating the Yalta promise of free and unfettered elections there. It was only a matter of time before Hungary and Czechoslovakia fell into the Soviet orbit.

When Josef Stalin ordered the creation of a communist puppet regime in the Soviet sector of occupied Germany, the West began to panic. How many dominoes would fall? American diplomats saw the people of a continent ravaged by war looking for strong leadership and aid of any sort. If communists provided the help they desperately needed, they may embrace Stalin and communism as their saving grace. The continent was ripe for revolution. Would the Soviets get all of Germany? What about Italy and France? President Truman was determined to reverse the trend.

Since the American people were weary from war and had no desire to send troops into Eastern Europe to roll back the gains of Stalin's Red Army, fighting the Soviet Union would have been impossible. Instead, **George Kennan** a mid-level diplomat in the State Department proposed a new approach: the policy of **containment**.

In places where communism threatened to expand, American aid would be used to prevent a takeover. By vigorously supporting freely elected governments, the United States might be able to contain communism within its current borders. This policy became known as the **Truman Doctrine** as the President outlined his plans to Congress.

Greece and Turkey were the first nations spiraling into crisis that had not been directly occupied by the Soviet Army. Both countries were on the verge of being taken over by Soviet-backed guerrilla movements. Truman decided to draw a line in the sand. In March 1947, he asked Congress to appropriate \$400 million to send to these two nations in the form of military and economic assistance. Within two years the help the Americans provided had stabilized the Greek and Turkish economies and helped reestablish law and order. The communist threat passed as people began to view democracy and the free market system promoted by the United States as the road to peace and prosperity.

Emergency aid to Turkey and Greece worked to stabilize those two nations, but all of Europe was devastated. The war had ruined crop fields and destroyed infrastructure. The people of the entire continent were in dire need. On June 5, 1947, Secretary of State **George Marshall** announced the European Recovery Program. To avoid antagonizing the Soviet Union,



**Baltic States:** Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. They were independent nations along the Baltic Sea before WWII. After the war they were absorbed into the Soviet Union. They were the first three republics to declare independence in 1991.



**George Kennan:** The State Department official who developed the policy of containment.



**Containment:** The policy of preventing the spread of communist but not trying to eliminate it where it already existed.



**Truman Doctrine:** President Truman's plan to implement containment and use American money to support countries that were in danger of falling under communist domination.



**George Marshall:** American Secretary of State who proposed using American money to rebuild Europe. He believed that if countries had a strong economy they would be less likely to fall to communism.

Marshall announced that the purpose of sending aid to Western Europe was completely humanitarian, and even offered aid to the communist states in the East, but Stalin refused. He knew that American money could influence the hearts and minds of the people in his sphere of influence the same way it had in Greece and Turkey. In the end, congress approved Truman's request of \$17 billion over four years to be sent to Great Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium.



### Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

Congress races to pass funding to save Western Europe from the chaos spread by communism in a cartoon arguing in favor of the Marshall Plan.



Listen to Marshall's address at Harvard University proposing the plan to rebuild Europe

The **Marshall Plan** created an economic miracle in Western Europe. By the target date of the program four years later, Western European industries were producing twice as much as they had before war broke out. The aid also produced record levels of trade with American firms, fueling a postwar economic boom in the United States. Some Americans grumbled about the costs, but peace and freedom in Western Europe proved to be a bargain.

Lastly, and much to Truman's delight, none of the nations of Western Europe that received aid under the Marshall Plan ever faced a serious threat of communist takeover. On the contrary, the nations of Western Europe were, and continue to be America's strongest allies.

### THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

**Berlin**, Germany's wartime capital, was the prickliest of all issues that separated the United States and Soviet Union during the late 1940s and became a symbol of the entire Cold War. The city was divided into four Zones of Occupation like the rest of Germany. However, the entire city lay within the Soviet zone of occupation miles from the rest of West Germany. Once the nation of East Germany was established, the allied sections of the



**Marshall Plan:** The plan to use American money to rebuild Europe. It was intended to prevent the spread of communism by demonstrating that a free market system would be the path to prosperity.



**Berlin:** Capital city of Germany. After WWII it was divided. West Berlin was a small enclave of freedom surrounded by Soviet-dominated East Germany. The city was the site of many standoffs and physical manifestations of the Cold War.

capital known as West Berlin became an island of democracy and capitalism behind the Iron Curtain.

Stalin viewed West Berlin as an embarrassment. Thousands of East Germans were moving to West Berlin, and then on to West Germany to escape the establishment of a communist regime. Stalin wanted the Allies out of the city.

In June 1948, he decided to seal all land routes going into West Berlin. Since the borders of West Berlin had been open since the end of the war, most of what the people of the city consumed, especially food and fuel, was produced in the surrounding East German countryside. Stalin gambled that the Western powers were tired, and that their populations were not willing to risk another war to protect the city. Faced with starvation, he calculated the Americans would give up and leave the city rather than let people starve. Alternatively, the people of West Berlin would throw the Americans out in order to end the blockade. Either way, a withdrawal by the United States would eliminate the democratic enclave in the Soviet zone.

Truman was faced with a tough choice. Relinquishing West Berlin to the Soviets would seriously undermine the new doctrine of containment. Any negotiated settlement would suggest that the Soviet Union could engineer a crisis at any time to exact concessions. If Berlin were compromised, the whole of West Germany might question the American commitment to German democracy. To Harry Truman, there was no question. "We are going to stay, period," he declared. Together, with Britain, the United States began moving massive amounts of food and supplies into West Berlin by air.



**Primary Source: Photograph**

An American plane lands in Berlin during the airlift as young Berliners look on.

At first Stalin was convinced the **airlift** would fail and there was every reason to believe it would. After 1945, the allies had greatly reduced the number of heavy aircraft and pilots in their air forces. It was altogether possible that there might just not be the planes and pilots necessary to deliver enough food and fuel to keep the people of West Berlin from starving and freezing during the coming winter. There was also a problem of where to land. There were only three airports in West Berlin.

In a testament to logistical planning and resourcefulness, General **William Turner** organized around-the-clock flights. By the time the airlift ended, the allies were delivering 4,000 tons of supplies every day. At the height of the airlift, a plane was landing in West Berlin every minute.

With the airlift, Truman turned the tables on Stalin. Now the choice between war and peace was in Stalin's hands. Instead of the Americans starting a war to break the land blockade, Stalin would have to start a war to end the airlift by shooting down the allied planes, and he refused to give that order. Over the next eleven months, Stalin began to look bad in the eyes of the world. He was clearly willing to use innocent civilians as pawns to quench his expansionist thirst.

After more than a year, in May 1949, the Soviets ended the blockade. The United States and Britain had flown over 250,000 supply missions and the airlift had been a success. The policy of containment was intact, and even more importantly, the Americans and British had demonstrated to the people of West Berlin, West Germany, and the world that they would stand up to the Soviet Union in the defense of freedom.

### NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT

With his choice to blockade Berlin, Stalin miscalculated the strength of western unity. To cement the cooperation that the western allies had shown during the war and immediate postwar years, the Western allies formed the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** in April 1949. The pact operated on the basis of **collective security**. If any one of the member states were attacked, all would retaliate together. The original NATO members were Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Iceland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, and the United States. Later Greece and Turkey were added. These two nations were traditional enemies, and Turkey is a predominantly Muslim nation, but they straddle the seaways that connect the Black and Mediterranean Seas. With Greece, Turkey, Denmark, Norway and Iceland all members of NATO, the West could keep an eye on the Soviet Navy as it came and went from the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas.

NATO was the sort of permanent alliance George Washington had warned against in his Farewell Address in 1796. By helping to found NATO, the United States formally shed its isolationist past and thrust itself forward as the indispensable superpower in the struggle for freedom.



**Berlin Airlift:** Operation mounted by the United States and Great Britain to supply West Berlin with supplies by air when Stalin cut off the city's land access in 1948-1949. The Airlift was a success despite tremendous obstacles and the city was saved from communist takeover.



**William Turner:** American air force general who organized the Berlin Airlift.



**NATO:** Alliance that includes the United States, Canada, and most of the nations of Western Europe as well as Greece and Turkey. It was created to counter the threat of the Soviet Union.



**Collective Security:** An agreement between nations in which they agree to treat an attack on any member of the agreement as an attack on all members.

In 1955 West Germany joined NATO, prompting the Soviet Union and the communist nations of the Eastern Bloc to form their own mutual defense alliance. Because it was signed in the Polish city of Warsaw, the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance was commonly known as the **Warsaw Pact**. Like the members of NATO, the Warsaw Pact nations coordinated their militaries, integrated communications systems, shared equipment and technologies, used each other's military facilities, and practiced coordinated attacks. In time, NATO and the Warsaw Pact became synonymous with the free West and the communist East, even though there were nations on both sides of the Iron Curtain that refused to join either alliance.

When the Cold War ended in 1991, the Warsaw Pact dissolved. NATO, on the other hand, still exists today. Its membership has greatly expanded and now includes some of the former Warsaw Pact nations, much to the distress of current Russian leaders.

### CONTAINMENT IN ASIA

The crisis in Berlin may have been the first test of Truman's commitment to the policy of containment, but there was never any fighting involved in the Berlin Airlift. In Asia, however, a long and bloody land war proved to be a great test of Truman's resolve.

Unlike in Europe, containment had not gone well in Asia. First, and most importantly, China had fallen into communist hands. This was not entirely surprising. The transformation of China into a communist nation had begun long before the outbreak of the Cold War. In fact, a civil war had been raging in China since the early 1900s.

In 1911, modernized Chinese military units began uprisings against the Qing family's imperial rule. Over the next year, various provinces declared independence from the government and on January 1, 1912, delegates from the independent provinces elected **Sun Yat-sen** as the first provisional president of the Republic of China. The last emperor of China, Puyi, was forced to abdicate a month later on February 12. Although Sun was inaugurated in Nanjing as the first provisional president, he was unable to maintain stability since leaders in many provinces also wanted control. Sun did not command an army of his own and over the next decade, conflict rather than peace was common throughout China.

In the 1920s, Sun Yat-sen established a base in southern China and set out to unite the fragmented nation. With assistance from the Soviet Union, he entered into an alliance with the fledgling Communist Party of China. After Sun's death from cancer in 1925, one of his protégés, **Chiang Kai-shek**, seized control of the Kuomintang, Sun's political party, and succeeded in bringing most of South and Central China under its rule in a military campaign known as the Northern Expedition. In 1927, Chiang turned on the communists who had supported him in an effort to secure his power. In 1934, driven from



**Warsaw Pact:** The collective security agreement that was the answer to NATO. It included the Soviet Union and most of Eastern Europe.



**Sun Yat-sen:** Leader of the movement to overthrow the last of the Chinese emperors. He is often considered the "Father of China."



**Chiang Kai-shek:** Sun Yat-sen's successor and leader of the nationalist, non-communist Chinese forces. He lost to Mao and fled to Taiwan.



**Long March:** Heroic march of the Chinese communists to escape destruction.

their mountain bases, the communist forces embarked on the **Long March** across China's most desolate terrain to the northwest, where they established a guerrilla base at Yan'an in Shaanxi Province. During the Long March, the communists reorganized under a new leader, **Mao Zedong**.

Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang and Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party put their conflict on hold between 1937 and 1945 when they both turned their attention to repelling the invading Japanese. Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, the war between the nationalists and communists resumed.

After three years of exhausting military campaigns, Chiang Kai-shek and approximately two million Nationalist Chinese retreated from mainland China to the island of Formosa on October 1, 1949. Mao Zedong proclaimed the **People's Republic of China** with its capital in Beijing. In December 1949, Chiang proclaimed Taipei, Taiwan, the temporary capital of the **Republic of China**. To this day, both the communist government in Beijing and the nationalist government in Taipei claim to be the legitimate rulers of all of China, but in reality, mainland China and the island nation of **Taiwan** operate as fully independent countries.



**Mao Zedong:** Leader of the Chinese communists. He became the first leader of mainland China after the communist takeover.



**People's Republic of China (PRC):** The official name of communist mainland China.



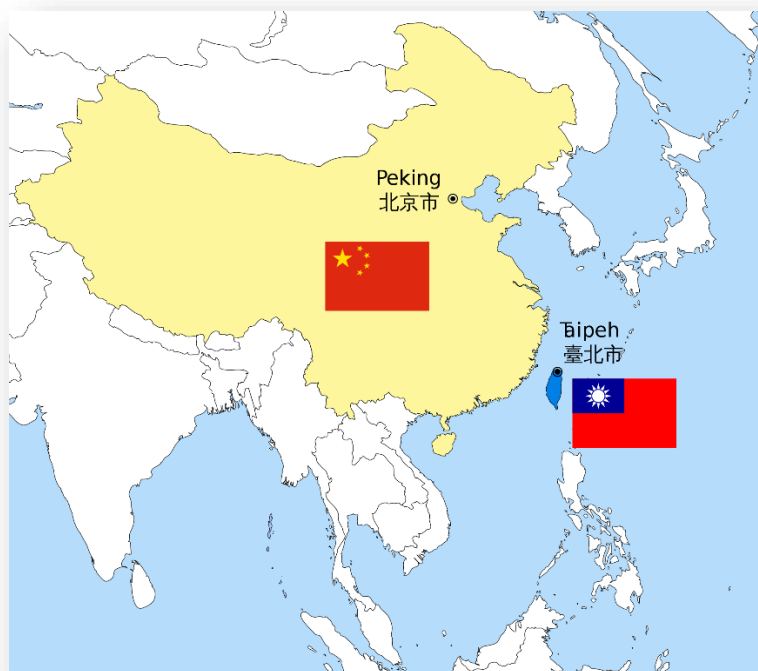
**Republic of China (ROC):** The official name of non-communist Taiwan.



**Taiwan:** The small island nation off the southern coast of China founded by Chiang Kai-shek and his followers.

### Secondary Source: Map

The two Chinas. This map shows mainland China and Taiwan as well as the two capital cities.



Although the United States had not been directly involved in the Chinese Civil War, President Truman was widely criticized for failing to stop the march of Mao's army. China, the most populous country on the planet had become the world's second communist nation on Truman's watch. How could he let this happen and what did it mean for the rest of Asia?

## THE KOREAN WAR

When the Soviet Union entered the Second World War against Japan, they sent troops into Japanese-occupied Korea. American troops established a presence in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula and when the Japanese surrendered, Korea split into a Soviet northern zone, and an American southern zone, divided at the **38<sup>th</sup> Parallel**. Korea began to resemble divided Germany.

Upon the recommendation of the United Nations, elections were scheduled to choose leaders who would reunify Korea, but fearing that the Americans would manipulate the outcome, the North's communist leaders refused to participate. The election went forward in the South and **Syngman Rhee** became president, but the Soviets supported **Kim Il-Sung** as leader of the North. When the United States and the Soviet Union withdrew their forces from the peninsula in 1948 and 1949, trouble began.

Kim Il-Sung had no desire to remain leader of only the northern half of Korea. On June 25, 1950, his armed forces crossed the 38th Parallel and marched into the South. It took only two days for President Truman to commit the United States military to the defense of South Korea. Truman hoped to build a broad coalition by enlisting support from the United Nations.

Of course, the Soviet Union could veto any proposed action by the Security Council, but this time the Americans were in luck. The Soviets were boycotting the Security Council for refusing to admit communist China into the United Nations. As a result, the Council voted unanimously to "repel the armed attack" of North Korea. Many countries sent troops to defend the South but the vast majority of the soldiers were from the United States and South Korea.

The commander of the United Nations forces was **Douglas MacArthur**, the hero of World War II in the Pacific and commander of the American occupation of Japan. He had an uphill battle to fight, as the North had overrun the entire peninsula with the exception of a small area around the city of Pusan in the far south.

MacArthur ordered a daring amphibious assault at Inchon on the western side of the peninsula. It was one of the most brilliant military calculations of his illustrious career. Caught by surprise, the communist-backed northern forces reeled in retreat. American troops from Inchon and Pusan quickly pushed the North Koreans to the 38th Parallel and then beyond. MacArthur, Truman and the Americans saw an opportunity to create a united democratic Korea and pushed Kim's army up to the Yalu River, the border between Korea and China.

Truman relished the idea of reuniting Korea, but his hopes were dashed on November 27, when over 400,000 Chinese soldiers flooded across the Yalu River. Surprising Truman and MacArthur who had both calculated that the



**38<sup>th</sup> Parallel:** The line of latitude that divided North and South Korea before the Korean War. The current boundary still roughly follows the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel.



**Syngman Rhee:** First leader of South Korea. He ruled as a dictator but was not communist.



**Kim Il-Sung:** First leader of communist North Korea.



**Douglas MacArthur:** American hero of WWII in the Pacific. He had led the occupation of Japan and was commander in the Korean War until he was relieved by President Truman for insubordination.

Chinese would want to stay out of the fight, Chairman Mao Zedong had decided to come to the aid of his communist neighbor.

American troops were once again forced south of the 38th Parallel. General MacArthur viewed the seesawing war as a great struggle against the evil forces of communism. He applied the lessons he learned fighting the Japanese in World War II, and advocated for nothing less than total victory. He proposed escalating the war by bombing China, even suggesting that nuclear weapons should be considered as an option. In MacArthur's mind, not winning was the same as losing.

Truman disagreed. He feared escalation of the conflict could lead to another world war, especially if by attacking China the Americans provoked the Soviet Union. Truman could imagine the world slipping into another great war in the same way the European powers had tumbled into World War One in 1914. Actually, China was also exercising restraint. They could have attacked American bases in Japan that were used to support the war in Korea, but like Truman, had decided to fight the war only in Korea.

Disgruntled, MacArthur took his case directly to the American people by openly criticizing Truman's approach. The Constitution firmly gives the power of commander-in-chief of the military to a civilian elected president. Truman feared that if he gave in to MacArthur it might appear that the president was taking orders from the military, rather than the other way around, so on April 6, 1951, Truman ordered that MacArthur be replaced as commander in Korea and Japan.



**Primary Source: Photograph**

President Truman and Douglas MacArthur at a meeting they held in Hawaii.



Read documents related to  
The firing of MacArthur

Fallout from Truman's decision was immediate. Some Republicans in Congress called for him to be impeached. MacArthur was a revered war hero. When he flew home to the United States, he was greeted with a parade that was attended by 500,000 people. In contrast, Truman's popularity dropped to 22%, the lowest ever for any president in the era of modern opinion polling. Meanwhile, MacArthur was invited to address a joint session of Congress, the only military commander ever to do so.

In his speech MacArthur declared, "Efforts have been made to distort my position. It has been said in effect that I was a warmonger. Nothing could be further from the truth. I know war as few other men now living know it, and nothing to me is more revolting... But once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision. In war there can be no substitute for victory." In the end, though, Truman was president, and his judgment was that the best resolution of the war in Korea was not total victory against all the forces of communism, but a permanently divided Korean peninsula.

The war itself had evolved into a **stalemate**, with the front line corresponding more or less to the 38th Parallel where the division of the peninsula had been three years before. Ceasefire negotiations dragged on for two more years, beyond Truman's presidency. Finally, under the direction of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Truman's successor, an **armistice** was signed at Panmunjom on July 27, 1953. North Korea remained a communist dictatorship under the leadership of Kim Il-sung, and South Korea remained under the control of Syngman Rhee who ruled for 12 years as a dictator, but, in the opinion of the United States, at least not a communist dictator.

Over 5 million people died before the war ended and more than half of the victims were civilians. In all, 37,000 Americans died in the conflict. Today, Korea remains divided by a three-mile wide **demilitarized zone (DMZ)** guarded on both sides by vigilant armies. Kim Il-sung was succeeded by his son **Kim Jong-il** and then by his grandson **Kim Jong-un**. Supported today only by China, North Korea is one of the world's poorest and most isolated countries.

South Korea eventually embraced democracy, modernized its economy, and is a major trading partner of the United States. Korean products such as Samsung electronics and Hyundai automobiles are commonplace in America, and American products and soldiers are familiar sights in South Korea. In 2017, there were still 37,500 American military personnel stationed in South Korea standing guard against another invasion from the North.



**Stalemate:** A situation in war in which neither side is able to win.



**Armistice:** An agreement to stop fighting. Rather than creating peace, it serves as a permanent suspension of war.



**Demilitarized Zone (DMZ):** The three-mile wide strip of land that marks the boundary between North and South Korea.



**Kim Jong-il:** Second leader of North Korea from 1994-2011



**Kim Jong-un:** Third leader of North Korea from 2011 to the present.

## VIETNAM

In the 1800s and early 1900s, powerful nations gobbled up weaker ones in the development of vast empires. For example, the United States took Hawaii and the Philippines. Great Britain ruled over India. And all the major powers of Europe had divided up Africa. The lands of Southeast Asia that are today's nations of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia comprised the French colony of **Indochina**.

After World War One, an independence movement formed in Vietnam led by **Ho Chi Minh**. Ho was educated in the West, where he became a disciple of Marxist thought. Ho resented and resisted the French, and when the Japanese invaded Vietnam during World War II and displaced the French, Ho fought them as well. His liberation movement, known as the **Viet Minh**, used guerrilla warfare and successfully held many key cities by 1945. When the Japanese surrendered, Ho gave a victory speech in Hanoi. Paraphrasing Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, Ho proclaimed a new independent nation of Vietnam.

France was determined to reclaim all its territories after World War II. The United States now faced an interesting dilemma. American tradition dictated sympathy for revolutionaries rather than archaic colonial powers. The American army had even helped Ho during World War II in his fight against Japan. However, given Truman's new strategy of containment, supporting the Marxist Viet Minh was unthinkable.

## DOMINO THEORY

Vietnam was a small nation compared to China, Korea or Japan, and most Americans had never heard of it and would have been at a loss to find it on a map. However, for military strategists Vietnam was hugely important.

American diplomats subscribed to the **Domino Theory**. Like a line of dominos in which a first falling domino knocks down the next, which topples the next, and so on, a communist victory in Vietnam might lead to communist victories in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Such a scenario was unthinkable to the makers of American foreign policy.

President Truman decided to support France in its efforts to reclaim Indochina by providing money and military advisers. The United States financial commitment amounted to nearly one billion dollars per year. For Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese, America's support of the French imperialists was unimaginable. How could a nation whose founding ideals they so admired help the colonizers?

The French, for their part, found Ho Chi Minh a formidable adversary. Between 1945 and 1954, a fierce war raged. Slowly but surely, the Viet Minh wore down the French will to fight. In the end, a large regiment of French troops was surrounded by the Vietnamese under the leadership of



**Indochina:** The French colony in Southeast Asia including Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.



**Ho Chi Minh:** Communist leader of North Vietnam. His primary goal was Vietnamese independence.



**Viet Minh:** The guerrilla fighters loyal to Ho Chi Minh.



**Domino Theory:** American belief that if one nation fell to communism its neighbors would soon follow.



**Vo Nguyen Giap:** General in charge of the North Vietnamese Army. He defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu.



**Dien Bien Phu:** Final battle in 1954 between the Vietnamese forces under Ho Chi Min and the French. The French lost and they abandoned Indochina as a colony.

communist general **Vo Nguyen Giap** at **Dien Bien Phu**. After a long siege, the French surrendered. This final catastrophe convinced the French to abandon their hopes of reclaiming their lost colony.

### PICKING SIDES

The French troops withdrew, leaving Ho Chi Minh in control of the northern half of the country. Negotiations to formally end the conflict took place in Geneva, Switzerland. A multinational agreement divided Vietnam at the 17th Parallel. The territory north of this line would be led by Ho Chi Minh with **Hanoi** its capital.

The southern sector named the city of **Saigon** its capital and **Ngo Dinh Diem** its leader. The division of Vietnam was meant to be temporary, with nationwide elections scheduled for 1956. Knowing that Ho Chi Minh would be a sure victor, however, the South made sure these elections were never held.

During the administrations of Eisenhower and Kennedy, the United States continued to supply funds, weapons, and military advisers to South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh turned North Vietnam into a communist dictatorship and created a new band of guerrillas called the **Viet Cong**, whose sole purpose was to overthrow the military regime in the South and reunite the nation.

In the first of many cases during the Cold War, the United States backed an unpopular leader in Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem was corrupt, showed little commitment to democratic principles, and favored Catholics to the dismay of Vietnam's Buddhist majority. But Diem was not a communist, which was the most important criteria when the United States was looking for allies around the world during the Cold War.

Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon and Ford all struggled with the question of how to stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia without being on the wrong side of history. In the end, American's leaders were unsuccessful in almost all of their goals. The United States ended up fighting a long, devastating and disastrous war that, after terrible bloodshed and destruction, we ultimately lost. Ho Chi Minh's struggle for a unified, independent Vietnam under a communist government succeeded.

### CONCLUSION

Although containment successfully prevented the spread of communism in Europe and Korea, the United States lost the fight to stop communists from unifying Vietnam. Containment proved to be largely peaceful in Europe, but resulted in tremendous violence and bloodshed in Asia. In addition, containment did nothing to liberate people from communism. At best, it protected some people from living under communist rule. So, was containment the right way to deal with the spread of communism?



**Hanoi:** Capital of North Vietnam.



**Saigon:** Capital of South Vietnam. Today it is known as Ho Chi Minh City.



**Ngo Dinh Diem:** Leader of South Vietnam. He was widely disliked by his own people.



**Viet Cong:** Guerrilla fighters loyal to Ho Chi Minh based in South Vietnam.

**SUMMARY**

Americans did not want to continue fighting to stop communism. They had just finished fighting the Germans and Japanese and fighting the Soviets to stop communism would have been unpopular with voters. Instead, leaders like President Truman decided to prevent communism from spreading to new places. This was called containment.

Americans were afraid that poverty and political instability in Europe would give communists an opportunity to win over the hearts and minds of people in many countries, not just the nations that were occupied by Soviet troops. A solution was to promote economic recovery. In theory, if people had jobs and the economy was doing well, they would not want to give up prosperity to experiment with communism. To do this, the United States gave billions of dollars to places like France, West Germany, Greece and Japan to help them rebuild.

Stalin was angry that the city of Berlin was divided and wanted to unite the city under communist rule. To force the Americans, British and French out, he blockaded the city, preventing fuel and food from being brought in. He believed that the allies would give up the city rather than fight. Truman saw the conflict as a test of his willingness to stand up to stop the spread of communism and organized an airlift to supply everything the people of West Berlin needed by air transport. After more than a year, Stalin gave up and allowed ground transport into the city again. It was an important early victory for containment.

Both the United States and Soviet Union wanted allies. The United States and its allies in Western Europe formed NATO. The Soviet Union and its allies in Eastern Europe formed the Warsaw Pact. Both alliances were for mutual defense. If any country was attacked, everyone would join the fight in their defense.

In China, the civil war that had been raging before the Japanese invaded reignited. Communists and nationalists fought in the late 1940s, and communists under Mao Zedong won, driving the nationalists to the island of Taiwan. The United States did not want to fight another war so soon after World War II, and did not directly join the fighting. This was a failure to contain the spread of communism.

At the end of World War II, Korea had been divided between communists in the North and non-communists in the South. In 1950, the communists invaded the South and the United States led a fight to defend them. Korea was another important test of containment. The war was long and ended in a stalemate. Today Korea is still divided between a communist North and non-communist South. During the Korean War, General MacArthur wanted to expand the war into China and defeat communism once and for all, but President Truman fired him. The Cold War would be a long conflict, but always limited.



In the end, American leaders came to believe in a domino theory. They thought that if one nation became communist, its neighbors would also soon become communists. In order to prevent the spread of communism, every country, no matter how small, would need to be defended. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson all decided to support the anti-communists in Vietnam for this reason.



## PEOPLE & GROUPS

**George Kennan:** The State Department official who developed the policy of containment.

**George Marshall:** American Secretary of State who proposed using American money to rebuild Europe. He believed that if countries had a strong economy they would be less likely to fall to communism.

**William Turner:** American air force general who organized the Berlin Airlift.

**NATO:** Alliance that includes the United States, Canada, and most of the nations of Western Europe as well Greece and Turkey. It was created to counter the threat of the Soviet Union.

**Warsaw Pact:** The collective security agreement that was the answer to NATO. It included the Soviet Union and most of Eastern Europe.

**Sun Yat-sen:** Leader of the movement to overthrow the last of the Chinese emperors. He is often considered the "Father of China."

**Chiang Kai-shek:** Sun Yat-sen's successor and leader of the nationalist, non-communist Chinese forces. He lost to Mao and fled to Taiwan.

**Mao Zedong:** Leader of the Chinese communists. He became the first leader of mainland China after the communist takeover.

**Syngman Rhee:** First leader of South Korea. He ruled as a dictator but was not communist.

**Kim Il-Sung:** First leader of communist North Korea.

**Douglas MacArthur:** American hero of WWII in the Pacific. He had led the occupation of Japan and was commander in the Korean War until he was relieved by President Truman for insubordination.

**Kim Jong-il:** Second leader of North Korea from 1994-2011

**Kim Jong-un:** Third leader of North Korea from 2011 to the present.

**Ho Chi Minh:** Communist leader of North Vietnam. His primary goal was Vietnamese independence.

**Viet Minh:** The guerrilla fighters loyal to Ho Chi Minh.

**Vo Nguyen Giap:** General in charge of the North Vietnamese Army. He defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu.

**Ngo Dinh Diem:** Leader of South Vietnam. He was widely disliked by his own people.

**Viet Cong:** Guerrilla fighters loyal to Ho Chi Minh based in South Vietnam.



## LOCATIONS

**Baltic States:** Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. They were independent nations along the Baltic Sea before WWII. After the war they were absorbed into the Soviet Union. They were the first three republics to declare independence in 1991.

**Berlin:** Capital city of Germany. After WWII it was divided. West Berlin was a small enclave of freedom surrounded by Soviet-dominated East Germany. The city was the site of many standoffs and physical manifestations of the Cold War.

**People's Republic of China (PRC):** The official name of communist mainland China.

**Republic of China (ROC):** The official name of non-communist Taiwan.

**Taiwan:** The small island nation off the southern coast of China founded by Chiang Kai-shek and his followers.

**38<sup>th</sup> Parallel:** The line of latitude that divided North and South Korea before the Korean War. The current boundary still roughly follows the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel.

**Demilitarized Zone (DMZ):** The three-mile wide strip of land that marks the boundary between North and South Korea.

**Indochina:** The French colony in Southeast Asia including Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

**Hanoi:** Capital of North Vietnam.

**Saigon:** Capital of South Vietnam. Today it is known as Ho Chi Minh City.



## POLICIES

**Containment:** The policy of preventing the spread of communist but not trying to eliminate it where it already existed.

**Truman Doctrine:** President Truman's plan to implement containment and use American money to support countries that were in danger of falling under communist domination.

**Marshall Plan:** The plan to use American money to rebuild Europe. It was intended to prevent the spread of communism by demonstrating that a free market system would be the path to prosperity.

**Domino Theory:** American belief that if one nation fell to communism its neighbors would soon follow.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Collective Security:** An agreement between nations in which they agree to treat an attack on any member of the agreement as an attack on all members.

**Stalemate:** A situation in war in which neither side is able to win.

**Armistice:** An agreement to stop fighting. Rather than creating peace, it serves as a permanent suspension of war.



## EVENTS

**Berlin Airlift:** Operation mounted by the United States and Great Britain to supply West Berlin by air when Stalin cut off the city's land access in 1948-1949. The Airlift was a success despite tremendous obstacles and the city was saved from communist takeover.

**Long March:** Heroic march of the Chinese communists to escape destruction.

**Dien Bien Phu:** Final battle in 1954 between the Vietnamese forces under Ho Chi Min and the French. The French lost and they abandoned Indochina as a colony.



# 3

## T H I R D Q U E S T I O N DID AMERICAN LEADERS RESPOND WISELY TO THE THREAT OF COMMUNISM?



### INTRODUCTION

The first decades of the Cold War saw tremendous resources on both sides put into the development of weapons – especially nuclear weapons – and a willingness on the part of leaders to play “chicken” with those weapons. By the late 1950s people were learning to live in constant fear of nuclear annihilation, and in 1962, John F. Kennedy almost became the last president ever when he and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev went head to head over the deployment of nuclear missiles in Cuba.

Was this good policy? Was the headlong rush to build nuclear weapons and to counter every possible threat in every corner of the globe wise? Were there other ways of dealing with the communist world that might not have produced such costly, dangerous outcomes? Does matching your opponent gun for gun, ship for ship, warhead for warhead make you stronger or safer? Or does it just put everyone in greater danger?

What do you think? Did American leaders respond wisely to the threat of communism?

### NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

The United States developed the first atomic weapon during World War II and is the only nation in history to have ever used such a weapon in war when it bombed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. For a few years, America was the only nuclear power. However, by 1964, all five of the victors of that war had developed nuclear weapons.

The process of spreading weapons around the world, and especially the spread of nuclear weapons is known as **proliferation**. Today, a total of nine nations possess nuclear weapons.

The Soviet Union surprised the world on August 29, 1949 when it tested its first nuclear warhead. Whereas the Soviet atomic project was first and foremost a product of local expertise and scientific talent, it is clear that espionage of the American Manhattan Project helped the Soviets in various ways and most certainly shortened the time needed to develop its atomic bomb.

In 1952, the United Kingdom became the third nation to possess nuclear weapons when it detonated an atomic bomb in Operation Hurricane on October 3, 1952. Despite major contributions to the Manhattan Project by both Canadian and British governments, the United States Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act of 1946, which prohibited multi-national cooperation on nuclear projects. The law fueled resentment from British scientists and Winston Churchill, as they believed that there were agreements regarding post-war sharing of nuclear technology, and led to Britain developing its own nuclear weapons. Britain did not begin planning the development of their own nuclear weapon until 1947. Because of Britain's small size, they decided to test their bomb on the Monte Bello Islands, off the coast of Australia.

France became the fourth nation to possess nuclear weapons on February 13, 1960, when the atomic bomb Gerboise Bleue was detonated in Algeria in North Africa, then still a French colony.

In the late 1950s, China began developing nuclear weapons with substantial Soviet assistance in exchange for uranium ore. However, when the Soviets and Chinese fell out in the late 1950s over competing interpretations of communist doctrine, the Chinese continued developing nuclear weapons without Soviet support and made remarkable progress in the 1960s. The People's Republic of China became the fifth nuclear power on October 16, 1964 at Lop Nur in western China.

So, within twenty years of the first test of a nuclear device, all five of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council were members of the "**nuclear club**."



**Proliferation:** The spread of weapons, especially nuclear weapons to multiple countries.



**Nuclear Club:** The group of countries who have nuclear weapons.

### THE ARMS RACE

After the successful Trinity nuclear test July 16, 1945, which was the very first nuclear detonation, the Manhattan project lead manager J. Robert Oppenheimer recalled, "We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried, most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture the Bhagavad Gita. Vishnu is trying to persuade the prince that he should do his duty and to impress him takes on his multiarmed form and says, 'Now, I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.' I suppose we all thought that one way or another."

Immediately after the atomic bombings of Japan, the status of atomic weapons in international and military relations was unclear. Presumably, the United States hoped atomic weapons could offset the Soviet Union's larger conventional ground forces in Eastern Europe, and possibly be used to pressure Soviet leader Josef Stalin into making concessions. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union pursued its own atomic capabilities through a combination of scientific research and espionage directed against the American program.

The Soviets believed that the Americans, with their limited nuclear arsenal, were unlikely to engage in any new world wars, while the Americans were not confident they could prevent a Soviet takeover of Europe, despite their atomic advantage. The result of this insecurity on both sides was the massive development of more nuclear weapons, more powerful nuclear weapons, and more and better ways of deploying and delivering them.



**Primary Source: Photograph**

A B-52 Stratofortress unloading bombs in the 1960s. These aircraft could also carry nuclear warheads.

At the start of the Cold War, the United States and its allies in Europe had large enough bombers to strike targets in the Soviet Union, but the reverse was not true. In the early 1950s, however, the widespread introduction of jet-powered interceptor aircraft upset this imbalance by reducing the



**Curtis LeMay:** General who led the Strategic Air Command, responsible for America's nuclear bombers and missiles.

effectiveness of the American bomber fleet. General **Curtis LeMay** was placed in command of the **Strategic Air Command** which managed the American bombers and missiles, and instituted a program to update the bomber fleet to one that was all-jet powered. It was at this time that designers at Boeing produced the infamous **B-52 Stratofortress**, providing the ability to bomb the Soviet Union from bases in the United States.

In the early 1950s, the design of nuclear weapons was evolving. New warheads used fusion instead of fission and produced much larger and more devastating explosions. Referred to as **thermonuclear** warheads, or more commonly **hydrogen** or **H-bombs**, these weapons replaced the older designs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

At the same time that scientists were developing the hydrogen bomb, war planners were thinking about using small nuclear weapons on the battlefield, much the way artillery had been used in earlier wars. These **tactical nuclear weapons** could be carried on small trucks and moved quickly. The United States even developed a nuclear rocket so small it could be mounted on a tripod and carried on foot by a pair of soldiers. There was a significant danger in deploying this class of weapons. In theory, field commanders would have the authority to order their use as needed for an ongoing battle. This doctrine took the authority to launch a nuclear strike, no matter how small, away from the president. Obviously, this posed a great risk that a war might spiral quickly out of control and result in a much larger nuclear exchange. In Korea, General Douglas MacArthur requested the authority to deploy these tactical nuclear weapons, but knowing that he might very well use them against China, President Truman refused.

A revolution in nuclear strategy occurred with the introduction of the **intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)**, which the Soviet Union first successfully tested in August 1957. A missile was much faster and more cost-effective than a bomber at delivering a warhead to a target and enjoyed a higher survivability due to the enormous difficulty of intercepting ICBMs, a result of their high altitude and extreme speed. ICBMs could be mounted on the backs of huge trucks or buried in underground silos encased in protective concrete.

By 1960, the United States had three ways of delivering a nuclear strike: ICBMs, **submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM)**, and strategic bombers. These different forces had their advantages and disadvantages. Bombers could deliver large payloads and strike with great accuracy, but were slow, vulnerable while on the ground, and could be shot down as they flew toward their targets. ICBMs were safe in their underground silos while on the ground, but were less accurate than bombers and could not be recalled after launch. Submarines were least vulnerable but were also least accurate and communication could be poor at times.



**Strategic Air Command:** The organization in the American military responsible for America's nuclear bombers and missiles.



**B-52 Stratofortress:** Long-range bomber designed to carry nuclear bombs deep into the Soviet Union.



**Thermonuclear Warhead:** A nuclear warhead that uses fusion to produce a much larger explosion than the fission bomb used against Japan. Also known as a hydrogen bomb or H-bomb.



**Tactical Nuclear Weapons:** Small nuclear weapons meant to be used on the battlefield the way artillery might be used.



**Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM):** Nuclear-armed missiles that are fired from one continent to targets in another.



**Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM):** Nuclear-armed missiles fired from submarines.

This **nuclear triad** was critical to maintaining an effective deterrent. A Soviet sneak attack might be able to cripple two of the elements of the triad, but would be unlikely to eliminate all three. The possibility of a counterattack made it possible for the United States to impose unacceptable damage to the Soviet Union. In other words, the American nuclear forces had survivability. Naturally, the Soviet Union and the other nuclear powers replicated the American triad with aircraft, ICBMs, and submarines of their own.



**Nuclear Triad:** The three methods of attacking with nuclear weapons: land-based bombers, land-based missiles and submarine-based missiles.

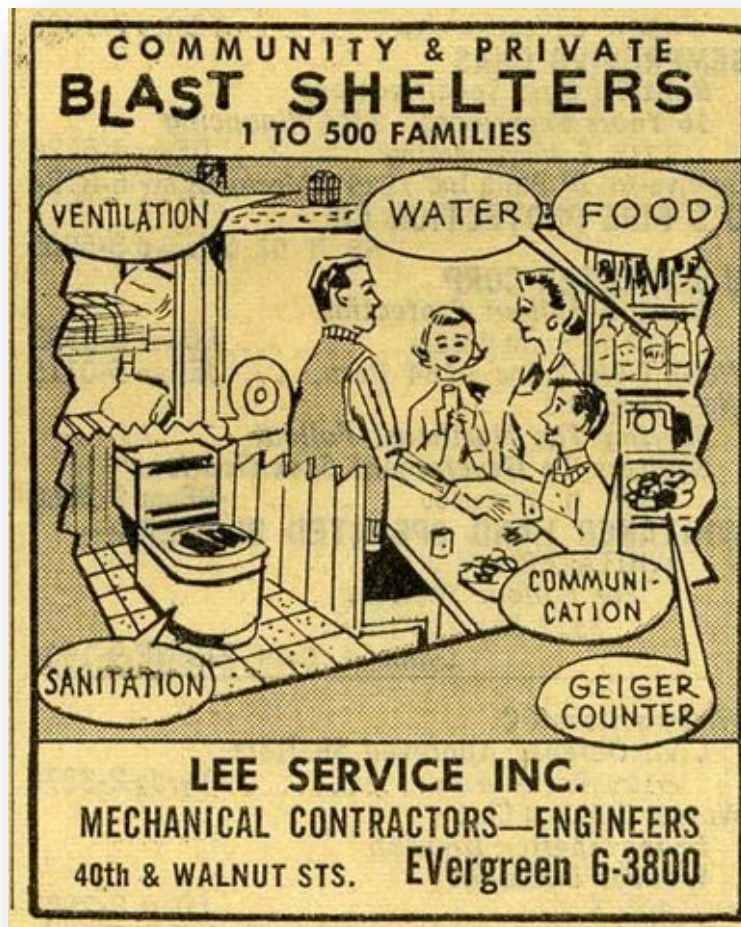


**Primary Source: Photograph**

The USS Sam Rayburn, a ballistic missile submarine in port with its missile hatches open.

### RESPONDING TO THE ARMS RACE

In the early 1960s, tensions were so high between the superpowers that the Strategic Air Command, the division of the US Air Force that managed the nuclear arsenal, instituted round-the-clock airborne alerts. At any moment, a group of B-52s armed with thermonuclear bombs was in flight near the borders of the Soviet Union waiting for orders to turn and attack. Eventually this program was ended in 1968 after five of the B-52s crashed. Luckily none of these incidents led to accidental nuclear explosions, but in the end, political leaders decided that the risk of disaster was greater than the risk of a Soviet attack.



Primary Source: Document

An advertisement to build fallout shelters from the 1950s.



Read a Civil Defense Manual from 1966

Early ICBMs and bombers were relatively inaccurate, which meant that attacks on military targets such as bases and airfields would not necessarily prevent a counterattack. Consequently, both the Americans and Soviets planned attacks directly on the enemy population, which would theoretically lead to a collapse of the enemy's will to fight. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union invested in extensive protected civilian infrastructure, such as large "nuclear-proof" bunkers and non-perishable food stores. In the United States, smaller scale **civil defense** programs were instituted in the 1950s, where schools and other public buildings had basements stocked with non-perishable food supplies, canned water, first aid supplies, and Geiger counters. Many of the locations were given **fallout shelter** designation signs. Students watched informational videos about how to respond in case of nuclear attack and practiced "duck and cover" drills in class along with regular fire drills. Early warning radar and satellites were deployed to provide notice of an imminent attack and the civil defense siren system was put in place. Today these sirens are used to warn of impending natural



**Civil Defense:** The local organizations who plan for disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and nuclear attack.



**Fallout Shelter:** A place that would be safe during an atomic attack. They were often stocked with food, water, and medical supplies.

disasters such as tornados and tsunami, but during the early decades of the Cold War, they had a more sinister purpose.

The prospect of nuclear war was indeed terrifying. By the 1970s both the Soviets and Americans were developing **multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV)**, ballistic missiles containing several thermonuclear warheads that would open up in space and then be aimed at different targets. With over 50,000 nuclear warheads spread around the world, the ability of humanity to destroy itself was a reality. In the end, if all out nuclear war had actually happened, millions of people would have died in the first few hours, and millions more in the ensuing days from radiation sickness and the resulting social and agricultural catastrophe as crops and civil society failed. The prospect of such a **nuclear winter** gave leaders on both sides of the Iron Curtain pause. Although military strategies developed plans for nuclear war, the idea of actually carrying out these plans was unimaginable.

Since nuclear war was an existential threat, the role of government changed. Instead of protecting freedoms and providing basic services, the government was now expected to protect the very existence of the nation. The scientists who were responsible for developing the warheads, missiles, aircraft, radars and all of the technologies that were meant to protect the world became national heroes. Fictional characters who represented protection from the evils of communism and nuclear war also became popular. Comic books featuring **Captain America** and **Superman** were a rage among young people frightened by the idea of sudden and unpredictable annihilation.

## MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION

It may seem contradictory, but it was widely believed that nuclear weapons made the world safer.

Both Soviet and American experts hoped to use nuclear weapons to extract concessions from the other in the form of high-stakes nuclear blackmail, but the risk connected with using these weapons was so grave that they refrained. While some, like General Douglas MacArthur, argued nuclear weapons should have been used during the Korean War, most elected leaders, including Presidents Truman and Eisenhower opposed the idea.

By the end of the 1950s, both the United States and Soviet Union had enough nuclear power to obliterate the other side and because of the resiliency built into the nuclear triad, both sides developed a capability to launch a devastating attack even after sustaining a full assault. Any attack would be met with a full response, meaning that any side that dared to order a first strike was ensuring its own annihilation. This was the heart of the idea known as **mutually assured destruction (MAD)**.

What made MAD work as a deterrent was that your opponent knew that you had the capability to respond to a first strike. Although most weapons systems were developed in secret, once they were completed it was



**Multiple Independent Targetable Reentry Vehicles (MIRV):** Missiles that separate in space and deliver nuclear warheads to many different targets.



**Nuclear Winter:** The time period after a major nuclear exchange during which crops would be destroyed and most humans would starve.



**Captain America and Superman:** Superheroes who became popular during the Cold War by fighting against communist enemies in comic books.



**Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD):** The situation in which both the United States and Soviet Union could destroy one another in a nuclear exchange. Because starting a war meant assured destruction, no side would start the war.

important to show them off. The latest bombers were flown for the public and press at airshows and especially at parades in Moscow, trucks bearing nuclear missiles were driven through the streets for cheering crowds, and watching American strategists.



Primary Source: Photograph

A truck-mounted nuclear missile on parade in Red Square in the heart of Moscow.

Since the Americans and the Soviets knew that any attack upon the other would be devastating to themselves, the theory of MAD prevented nuclear war. Indeed, the development of tens of thousands of nuclear weapons seemed crazy, and the idea that their very existence ensured peace seems even more illogical, but history has so far proven that fear of nuclear war is a powerful deterrent.

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTING

Every member of the nuclear club undertook a testing program, in part to find out how well their latest technological designs were working, and also to show off their power. Because of the dangers of radioactive fallout from atmospheric nuclear explosions, these tests needed to be done far from population centers. For the Soviet Union, that meant the islands of the Arctic Ocean in Siberia. For China, testing was conducted in the desolated areas of Central Asia. For the Americans and French, nuclear testing was carried out on the islands of Micronesia in the Pacific Ocean.

The United States conducted its first post-war nuclear tests, called Operation Crossroads, at **Bikini Atoll** in the Marshall Islands on 95 ships, including German and Japanese ships that were captured during World War II. One plutonium implosion-type bomb was detonated over the fleet, while the other one was detonated underwater. The 40 families who had lived on the atoll were forced to move before the test. Even today, Bikini Atoll is too contaminated to be safe for habitation and the now-more-than-4000



**Bikini Atoll:** Atoll in the Marshall Islands used by the United States for testing nuclear weapons. It was the site of the Castle Bravo test.

descendants of the original islanders are scattered across other islands, and the United States.

The United States detonated the first hydrogen bomb on November 1, 1952, on **Enewetak**, another atoll in the Marshall Islands. Code-named Ivy Mike, the project was led by Edward Teller, a Hungarian-American nuclear physicist. It created a radioactive mushroom cloud 100 miles wide and 25 miles high, killing all life on the surrounding islands. As was true at Bikini Atoll, the residents of Enewetak had to move. In all, the United States fired 43 nuclear tests on Enewetak.

On March 1, 1954, the United States conducted the **Castle Bravo** test, of a hydrogen bomb on Bikini Atoll. Scientists significantly underestimated the size of the bomb. Instead of yielding the expected 5 megatons, it produced and explosion of 14.8 megatons, which is the largest nuclear explosion tested by the United States. Fallout from the detonation fell on residents of Rongelap and Utirik atolls and spread around the world. Not only had the Americans not anticipated the size of the blast, but they also miscalculated how wind patterns would carry the resulting radiation. Residents on nearby islands were not evacuated until three days after the test and suffered radiation sickness. Twenty-three crewmembers of the Japanese fishing vessel Daigo Fukuryu Maru, some 50 miles away, were also contaminated by fallout and experienced acute radiation syndrome. The blast initiated an international movement to end atmospheric thermonuclear testing.



**Enewetak:** Island in the Marshall Islands used by the United States for testing nuclear weapons. Location of the first hydrogen bomb test.



**Castle Bravo:** Nuclear test on Bikini Atoll that was much larger than expected.



Primary Source: Photograph

The Castle Bravo Test



Watch video from  
the Castle Bravo  
Nuclear Test

In all, the United States conducted over 67 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands. Today, a **Compact of Free Association (COFA)** between the United States, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau allows citizens of these island nations to travel freely to the United States without a passport. The United States has also provided free medical care for the hundreds of people who developed cancers as a result of radiation exposure. In exchange, the COFA nations grant the American military exclusive use of their territory – with the caveat that the Americans do not use, store or test nuclear weapons in the islands.

France conducted most of its nuclear tests at Fangatuafa Atoll in French Polynesia, also known as the Society Islands. As was the case in the Marshalls, the French tests significantly contaminated the atoll with radiation, making it off-limits to humans.

Today, the original members of the nuclear club have agreed to end all nuclear testing. However India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons in 1998, and North Korea has tested its weapons multiple times since 2000.

### THE SPACE RACE

The world's first long-range rocket was the V-2, made by German scientists during World War II. The V-2, and other models like it, were designed to carry 1,000 kg bombs over a long distance and exploded upon impact. In 1944, Hitler decided to unleash his secret weapon and thousands of these rockets were launched at Britain. The German missiles were notoriously inaccurate, so they caused very little physical damage, but their ability to produce psychological terror was tremendous.

As the war was drawing to a close, hundreds of German rockets, and their scientists were captured. Taken to the Soviet Union and United States, they were “encouraged” to work and share their knowledge.

Apart from the desire to explore outer space, the development of rockets and satellites served an important military purpose. Intercontinental ballistic missiles had long been regarded the ideal platform for nuclear weapons, and were a more effective delivery system than strategic bombers.

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union showed the world that they had missiles able to reach any part of the world when they launched the **Sputnik** satellite into Earth orbit. After some embarrassing failures, and after four months of waiting, the Americans finally managed to successfully launch their own satellite, **Explorer 1**, on January 31, 1958.

In 1957, the Soviets launched the first animal into space – a dog named **Laika** – and on April 12, 1961, Soviet cosmonaut **Yuri Gagarin** became the first human to orbit the Earth. This was another embarrassing blow to the United States and showed the world again how technologically advanced the Soviets had become.



**Compact of Free Association (COFA):** Agreement between the US, Marshall Islands, and Federated States of Micronesia.



**Sputnik:** First man-made satellite launched by the Soviet Union in 1957.



**Explorer 1:** America's first satellite, launched in 1958.



**Laika:** A dog. The first animal in space.



**Yuri Gagarin:** Soviet Cosmonaut and first human in space in 1961.

NASA launched **Alan Shephard**, the first American astronaut into space in 1961, but the United States was lagging behind its communist rival in the Space Race. In 1963, **Valentina Tereshkova** became the first woman in space. While there was nothing particularly important to be found in space itself, the development of the space program became a matter of national pride, and served to advance scientific research that was used by the military. While the Soviets clearly led the way in the 1950s, the Americans were the pioneers of the 1960s.

In 1961, shortly after taking office, President **John F. Kennedy (JFK)** challenged the United States to land a man on the moon before the end of the decade. At the time, such a mission was impossible. Enormous financial, and human resources were necessary to make his goal a reality but Kennedy believed it would be worth the price. At a speech at Rice University, he declared, **“We choose to go to the Moon! We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win.”**

To the surprise of many, the **Apollo Program** met Kennedy’s challenge. **Neil Armstrong** and Buzz Aldrin became the first people to set foot on the moon, on July 21, 1969. Over 300 million people around the world watched the event through their television screens. It was a terrific achievement that more than made up for the bad start in the Space Race. As he stepped off the ladder of the Eagle Lander onto the lunar surface, Armstrong delivered his famous line, **“One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”**



**Alan Shephard:** First American in space in 1961.



**Valentina Tereshkova:** Soviet cosmonaut. She became the first woman in space in 1963.



**John F. Kennedy (JFK):** Democratic president from 1961-1963. He was president during the Cuban Missile Crisis.



**We Choose to Go to the Moon:** Speech by JFK in 1961 in which he challenged America to send a man to the moon before 1970.



**Apollo Program:** NASA program to develop the technology to send a man to the Moon.



**Neil Armstrong:** First man to set foot on the Moon in 1969.



**One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind:** Armstrong’s statement as he stepped onto the Moon’s surface.

### Primary Source: Photograph

Astronaut Buzz Aldrin on the surface of the moon.



Watch the Kennedy’s Moon Speech

By landing on the Moon, the Americans had decisively won the Space Race. While both the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as European nations, China, Japan, and a host of other countries continued to explore the heavens, the era of the Space Race, which coincided with the Arms Race is over.

In the end, the exploration of space advanced our understanding of the universe, but provided a host of benefits for everyday life that we often do not realize are consequences of the rush to beat the Soviets during the Cold War. For example, the network of satellites that provide locations (GPS) and satellites that transmit television, radio and internet signals around the world, as well as weather satellites that track dangerous storms are products of the intense competition of the 1950s and 1960s.

Many technologies that were first developed for the space program have been spun off and are now found in everyday products. Invisible braces, memory foam mattresses, solar panels, ski boots, UV-blocking sunglasses, and cordless tools are all children of the space program.

### **1960 ELECTION**

In the **1960 presidential election**, the incumbent president Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower had already served two terms and thus was not eligible to run again. The Republican Party nominated Richard Nixon, Eisenhower's vice president, while the Democrats nominated John F. Kennedy, a senator from Massachusetts. It was one of the closest elections in American history.

Senator Kennedy initially faced opposition from some Democratic Party elders who claimed he was too young and inexperienced to be president. However, JFK, as he came to be known, had an effective campaigning strategy even in the primaries.

At the Republican National Convention, Nixon was the overwhelming choice of the delegates. Nixon chose United Nations Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. to be his running mate. Lodge's foreign-policy credentials fit into Nixon's strategy of campaigning more on foreign policy than domestic policy.

Both Kennedy and Nixon drew large and enthusiastic crowds throughout the campaign. In August of 1960, most polls gave Nixon a lead over Kennedy. However, Nixon was plagued by bad luck throughout the fall campaign. In August, President Eisenhower was asked to name some important ideas that Nixon had contributed to his administration. When he hesitated, it made it seem as though Nixon hadn't been involved in any of Eisenhower's important decisions. In addition, Nixon had to cease campaigning for two weeks early in the campaign to recover from a knee injury. Despite this delay in campaigning, he refused to abandon his pledge to visit all 50 states. Thus, he ended up wasting time visiting states that he had no chance of winning and states that had few electoral votes.



Watch the Moon Landing



**1960 Presidential Election:** Election between Senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard Nixon. Kennedy won in a close popular vote.

Kennedy benefited from his selection of Texas Senator **Lyndon B. Johnson** as his running mate. Johnson vigorously campaigned for Kennedy and was instrumental in helping to carry several Southern states. Lodge, on the other hand, ran a lethargic campaign and made additional mistakes that hurt Nixon.

The key turning point of the campaign was the four **Kennedy-Nixon debates**. These were the first televised presidential debates, and they attracted enormous publicity. In the first debate, Nixon looked pale, sickly, underweight, and tired as a result of his hospital stay. Kennedy, by contrast, appeared strong, confident, and relaxed during the debate.

The election on November 8, 1960 remains one of the most famous election nights in American history. In the national popular vote, Kennedy beat Nixon by just one tenth of one percentage point (0.1%)—the closest popular-vote margin of the 20th century. In the Electoral College, Kennedy's victory was larger, as he took 303 electoral votes to Nixon's 219.



**Lyndon B. Johnson:** Vice president for John F. Kennedy and president from 1963-1968.



**Kennedy-Nixon Debates:** The first televised presidential election debates.

### Primary Source: Photograph

Kennedy and Nixon held three live debates, the first televised debates in presidential election history.



Watch highlights from the Nixon-Kennedy Debates

## THE NEW FRONTIER

Compared to Eisenhower, President Kennedy was young and glamorous. The youngest president ever elected, Kennedy and his stylish wife Jacqueline had two young children. The Kennedys were exciting, attractive and energetic. Before the inauguration, the Kennedys had even attended a ball hosted by Hollywood superstar Frank Sinatra.

Kennedy and most of his advisors were part of a new generation, later labeled the Greatest Generation, who were among the GIs and Rosie the

Riveters who had sacrificed so much to win World War II. Highlighting the transition of power from the leaders of that war to the men and women who had been its soldiers, Kennedy said, “Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that **the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans**, born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace...”

He went on to confirm his willingness to stand up to communism and support nations around the world who were on the front lines of the Cold War. “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty. This much we pledge – and more.”

Kennedy had described the future he wanted to build as a **New Frontier**, and he brought with him to the White House a group of young, visionary advisors who became known as the **New Frontiersmen**. Among them were his brother Robert “Bobby” Kennedy who served as Attorney General and Dean Rusk the Secretary of State. Kennedy tapped Robert McNamara, formerly the President of the Ford Motor Company, to be Secretary of Defense. A brilliant lawyer, Ted Sorenson became one of Kennedy’s closest advisors and the speechwriter who drafted many of the president’s most famous lines.

The excitement that surrounded Kennedy everywhere he went eventually gave rise to the myth of his presidency as a modern Camelot. Like the Camelot of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, Kennedy’s administration was fleeting, full of hope, noble struggles, energy and intrigue. After his assassination in 1963, his widow launched the metaphor when she told Life Magazine, “Don’t let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot... There’ll never be another Camelot again...”

## FLEXIBLE RESPONSE

When Kennedy became president in 1960 it was becoming clear that Eisenhower’s strategy of amassing a huge stockpile of nuclear weapons that would enable massive retaliation was becoming obsolete.

Kennedy wanted more options. He wanted to be able to respond to smaller conflicts in other parts of the world without resorting to threats of nuclear annihilation. He cited General Maxwell Taylor’s book “The Uncertain Trumpet” and its conclusion that massive retaliation left the United States with only two choices: defeat on the ground or the resort to the use of nuclear weapons.

Technology had improved since massive retaliation was adopted. Improvements in communication and transportation meant American forces could be deployed more effectively, quickly, and flexibly than before. Advisers persuaded Kennedy that having multiple options would allow the



**Kennedy’s Inaugural Address:** President Kennedy’s speech in 1961 and occasion of some of his most famous statements.



Watch Kennedy’s Inaugural Address



**New Frontier:** Kennedy’s agenda, including more domestic spending and a shift away from massive retaliation.



**New Frontiersmen:** The group of young intellectuals who served as Kennedy’s advisors.

president to apply the appropriate amount of force without risking escalation or losing alternatives. This would improve credibility for deterrence as the United States would now have low-intensity options and therefore would be more likely to use them, rather than massive retaliation's all-or-nothing options.

**Flexible response** meant that the military would need to build up its convention forces, not just its nuclear triad, since it might be called on to fight multiple wars simultaneously in different parts of the world, against different types of enemies. Rather than reducing the size of the military, Kennedy greatly increased it, and especially increased the size of the traditional means of warfare: troops, tanks, aircraft, and warships, not just nuclear bombers, missiles and ballistic missile submarines.

## THE PEACE CORPS

President Kennedy understood that the United States and supporters of economic and political freedom would not defeat communism with force alone. Since the struggle between East and West was at its core an ideological struggle, the United States needed to win the hearts and minds of the people of the world. Therefore, he aggressively promoted a new **Peace Corps**. This volunteer program sent young Americans, typically recent college graduates, around the world to provide technical assistance to promote economic development and help promote goodwill toward the United States and its ideas. Kennedy believed that people would choose freedom over communism if they met Americans who wanted to serve others, not just the uniformed soldiers of America's armed forces.

The Peace Corps was an enormous success and continues its work even today. Over its history, nearly 220,000 Americans have served their two-year commitments in more than 140 countries.

## THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

One of President Kennedy's first challenges was Cuba. Located just 90 miles south of Florida, Cuba had a long and checkered relationship with the United States. Freed from Spanish colonial rule in 1898 as part of the Spanish-American War, Cuba had enjoyed only partial sovereignty. While the Teller Amendment had promised the United States would ensure Cuban independence after the conclusion of a peace treaty with Spain, the Platt Amendment enshrined America's right to intervene in Cuban affairs.

And intervene they did. At least four times, American troops landed in Cuba to put down rebellions and protect American business interests. The United States had good reason to be interested in Cuba's internal affairs. American companies controlled 60% of the island's sugar cane industry.

In the 1930s the United States supported a coup led by **Fulgencio Batista** who went on to rule Cuba for nearly 20 years. The Batista era witnessed the almost complete domination of Cuba's economy by the United States, as the



**Flexible Response:** Kennedy's policy of having more conventional (non-nuclear) weapons so that the United States could use military power without resorting to a nuclear attack.



**Peace Corps:** A group of young American volunteers who travel to developing nations to provide support and help spread goodwill.



**Fulgencio Batista:** Corrupt dictator of Cuba. He was supported by the United States and was overthrown by Castro.

number of American corporations continued to swell. Corruption was rife and Havana became a popular sanctuary for American organized crime. Of course, Batista and his cronies used their positions in government to enrich themselves.

In 1958, a young lawyer named **Fidel Castro** initiated a rebellion against Batista and his regime. From his bases in the mountains of the interior, Castro capitalized on popular discontent and growing anti-American feeling to turn the people against the government. In January 1959, **Castro and his rebel army marched into the cities of Santiago de Cuba and Havana.** Batista fled to Spain.

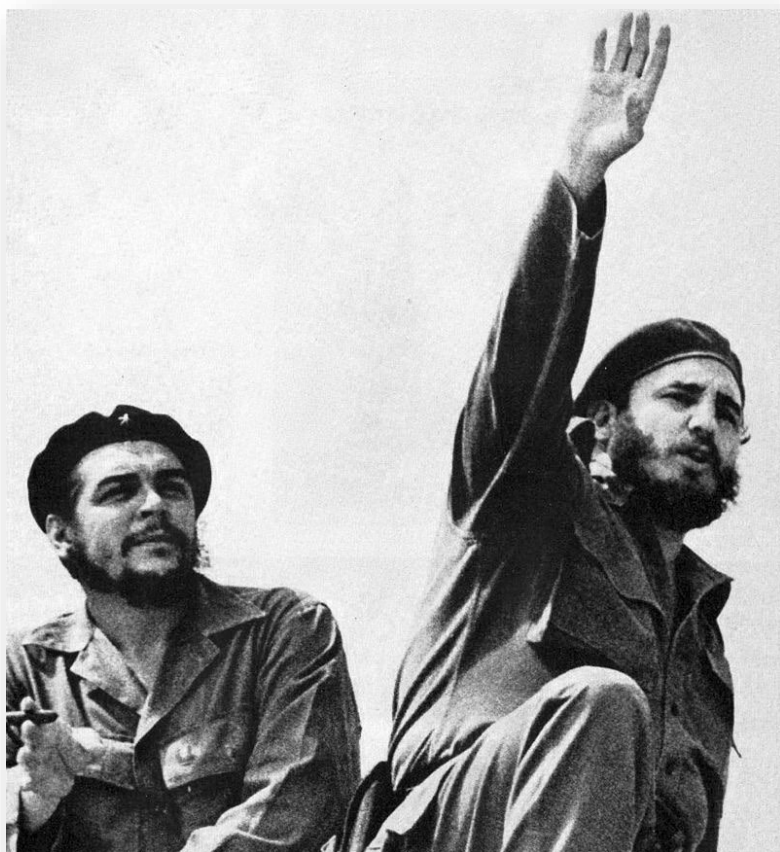
At first, Kennedy supported the Cuban Revolution. Castro was seen by many Americans as a breath of fresh air. Although Batista had protected American businesses in Cuba, Castro might promote democracy, which Batista had not. However, it soon became clear that Castro had more communist leanings. His new government nationalized the wealthy organizations and business of the island. They took possession of the Catholic Church and the estates of the mafia dons. They seized American sugar plantations. Thousands of upper class Cubans moved to South Florida to escape Castro.



**Fidel Castro:** Communist leader who led the Cuban Revolution in 1959.



**Cuban Revolution:** Communist overthrow of Batista's Cuban government in 1958, led by Fidel Castro.



**Primary Source: Photograph**

Fidel Castro (right) and his second-in-command, Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

The **Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)** mounted a concerted effort to assassinate Castro. The assassination attempts included exploding and poisoned cigars, a tuberculosis-infected scuba-diving suit (Castro loved cigars and scuba diving), a ballpoint pen containing a hypodermic syringe preloaded with lethal poison, bombings and other more straight forward mafia-style execution endeavors. While all of these plots failed, they convinced Castro that the Americans were out to get him, which they were, and that he needed protection from the Soviet Union.

On April 17, 1961, President John F. Kennedy authorized the most brazen attack on Cuba, using 1,500 CIA-trained Cuban exiles. The exiles were to invade Cuba through the **Bay of Pigs** in southwestern Cuba. The forces made many mistakes. The Cuban people did not rise up against Castro as expected and trapped on the beach they urgently called to Washington for American air support. Kennedy, who had naively believed his CIA advisors when they told him the plan was flawless, hesitated. He did not want to become involved in an outright war with Cuba. He refused to send in the air force. Within days, Castro's forces crushed the exiles. It was a humiliating defeat for the new president. Kennedy never trusted military or intelligence advice again, and the Soviet Union concluded that Kennedy was a weak leader. The invasion also angered many Latin-American nations who saw it, yet again, as American arrogance and disrespect for their sovereignty.

## THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

In 1962, the Soviet Union was falling desperately behind the United States in the arms race. Soviet missiles were only powerful enough to be launched against Europe, but American missiles were capable of striking the entire Soviet Union. In late April 1962, Soviet Premier **Nikita Khrushchev** conceived the idea of placing intermediate-range missiles in Cuba. A deployment in Cuba would double the Soviet strategic arsenal and provide a real deterrent to a potential attack against the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, Fidel Castro was looking for a way to defend his island nation from another attack by the United States. Since the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, Castro believed a second attack was inevitable. He approved of Khrushchev's plan to place missiles on the island.

The resulting confrontation between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev is considered by many historians to be the climactic moment of the Cold War. The **Cuban Missile Crisis**, as it is now known, was closest the world ever came to nuclear war.

The crisis began on October 15, 1962 when reconnaissance photographs taken by **U-2** spy planes revealed Soviet missile sites under construction in Cuba. Kennedy convened a special committee of twelve of his most important advisers to help him handle the crisis. After seven days of secret and intense debate, this executive committee, or **EX-COMM**, concluded that



**Central Intelligence Agency (CIA):** America's spy agency.



**Bay of Pigs Invasion:** 1961 attack by anti-communist Cuban exiles who had been trained by the CIA in an effort to start a revolution against Castro. The invasion failed and Kennedy refused to support the invaders.



**Nikita Khrushchev:** Soviet leader from 1953-1964. He was leader during the Cuban Missile Crisis.



**Cuban Missile Crisis:** 13-day standoff in 1962. The Soviet Union had placed nuclear missiles in Cuba and Kennedy demanded that they be removed. It was the closest the world ever came to nuclear war.



**U-2:** American spy plane.



**Ex-Comm:** The group of experts who advised Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

it had to impose a naval quarantine around Cuba, which would prevent the arrival of more Soviet offensive weapons on the island.

On October 22, Kennedy announced the discovery of the missile installations to the public and his decision to quarantine the island in an evening television address. He was somber and sought to project an air of determination. He demanded that the Soviets remove all of their offensive weapons from Cuba. Since a naval **blockade** is technically an act of war according to international law, Kennedy euphemistically called it a quarantine.

Khrushchev reacted furiously. In a letter and speech on October 24, he called Kennedy's bluff. He wrote, "If you weigh the present situation with a cool head without giving way to passion, you will understand that the Soviet Union cannot afford not to decline the despotic demands of the USA." He said that the quarantine was an illegal act of aggression that Soviet ships would be instructed to ignore, and that Kennedy's actions might lead to war.

The United Nations Security Council convened to deal with the mounting crisis. The Soviets had publicly claimed that they were not installing nuclear missiles in Cuba, and that their support for Castro was purely defensive. Many nations believed that Kennedy was concocting an excuse to invade the island and depose Castro after his first attempt at the Bay of Pigs had failed. On October 25, Kennedy's ambassador to the United Nations, **Adlai Stevenson** confronted Soviet Ambassador Valerian Zorin in an emergency meeting of the Security Council. The resulting exchange is now one of the most famous moments in United Nations history.

Stevenson began, "All right sir, let me ask you one simple question. Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the U.S.S.R has placed and is placing medium and intermediate range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no? Don't wait for the translation: yes or no?"

Zorin responded, "I am not in an American courtroom, sir, and therefore I do not wish to answer a question that is put to me in the fashion in which a prosecutor does. In due course, sir, you will have your reply. Do not worry."

Stevenson, not about to let the Soviets off the hook, replied, "You are in the court of world opinion right now and you can answer yes or no."

Zorin tried to brush Stevenson off. "Sir, will you please continue your statement. You will have your answer in due course." But Stevenson was tenacious. "I am prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over, if that's your decision. And I'm also prepared to present the evidence in this room."

With that, Stevenson's aids brought out poster-sized copies of the U-2 photographs of the Soviet missile sites in Cuba. The incontrovertible evidence as Stevenson called it, turned the world against the Soviet Union. Clearly, it was not Kennedy, but Khrushchev who had put the crisis in motion.



**Blockade:** The use of a navy to prevent the entrance and exit of ships from a port.



Watch Kennedy's TV Address



**Adlai Stevenson:** Democratic presidential candidate and ambassador to the United Nations during the Cuban Missile Crisis.



Primary Source: Photograph

Adlai Stevenson's presentation to the Security Council in the midst of the Cuban Missile Crisis.



Watch Adlai Stevenson  
at the United Nations

On October 26, Khrushchev cabled an impassioned letter to Kennedy. He proposed removing the Soviet missiles and personnel from Cuba if the United States would guarantee not to invade the island or attempt to remove Castro.

While the EX-COMM debated Khrushchev's offer, a U-2 was shot down as it flew high over Cuba. The joint chiefs of staff demanded that Kennedy give them the go-ahead to mount an invasion. The Soviets had clearly initiated the war. If Kennedy refused, they argued, it would be the Bay of Pigs all over again.

Kennedy refused anyway.

In the midst of this, Kennedy received a second letter from Khrushchev. This time, the Soviet leader demanded the removal of American missiles in Turkey in exchange for his missiles in Cuba.

This put Kennedy in a terrible position. Time was running out to mount an invasion. If he waited even a day or two, the military could not guarantee that they could destroy the Soviet missiles before they could be launched. Khrushchev's first letter seemed reasonable, but the second letter was more demanding. Perhaps he had lost power and hardliners in Moscow had taken over. Alternatively, it was possible that Khrushchev was terrified Kennedy might actually launch a first strike and he was desperately searching for a way out of the crisis.

The members of EX-COMM all agreed that making a deal with the Soviets was risky. If the Soviet Union could use the threat of missiles in Cuba to extract concessions from the United States, what would prevent them from trying it again a year or two later? What would they demand next? Berlin?

Finally, the president's younger brother, **Robert Kennedy** suggested ignoring the second letter and publicly agreeing to the terms of the first. However, the United States would secretly agree to remove the missiles from Turkey – many months later – so it would not seem to be part of a deal. He met late on the night of October 27 with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin to pass along the message, and to stress that the Soviets would have to agree the next day, or there would be war.

On October 28, Khrushchev announced that he would dismantle the installations in Cuba and return the missiles to the Soviet Union, expressing his trust that the United States would not invade Cuba. The crisis had lasted 13 days. In the end, Kennedy's cool-headedness, patience, and determination to find a way for Khrushchev to save face paid off. Although the unthinkable had been only hours away, the world had not descended into nuclear war.



**Robert Kennedy:** John F. Kennedy's younger brother. He was Attorney General during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

### Primary Source: Photograph

The members of Ex-Comm gathered around a table with President Kennedy at the center during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

## EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS

The Cuban Missile Crisis had both short-term and long-term effects. Seeing the need for better communication, a direct link was established between the White House and Kremlin. Although in popular culture it is known as the **red telephone** on the president's desk, the hotline was never a telephone line, and no red phones have ever been used. The first implementation used Teletype equipment, then a fax machine, and since 2008, a secure computer link over which messages are exchanged by email.

The crisis was a great boost for Kennedy. Erasing doubts about his ability to stand up to communists, his reputation as a determined cold warrior was restored. On the other hand, the final compromise was viewed in the Soviet Union as an embarrassment. Two years afterward the **Politburo** forced Khrushchev out of power, replacing him with **Leonid Brezhnev**.



**Red Telephone:** Nickname for the direct communication link between the White House and Kremlin.



**Politburo:** The group of the leaders of the Soviet Union. Roughly equivalent to the President's cabinet.



**Leonid Brezhnev:** Soviet leader from 1964-1982.

The United States kept its promise never to invade Cuba. Castro remained in power as a communist dictator well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. When he died in 2016 at age 90, his younger brother **Raul** took over, continuing the regime's hold on power. Accepting Castro's government, however, did not mean that relations between the two nations were any warmer. Americans continued to restrict all travel and trade with Cuba. As the decades progressed, Cuba became more and more impoverished. After 54 years of **embargo**, in 2014 President Barack Obama announced a change in policy, allowing direct flights from the United States to Cuba, and granting travel visas for American tourists. Obama himself visited Cuba in 2016. In 2017, the new Trump Administration, weary of being seen as soft on America's enemies, and aware of the importance of Cuban-American voters, cancelled Obama's agreements.

### CONCLUSION

The arms race and the brinksmanship that led to the Cuban Missile Crisis were such a dangerous game that Kennedy and Khrushchev nearly let things slip out of control. The nuclear standoff between East and West produced a strange stalemate that seems to have prevented war. But, was this a good way to deal with the Soviets? Was the outcome we achieved worth the price we paid – both financially and in our physical and emotional security?

What do you think? Did American leaders respond wisely to the communist threat?



**Raul Castro:** Fidel Castro's younger brother and leader of Cuba from 2008 to the present.



**Embargo:** A block on trade.

**SUMMARY**

When World War II ended, the United States was the only country with an atomic bomb. Within a few years, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France and China had also developed nuclear weapons.

Since the Cold War was essentially a long face off, both sides wanted to be prepared with the most powerful weapons. This led to an arms race in which the United States and Soviet Union tried to outdo each other to develop more powerful and more plentiful nuclear bombs, missiles, tanks, and airplanes. Both superpowers ended up having nuclear weapons mounted on missiles, in bombs delivered by airplanes, and missiles launched from submarines.

In the United States, people were terrified of the possibility of death from sudden, unpredictable nuclear attack. Many Americans built fallout shelters. Students practiced “duck and cover” drills at school, and superheroes fought communists in comic books.

By the end of the arms race, both nations had enough nuclear weapons to destroy the other many times over. However, both sides were afraid to shoot first, for fear of a retaliatory attack. This mutually assured destruction prevented nuclear war.

All nuclear nations tested their weapons. The United States and France tested weapons in the islands of the Pacific, with disastrous results for the health of the islanders.

The race for technological superiority extended into space. The Soviet Union launched the first satellite, first animal, and first person into space, but the United States was first to send a man to the Moon.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected president in a close election over Vice President Richard Nixon. It was the first election that featured televised debates.

Kennedy wanted more conventional weapons so he would have other options besides nuclear war. He also wanted Americans to travel abroad to help other nations so that people around the world would think positively about the United States.

In 1959, communists took over the island nation of Cuba. Americans tried to help anti-communist Cubans retake the island, but their invasion failed and Kennedy refused to help. This was embarrassing for Kennedy and made the Soviets think Kennedy was weak.

In 1962, Soviet leader Khrushchev placed nuclear missiles in Cuba. The 13 days of standoff between Khrushchev and Kennedy were the closest the two superpowers ever came to nuclear war. After the crisis, both sides decided to try to talk more and find ways to reduce their nuclear arsenals.



## PEOPLE & GROUPS

**Curtis LeMay:** General who led the Strategic Air Command, responsible for America's nuclear bombers and missiles.

**Nuclear Club:** The group of countries who have nuclear weapons.

**Captain America** and **Superman:** Superheroes who became popular during the Cold War by fighting against communist enemies in comic books.

**Laika:** A dog. The first animal in space.

**Yuri Gagarin:** Soviet Cosmonaut and first human in space in 1961.

**Alan Shephard:** First American in space in 1961.

**Valentina Tereshkova:** Soviet cosmonaut. She became the first woman in space in 1963.

**John F. Kennedy (JFK):** Democratic president from 1961-1963. He was president during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**Neil Armstrong:** First man to set foot on the Moon in 1969.

**Lyndon B. Johnson:** Vice president for John F. Kennedy and president from 1963-1968.

**New Frontiersmen:** The group of young intellectuals who served as Kennedy's advisors.

**Fulgencio Batista:** Corrupt dictator of Cuba. He was supported by the United States and was overthrown by Castro.

**Fidel Castro:** Communist leader who led the Cuban Revolution in 1959.

**Nikita Khrushchev:** Soviet leader from 1953-1964. He was leader during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**Adlai Stevenson:** Democratic presidential candidate and ambassador to the United Nations during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**Robert Kennedy:** John F. Kennedy's younger brother. He was Attorney General during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**Ex-Comm:** The group of experts who advised Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**Politburo:** The group of the leaders of the Soviet Union. Roughly equivalent to the President's cabinet.

**Leonid Brezhnev:** Soviet leader from 1964-1982.

**Raul Castro:** Fidel Castro's younger brother and leader of Cuba from 2008 to the present.



## POLICIES & TREATIES

**Compact of Free Association (COFA):** Agreement between the US, Marshall Islands, and Federated States of Micronesia.

**New Frontier:** Kennedy's agenda, including more domestic spending and a shift away from massive retaliation.

**Flexible Response:** Kennedy's policy of having more conventional (non-nuclear) weapons so that the United States could use military power without resorting to a nuclear attack.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Proliferation:** The spread of weapons, especially nuclear weapons to multiple countries.

**Nuclear Winter:** The time period after a major nuclear exchange during which crops would be destroyed and most humans would starve.

**Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD):** The situation in which both the United States and Soviet Union could destroy one another in a nuclear exchange. Because starting a war meant assured destruction, no side would start the war.

**Blockade:** The use of a navy to prevent the entrance and exit of ships from a port.

**Embargo:** A block on trade.



## GOVERNMENT & MILITARY AGENCIES

**Strategic Air Command:** The organization in the American military responsible for America's nuclear bombers and missiles.

**Civil Defense:** The local organizations who plan for disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and nuclear attack.

**Apollo Program:** NASA program to develop the technology to send a man to the Moon.

**Peace Corps:** A group of young American volunteers who travel to developing nations to provide support and help spread goodwill.

**Central Intelligence Agency (CIA):** America's spy agency.



## SPEECHES

**Kennedy's Inaugural Address:** President Kennedy's speech in 1961 and occasion of some of his most famous statements.

**We Choose to Go to the Moon:** Speech by JFK in 1961 in which he challenged America to send a man to the moon before 1970.

**One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind:** Armstrong's statement as he stepped onto the Moon's surface.



## LOCATIONS

**Bikini Atoll:** Atoll in the Marshall Islands used by the United States for testing nuclear weapons. It was the site of the Castle Bravo test.

**Eniwetok:** Island in the Marshall Islands used by the United States for testing nuclear weapons. Location of the first hydrogen bomb test.



## EVENTS

**Castle Bravo:** Nuclear test on Bikini Atoll that was much larger than expected.

**1960 Presidential Election:** Election between Senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard Nixon. Kennedy won in a close popular vote.

**Kennedy-Nixon Debates:** The first televised presidential election debates.

**Cuban Revolution:** Communist overthrow of Batista's Cuban government in 1958, led by Fidel Castro.

**Bay of Pigs Invasion:** 1961 attack by anti-communist Cuban exiles who had been trained by the CIA in an effort to start a revolution against Castro. The invasion failed and Kennedy refused to support the invaders.

**Cuban Missile Crisis:** 13-day standoff in 1962. The Soviet Union had placed nuclear missiles in Cuba and Kennedy demanded that they be removed. It was the closest the world ever came to nuclear war.



## TECHNOLOGIES

**B-52 Stratofortress:** Long-range bomber designed to carry nuclear bombs deep into the Soviet Union.

**Thermonuclear Warhead:** A nuclear warhead that uses fusion to produce a much larger explosion than the fission bomb used against Japan. Also known as a hydrogen bomb or H-bomb.

**Tactical Nuclear Weapons:** Small nuclear weapons meant to be used on the battlefield the way artillery might be used.

**Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM):** Nuclear-armed missiles that are fired from one continent to targets in another.

**Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM):** Nuclear-armed missiles fired from submarines.

**Nuclear Triad:** The three methods of attacking with nuclear weapons: land-based bombers, land-based missiles and submarine-based missiles.

**Multiple Independent Targetable Reentry Vehicles (MIRV):** Missiles that separate in space and deliver nuclear warheads to many different targets.

**Fallout Shelter:** A place that would be safe during an atomic attack. They were often stocked with food, water, and medical supplies.

**Sputnik:** First man-made satellite launched by the Soviet Union in 1957.

**Explorer 1:** America's first satellite, launched in 1958.

**U-2:** American spy plane.

**Red Telephone:** Nickname for the direct communication link between the White House and Kremlin.



# 4

## F O U R T H   Q U E S T I O N DID THE COLD WAR HURT AMERICA?



### INTRODUCTION

An atmosphere of fear hung over America during the early years of the Cold War. People feared that communists might achieve their goal of world domination. When the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb in 1949, Americans feared nuclear holocaust. That same year, China, the world's most populous nation, became communist. Half of Europe was under Josef Stalin's influence, and every time Americans read their newspapers there seemed to be a new and more terrifying danger.

These fears changed the way Americans thought about freedom and security. Sometimes they became paranoid and ignored basic freedoms as they tumbled over themselves to find communists hidden in their midst. Other times, a desire to defend themselves and stay ahead of the looming danger from the East led to impressive advances in science and engineering.

While the face-to-face standoff between the American armed forces and communist troops might have been far away in Berlin, Korea or Vietnam, the Cold War, like all wars, changed America. Some wars lead to positive outcomes on the home front. For example, the Second World War led to increased participation by women in the workforce, an increased number of Americans going to college due to the GI Bill, and courageous leaders who advanced civil right for African-Americans.

Was this true of the Cold War? Did this long period living on the edge of annihilation make life at home better, or did the Cold War hurt America?

### MCCARTHYISM

“Are you, or have you ever been, a communist?” In the late 1940s and early 1950s, thousands of Americans who toiled in the government, served in the army, worked in the movie industry, or came from any number of other walks of life had to answer that question under oath.

It did not take long for the Cold War confrontation in Europe and Asia to come home. In 1947, President Truman had ordered background checks of every civilian in service to the government to make sure they were not secretly supporting communism or Nazism. When **Alger Hiss**, a high-ranking diplomat at the State Department who had advised Roosevelt at Yalta and been involved in the creation of the United Nations was denounced as a communist and arrested on charges of espionage, Americans panicked. The Hiss trial concluded in 1950 with a conviction. Hiss went to jail, but evidence of his guilt is still inconclusive.

In 1951, husband and wife **Julius and Ethel Rosenberg** were accused of passing nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union. Like Alger Hiss, the Rosenbergs maintained their innocence. While the evidence against Julius was convincing, Ethel’s involvement in the plot seems to have been less crucial. All the same, they were both convicted and put to death in the electric chair.

Senator **Joseph McCarthy** of Wisconsin capitalized on national paranoia by proclaiming that communists were omnipresent and that he was America’s only salvation. Historians often label his efforts a witch hunt in reference to the Salem Witch Trials of the 1600s in which dozens of people were falsely accused.

At a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950, McCarthy launched his first salvo. He proclaimed that he was aware of **205 card-carrying members of the Communist Party** who worked for the State Department. A few days later, he repeated the charges at a speech in Salt Lake City. McCarthy began to attract headlines, and the Senate asked him to make his case. As it turned out, McCarthy was never able to provide any evidence to support his sensational accusations.

On February 20, 1950, McCarthy addressed the Senate and made a list of dubious claims against suspected communists. He originally cited 81 cases that day but skipped several as he went, and for most cases repeated the same flimsy information. He proved nothing that day, but the Senators were suspicious enough that they called for a full investigation. McCarthy was in the national spotlight.

Staying in the headlines was a full-time job. After accusing low-level officials, McCarthy went for the big guns, even questioning the loyalty of Dean Acheson and George Marshall, two of the most respected republican leaders of the day.



**Alger Hiss:** American diplomat who had advised Roosevelt at Yalta and was involved in the creation of the United Nations. He was denounced as a communist during the Red Scare. He was convicted but evidence of his guilt is inconclusive.



**Julius and Ethel Rosenberg:** Julius Rosenberg was scientist who gave nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union. He and his wife Ethel were tried, convicted and put to death during the Red Scare.



**Joseph McCarthy:** Senator who became famous as an accuser during the Red Scare. He rarely presented evidence and was eventually discredited.



**McCarthy’s 205 Communists:** McCarthy claimed to know of 205 communists working in the State Department during a speech in 1950. He never provided evidence but his claim and subsequent Senate hearings made him famous.



**Primary Source: Photograph**

Senator Joseph McCarthy claiming to know of communists working in the State Department.

Some Republicans in the Senate were aghast and disavowed McCarthy. Others such as Senator Robert Taft and Congressman Richard Nixon saw him as an asset. The public loved the show. It was emotionally rewarding to think that someone was making sure the country was safe from communist infiltration, and McCarthy was a master of alternately stoking fear and then providing a show of strength and resolve. His supporters rewarded the witch-hunters by sending red-baiters to Washington to file accusations against suspected **Reds**, providing plenty of work for McCarthy and his fellow communist hunters.

Dwight Eisenhower, the hero of World War II had no love for McCarthy. Eisenhower could see through McCarthy's charade, but when Eisenhower was elected president in 1952, he was reluctant to condemn McCarthy for fear of splitting the Republican Party. McCarthy's accusations went on into 1954, when the Wisconsin senator turned his sights on the United States Army. For eight weeks, in televised hearings, McCarthy interrogated army officials, including many decorated war heroes.



**Reds:** Derogatory nickname for communists.



**Primary Source: Photograph**

Senator Joseph McCarthy and Welch at the Army hearings.

This was his tragic mistake. Television was new in the 1950s, and for the first time Americans were able to watch McCarthy live. Instead of showing a noble crusader, television illustrated the mean-spiritedness of McCarthy's campaign. The army then went on the attack, questioning McCarthy's methods and credibility leading up to one of the most memorable lines in government history. Joseph Welch, a lawyer for the army challenged McCarthy, "Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness." Then, defending the young man McCarthy was accusing, Welch went on, "Let us not assassinate this lad further, senator. You have done enough. **Have you no sense of decency?**"

Americans agreed. McCarthy was a jerk, and Welch and television proved it. The American people thought McCarthy unscrupulous in his attacks. Poll after poll showed that Americans would not tolerate attacks on the brave men and women in the armed forces.

Fed up with the embarrassing show, McCarthy's colleagues censured him for dishonoring the Senate, and the hearings came to a close. Plagued with poor health and alcoholism, McCarthy himself died three years later.

### HUAC

Senator McCarthy was not the only individual to make a name for himself seeking out potential communists. Members of the House of Representatives wanted to show that they were just as enthusiastic about rooting out the red threat.

The **House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)** targeted the Hollywood film industry. Actors, writers and producers alike were summoned to appear before the committee and provide names of colleagues who may have been members of the Communist Party.



**Have you no sense of decency?:**

Famous line from Army lawyer Joseph Welch during the Red Scare.

His televised question helped discredit Joseph McCarthy.



Watch Welch and McCarthy at the Army Hearings



**House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC):**

Special committee formed by members of the House of Representatives to investigate communists in the United States. Future president Richard Nixon was a member of the committee and they investigated the Hollywood 10.

Those who repented and named names of suspected communists were allowed to return to business as usual. Those who refused to address the committee were cited for contempt. Since the First Amendment protects Americans' right to free speech and freedom of assembly, there is nothing illegal about being communist, meeting with communists, or spreading communist ideas.

Primary Source: Document

A warning to Americans during the height of the Red Scare focused especially on the supposed influence of communists in Hollywood.



**AMERICANS . . . . .**  
**DON'T PATRONIZE REDS!!!!**

—•—

**YOU CAN DRIVE THE REDS OUT OF**  
**TELEVISION, RADIO AND HOLLY-**  
**WOOD . . . . .**

**THIS TRACT WILL TELL YOU HOW.**

**WHY WE MUST DRIVE THEM OUT:**

1) The REDS have made our Screen, Radio and TV Moscow's most effective Fifth Column in America . . .  
 2) The REDS of Hollywood and Broadway have always been the chief financial support of Communist propaganda in America . . . 3) OUR OWN FILMS, made by RED Producers, Directors, Writers and STARS, are being used by Moscow in ASIA, Africa, the Balkans and throughout Europe to create hatred of America . . . 4) RIGHT NOW films are being made to craftily glorify MARXISM, UNESCO and ONE-WORLDISM . . . and via your TV Set they are being piped into your Living Room—and are poisoning the minds of your children under your very eyes ! ! !

So REMEMBER — If you patronize a Film made by RED Producers, Writers, Stars and STUDIOS you are aiding and abetting COMMUNISM . . . every time you permit REDS to come into your Living Room VIA YOUR TV SET you are helping MOSCOW and the INTERNATIONALISTS to destroy America ! ! !



Watch a 1950 video:  
 "How to Spot a Communist"

When ten writers and directors refused to answer the questions the HUAC members posed, citing their first amendment rights, they were cited for contempt of Congress. This was a dubious charge legally since Congress does not have the right to question anyone's political beliefs, but in the hysteria

## 4 DID THE COLD WAR HURT AMERICA?



of the early 1950s, even being accused of being a communist was tantamount to a social death sentence.

The **Hollywood 10** as they came to be called were fined, jailed, and lost their jobs. Like others who were accused of being communist during this time, they were blacklisted, meaning that no one would hire them. Years passed before they had their reputations restored.

Americans had mixed feelings about the Hollywood 10. Some people admired them for standing up to government officials who were abusing the Constitution. Others felt that communism was such an existential threat that bending the rules was necessary to protect the nation.

### EFFECTS OF THE RED SCARE

This era in American history is called the **Red Scare** or **McCarthyism** and we look back with some mystification. How could people have been so consumed by fear that they ignored the Constitution? Were there in fact communists in America? The answer is undoubtedly yes, but many of the accused had attended communist events many years before the hearings. In fact, it had been fashionable to do so in the 1930s.

Although Soviet spies did penetrate the highest levels of the American government, the vast majority of the accused were innocent victims. All across America, state legislatures and school boards mimicked McCarthy and HUAC. Thousands of people lost their jobs and had their reputations tarnished.

Unions were a special target of communist hunters. Sensing an unfavorable environment, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) merged in 1955 to close ranks. Librarians and school boards pulled books from library shelves that they thought might corrupt the minds of children, including *Robin Hood*, which was deemed dangerous for spreading the communist-like notion of stealing from the rich to give to the poor.

Some famous politicians first got their start during the Red Scare. Unlike Senator McCarthy who fell into disgrace, congressman Richard Nixon polished his anti-communist credentials as a member of HUAC and was selected by Eisenhower to be vice president. Later, Nixon capitalized on his tough reputation when he ran for president himself. Another future president, an actor named Ronald Reagan was elected president of the Screen Actors Guild, the union of Hollywood actors, and worked to root out communists from within the ranks of the Hollywood elite.

The Red Scare cast a long shadow over American foreign policy as well. For more than two decades, no politician could consider visiting or opening trade with China or withdrawing troops from Southeast Asia without being branded a communist. Ultimately, it was Richard Nixon, one of the great



**Hollywood 10:** A group of ten Hollywood writers, producers and directors who were accused of being communist. They refused to answer questions from HUAC and were blacklisted.



**Second Red Scare:** The period in the late 1940s and early 1950s when the fear that communists were infiltrating America drove wild accusations and political investigations.



**McCarthyism:** Another term often used for the Second Red Scare which refers to the unfounded accusations common of the time.

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heroes of HUAC, who was able to visit China without being suspected of being soft on communists.

Above all, several messages became crystal clear to the average American: Don't criticize the United States and don't be different.

### ATOMS FOR PEACE

As the arms race intensified, fear among the general public about the mysterious dangers of atomic weapons intensified. Research on atomic energy was a strictly held secret and the results of that research had been used only for developing weaponry. President Eisenhower wanted to change that, and on December 8, 1953, he delivered a groundbreaking speech to the United Nations General Assembly that has become known as “Atoms for Peace.”

Eisenhower was determined to solve “the fearful atomic dilemma” by finding some way by which “the miraculous inventiveness of man would not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life.” Essentially, Eisenhower argued, the nations of the world should share the discoveries they were making in the field of atomic energy so that the technologies that were being developed for war could also be applied to civilian purposes – electricity production and medicine for example.

Atoms for Peace opened up nuclear research to civilians and countries that had not previously possessed nuclear technology. This made it possible for some countries to develop weapons. However, the Atoms for Peace program that Eisenhower's speech initiated had great impacts on the world.

Atoms for Peace created the ideological background for the creation of the **International Atomic Energy Agency** and the **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**. Eisenhower argued for a nonproliferation agreement throughout the world and argued for a stop of the spread of military use of nuclear weapons. Although the nations that already had atomic weapons kept their weapons and grew their supplies, very few other countries have developed similar weapons since. In this way, Eisenhower was successful.

The Atoms for Peace program also created regulations for the use and handling of nuclear material and production of nuclear power. Today, there are over 440 nuclear reactors in 31 countries that provide about 11% of the world's electricity. In the United States, 99 reactors provide about 19% of our electricity. Atomic technologies have been used by doctors to diagnose illnesses and treat cancers, in agriculture to eradicate pests, and in industry to develop smoke detectors and perhaps eventually, automobiles.



**Atoms for Peace:** A speech given by President Eisenhower in 1953 (and the government programs that followed) that encouraged the civilian use of nuclear technology.



Watch Eisenhower's  
Atoms for Peace Speech



**International Atomic Energy Agency:** A part of the United Nations that monitors the use of nuclear technology.



**Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty:** A treaty signed in 1968 by all but four countries in the world. Nations promise not to acquire nuclear weapons (if they don't already possess them) and in exchange they may use nuclear technology for civilian purposes.

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### Primary Source: Photograph

The Grafenrheinfeld Nuclear Power Plant in Germany. The steam rising from the cooling towers is non-polluting. The use of nuclear technology for civilian purposes was an important product of Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program.

The Atoms for Peace speech and program helped Americans and the people of the rest of the world see the benefits and not just the terror of nuclear power. However, Atoms for Peace did nothing to slow the arms race. The belief that in order to avoid a nuclear war the United States must stay on the offensive, ready to strike at any time, meant that the arms race was essential to preserve our very existence, and the same belief is the reason that the Soviet Union would not give up its atomic weapons either. In fact, during Eisenhower's time in office, the nuclear holdings of the United States rose from 1,005 to 20,000 weapons.

### THE MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Before World War II, the United States didn't have a permanent military industry. In times of war, companies that built cars, refrigerators, and all the other things that were sold to consumers simply adapted their factories to produce tanks, bombers and bombs. This was the basis for President Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous Arsenal of Democracy.

However, the realities of the Cold War were different. The nuclear standoff with the Soviet Union meant that the United States could never go back to a time when the government was not developing, producing and buying new weapons systems. And so, a complex and enduring network grew up between the military who needed the latest weaponry, the companies who developed and built those weapons, and Congress which provided the funds.

President Eisenhower warned Americans about the danger of this relationship, which he dubbed the **Military Industrial Complex**. He foresaw a time when members of congress would realize that they needed the votes of workers at major defense contractors such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, or Raytheon and would make sure that the military purchased new aircraft,



### Military Industrial Complex:

President Eisenhower's term for the relationship between the military, weapons manufacturers, and lawmakers who allocated funding for weapons systems.

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missiles, and guns from these hometown producers. In the end, the government would spend tax dollars, not because the military needed a particular new weapon, but because these contracts were important for creating jobs.

Since the 1950s, many leaders have tried to reduce the size of the nation's arsenal, or stop the purchase of new equipment they deem unnecessary, only to come up against the resistance of the Military Industrial Complex and find that the demands of the Cold War have irreversibly changed the way our country produces the tools of war.

### EDUCATION

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the world's first satellite. Suddenly, there was concrete evidence that Soviet education might be superior to that in the United States, and Congress reacted by passing the **National Defense Education Act** to bring American schools up to speed.



**National Defense Education Act:** Law passed in 1957 after the launch of Sputnik. It provided funding for science and mathematics education in schools and universities.

Since the defense of the nation was based on nuclear weapons, there was a tremendous need for the scientists and mathematicians who could develop these essential technologies. New electronic computers created a demand for programmers. For years, the United States had relied on well-educated refugees from Europe for its top mathematicians, but it was clearly time for the United States to educate its own. Consequently, the law's focus was preparing young people to excel in math and science.

The law provided funding for schools to upgrade their science laboratories and to train new math and science teachers. It provided loans for students to attend college. It provided money for students to study languages that might help national defense such as Russian. The law initiated a search for talented students, which gave birth to gifted and talented programs in public schools across the country.

Perhaps most importantly in the long term, however, was that the Cold War changed Americans' attitudes towards science in public schools. In the 1920s, a great debate had raged between believers in modernism and traditionalists who insisted that the Bible be the basis for scientific study. The 1925 Scopes Trial had epitomized this conflict. In the 1950s, all that changed. Studying science, not the Bible, was essential for the nation's survival. The traditionalists did not disappear, but at least while the Soviet Union's missiles were aimed at America, science and mathematics ruled the public schools.

### THE MISSILE GAP

Another important consequence of the Soviet launch of Sputnik was the growing prevalence of the idea that the United States was falling behind in its total number of missiles. By this time the actual number of nuclear missiles and bombs each nation had was irrelevant since they could destroy

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one another many times over, but the fear of being somehow behind our rivals was potent.

In the early 1950s, American magazines began carrying stories about nuclear powered or nuclear armed Soviet bombers crossing the Arctic and raining destruction down on the United States. Although they were much exaggerated and proven false by subsequent U-2 spy plane missions over the Soviet Union, stories of a **bomber gap** put pressure on members of Congress to act. In response, the air force increased its own bomber fleet to a whopping 2,500 aircraft, far exceeding what turned out to be an imagined, rather than real threat.

Fear of a bomber gap was soon replaced, however, by fear of a **missile gap**. Missiles were far more terrifying than bombers since they could strike with less warning, and covered the distance from their bases deep inside the Soviet Union to their targets in the United States in minutes rather than hours. Incoming bombers might be intercepted and shot down by fighter aircraft, but no one had any way to defend against incoming missiles. Then Senator John F. Kennedy helped popularize this notion in speeches as he geared up for his presidential campaign in 1960.

President Eisenhower, who knew full well that there was no missile gap, was irritated by Kennedy's rhetoric. He knew that fear was an infection that could lead to problems in society, and despite his efforts to provide reassuring, steady, thoughtful leadership, the public seemed to be buying into the idea. Once again, pressure mounted on congress to allocate funds to increase the arsenal of nuclear-tipped missiles.

Ironically, talk of a missile gap probably made America less safe since Soviet leaders began to view Kennedy as an extremist warmonger. When Kennedy authorized the invasion of communist Cuba in 1961 at the Bay of Pigs their fears were confirmed and Kennedy's campaign talk of a missile gap, which he had known was an exaggeration, ended up making the Cuban Missile Crisis much more dangerous than it had to be.

Whether they bought into the idea of the bomber gap and missile gap or not, Americans had legitimate fears when it came to nuclear attack. What could a regular citizen do if the Soviets decided to launch a nuclear first strike? In reality, the answer was nothing, but this was entirely un-reassuring. A whole industry grew up during the 1950s to build **bomb shelters** in backyards and basements. Complete with beds, tins of crackers and barrels of water, these shelters were advertised in popular magazines and in newspapers. While a personal shelter might save a family from the blast and radioactive fallout of a nuclear attack, it is hard to imagine what sort of world they might climb out to find after consuming their rations of stale crackers.



**Bomber Gap:** A perceived lack of long-range bombers capable of striking the Soviet Union in the early 1950s. There was no gap – the United States had a roughly equal number of bombers as the Soviet Union. Concern, however, meant an increase in spending for bomber aircraft.



**Missile Gap:** A perceived lack of ICBMs compared to the Soviet Union. There was actually no gap, but the public became concerned with Senator Kennedy repeatedly used the term to stoke fear during his 1960 presidential campaign.



**Bomb Shelters:** A place that would be safe during an atomic attack. They were often stocked with food, water, and medical supplies.

## EISENHOWER'S FAREWELL

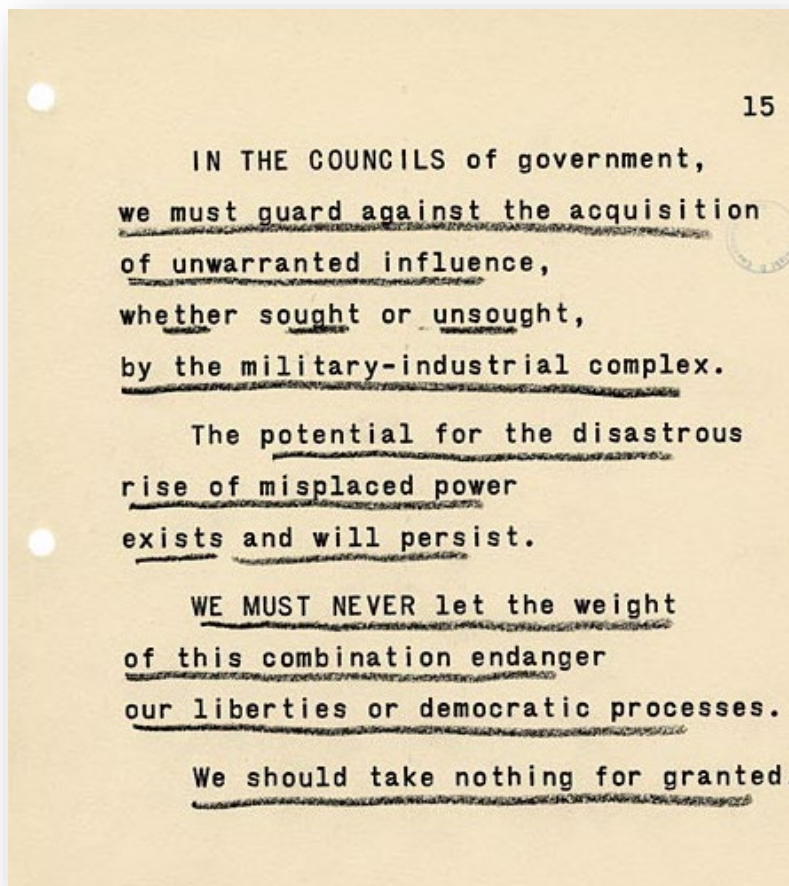
Shortly after taking the oath of office in 1953, President Eisenhower had delivered a speech in which he warned about the cost of expanding the armed forces. A former general and hero of the Second World War, Eisenhower surprised many with his dovish tone. He said, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some fifty miles of concrete pavement. We pay for a single fighter with a half-million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."



Watch Eisenhower's  
Farewell Address

## Primary Source: Document

Page 15 from Eisenhower's copy of his farewell address that he used during the television broadcast



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By the time his presidency ended eight years later, Eisenhower had presided over a long period of economic growth and also a huge expansion of the military. A few days before he handed off power to John F. Kennedy, the young president-elect, Eisenhower appeared on television to speak to the nation one last time. In this **farewell address**, his message was even more urgent. He warned of the danger of the Military Industrial Complex, a term he coined for the speech, and also against the growing influence of government-funded, defense-oriented research, which he saw as limiting the natural curiosity of America's brightest minds.

He urged leaders in American and the world to act cautiously, to keep an eye on the distant future and avoid rash acts that might seem necessary in the moment but would endanger generations to come.

Years later, we can look back and see the wisdom that the aging president imparted. His lessons about developing understanding, avoiding unnecessary conflict, guarding against undue influence, and seeking ways to disarm apply as much today as they did in 1961.

### CONCLUSION

Every war America has fought has had impacts on the home front. People make sacrifices to support the troops or take jobs in new places to fill in for workers who have taken up arms. But no war produced results at home quite like the Cold War. We transformed our economy. We learned to live in perpetual fear. In some cases, we turned on one another. Although President Eisenhower did his best to turn the negatives of nuclear war into positive advances for humanity, so many aspects of fighting the Cold War turned out to be bad for everyday Americans.

Of course, what was the alternative to fighting the communists? Letting them win? That would have been a catastrophe! Certainly, the benefit of saving freedom for humankind outweighs any price we had to pay. What do you think? Did the Cold War hurt America?



#### Eisenhower's Farewell Address:

Televised address by departing President Eisenhower in 1961 shortly before Kennedy took office. Eisenhower warned of the dangers of all-or-nothing thinking and the growing influence of a military industrial complex.



### SUMMARY

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a second Red Scare swept the United States. People in both the House of Representatives and especially Senator Joseph McCarthy investigated suspected communists. Many people's careers were ruined by false accusations since few real communists were ever found. Those that did, such as spies who had given nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union, fueled fears that gave power to the accusers.

President Eisenhower wanted to find ways to use nuclear power for good, not just for weapons of destruction. His Atoms for Peace program encouraged the sharing of nuclear technology to support things such as medicine and nuclear power stations to generate electricity.

When he left office, Eisenhower warned America about the danger posed by the Cold War's long period of military readiness. Unlike past wars that ended, the Cold War was always about to begin. This meant that the government was always spending money to have the latest military technology, and the companies and workers that supplied those weapons relied on tax money being spend for their jobs. Eisenhower warned that this would lead to unnecessary spending in the future, which has turned out to be true.

In fact, during the election campaign of 1960s, Kennedy encouraged this sort of spending by claiming that they United States had fewer missiles than the Soviet Union. This missile gap did not actually exist, but many people were so afraid of communists that they believed it anyway and their fear encouraged politicians to vote to spend money on the military.

Fear that the communists might be more advanced in the fields of science and math, and therefore might be able to surpass the United States in weapon design, led to spending in education. Science education became important again and many colleges and high schools built new science labs and hired science teachers.



## PEOPLE AND GROUPS

**Alger Hiss:** American diplomat who had advised Roosevelt at Yalta and was involved in the creation of the United Nations. He was denounced as a communist during the Red Scare. He was convicted but evidence of his guilt is inconclusive.

**Julius and Ethel Rosenberg:** Julius Rosenberg was scientist who gave nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union. He and his wife Ethel were tried, convicted and put to death during the Red Scare.

**Joseph McCarthy:** Senator who became famous as an accuser during the Red Scare. He rarely presented evidence and was eventually discredited.

**Reds:** Derogatory nickname for communists.

**Hollywood 10:** A group of ten Hollywood writers, producers and directors who were accused of being communist. They refused to answer questions from HUAC and were blacklisted.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Military Industrial Complex:** President Eisenhower's term for the relationship between the military, weapons manufacturers, and lawmakers who allocated funding for weapons systems.

**Bomber Gap:** A perceived lack of long-range bombers capable of striking the Soviet Union in the early 1950s. There was no gap – the United States had a roughly equal number of bombers as the Soviet Union. Concern, however, meant an increase in spending for bomber aircraft.

**Missile Gap:** A perceived lack of ICBMs compared to the Soviet Union. There was actually no gap, but the public became concerned with Senator Kennedy repeatedly used the term to stoke fear during his 1960 presidential campaign.

**Bomb Shelters:** A place that would be safe during an atomic attack. They were often stocked with food, water, and medical supplies.



## LAWS & TREATIES

**Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty:** A treaty signed in 1968 by all but four countries in the world. Nations promise not to acquire nuclear weapons (if they don't already possess them) and in exchange they may use nuclear technology for civilian purposes.

**National Defense Education Act:** Law passed in 1957 after the launch of Sputnik. It provided funding for science and mathematics education in schools and universities.



## GOVERNMENT & INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

**House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC):** Special committee formed by members of the House of Representatives to investigate communists in the United States. Future president Richard Nixon was a member of the committee and they investigated the Hollywood 10.

**International Atomic Energy Agency:** A part of the United Nations that monitors the use of nuclear technology.



## SPEECHES

**McCarthy's 205 Communists:** McCarthy claimed to know of 205 communists working in the State Department during a speech in 1950. He never provided evidence but his claim and subsequent Senate hearings made him famous.

**Have you no sense of decency?:** Famous line from Army lawyer Joseph Welch during the Red Scare. His televised question helped discredit Joseph McCarthy.

**Atoms for Peace:** A speech given by President Eisenhower in 1953 (and the government programs that followed) that encouraged the civilian use of nuclear technology.

**Eisenhower's Farewell Address:** Televised address by departing President Eisenhower in 1961 shortly before Kennedy took office. Eisenhower warned of the dangers of all-or-nothing thinking and the growing influence of a military industrial complex.



## EVENTS

**Second Red Scare:** The period in the late 1940s and early 1950s when the fear that communists were infiltrating America drove wild accusations and political investigations.

**McCarthyism:** Another term often used for the Second Red Scare which refers to the unfounded accusations common of the time.

# 5

## F I F T H Q U E S T I O N W A S T H E S O V I E T U N I O N A C T U A L L Y A N E V I L E M P I R E ?



### INTRODUCTION

In 1983, American President Ronald Reagan declared his belief that the Soviet Union was an “evil empire.” He described the ways that the Soviet government restricted the practice of religion, persecuted political opponents, limited personal freedom, dominated the nations of Eastern Europe and sought to spread communism around the world.

Reagan cast the struggle between the East and West as a moral struggle between the forces of good and evil and predicted that communism would eventually be relegated to the “ash heap of history.”

Reagan’s criticisms of the Soviet Union were all at least partly true. But all nations and governments have implemented policies that turn out to be bad, including the United States. Although the citizens of the Soviet Union may have lived in fear, the Soviet school system produced one of the highest rates of literacy in the world. While Americans enjoy the freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, we also endure tremendous racism.

Clearly, no nation is perfect, but was there something especially uniquely wrong with communism and the Soviet Union in particular? Had President Reagan touched on some truth about that place and time in history? Was the Soviet Union actually an evil empire?

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### KITCHEN DEBATES

During the Cold War, Americans and Soviets typically faced off militarily. They had relatively few chances to directly debate the merits of their two ways of life. One exception was the Kitchen Debates.

In 1959, the Soviets and Americans had agreed to hold exhibits in each other's countries as a cultural exchange to promote understanding. The Soviet exhibit in New York opened in June 1959, and the following month then-Vice President Nixon was on hand to open the American exhibit in Moscow. Nixon took Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev on a tour of the exhibit. There were multiple displays of consumer goods provided by over 450 American companies. A centerpiece of the exhibit was a geodesic dome, which housed scientific and technical experiments.

The **Kitchen Debate** took place in a number of locations at the exhibition but primarily in the kitchen of a model suburban house, cut in half for easy viewing. This was only one of a series of four meetings that occurred between Nixon and Khrushchev during the 1959 exhibition.



**Kitchen Debate:** A series of debates between Vice-President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in 1959 in Moscow about the relative merits of communism and capitalism.

During the first meeting, in the Kremlin, Khrushchev dismissed the new consumer technologies of the United States and declared that the Soviets would have all of the same things in a few years. He satirically asked if there was a machine that “puts food into the mouth and pushes it down.” Nixon responded by saying at least the competition was technological, rather than military.

The second visit occurred in a television studio inside the American exhibit. At the end, Khrushchev stated that everything he had said in their debate should be translated into English and broadcast in the United States. Nixon responded, “Certainly it will, and everything I say is to be translated into Russian and broadcast across the Soviet Union. That's a fair bargain.” To this proposal, he and Khrushchev shook hands vigorously.

The exchange between Khrushchev and Nixon is interesting because while they were discussing which country was superior, they did not compare nuclear weapons, political influence, or control of territories. They were using the technological innovations set up in the exhibit. Nixon argued that the Americans built to take advantage of new techniques, while Khrushchev argued that the Soviets built for future generations.

It is certainly true that the United States was developing a more consumer-driven economy in which new technologies were being replaced regularly. Just think of the pace at which companies like Apple or Samsung produce phones that make last year's model obsolete. However, the Soviet model of building for the future often meant dreary, grey concrete buildings and technologies that were considered old-fashioned in the West.

The third visit occurred inside the kitchen of the cutaway model home. The kitchen was furnished with a dishwasher, refrigerator, and cooktop and

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oven. It was designed to represent a \$14,000 home that a typical American worker could afford in 1959.

In front of the cameras and in front of the wealth that the free market system had created for the everyday American housewife, Nixon tried to convince Khrushchev that the free market system was not terrible in the way Soviet propaganda portrayed it. Nixon said that he should “not be afraid of ideas. After all, you don’t know everything.” The Soviet leader replied, “You don’t know anything about communism, except fear of it.”



Primary Source: Photograph

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and Vice President Richard Nixon engage in the Kitchen Debate.



Watch video from the  
Kitchen Debates

In the United States, three major television networks broadcast the kitchen debate. American reaction was initially mixed, with The New York Times calling it “an exchange that emphasized the gulf between east and west but had little bearing on the substantive issue” and portrayed it as a political stunt. On the other hand, Time Magazine, also covering the exhibition, praised Nixon, saying he “managed in a unique way to personify a national character proud of peaceful accomplishment, sure of its way of life, confident of its power under threat.”

Because of the informal nature of the exchange, Nixon gained popularity. He also impressed Mr. Khrushchev. The reporter William Safire who was present at the debates recalled “the shrewd Khrushchev came away from his personal duel of words with Nixon persuaded that the advocate of capitalism was not just tough-minded but strong-willed.”

The trip raised Nixon's profile as a public statesman, greatly improving his chances for receiving the Republican presidential nomination the following year. Khrushchev claimed that following his confrontation with Nixon he did all he could to bring about Nixon's defeat in his 1960 presidential campaign.

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In the end the Kitchen Debate did not change the opinions of leaders on either side of the Iron Curtain. It did, however, demonstrate the enormous gulf between free market and communist ideology. Although leaders in the Soviet Union were not about to embrace a market economy or democracy, the same could not be said for the people of Eastern Europe. Their discontent was strikingly manifested in open rebellions in both Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

### HUNGARY

Soviet premier Josef Stalin had said “Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach.” When the Soviet Army marched across Eastern Europe at the end of World War II, Stalin’s dream of expanding communism became reality. When the war ended, the Soviets set up communist governments in the puppet states of the Eastern Bloc. Like the American military, which remained stationed in West Germany, Great Britain, and Italy, Soviet troops stayed on in East Germany and the Warsaw Pact states of the East. The presence of the Soviets did not, however, mean that the people of the Eastern Bloc were content.

The **Hungarian Uprising** of 1956 was a nationwide revolt against the government of the Hungarian People’s Republic and its Soviet-imposed policies, lasting from October 23 until November 10, 1956. Though leaderless when it first began, it was the first major threat to Soviet control since the Red Army drove Nazi Germany from its territory at the end of World War II.

The revolt began as a student demonstration, which attracted thousands who marched through central Budapest to the Parliament building. When a delegation of the students entered the radio building to try to broadcast the students’ demands, the State Security Police (ÁVH) attacked from within the building. One student was killed and as the news of the shooting swept through the streets, disorder and violence erupted throughout the capital.

The revolt spread quickly across Hungary and the government collapsed. Thousands organized into militias, battling the ÁVH and Soviet troops. Pro-Soviet communists and ÁVH members captured by the militias were imprisoned or executed. A new government formally disbanded the ÁVH, declared its intention to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, and pledged to re-establish free elections. By the end of October, fighting had almost ceased as the remnants of the communist dictatorship were swept away. A sense of normality began to return.

Initially the Soviet leadership announced a willingness to negotiate a withdrawal of its troops, but the Soviet politburo changed its mind and moved to crush the revolution. On November 4, a large Soviet force invaded Budapest and other regions of the country. The Hungarians resisted for a week before being crushed by the overwhelming Soviet force. Over 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Soviet troops were killed in the conflict, and 200,000



**Hungarian Uprising:** Revolution by Hungarians in 1956 against Soviet domination. The uprising was crushed when forces from the Soviet Union invaded Hungary.

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Hungarians fled as refugees. Mass arrests and denunciations continued for months afterward as the newly reinstalled, Soviet-backed, communist government suppressed all public opposition. Public discussion of the revolution was banned in Hungary for more than 30 years.



### Primary Source: Photograph

A Soviet T-54 tank on the streets of Budapest during the crackdown against the Hungarian Uprising.

### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Roughly ten years after the failed Hungarian Revolution, the government of another member of the Eastern Bloc briefly resisted Soviet domination. The Czechoslovakian government began a series of reforms to open up the economy and political system. This brief period was called the **Prague Spring**, named for the nation's capital city.

The reforms, especially the decentralization of administrative authority, were not received well by the Soviets, who, after failed negotiations, sent half a million Warsaw Pact troops and tanks to occupy the country. A spirited non-violent resistance was mounted throughout the country, including painting over and turning street signs to confuse the invaders. On one occasion an entire invasion force from Poland was routed back out of the country after a day's wandering. The Czechoslovakians defied curfews and one protestor, Jan Palach set himself on fire in Prague's Wenceslas Square to protest renewed restrictions on freedom of speech. While the Soviet military had predicted that it would take four days to subdue the country, the resistance held out for eight months.

In the end, however, the hope for significant reform was crushed by the force of the Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops. By the end of 1968 central control of the economy and restrictions on civil liberties had been restored. It would be another 20 years before the people of Czechoslovakia enjoyed basic civil rights.



**Prague Spring:** An uprising in Czechoslovakia in 1968 in which the government and citizens attempted to reform the economy and political system. The uprising was ended when the Soviet Union sent in its military to restore communists to power.

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### THE POLICE STATE

In the case of the uprisings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union had to use its army on a massive scale to put down widespread rebellion. Normally, however, in the Soviet Union and the world's other communist nations, order was maintained by establishing a continuous level of fear and extensive surveillance of citizens.

In most dictatorships, both communist and otherwise, the normal police forces are supplemented by a secret police. In the Soviet Union, the **KGB** served this role. In East Germany, they were known as the **Stasi**, in China as the **Juntong**, and in North Korea as the **State Security Department**. Regardless of their name, they all used the same tactics. The people of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, Cuba and North Korea knew they were being watched, that the secret police were listening to their phone calls, reading their mail, and monitoring where they travelled, where they shopped, and who they associated with. In an effort to protect themselves from suspicion, people promised the secret police that they would serve as spies to keep an eye on their neighbors. After the Cold War ended, historians read the Stasi's files and found that nearly every East German had been so afraid of persecution that they had promised to be informants for the secret police.

If the secret police suspected that someone was planning a protest, spreading information that would harm the government or trying to flee the country, that person would be arrested, tortured, exiled or killed. People in the communist world feared the infamous "midnight knock of the secret police" and family members, friends, and acquaintances simply disappeared. Most secret police forces operated a system of clandestine camps to house these political prisoners. In China, this system was called Laogai, the abbreviation for Láodòng Gǎizào, which means "reform through labor." In reality, reform meant punishment. Prisoners who were released served as a warning to their friends and family of the power of the government. The most infamous of all labor camps in the communist world, however, were the Gulags of the Soviet Union.

### THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO

The **Gulag** was the government agency created under Vladimir Lenin immediately after the founding of the Soviet Union that operated a system of forced labor camps. The camps housed a wide range of convicts, from petty criminals to political opponents. Large numbers were convicted by simplified procedures, such as **troikas**, three man panels who proclaimed their judgement without a trial. The entire system reached its peak during Josef Stalin's rule from the 1930s through the 1950s when more than 100,000 people were imprisoned in the Gulag system. The camps remained in operation until the 1980s.



**KGB:** The spy organization and secret police of the Soviet Union



**Stasi:** The secret police of East Germany



**Juntong:** The secret police of communist China



**State Security Department:** The secret police of North Korea



**Gulag:** The prison system in the Soviet Union based on labor camps which housed thousands of political prisoners



**Troika:** A group of three judges. The troikas in the Soviet Union provided a quick way to convict political prisoners without allowing for fair trials.

## 5 WAS THE SOVIET UNION ACTUALLY AN EVIL EMPIRE?



Primary Source: Photograph

Prisoners in the gulag system work to build a canal.



Read the Gulag Archipelago

**Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn**, winner of the 1970 Nobel Prize in Literature, survived eight years of Gulag incarceration and gave the term its international repute with the publication of his book **“The Gulag Archipelago”** in 1973. The author likened the scattered camps to an archipelago, a chain of islands, and as an eyewitness, he described the Gulag as a system where people were worked to death. Some scholars support this view, though this claim is controversial, given that the vast majority of people who entered the Gulag came out alive. Being alive, however, did not mean a return to normal life. Former prisoners who had been sent away to the Gulag prisons for criticizing the communist regime were usually prohibited from moving into large cities where their ideas might infect others. Being convicted of opposing communism in the Soviet Union meant at best a life of banishment from society, and at worst, death.

### DÉTENTE

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States and the Soviet Union took a step back from the brink of war and leaders on both sides decided that the ever escalation arms race, space race, and brinksmanship was unwise. By the early 1970s, the two nations had initiated a series of steps to reduce the risk of war and demonstrate cooperation in science and culture. This era was known by the French word **détente**.

The leaders most associated with détente were President Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor **Dr. Henry Kissinger**. Both of them viewed the world and the conflict between the United States and Soviet Union in terms



**Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn:** Russian political dissident and author of “The Gulag Archipelago”



**The Gulag Archipelago:** Book by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn recounting his experiences as a political prisoner in the Soviet Union’s gulags.



**Détente:** A policy of engaging the Soviet Union in negotiations used by Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter in the 1970s. It assumed that the end of the Cold War was not imminent so negotiation rather than confrontation was the best policy.



**Dr. Henry Kissinger:** National Security Advisor to President Nixon. He believed in *realpolitik* and was instrumental in the negotiations with the

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of **realpolitik**, not as a moral struggle between competing ideologies. That is, they saw conflict in practical, rather than ideological terms. Both superpowers had needs – security, access to ports and raw materials, allies, prestige – and the East and West could coexist so long as leaders found ways for both sides to get what they needed.

The most obvious manifestation of détente was the series of summits held between the leaders of the two superpowers and the treaties that resulted from these meetings. On August 5, 1963, even before the era that has come to be known as détente, the **Partial Test Ban Treaty** was signed ending all nuclear tests in the atmosphere, underwater or in outer space. Only tests conducted underground were permitted. Later in the decade, the **Outer Space Treaty**, signed in January 1967, and the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty** signed in July 1968, were two of the first building blocks of détente. These early treaties were signed all over the globe and are important steps in limiting the distribution of nuclear weapons. They effectively turned back the dangerous spread of weapons of mass destruction, containing their deployment and testing.

While Kennedy and Johnson in the 1960s did their part to deescalate the Cold War, most of the treaties associated with détente were not developed until the Nixon Administration came into office in 1969. After a series of negotiations, the United States and Soviet Union signed the **Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I)** in 1972. This treaty limited each power's nuclear arsenal, effectively bringing an end to the arms race. In the same year that SALT I was signed, the **Biological Weapons Convention** and the **Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty** were also concluded. To follow up on their work, the two nations began working on a second arms limitation treaty, known as **SALT II**.

In 1975, the leaders of the major nations in both the East and West met and produced the **Helsinki Accords**, a wide-ranging series of agreements on economic, political, and human rights issues. The agreements were initiated by the Soviet Union, and were signed by 35 nations throughout Europe and North America. The accords were a major political victory of Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet premier, because they affirmed respect for the boundaries of Europe, effectively cementing the communist satellite states the Soviets had fought so hard to create at the end of the Second World War. However, the accords also guaranteed human rights, something the communists were not known for, and the West often used the agreement as grounds to criticize the activities of the secret police in the Soviet Union and its allies.

Détente extended beyond politics and arms control. In July of 1975, the **Apollo-Soyuz Test Project** became the first international space mission when three American astronauts and two Soviet cosmonauts docked their spacecraft in outer space and conducted joint experiments. This mission had been preceded by five years of political negotiation and technical co-

Soviet Union and China that were part of the détente policy.



**Realpolitik:** Policies based on practical rather than moral or ideological goals.



**Partial Test Ban Treaty:** 1963 treaty banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, under water and in space.



**Outer Space Treaty:** 1967 treaty stating that space would only be used for peaceful purposes.



**Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty:** A treaty signed in 1968 by all but four countries in the world. Nations promise not to acquire nuclear weapons (if they don't already possess them) and in exchange they may use nuclear technology for civilian purposes.



**SALT I & SALT II:** Treaties signed between the United States and Soviet Union in 1972 and 1979 agreeing to reduce the number of nuclear warheads in their arsenals.



**Biological Weapons Convention:** Treaty signed by almost every nation in the world agreeing to eliminate all biological weapons.



**Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty:** 1972 treaty between the United States and Soviet Union agreeing to limit the development of missiles that could intercept incoming ICBMs.



**Helsinki Accords:** 1975 agreement between the major nations of the Free and Communist Worlds. It guaranteed respect for boundaries, thus cementing the communist takeover of Eastern Europe, but also committed nations to respect human rights.



**Apollo-Soyuz Test Project:** A Soviet and American project to launch satellites that would link up in orbit. The project culminated in 1975 and represented progress in scientific cooperation.

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operation, including exchanges of American and Soviet engineers between NASA and the Soviet space agency.



### Primary Source: Photograph

The famous handshake between American astronaut Gibson and Soviet cosmonaut Dezhurov after their two capsules successfully docked in orbit.



Watch video of the Apollo-Soyuz handshake

Trade relations between the two blocs increased substantially during the era of détente. Most significant were the vast shipments of grain sent from the West to the Soviet Union each year, which helped make up for the failure of kolkhoz, Soviet collectivized agriculture. Even as the United States stood ready with nuclear weapons to defend against Soviet attack, American farmers were feeding the people of their most bitter rival.

President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger were eager to find ways to manage the Cold War, but in the Soviet Union, détente was often seen differently. Leonid Brezhnev, the leader of the Soviet Union from 1964 to 1982 was intent on using the period of relaxed tensions to prepare for Soviet expansion. In 1979, he ordered an **invasion of Afghanistan**, one of the Soviet Union's southern neighbors. Like all other foreign incursions into this vast, mountainous nation, the Soviet effort failed, but the invasion was a major reason President Ronald Reagan, elected in 1980, chose to end détente and resume a more confrontational relationship.



**Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan:** Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The Soviets failed, partially due to support the United States gave to Afghan freedom fighters.

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Primary Source: Photograph

Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev and President Richard Nixon

### THE THIRD WORLD

As the British and French Empires slowly yielded to independence movements after World War II, a new Third World emerged. This became a major battleground of the Cold War as the United States and the Soviet Union struggled to bring new nations into their respective orbits. Across the Third World, the two superpowers squared off in a series of **proxy wars**.

The United States had a long and often contentious relationship with its southern neighbors going back to its founding. The Monroe Doctrine demanded that European nations not interfere in Latin America while the Roosevelt Corollary specifically stated that the United States would. America had taken half of the territory of Mexico at the conclusion of the Mexican-American War of the 1840s, taken control of Puerto Rico after the Spanish-American War, and interfered in the affairs of Cuba, Panama, and the various banana republics of Central America even before the Cold War began.

The driving factor in each of these earlier relationships was economic. Americans wanted land, or access to land in the cases of the Panama Canal or the coffee, sugar and fruit plantations of Central America and the Caribbean. The Cold War changed the rules of the game. The United States no longer needed to support governments that would be amenable to American business interests. Now, the most important characteristic of Latin American leaders was their willingness to stand up to communism.

The United States lent its support to a variety of despotic **strongmen** who oppressed their people, violated human rights and enriched themselves – Fulgencio Bautista of Cuba and Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic stand out as particularly egregious examples. While there was opposition at home to these unsavory alliances, experts in Washington who were



**Proxy Wars:** Wars that were not fought between the United States and Soviet Union. However, the superpowers supported either side and the wars were viewed as a stand-in for real face-to-face conflict.



**Strongman:** A leader, often from the military, that rules a country as a dictator. The United States often supported these leaders in Third World nations because they opposed communism.

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adherents to the policy in containment and the Domino Theory believed they were necessary.

### CHILE AND PANAMA

For generations Chile had been a model in South America of stable, democratic government. A succession of elected presidents had held office and turned over power peacefully when their terms ended. The army stayed out of politics.

That changed in 1973. The new president, **Salvador Allende** promoted reforms that were strikingly similar to changes advocated by other communist leaders. Cuba's Fidel Castro visited Chile and commended Allende. But Allende was different in that he did not want a revolution. He believed in working slowly through the democratic process. This may have been enough reassurance in normal times, but in the pressure cooker of the Cold War, the CIA saw Allende as a dangerous example. If Chile took a peaceful path away from capitalism, other nations might be inspired to do the same.

**Augusto Pinochet**, the commander-in-chief of the Chilean army organized a coup and overthrew Allende. Although the United States was not directly involved, CIA agents knew what Pinochet was planning. Pinochet correctly assumed that if the CIA did not try to stop him, they were in favor of removing Allende.

Allende shot himself just before being taken prisoner by Pinochet's forces. Pinochet went on to rule Chile as a dictator for the next 17 years. He was staunchly anti-communist, but his secret police forces murdered over 2,000 people.

In Panama, support for anti-Communist regimes was more covert. **Manuel Noriega**, the future dictator of Panama, was on the payroll of the CIA beginning in 1967. By 1971, his involvement in the drug trade was well known to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). However, he was an important asset of the CIA and was well protected. The Carter Administration dropped Noriega from its payroll, but he was reinstated by the Reagan Administration. His salary peaked in 1985 at \$200,000 per year. In return, Noriega allowed the CIA to set up listening stations in his country and provide funding for anti-communists in Nicaragua.

### CENTRAL AMERICA

The violent civil wars in Central America that took place in the 1970s and 1980s were rooted in unjust distribution of land and power created during the Spanish colonial era. It is possible that these wars would have happened regardless of outside influences. However, the United States and Soviet Union viewed each of these small wars as microcosms of their herculean struggle. Like pouring fuel on a fire, weapons, money, advisors, and pressure provided by the superpowers made the wars much longer and more deadly.



**Salvador Allende:** Democratically elected president of Chile who proposed communist-like policies and was deposed in 1973. The CIA is seen as complicit in his overthrow.



**Augusto Pinochet:** Military general in Chile who led a coup against democratically elected Salvador Allende. He ruled Chile for 17 years and murdered more than 2,000 people. The US supported him because he opposed communism.



**Manuel Noriega:** Panamanian strongman who was supported by the CIA. He was involved in the drug trade and was eventually removed in a US military invasion and put on trial for drug trafficking.

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The wars were especially hard on the poor who, like pawns on a chessboard, were used by the combatants as both shields and scapegoats. The local problems that gave rise to social unrest had nothing to do with communism, but the Cold War intensified and gave undue significance to the civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

In an effort to help prevent communist infiltration in Latin America, the CIA and the military's **School of the Americas** trained Latin American army officers in torture and assassination techniques. The School of the Americas has widely been criticized for the human rights violations performed by its graduates. On September 20, 1996, the Pentagon was forced to release training manuals that were used at the U.S. Army School of the Americas, and distributed to thousands of military officers from 11 South and Central American countries, including Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Panama, where the United States military was heavily involved in counterinsurgency. These manuals advocated targeting civilians, extrajudicial executions, torture, false imprisonment, and extortion. War crimes and human rights violations such as these horrified the American public, but in the effort to prevent the spread of communism, some felt that the ends justified the means.



**School of the Americas:** School run by the US Army to train Latin American military leaders. Some of the school's graduates have gone on to commit human rights violations in their home countries or lead drug trafficking organizations.



### Primary Source: Photograph

Photos, crosses, and protesters laying outside the entrance to Fort Benning, the home of the School of the Americas, to remember the victims of violence in Central America perpetrated by graduates of the school.

In 1999, a report on the Guatemalan Civil War from the Commission for Historical Clarification, sponsored by the United Nations, stated that, "the United States demonstrated that it was willing to provide support for strong military regimes in its strategic backyard. In the case of Guatemala, military assistance was directed towards reinforcing the national intelligence apparatus, and for training the officer corps in counterinsurgency techniques, key factors which had significant bearing on... acts of genocide." According to the Commission, between 1981 and 1983, the Guatemalan

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security apparatus – financed, armed, trained, and advised by the United States – destroyed 400 indigenous Mayan villages and butchered 200,000 people. The majority of the victims were political activists, students, trade unionists, priests, human rights advocates, and poor peasants.

America's involvement in neighboring Nicaragua was just as deadly. Beginning in 1936, three generations of the Somoza Family had ruled Nicaragua. The United States had directly paid the Samozas in return for favorable business relations, but in 1979, the FSLN, a group of revolutionaries overthrew his regime.

The Frente Nacionalista de Liberacion Nacional (**FSLN**), or **Sandinistas**, were committed to Marxist ideology, and many of their leaders had long-standing relationships with the Soviet Union and Cuba. President Carter initially hoped that continued American aid to the new government would keep the Sandinistas from aligning with the Soviet Bloc, but the Carter Administration allotted the Sandinistas minimal funding and the Sandinistas resolutely turned away from the United States. Instead, Cuban and East European assistance was turned into a new army of 75,000. The buildup included Soviet T-55 heavy tanks, heavy artillery and Soviet HIND attack helicopters, an unprecedented military expansion that made the Sandinista Army more powerful than all of its neighbors combined.

The first challenge to the powerful new army came from the **Contras**, groups of Somoza's old National Guard who had fled to Honduras. There they had been organized, trained and funded by CIA operatives using money they made by cocaine trafficking. They engaged in a systematic campaign of terror amongst the rural Nicaraguan population in order to disrupt the social reform projects of the Sandinistas.

The Reagan Administration insisted that the Sandinistas posed a "communist threat," particularly because of the support provided to the Sandinistas by Cuban president Fidel Castro. The Reagan Administration suspended aid to Nicaragua and expanded the supply of arms and training to the Contras in neighboring Honduras, as well as allied groups based to the south in Costa Rica. President Reagan called the Contras "the moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers."

Congress disagreed. The Contras engaged in the same human rights violations as their counterparts in other Central American nations. Since the largest base of support for the Sandinistas was with the poor peasants of the countryside, the Contras destroyed the health centers, schools and cooperatives these people relied on. Large-scale murder, rape and torture also occurred in Contra-dominated areas. In 1982, Congress responded to public outrage about the situation by prohibiting Reagan from sending further aid to the Contras.

President Reagan also provided controversial support to the right-wing government of El Salvador and all branches of the security apparatus.



**Sandinistas:** Communist revolutionaries in Nicaragua who took control in the 1970s and were opposed by the American-backed Contras.



**Contras:** Anti-communist guerrilla group who were supported by the CIA and fought against the communist Sandinistas in Nicaragua. They were known for human rights violations and using drug trafficking as a means of financial support.

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Reagan and the CIA feared a takeover by the communist-leaning Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (**FMLN**) during the Salvadorian Civil War, which had begun in 1979. The war left 75,000 people dead, 8,000 missing, and one million homeless. A million Salvadorans, fleeing the war and American-backed right-wing armed forces, tried to immigrate to the United States but were denied asylum. As was the case in Guatemala, the vast majority of the victims were peasants, trade unionists, teachers, students, human rights advocates, journalists, priests, nuns, and anyone working in the interests of the poor majority.

### OSCAR ROMERO

Of all the voices in opposition to the violence perpetrated against innocent civilians, **Oscar Romero**, the Archbishop of San Salvador spoke with the most conviction, clarity, and moral authority.

In 1977, the same year that Romero became archbishop, his friend Rutilio Grande was assassinated by government soldiers. Grande was a Jesuit priest who had been working in the countryside and his death had a profound impact on Romero, who later said, “When I looked at Rutilio lying there dead I thought, ‘If they have killed him for doing what he did, then I too have to walk the same path.’” Romero urged the government to investigate, but they ignored his request. Romero began speaking out against poverty, social injustice, assassinations and torture.

Romero also criticized the United States for helping fuel the violence in El Salvador and wrote to President Jimmy Carter in February 1980, warning that increased American military aid would “undoubtedly sharpen the injustice and the political repression inflicted on the organized people, whose struggle has often been for their most basic human rights.” Carter ignored Romero's pleas and military aid to the Salvadoran government continued.

On March 23, 1980, Romero delivered a sermon in which he called on Salvadoran soldiers, as Christians, to obey God's higher order and to stop carrying out the government's repression and violations of basic human rights. The next evening, Romero celebrated mass at a small chapel at Hospital de la Divina Providencia. As he finished his sermon, a car came to a stop on the street in front of the chapel. A gunman emerged from the vehicle, stepped to the door of the chapel, and fired. Romero was struck in the heart, and the vehicle sped off. **The archbishop died instantly.**

Romero was buried in the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Salvador. The funeral mass was attended by more than 250,000 mourners from all over the world. At the funeral, Cardinal Ernesto Corripio y Ahumada, speaking as the personal delegate of Pope John Paul II, eulogized Romero as a “beloved, peacemaking man of God,” and stated that “his blood will give fruit to brotherhood, love and peace.”



**FMLN:** Communist revolutionary group in El Salvador in the 1970s and 1980s. They were opposed by the United States.



**Oscar Romero:** Catholic archbishop in El Salvador who spoke out against violence during his country's civil war. He was assassinated by right-wing militants.



**Assassination of Oscar Romero:** 1980 assassination of Oscar Romero while he was celebrating mass. He had recently urged militants to stop committing human rights violations.

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Primary Source: Photograph

Monsignor Oscar Romero



Watch video from the funeral of Oscar Romero

During the ceremony, smoke bombs exploded on the streets near the cathedral and there were rifle shots from surrounding buildings, including the National Palace. Some 30 to 50 of the mourners were killed by gunfire and in the ensuing stampede of fleeing people. Some witnesses claimed government forces had fired the shots, but there are contradictory accounts as to the course of events. The truth will probably never be known.

As the gunfire continued, Romero's body was buried in a crypt beneath the sanctuary. Even after the burial, people continued to line up to pay homage to their martyred prelate.

The wars of Central America were long, brutal struggles made worse by the circumstances of the Cold War. Today, most people look back with sadness and regret the involvement that the great powers played in prolonging the bloodshed. In El Salvador, Oscar Romero stood up to powerful forces to demand peace and basic human rights in the same way that Gandhi had done three decades before. He remains a beloved hero for common people across Latin America and an international symbol of the harm the Cold War did in the Third World.

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Primary Source: Photograph

Young soldiers in El Salvador in 1990.

### THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East posed numerous challenges for the United States during the Cold War, just as it continues to do today. At the center of America's concerns in this part of the world are the security of the nation of Israel and access to the oil in and around the Persian Gulf.

**Israel** was carved out of Palestine at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea after World War II as a homeland for the Jewish people. The United States' recognition of Israel in 1948 created a strong new ally, but also created many enemies. The United Nations had tried to negotiate borders for the new nation, but the non-Jewish Palestinians who had lived there for generations rejected the plan. The Jewish settlers went to war and millions of Arabs were forced into exile. Enraged that the Americans supported the new Jewish state, Israel's Arab neighbors found supportive ears in the Soviet Union.



**Israel:** Nation in the Middle East created in 1948 largely by Jews who escaped the Holocaust. It is a strong ally of the United States but has a violent history with its Arab neighbors.

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When Egyptian President **Gamal Abdel Nasser** sought to strengthen ties with the Soviet Bloc, the United States withdrew its pledge to help Nasser construct the all-important Aswan Dam on the Nile River. Nasser responded by nationalizing the Suez Canal in 1956. The canal is an important trade link between Europe and Asia for everyone, but it was essential for Britain and France, who joined with Israel to invade Egypt.

In the first real Cold War test of the alliance between Western Europe and the United States, President Dwight Eisenhower called upon Britain and France to show restraint. When it seemed like they might refuse, he threatened to stop selling them American treasury bonds, a move which would have devastated their economies. They backed down. In the end, The **Suez Crisis** led to the creation of a United Nations peacekeeping operation to police the border between Egypt and Israel. The rift between the allies may also have emboldened Stalin in his crackdowns on dissent in Hungary.

The Soviets might have believed the Suez Crisis was a sign that Americans did not want to get involved in the Middle East, but they were mistaken. With Soviet influence growing in the oil-rich region, the president issued the Eisenhower Doctrine, which pledged American support to any government fighting communist insurgencies in the Middle East. Making good on that promise, he sent over 5,000 marines to Lebanon to forestall an anti-Western takeover.

Over time, the United States became more and more deeply involved in the Middle East. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the Americans provided weapons to the Afghan resistance movement. When Iran and Iraq went to war, the Americans gave support to Iran while the Soviets supported Iraq. In 1983, the radical group Hezbollah set off a bomb at the marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 American marines. Presumably the attack was in retaliation for America's presence in the region.

However, over time it has also become clear that America's fundamental interests in the Middle East were Israel and oil, not the containment of communism. After the Cold War ended, the Middle East was the first place the United States went to war and more Americans have died fighting in the Middle East in the past thirty years than every other corner of the globe combined.

### CONCLUSION

There remains little doubt today that communism as an economic system and dictatorship as a form of government are both evil, insofar as they restrict individual liberty. The Soviet Union, as the world's foremost exporter of communist ideology may well have deserved Reagan's disparaging nickname the "Evil Empire." That Soviet leaders, their armies and secret police murdered thousands of people in their quest to free the masses from the rule of capitalists is undeniable.



**Gamal Abdel Nasser:** Nationalist leader of Egypt who was supported by the Soviet Union and led his country during the Suez Crisis.



**Suez Crisis:** 1956 conflict between Egypt and the combined forces of Israel, France and the United Kingdom after Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal. President Eisenhower refused to support France and the UK.

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Like the fabled City Upon a Hill, the United States stood firmly throughout the Cold War as a beacon of freedom and hope in the face of communism. However, to maintain the freedom of the world, especially of the Third World, Americans perpetrated and supported enormous injustice and violence of their own.

The republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater said once that “moderation in the protection of liberty is no virtue; extremism in the defense of freedom is no vice.” What do you think? If defeating communism was a noble cause, did it excuse the means? Was the Soviet Union “evil” in a way that the United States was not?

Perhaps it is also worth looking at the question from the perspective of the people of the Third World who were the pawns in the global game. Was the Soviet Union any more evil or more of an empire than the United States?

Of course, the story of the people who suffered in the great struggles of the Cold War is tragic. How senseless it seems now that the Cold War is over that so many perished over ideology. However, knowing both the noble ideals that drove the struggle as well as the people who paid the price for freedom’s eventual victory helps us understand that good and evil is rarely black and white. As Archbishop Oscar Romero said, “there are many things that can only be seen through eyes that have cried.”

What do you think? Was President Reagan right? Was the Soviet Union an evil empire?

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### SUMMARY

There were few chances for the United States and Soviet Union to actually meet face to face and debate their ideas. Once chance was the Kitchen Debates between then-Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in 1959. Nixon showed off a model American kitchen and all the good things that capitalism allowed people to buy. Khrushchev was impressed, but did not change his mind about the benefits of communism.

Twice, people in Eastern Europe tried to fight to get rid of their communist governments. In 1959, people in Hungary rebelled and in 1968, people in Czechoslovakia rebelled. In both cases, the Soviet Union sent its own troops to put down the rebellions and restore communists to power.

One way communist governments maintained control was through fear. People who disagreed or tried to organize opposition to the government were arrested, thrown in jail, or sometimes they simply disappeared. People knew that the secret police might appear at any moment and had power to kidnap political opponents, so most people tried to avoid criticizing their leaders or doing anything that might put themselves in danger. The result was an obedient and unhappy people.

In the 1970s, American leaders decided that there was little chance of getting rid of communism. The initial worries about communism spreading had ended. Therefore, they decided, they should try to find ways to get along and coexist peacefully. The United States and Soviet Union signed a series of treaties to ban the testing of nuclear weapons, and to start to reduce their total number of warheads. The two nations even worked together to have their spacecraft dock in orbit and their astronauts shake hands in space. This period of cooling tensions was called *Détente*, but ended when the Soviets invaded their neighbor Afghanistan.

Both the United States and Soviet Union tried to convince other nations to join their side. This meant that Americans supported anti-communist governments around the world. Sometimes, we supported people who were dictators and terrible leaders, such as in Chile and Panama, simply because they were anti-communist. These conflicts were proxy wars, because they stood in for actual fights between the superpowers.

In Central America, when the poor started a revolution against the wealthy landowners, the Soviet Union supported the poor and the United States ended up supporting the rich people who controlled the government. Because both superpowers were giving money and weapons to their side, the civil wars lasted a long time and thousands of people died who might have lived if the Cold War had not been raging. Similar problems happened in the Middle East. In Afghanistan, the United States gave weapons to the same people who we eventually had to fight after 9/11.



## PEOPLE & GROUPS

**Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn:** Russian political dissident and author of “The Gulag Archipelago”

**Dr. Henry Kissinger:** National Security Advisor to President Nixon. He believed in realpolitik and was instrumental in the negotiations with the Soviet Union and China that were part of the détente policy.

**Strongman:** A leader, often from the military, that rules a country as a dictator. The United States often supported these leaders in Third World nations because they opposed communism.

**Salvador Allende:** Democratically elected president of Chile who proposed communist-like policies and was deposed in 1973. The CIA is seen as complicit in his overthrow.

**Augusto Pinochet:** Military general in Chile who led a coup against democratically elected Salvador Allende. He ruled Chile for 17 years and murdered more than 2,000 people. The US supported him because he opposed communism.

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**Sandinistas:** Communist revolutionaries in Nicaragua who took control in the 1970s and were opposed by the American-backed Contras.

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**FMLN:** Communist revolutionary group in El Salvador in the 1970s and 1980s. They were opposed by the United States.

**Oscar Romero:** Catholic archbishop in El Salvador who spoke out against violence during his country’s civil war. He was assassinated by right-wing militants.

**Gamal Abdel Nasser:** Nationalist leader of Egypt who was supported by the Soviet Union and led his country during the Suez Crisis.



## TEXTS

**The Gulag Archipelago:** Book by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn recounting his experiences as a political prisoner in the Soviet Union’s gulags.



## POLICIES & TREATIES

**Partial Test Ban Treaty:** 1963 treaty banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, under water and in space.

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**Détente:** A policy of engaging the Soviet Union in negotiations used by Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter in the 1970s. It assumed that the end of the Cold War was not imminent so negotiation rather than confrontation was the best policy.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Realpolitik:** Policies based on practical rather than moral or ideological goals.

**Proxy Wars:** Wars that were not fought between the United States and Soviet Union. However, the superpowers supported either side and the wars were viewed as a stand-in for real face-to-face conflict.



## LOCATIONS

**Israel:** Nation in the Middle East created in 1948 largely by Jews who escaped the Holocaust. It is a strong ally of the United States but has a violent history with its Arab neighbors.



## EVENTS

**Kitchen Debate:** A series of debates between Vice-President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in Moscow about the relative merits of communism and capitalism.

**Hungarian Uprising:** Revolution by Hungarians in 1956 against Soviet domination. The uprising was crushed when forces from the Soviet Union invaded Hungary.

**Prague Spring:** An uprising in Czechoslovakia in 1968 in which the government and citizens attempted to reform the economy and political system. The uprising was ended when the Soviet Union sent in its military to restore communists to power.

**Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan:** Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The Soviets failed, partially due to support the United States gave to Afghan freedom fighters.

**Assassination of Oscar Romero:** 1980 assassination of Oscar Romero while he was celebrating mass. He had recently urged militants to stop committing human rights violations.

**Suez Crisis:** 1956 conflict between Egypt and the combined forces of Israel, France and the United Kingdom after Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal. President Eisenhower refused to support France and the UK.



## GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

**KGB:** The spy organization and secret police of the Soviet Union

**Stasi:** The secret police of East Germany

**Juntong:** The secret police of communist China

**State Security Department:** The secret police of North Korea

**Gulag:** The prison system in the Soviet Union based on labor camps which housed thousands of political prisoners

**Troika:** A group of three judges. The troikas in the Soviet Union provided a quick way to convict political prisoners without allowing for fair trials.

**Apollo-Soyuz Test Project:** A Soviet and American project to launch satellites that would link up in orbit. The project culminated in 1975 and represented progress in scientific cooperation.

**School of the Americas:** School run by the US Army to train Latin American military leaders. Some of the school’s graduates have gone on to commit human rights violations in their home countries or lead drug trafficking organizations.

# 6

## S I X T H Q U E S T I O N

### WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



#### INTRODUCTION

Every war ends. Even the wars we are currently engaged in will eventually end. And so, the Cold War ended, some four decades after it began. But why? Without ever fighting out their differences on the battlefield, the United States and our NATO allies and the Soviet Union and the other communist nations of the world gave up their nuclear faceoff.

It's hard to imagine that after all the money spent, and lives lost, that the two great superpowers would simply hang it up and walk away. Indeed, it is not that simple, but from a distance, it is clear that the Cold War deserves that name. It ended without the Herculean war that everyone spent all that time preparing for.

How is that possible? We couldn't stop Hitler without a war. We didn't prevent the Cold War from starting. So how is it that it ended with such a whimper? Why did the Cold War end?

### NIXON AND CHINA

When the communists took control in China in 1949, they created the **People's Republic of China (PRC)** and exiled the nationalists to the island of Taiwan. The United States recognized the nationalist **Republic of China (ROC)** on Taiwan as the sole government of all of China, and that government held China's seat at the United Nations Security Council. But early in his first term, Nixon began sending subtle hints that he was ready to have warmer relations with the communist government on the mainland. After a series of these overtures by both countries, Nixon's national security advisor, Dr. Henry Kissinger, flew on secret diplomatic missions to Beijing where he met with Premier Zhou Enlai.

On July 15, 1971, Nixon himself shocked the world by announcing on live television that he would visit the PRC the following year. While most politicians would have been criticized as being soft on communism for visiting mainland China or normalizing the relationship, Nixon was different. As a veteran of HUAC, Nixon's reputation as a cold warrior gave him the political cover to make a change in America's policy toward Beijing.

The week-long visit, from February 21 to 28, 1972, allowed the American public to view images of China for the first time in over two decades. Throughout the week, the President and his senior advisers engaged in substantive discussions with the PRC leadership, including a meeting with Chairman Mao Zedong, while First Lady Pat Nixon toured schools, factories and hospitals in the cities of Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai with the large American press corps in tow.

American President **Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to communist China** was an important strategic and diplomatic overture that marked the culmination of the Nixon administration's **rapprochement** between the United States and China. The seven-day official visit to three Chinese cities was the first time an American president had visited the PRC. Nixon's arrival in Beijing ended a 25-year gap in communication and diplomatic ties between the two countries and was the key step in normalizing relations between the United States and communist China.

Nixon didn't decide to go to China because he suddenly believed that communism was acceptable. The reason for opening up China was for the United States to gain more leverage over relations with the Soviet Union. The Soviets in Moscow and the communists in China viewed each other with suspicion and had even fought a minor war over their shared border. By normalizing relations with the Chinese, Nixon was able to play the two communist powers off one another.

Kissinger and Nixon also wanted to get help in resolving the Vietnam War. By dealing with both Russia and China, they hoped to put pressure on Ho Chi Minh's government in Hanoi to negotiate seriously. At a minimum, Nixon wanted Russia and China to encourage Hanoi to make a deal with the United



**People's Republic of China (PRC):** Mainland, communist China. The PRC currently holds China's seat at the United Nations.



**Republic of China (ROC):** Non-communist Taiwan.



**Nixon's Visit to China:** 1972 visit by President Nixon to the People's Republic of China. This visit officially reopened the diplomatic relationship between the PRC and the US and the US recognized the PRC government as the representatives of China at the United Nations.



**Rapprochement:** The policy of improving relations with communist China under the Nixon Administration. Similar to détente with the Soviet Union.

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



States and give Hanoi a sense of isolation as their two patrons were dealing directly with the Americans. Indeed, by their willingness to engage in summit meetings with Nixon, the Russians and Chinese demonstrated that bilateral relations with the United States was a higher priority than their support for Vietnam.

Unknown to Nixon and the rest of the American diplomats at the time, Mao Zedong was in poor health and he had been hospitalized for several weeks before Nixon's arrival. Nevertheless, Mao felt well enough to meet with Nixon. Upon being introduced to Nixon for the first time, Mao, speaking through his translator, joked with him: "I believe our old friend Chiang Kai-shek would not approve of this."




Primary Source: Photograph

President Richard Nixon and First Lady Pat Nixon visiting the Great Wall of China in 1972.

In contrast, Nixon held many meetings with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai during the trip, which included visits to the Great Wall, Hangzhou, and Shanghai. At the conclusion of his trip, the United States and the PRC governments issued the **Shanghai Communiqué**, a statement of their foreign policy views and a document that has remained the basis of Sino-American bilateral relations. Kissinger stated that the United States also intended to pull all its forces out of the island of Taiwan. In the communiqué, both nations pledged to work toward the full normalization of diplomatic policy.

The relationship between China and the United States is now one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world, and every successive president, with the exception of Jimmy Carter, has visited China. The trip is consistently ranked by historians, scholars, and journalists as one of the most important, if not the most important, visits by a president anywhere. A "Nixon to China"

 **Shanghai Communiqué:** Joint statement by China and the United States in 1972 as part of Nixon's visit to China. The two nations agreed to normalize relations.



Read the Shanghai Communiqué

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?

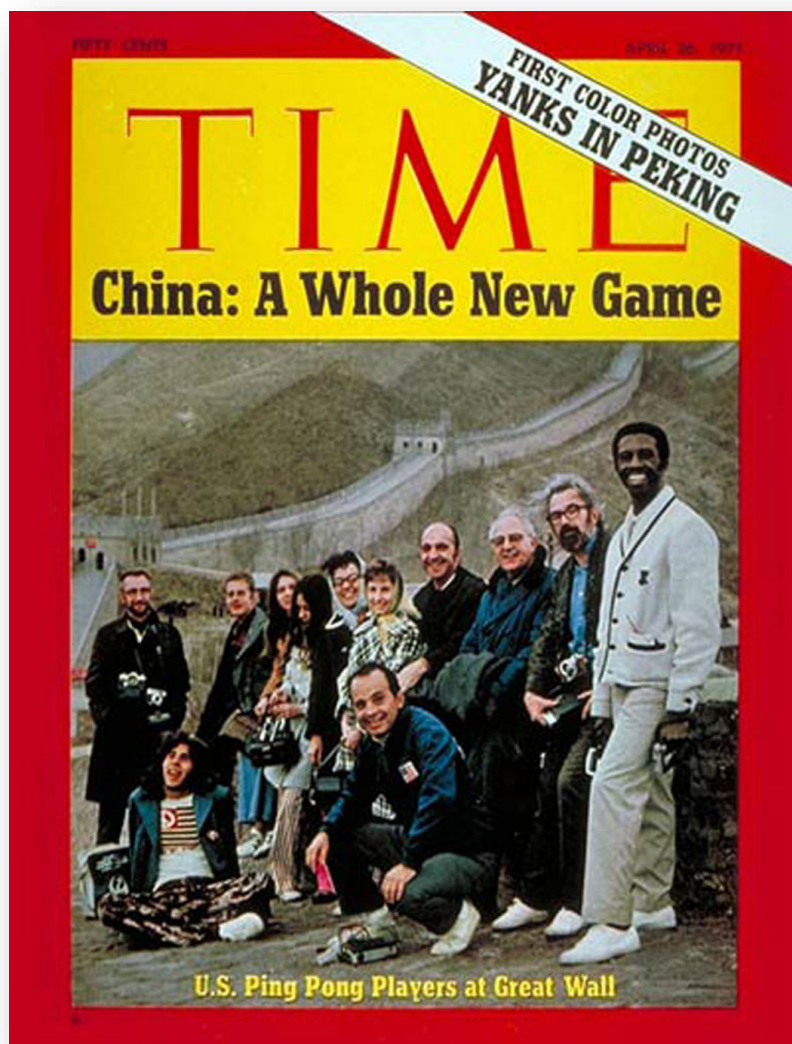
DID ANYONE  
WIN THE  
COLD  
WAR?

moment has since become a metaphor for an unexpected, uncharacteristic or especially impactful action by any politician.

By formally recognizing the government of mainland China, Nixon initiated an enormous shift in global power. The communists took over China's seat at the Security Council of the United Nations. The United States moved its embassy from Taipei to Beijing. However, formal recognition did not end American support for Taiwan. To this day, the government of the Republic of China remains an important American ally in Asia. The American military conducts joint operations with their Taiwanese counterparts and, much to Beijing's disapproval, the United States sells advanced weapons systems and aircraft to Taiwan.

Primary Source: Document

The cover of Time Magazine in which the new relationship between the United States and communist China was a feature story.



Watch a news report  
about Ping-Pong Diplomacy

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



The United States and China wanted to hold public demonstrations of their new friendship. One of the most obvious of these was a series of ping pong matches between Chinese and Americans. The friendly competitions showed that the two nations could be both patriotic and competitive in ways that were not dangerous. In fact, **Ping Pong Diplomacy** became a synonym for the cultural exchanges between competing nations that were designed to foster better relationships. Additionally, the government of China gave a gift of two pandas to the National Zoo in Washington, DC. Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing were the first giant pandas to live in the United States and were beloved symbols of friendship.



**Ping Pong Diplomacy:** The use of non-governmental exchanges (such as ping pong tournaments) to foster better relationships between competing nations.

### Primary Source: Photograph

Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing at the National Zoo in Washington, DC. They were a gift from the People's Republic of China to the United States after Nixon's visit in 1972.

Officially, the United States holds a **One China Policy** – that is, the government believes the mainland and Taiwan should be united under one government, but in reality, while doing business with both, Americans are as dedicated to preventing a communist takeover of Taiwan now as they were in 1949.

### RONALD REAGAN

When he was elected in 1980, **Ronald Reagan** was the nation's oldest president. As a former movie star, Reagan was already well known in the United States. He had tried to root out communists in Hollywood during the Red Scare of the 1950s and had served as governor of California. He even ran against President Gerald Ford for the republican nomination in 1976.

Unlike Nixon and Kissinger, Reagan did not believe détente and coexistence with the Soviet Union was possible. He did not trust communists and believed that allowing the Cold War to go on indefinitely was unacceptable.



**One China Policy:** American policy to officially recognize only one government of both China and Taiwan. The US maintains an embassy in Beijing and supports China's membership in the UN. However, the US still supports Taiwan.



**Ronald Reagan:** American president from 1981-1989. He abandoned détente and supported a more confrontational stance toward the Soviet Union based on an ideological view of the conflict. In his second term he began negotiating with Gorbachev and is credited with helping end the Cold War.

Angered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Reagan ordered a massive buildup of the armed forces and implemented new policies toward the Soviet Union. He revived the B-1 bomber program that had been canceled by the Carter Administration, and began producing the MX Peacekeeper missile. These MIRV missiles each had multiple warheads that could be directed at different targets. In response to Soviet deployment of short-range nuclear missiles, Reagan oversaw NATO's deployment of Pershing short-range nuclear missiles in West Germany. Reagan also ordered the development of a defensive system that would be able to shoot down incoming Soviet missiles.

Reagan's struggle against the Soviet Union was more than just about military strength. Together with Prime Minister **Margaret Thatcher** of the United Kingdom, Reagan denounced the Soviet Union in ideological terms. In a famous address given on June 8, 1982 to the British Parliament at Westminster Palace, Reagan said, "the forward march of freedom and democracy will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history." On March 3, 1983, he predicted that communism would collapse, stating, "communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history, whose last pages even now are being written." A few days later in a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals Reagan called the Soviet Union "**an evil empire**."

Unlike Nixon and Kissinger who wanted to manage the Soviet Union and find ways for the superpowers to coexist, Reagan and his aids sought to confront Soviet power everywhere in the world. Reagan was also desperate to put to rest **Vietnam Syndrome** (the reluctance to use military force in foreign countries for fear of suffering another embarrassing defeat), which had influenced American foreign policy since the mid-1970s. Under a policy that came to be known as the **Reagan Doctrine**, Reagan and his administration provided overt and covert aid to anti-communist resistance movements in an effort to manipulate governments in Africa, Asia, and Latin America away from communism and toward capitalism. Sometimes this meant supporting authoritarian regimes who were not supporters of freedom just to keep them "safe" from Soviet influence.

Reagan deployed the CIA's Special Activities Division to Afghanistan and Pakistan where they trained, equipped, and lead Mujahidin forces against the Soviet Army. Many historians believe the support from the United States was critical to ending the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, although the American weapons that were provided in the 1980s were later used against American troops during the war in Afghanistan in the 2000s.

The end of détente and the confrontational tone set by President Reagan did not last forever. In 1985, Mikael Gorbachev, a young, charismatic leader took over in the Soviet Union and sensing opportunity, Reagan began to change his rhetoric and thinking.



**Margaret Thatcher:** British Prime Minister in the 1980s. Nicknamed the "Iron Lady", she was a strong ally of President Reagan.



**Evil Empire Speech:** 1982 speech by President Ronald Reagan in which he condemned communism and the Soviet Union calling it an "Evil Empire."



**Vietnam Syndrome:** Reluctance on the part of American politicians and military leaders to use the armed forces due to the loss in Vietnam. Ronald Reagan helped end this.



**Reagan Doctrine:** President Reagan's policy of supporting anti-communist leaders and organizations everywhere in the world.



Watch the  
"Evil Empire" Speech

### THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE

In March of 1983, Reagan introduced the **Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)**, a project that would use ground and space-based systems to protect the United States from attack by strategic nuclear ballistic missiles. In short, Reagan wanted to be able to shoot down incoming nuclear missiles. He believed that this defensive shield would make nuclear war impossible. However, disbelief that the technology could ever work led opponents to nickname the project “Star Wars,” in a reference to the popular science fiction trilogy in theaters at the time. The Soviets were highly critical of the SDI program since it would seriously unbalance the power relationship. If the Americans could intercept Soviet missiles, the Soviet Union would lose its deterrent power.

The technological challenges proved to be daunting and Reagan’s dream of a missile shield never became a reality during his presidency or even his lifetime. However, in the years since 1983, the SDI program has continued. Today, the **Missile Defense Agency** continues to work to perfect missiles that could be used to shoot down incoming ballistic missiles from North Korea.



**Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI):** Military program championed by President Reagan to develop a system to intercept incoming nuclear missiles. It was nicknamed “Star Wars” by its critics.



**Missile Defense Agency:** Military organization that develops and operates a system to intercept incoming nuclear missiles. It is the contemporary version of the original SDI.



#### Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

Many critics of Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative used the Star Wars movies to emphasize the technological challenges of making the system work.

### THE IRAN-CONTRA SCANDAL

The American public was supportive of Reagan and his approach to fighting the Cold War. In 1984 they returned him to the White House for a second term with one of the largest landslide victories in presidential history. In his second term, however, his efforts to confront communism nearly brought down his administration.

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



The **Iran-Contra Scandal** came to light in November of 1986. During the Reagan Administration, senior officials had secretly facilitated the sale of weapons to Iran, which at the time was the subject of an arms embargo. The administration then used the funds from the sales to finance the anti-Sandinista Contras in Nicaragua.

While President Reagan was a supporter of the Contra cause, the evidence is unclear as to whether he authorized the diversion of the money raised by the Iranian arms sales to the Contras. Investigating Reagan's role in the affair, the Tower Commission found no evidence of the president's involvement. However, they deemed Reagan negligent for not monitoring and managing his staff, and indicted 14 administration officials, 11 of whom were convicted.

President Reagan addressed the public, accepting full responsibility for the crisis and maintaining his ignorance of the affair. The Iran-Contra Scandal cut Reagan's approval ratings from 67% to 46% in November 1986, the largest single drop for any president in history, though this rating had climbed back to 64% by the end of his term, the highest rating ever recorded for a departing President.

Although Reagan survived the scandal and finished his second term, the public had a new awareness of the extent of their government's efforts to fight communism in the Third World and began to question much more carefully America's involvement in proxy wars.

### GORBACHEV

The Soviet Union's large military expenses, in combination with collectivized agriculture and inefficient planned manufacturing, were a heavy burden for the Soviet economy. By the time **Mikhail Gorbachev** had ascended to power in 1985, the Soviets suffered from an economic growth rate close to zero percent. At the same time, Saudi Arabia increased oil production, which resulted in a drop of oil prices in 1985 to one-third of the previous level. Petroleum exports made up approximately 60% of the Soviet Union's total export earnings. The Soviet Union was on the verge of economic collapse.

To restructure the Soviet economy before catastrophe, Gorbachev announced an agenda of rapid reform based on what he called **perestroika** (restructuring) and **glasnost** (liberalization, openness). Gorbachev needed money to implement these changes. In order to redirect the country's resources from costly Cold War military commitments, he offered major concessions to the United States on the levels of conventional forces, nuclear weapons, and policy in Eastern Europe.

Many of Reagan's advisors doubted that Gorbachev was serious about winding down the arms race. Reagan, however, recognized the real change in the direction of the Soviet leadership and shifted to diplomacy in order to give Gorbachev an opportunity to further his reforms. Reagan sincerely



**Iran-Contra Scandal:** Political scandal in 1986 in which officials in the Reagan Administration illegally sold weapons to Iran and used the money to support the Contras in Nicaragua. The scandal called into question Reagan's ability to manage the day-to-day operations of government.



**Mikhail Gorbachev:** Last leader of the Soviet Union from 1985-1991. He promoted government reform and negotiated with the United States.



**Perestroika & Glasnost:** Reform programs in the Soviet Union promoted by Gorbachev designed to allow for more electoral freedom in order to save communism. They produced a higher demand for reform which eventually led to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



believed that if he could persuade the Soviets to examine the prosperous American economy, they too would embrace free market capitalism.



### Primary Source: Photograph

President Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva, Switzerland. The two leaders had a good personal relationship.

In all, Reagan and Gorbachev met face-to-face five times. Gorbachev visited New York and Reagan toured Moscow. Most famously, **they met in Reykjavik**, Iceland in 1985 to discuss a nuclear missile treaty. During the summit, they had a chance to sit down together and, finding that they both wished to see a world free from nuclear weapons, promised that they would eliminate their entire nuclear arsenals. Quickly, however, aids to both leaders pointed out that such a move would be politically impossible, and they settled for a much less extensive agreement. Despite the tremendous differences between their two nations, Reagan and Gorbachev got along well personally and their working relationship is still seen as a model of how diplomacy and mutual respect can advance peace in the world.

Reagan's approach to the Soviet Union was not entirely friendly during his second term however. Reagan was determined that the United States would remain the leader of the free world, and as such, he believed that it was his responsibility to continue to speak out against the evils of the communist system. Against the advice of his aids, Reagan decided to visit Berlin and to speak in front of the Berlin Wall. Much like Kennedy years before, Reagan forcefully reaffirmed America's commitment to maintaining West Berlin's freedom and personally challenged Gorbachev to allow Easterners to travel to the West. In what has become one of the most well remembered lines from the Cold War, at the conclusion of his speech he said, "There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern



**Reykjavik Summit:** 1985 summit between President Reagan and Gorbachev held in Reykjavik, Iceland. It was one of five meetings between the two leaders. At their meeting they agreed to eliminate all nuclear weapons but their advisors made them reverse this pledge.



**Tear Down This Wall:** 1987 speech by Ronald Reagan in West Berlin in which he challenged Gorbachev to open the Iron Curtain.



Watch the "Tear Down This Wall" Speech

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. **Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!**"



### Primary Source: Photograph

President Reagan delivering his Tear Down this Wall Speech in front of the Berlin Wall. A bullet proof glass wall was erected behind the podium so that the Brandenburg Gate would be clearly visible behind him.

### SOLIDARITY

Despite all the posturing, the tremendous arms race, and all the lives lost in the proxy wars of the Third World, communism and the Cold War ultimately came to an end peacefully. In fact, communism ended because the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union rose up against it.

The first clear sign that the people of the communist world were tired of living with their failed system was the **Solidarity** movement in Poland. Begun by shipbuilders in 1980, Solidarity was a labor union. Typically in communist nations the government thought of all workers as part of one great union which, of course, the government controlled. For workers this meant that being part of the people's union was worthless. Solidarity was a challenge to the status quo.

Led by **Lech Walesa**, the shipbuilders went on strike. Although Poland's government fought back against Solidarity with violence on numerous occasions, in the end it agreed to allow the workers to form their own union. By 1982, one third of all the workers in Poland had joined Solidarity and the government was forced to recognize the first non-government labor union in the communist world.

Walesa was hailed as a hero by the suffering people of Poland and by the West. In 1983 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent movement.

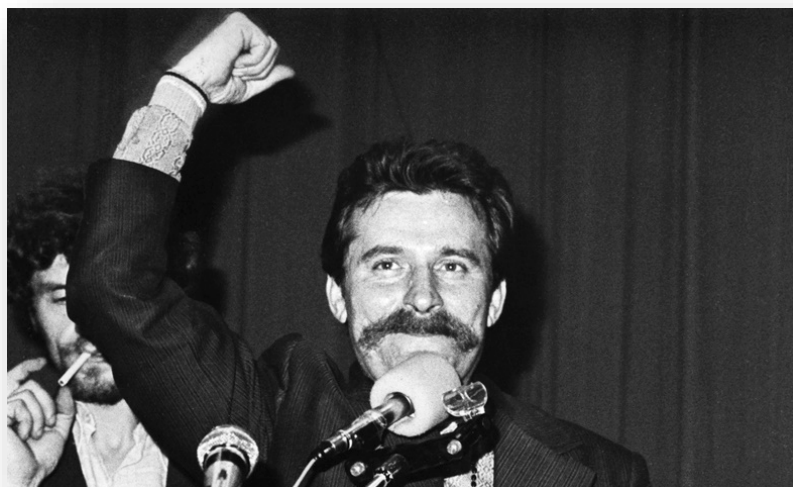


**Solidarity:** Labor movement in Poland in the 1980s led by Lech Walesa that successfully challenged the communist government.



**Lech Walesa:** Leader of the Solidarity movement in Poland. He became the first president of Poland after the fall of communism.

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



### Primary Source: Photograph

Lech Walesa, leader of the Solidarity movement and first president of Poland after the fall of communism.

Walesa could not have achieved all he did without moral and financial support. One particularly influential voice of support was **Pope John Paul II**. John Paul II was the first non-Italian pope in hundreds of years. In fact, he was from Poland. Like Archbishop Oscar Romero, the pope believed that religious leaders had an obligation to stand up for suffering people. As leader of the Catholic Church, John Paul II was a reformer. He gave churches permission to hold services in the languages of the people instead of Latin, which even few priests understood.



**Pope John Paul II:** Pope from 1978 to 2005. He was an outspoken critic of communism.



### Primary Source: Photograph

First Lady Nancy Reagan and President Reagan meet with Pope John Paul II.

John Paul II also took a special interest in the people of the communist world and spoke out regularly in favor of freedom and democracy. His voice in the struggle against communism was heard around the world and he inspired many people, especially American Catholics, to donate money to support Solidarity. Because he was a religious leader and not the president of a country, the pope was able to present himself as an impartial voice of reason.

### TIANANMEN SQUARE

The changing climate in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe inspired people in communist, mainland China to stand up for civil rights in their own country. In 1989, students across the nation began public demonstrations calling for freedom of speech, assembly and the press. The protests culminated in Tiananmen Square in the heart of Beijing in June, 1989. Known in China as the June Fourth Incident, the protests were forcibly suppressed after the government declared martial law. In what became known in the West as the **Tiananmen Square Massacre**, troops with automatic rifles and tanks killed at least several hundred, and perhaps several thousand demonstrators trying to block the military's advance towards Tiananmen Square.

As the protests developed in April, communist government leaders veered back and forth between conciliatory and hardline tactics, exposing deep divisions within the party leadership. Some advocated for more change and wanted to negotiate with the student leaders. Others saw the protests as a dangerous first step toward civil war and believed the protests should be ended with force.

By May, a student-led hunger strike galvanized support for the demonstrators around the country and the protests spread to some 400 cities. Ultimately, China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping resolved to use force. Communist Party authorities declared martial law on May 20, and mobilized as many as 300,000 troops to Beijing.

There, millions of young students and their supporters had concentrated in Tiananmen Square where they had erected a 33 foot tall statue entitled Goddess of Democracy. The statue was constructed in only four days out of foam, papier-mâché and metal and was strikingly similar to the Statue of Liberty. The constructors decided to make the statue as large as possible to try to dissuade the government from destroying it.

On June 3, the leadership had enough and the army marched through the streets toward the square. Met by students who had barricaded the roads with burning busses, the troops opened fire, killing hundreds of protesters. By June 5, the massacre was over. Tiananmen Square was empty. The Goddess of Democracy had been toppled and ground to dust by tanks.



**Tiananmen Square Massacre:** 1989 confrontation between pro-democracy activists and the communist government in Beijing, China. After protesters occupied Tiananmen Square in the center of the city the government ordered the military to break up the protest resulting in hundreds, possibly thousands of deaths.

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



### Primary Source: Photograph

The infamous “Tank Man” photograph from the Tiananmen Square Massacre.



Watch the original  
“Tank Man” video

The Chinese government was condemned internationally for the use of force against the protestors. The entire affair had been broadcast live on television and immortalized by photographer Jeff Widener who snapped an unforgettable picture of a lone man standing in the middle of Chang'an Avenue facing down an oncoming column of tanks. Western countries imposed economic sanctions and arms embargoes.

For its part, the communist government made widespread arrests of protesters and their supporters, suppressed other protests around China, expelled foreign journalists, strictly controlled coverage of the events in the domestic press, strengthened the police and internal security forces, and demoted or purged officials it deemed sympathetic to the protests.

The protests also led the government to set limits on political expression in China that have endured well into the 21st Century. Discussion of the Tiananmen Square protests is forbidden and textbooks have little, if any, information about the events. After the protests, officials banned controversial films and books, and shut down many newspapers. The government also announced it had seized 32 million contraband books and 2.4 million video and audio cassettes. Internet searches of “June 4” or “Tiananmen Square” made within China return censored results. Specific web pages with select keywords are censored, while other websites such as those of overseas Chinese democracy movements are blocked entirely. The censorship, however, has been inconsistent. Many sites have been blocked, unblocked, and re-blocked over the years, including YouTube, Wikipedia, and Flickr. The policy is much more stringent with Chinese-language sites than foreign-language ones. Social media censorship is more stringent during anniversaries. Even oblique references to the protests are usually deleted by government censors within hours. While the Chinese government allows a



Watch raw video  
from the Tiananmen  
Square Massacre

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certain measure of freedom of speech and criticism of the government online, freedom of assembly is strictly controlled. Since 1989, there have been no major public demonstrations.

The massacre has not been forgotten outside of China. Since its destruction, numerous replicas and memorials of the Goddess of Democracy have been erected around the world, including in Hong Kong and Washington, D.C.

### THE SINATRA DOCTRINE

Although political change did not come to China, massive political change was underway in Moscow, and especially in the Soviet Union's policy toward Eastern Europe.

The **Sinatra Doctrine** was a major break with the earlier **Brezhnev Doctrine**, under which the internal affairs of satellite states were tightly controlled by Moscow. The Brezhnev Doctrine had been used to justify the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, as well as the invasion of the non-Warsaw Pact nation of Afghanistan in 1979. By the late 1980s, structural flaws within the Soviet system, growing economic problems, the rise of anti-communist sentiment and the effects of the Soviet-Afghan War made it increasingly impractical for the Soviet Union to impose its will on its neighbors.

In Poland, Solidarity had flourished because of good leadership, international support, and most importantly, because the government of the Soviet Union had decided not to intervene in Poland's internal affairs.

In 1989, Gorbachev's Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze announced that the Soviet Union recognized the freedom of choice of all countries, specifically including the Warsaw Pact nations of Eastern Europe. When pressed about his boss's surprising declaration, Shevardnadze's spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov told an interviewer that, "We now have the Frank Sinatra doctrine. He has a song, 'I Did It My Way'. So every country decides on its own which road to take." When asked if this meant that Moscow would accept the rejection of communist parties in the Soviet Bloc, he replied, "That's for sure... political structures must be decided by the people who live there."

This was an incredible change in global politics. Since 1945, the Soviet Union had maintained total domination over its satellite states. Now, Gorbachev was ready to let them walk away from communism altogether.

In fact, the Eastern Europeans had already acquired greater freedom. A month before Gerasimov's statement, Poland had elected its first non-communist government. The government of Hungary had opened its border with Austria, dismantling the Iron Curtain on its own border. As Hungary was one of the few countries that East Germans could visit, thousands travelled there to flee across the newly opened border into the West. To the great annoyance of the East German government, the Hungarians refused to stop the exodus.



**Sinatra Doctrine:** The name that the Soviet government of Mikhail Gorbachev used to describe its policy of allowing neighboring Warsaw Pact states to determine their own internal affairs. The name alluded to the song "My Way" popularized by Frank Sinatra.



**Brezhnev Doctrine:** Soviet policy under Brezhnev in the 1970s in which the Soviet government used military force to control the governments of the Soviet Bloc.

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These developments greatly disturbed hardline communists such as the East German leader **Erich Honecker**, who condemned the end of the traditional unity of the Soviet Bloc and appealed to Moscow to rein in the Hungarians. Honecker faced a growing crisis at home, with massive anti-government demonstrations in Leipzig and other East German cities.

Initially, protesters were mostly people wanting to escape to the West, chanting "Wir wollen raus!" (We want out!). Then protestors began to chant "Wir bleiben hier!" (We are staying here!) demanding a change of government. The protest demonstrations grew considerably and neared its height on November 4, 1989, when half a million people gathered to demand political change at the **Alexanderplatz**, East Berlin's large public square and transportation hub.

### THE BERLIN WALL

In the middle of the chaos of the fall of 1989, Honecker, resigned. He had predicted that the Berlin Wall would stand for 50 or 100 more years if the conditions that had caused its construction did not change, but conditions were rapidly changing.

To reduce the social unrest, the new East German government decided to allow refugees to exit directly through crossing points between East Germany and West Germany, including between East and West Berlin.

Günter Schabowski, the communist party leader in East Berlin and the spokesperson for government, had the task of announcing the new regulations. However, he had not been involved in the discussions about the new regulations and had not been fully updated. Shortly before a press conference on November 9, he was handed a note announcing the changes, but given no further instructions on how to handle the information. These regulations had only been completed a few hours earlier and were to take effect the following day, so as to allow time to inform the border guards. But this starting time was not communicated to Schabowski.

At the end of the press conference, Schabowski read out loud the note he had been given. One of the reporters, asked when the regulations would take effect. After a few seconds' hesitation, Schabowski assumed it would be the same day based on the wording of the note and replied, "As far as I know, it takes effect immediately, without delay."

Excerpts from Schabowski's press conference were the lead story on West Germany's two main news programs that night. This, of course, meant that the news was broadcast to nearly all of East Germany as well. News anchorman Hanns Joachim Friedrichs proclaimed, "This 9 November is a historic day. The GDR (East Germany) has announced that, starting immediately, its borders are open to everyone. The gates in the Wall stand open wide."



**Erich Honecker:** Communist leader of East Germany from 1971-1989. He opposed reforms and the Sinatra Doctrine. He was forced to resign as protests mounted across East Germany in 1989.



**Alexanderplatz:** Major public square in East Berlin and site of protests in 1989 that culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall.

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



East Germans began gathering at the six checkpoints between East and West Berlin, demanding that border guards immediately open the gates. The surprised and overwhelmed guards began making hectic telephone calls to their superiors to find out what to do.

It soon became clear that no one among the East German government would take personal responsibility for issuing orders to use force against the protesters. The vastly outnumbered soldiers had no way to hold back the huge crowd of East German citizens. Finally, at 10:45 at night, Harald Jäger, the commander of the Bornholmer Straße border crossing yielded, ordering the guards to open the checkpoints and allow people through to West Berlin. As the Easterners swarmed through, they were greeted by Westerners waiting with flowers and champagne amid wild rejoicing. Soon afterward, a crowd of West Berliners jumped on top of the Wall, and were soon joined by East Germans. They danced together to celebrate their new freedom.



Primary Source: Photograph

Berliners climbed onto the Berlin Wall



Watch video from the fall of the Berlin Wall

Television coverage of citizens **demolishing sections of the Wall** that night was soon followed by the East German regime announcing ten new border crossings, including the historically significant locations of Potsdamer Platz, Glienicker Brücke, and Bernauer Straße. Crowds gathered on both sides of the historic crossings, waiting for hours to cheer the bulldozers that tore down portions of the Wall to reconnect roads that had been divided for years, and images of everyday Berliners destroying the wall were broadcast around the world. The end of the Iron Curtain had come without bloodshed. It was an emotional moment for freedom-loving people everywhere.



**Fall of the Berlin Wall:** The demonstrations and reverse of East German policy in November, 1989 that led to the opening of crossing points between East and West Berlin, and the subsequent destruction of the Berlin Wall by the people of Berlin.

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



### Primary Source: Photograph

Berliners brought hammers to chip away at the wall.

On Christmas Day, 1989, American conductor Leonard Bernstein led a symphony of East and West German, British, French, American and Soviet musicians in concert in Berlin. He concluded the performance with the great German composer Beethoven's 9th Symphony and in the final movement, Ode to Joy, he asked the chorus to sing *Freiheit* (freedom) instead of *Freude* (joy).

In June 1990, the East German military officially began dismantling the Wall. Virtually every road that was severed by the Berlin Wall was reconstructed and reopened by the end of the summer. Today, little is left of the Wall, a scar that has been erased by the Berliners who hated it.

The fall of the Wall marked the first critical step towards German reunification, which formally concluded a mere 339 days later on October 3, 1990 with the dissolution of East Germany and the official **reunification of Germany**.

### FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION

Unlike in China, Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union were specifically designed to permit more freedom by allowing a free press and the election of members of the government. Gorbachev had wanted to extend political freedom in order to preserve the communist economic system, but in the end his reforms set in motion events that would break up the nation itself.

Radical reformists were increasingly convinced that Gorbachev should abandon communism and transition to a market economy even if the eventual outcome meant the disintegration of the Soviet Union into several independent states. Boris Yeltsin, the newly elected leader of Russia, the largest and most powerful of the Soviet Union's republics, was also openly critical of the slow pace of Gorbachev's reforms.



Watch the  
"Ode to Freedom"  
Performance



**Reunification of Germany:** 1990 joining of East and West Germany. The East German government ceased to exist and the capital of Germany was moved from Bonn to Berlin.

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



But not everyone welcomed change. On August 19, 1991, Gorbachev's vice president, prime minister, defense minister and the head of the KGB put Gorbachev under house arrest and formed a "General Committee on the State Emergency." The **coup** organizers expected some popular support but found that public sympathy in large cities and in the republics was largely against them, manifested by public demonstrations, especially in Moscow.

Russian President **Boris Yeltsin** condemned the coup. Thousands of Muscovites came out to defend the White House, the Russian parliament building and Yeltsin's office, the symbolic seat of Russian sovereignty at the time. The organizers tried but ultimately failed to arrest Yeltsin, who rallied opposition to the coup with a speech atop a tank. The special forces dispatched by the coup leaders refused to storm the barricaded building. The coup leaders also neglected to jam foreign news broadcasts, so many Russians watched everything unfold live on CNN. Even Gorbachev was able to stay abreast of developments by tuning into the BBC World Service on a small transistor radio.



**1991 Coup:** Attempt to overthrow the Soviet government of Gorbachev by hard line leaders and generals in August 1991. It failed when the military refused to follow orders from the coup leaders. Gorbachev was returned to power but was weakened, leading to the breakup of the Soviet Union.



**Boris Yeltsin:** Russian leader who demanded greater reform during the 1980s. He opposed the 1991 coup and became the first president of independent Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union.

### Primary Source: Photograph

Boris Yeltsin (left side holding papers) address a crowd from on top of a tank outside of the Russian parliament building during the coup.

After three days, on August 21, 1991, the coup collapsed. The organizers were detained and Gorbachev returned as president, albeit with his influence much depleted. Three days later, Gorbachev dissolved the Central Committee of the Communist Party, resigned as the party's general secretary, and dissolved all party units in the government, effectively ending communist rule in the Soviet Union and dissolving the only remaining unifying force in the country.

The Soviet Union collapsed with dramatic speed in the last quarter of 1991. By the end of September, Gorbachev no longer had the authority to influence events outside of Moscow. He was challenged even there by Yeltsin, who had begun taking over what remained of the Soviet government, including the

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



Kremlin. Between August and December, ten republics declared their independence.

In a nationally televised speech early in the morning of December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned as president of the Soviet Union. He declared the office extinct, and all of its powers, including control of the nuclear arsenal, were ceded to Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

That night, after his resignation address, Gorbachev left the Kremlin, the Soviet flag was lowered for the last time and the Russian tricolor was raised in its place, symbolically marking the end of the Soviet Union. On that same day, the President of the United States George H.W. Bush held a brief televised speech officially recognizing the independence of the 11 former Soviet republics. The following day Yeltsin moved into Gorbachev's former office.

Following the **collapse of the Soviet Union**, Russia radically transformed from a centrally planned economy to a globally integrated market economy. Corrupt and haphazard privatization processes turned major state-owned firms over to politically connected oligarchs, which left control of Russia's wealth concentrated among a few enormously rich individuals. The result was disastrous, the economy fell more than 40% by 1999, hyperinflation ensued which wiped out personal savings, and crime spread rapidly. Difficulties in collecting taxes amid the collapsing economy and a dependence on short-term borrowing to finance budget deficits led to the 1998 Russian financial crisis. Many Russians began longing for the order and predictability of the old days.

Today, Russia has a free market economy but control of the nation's wealth continues to be in the hands of a few of the world's most wealthy men. The Russian government, like many of the governments of the former Soviet republics, looks far more like the dictatorships of the Cold War era than the democracies of the West.

### CUBA, VIETNAM AND NORTH KOREA

After the Cold War ended, communism did indeed end up on the "ash heap of history." As an economic system it had failed.

Vietnam's leaders followed the example of China. They opened up the economy, creating a vibrant free-market system, while maintaining strict political control. The United States and Vietnam maintain a positive relationship today.

Cuba's leadership, under the aging Fidel Castro and now his brother Raul, tried to hold on to communism. However, during the Cold War their economy had been supported financially by the Soviet Union. After 1991, they were set adrift and the Cuban economy collapsed. Faced with ever deepening poverty, the Cuban government has begun to allow limited private



**Fall of the Soviet Union:** December 25, 1991. The various republics of the Soviet Union became independent nations and the Soviet government and communism in the former Soviet Union ceased to exist. This was the final end of the Cold War.

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enterprise. The Castros, however, do not seem to be interested in relinquishing political power any time soon.

Only North Korea remains a Cold War-like opponent of the United States. Now ruled by the third generation of the Kim Family, the North has developed nuclear weapons as a deterrent to attack. Its only patron, China, is increasingly fed up with the problems its small neighbor creates. The economy, still based on communism, is in disarray. Without imports of rice, there would be mass starvation. Today, North Korea is one of the world's poorest nations, while on the other side of the DMZ, South Korea is one of the most vibrant. Truly, the two Koreas are proof that Reagan was right: democracy and a free market system are the paths to prosperity.

### LEGACY

Although the Cold War ended more than 20 years ago, its legacy continues to be tremendously important.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the post-Cold War world became unipolar instead of bipolar, with the United States the sole remaining superpower. The Cold War defined the political role of the United States as the leader of the Free World and institutionalized a global commitment to large-scale deployment of American servicemen, as well as a permanent, peacetime military industrial complex. Without the bipolar dynamic, the United States had to find a new role for itself in the world.

During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union used large portions of their nations' wealth to fund military buildups and wars. In addition to the loss of life by uniformed soldiers, millions died in the superpowers' proxy wars around the globe. Although most of the proxy wars ended along with the Cold War, the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Soviet Union did not bring peace to the world.

The breakdown of the governments in a number former communist nations resulted in new civil and ethnic conflicts, particularly in the former Yugoslavia. In Eastern Europe, the end of the Cold War has ushered in an era of economic growth and a large increase in the number of liberal democracies, while in other parts of the world, such as Afghanistan, independence was accompanied by state failure.

Despite the end of the Cold War, military development and spending has continued, particularly in the deployment of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles and defensive systems. Because there was no formalized treaty ending the Cold War, the former superpowers have continued to maintain and even improve or modify existing nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Moreover, other nations not previously acknowledged as nuclear-weapons states have developed and tested nuclear-explosive devices including India, Pakistan, and North Korea.



Watch a video about how Russia use social media to manipulate the 2016 election

## 6 WHY DID THE COLD WAR END?



Attitudes learned during the Cold War have proven hard to unlearn. Mistrust and rivalry between Americans and Russians is still potent. NATO's expansion into the nations of Eastern Europe is seen by many Russians as a threat to their security. While violent conflict between the two Cold War foes may be less likely now than in the past, cyberwar and espionage are still very much alive. In 2016, Russian government agents launched a concerted effort to use social media and the news media to manipulate the American presidential election.

### CONCLUSION

The Cold War ended in a series of steps over a few years. In the 1970s America's warming relationship with China opened up the opportunity for China to transition away from a communist economic system. In the 1980s Ronald Reagan correctly deduced that making arms-reduction treaties with Mikael Gorbachev would give the Soviet leader the money he needed to reform his government, leading eventually to political freedom in Eastern Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Two years later the Soviet Union itself disintegrated.

But what made all this happen? Was it the work of political leaders or the people of the nations themselves who were fed up with poverty and political persecution? Why did the Cold War end?

### SUMMARY

As part of his effort to reduce Cold War tensions, Richard Nixon decided to formally recognize the communist government of China and visited Beijing in 1972. This led to an opening up of China, as well as the sharing of goodwill gestures such as ping-pong matches and a gift of panda bears.

When Ronald Reagan became president in 1980, he decided to challenge communist leaders. He called the Soviet Union an "evil empire" and built up the American military. He disagreed with the idea of détente.

Reagan proposed a new strategy that would upend the system of mutually assured destruction. He wanted to build a system that could shoot down incoming Soviet missiles. The plan was not technologically possible, but it threatened to undo the delicate balance of power that had prevented war for decades.

Reagan was weakened as president by the Iran-Contra Scandal, which showed Americans how much he did not know about what his aides were doing. He survived, however, and started working with Soviet leaders.

Reagan met multiple times with Mikhail Gorbachev to try to reduce nuclear weapons. In fact, his second term was almost the opposite of his first. Instead of building up the military, Reagan started to reduce nuclear weapons. He wanted to give Gorbachev a chance to start reforms inside the Soviet Union.

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Communism started to fall in Europe beginning in Poland. Workers there formed a union that conducted a non-violent resistance against the communist leadership. Pope John Paul II, originally from Poland, was an important voice around the world against communism.

In 1989, students organized a mass protest in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China. They wanted democracy and an end to communist rule. However, the communist government of China sent in the army to end the protest.

Growing protests in Eastern Europe were different, however. The Soviet government under Gorbachev refused to intervene the way that had in Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s. Instead, they allowed pro-democracy demonstrations and permitted their Eastern European allies to open up the borders with the West.

In 1989, people in Berlin tore down the Berlin Wall. This most potent symbol of the division between East and West fell peacefully when the Soviets decided to let communism in East Germany end.

Gorbachev had hoped that by allowing people the freedom to vote, he might save communism, but that plan failed and in 1991, army officers staged a coup and tried to overthrow his government. However, the army itself did not follow the coup's leaders. Eventually, the destruction of Gorbachev's authority led to the splitting up of the Soviet Union and the end of communist governments in all the newly independent nations and in the former communist nations of Eastern Europe.

Communist governments continue in Cuba and North Korea. In China and Vietnam, the communist leaders gave up communism as an economic system, but continue to rule without elections.



## PEOPLE & GROUPS

**Ronald Reagan:** American president from 1981-1989. He abandoned détente and supported a more confrontational stance toward the Soviet Union based on an ideological view of the conflict. In his second term he began negotiating with Gorbachev and is credited with helping end the Cold War.

**Margaret Thatcher:** British Prime Minister in the 1980s. Nicknamed the “Iron Lady”, she was a strong ally of President Reagan.

**Mikhail Gorbachev:** Last leader of the Soviet Union from 1985-1991. He promoted government reform and negotiated with the United States.

**Solidarity:** Labor movement in Poland in the 1980s led by Lech Walesa that successfully challenged the communist government.

**Lech Walesa:** Leader of the Solidarity movement in Poland. He became the first president of Poland after the fall of communism.

**Pope John Paul II:** Pope from 1978 to 2005. He was an outspoken critic of communism.

**Erich Honecker:** Communist leader of East Germany from 1971-1989. He opposed reforms and the Sinatra Doctrine. He was forced to resign as protests mounted across East Germany in 1989.

**Boris Yeltsin:** Russian leader who demanded greater reform during the 1980s. He opposed the 1991 coup and became the first president of independent Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Vietnam Syndrome:** Reluctance on the part of American politicians and military leaders to use the armed forces due to the loss in Vietnam. Ronald Reagan helped end this.



## SPEECHES

**Evil Empire Speech:** 1982 speech by President Ronald Reagan in which he condemned communism and the Soviet Union calling it an “Evil Empire.”

**Tear Down This Wall:** 1987 speech by Ronald Reagan in West Berlin in which he challenged Gorbachev to open the Iron Curtain.



## POLICIES

**Rapprochement:** The policy of improving relations with communist China under the Nixon Administration. Similar to détente with the Soviet Union.

**Ping Pong Diplomacy:** The use of non-governmental exchanges (such as ping pong tournaments) to foster better relationships between competing nations.

**One China Policy:** American policy to officially recognize only one government of both China and Taiwan. The US maintains an embassy in Beijing and supports China’s membership in the UN. However, the US still supports Taiwan.

**Reagan Doctrine:** President Reagan’s policy of supporting anti-communist leaders and organizations everywhere in the world.

**Perestroika & Glasnost:** Reform programs in the Soviet Union promoted by Gorbachev designed to allow for more electoral freedom in order to save communism. They produced a higher demand for reform which eventually led to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

**Sinatra Doctrine:** The name that the Soviet government of Mikhail Gorbachev used to describe its policy of allowing neighboring Warsaw Pact states to determine their own internal affairs. The name alluded to the song “My Way” popularized by Frank Sinatra.

**Brezhnev Doctrine:** Soviet policy under Brezhnev in the 1970s in which the Soviet government used military force to control the governments of the Soviet Bloc.



## GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS & AGENCIES

**Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI):** Military program championed by President Reagan to develop a system to intercept incoming nuclear missiles. It was nicknamed “Star Wars” by its critics.

**Missile Defense Agency:** Military organization that develops and operates a system to intercept incoming nuclear missiles. It is the contemporary version of the original SDI.



## LOCATIONS

**People’s Republic of China (PRC):** Mainland, communist China. The PRC currently holds China’s seat at the United Nations.

**Republic of China (ROC):** Non-communist Taiwan.  
**Alexanderplatz:** Major public square in East Berlin and site of protests in 1989 that culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall.



## EVENTS

**Nixon’s Visit to China:** 1972 visit by President Nixon to the People’s Republic of China. This visit officially reopened the diplomatic relationship between the PRC and the US and the US recognized the PRC government as the representatives of China at the United Nations.

**Iran-Contra Scandal:** Political scandal in 1986 in which officials in the Reagan Administration illegally sold weapons to Iran and used the money to support the Contras in Nicaragua. The scandal called into question Reagan’s ability to manage the day-to-day operations of government.

**Reykjavik Summit:** 1985 summit between President Reagan and Gorbachev held in Reykjavik, Iceland. It was one of five meetings between the two leaders. At their meeting they agreed to eliminate all nuclear weapons but their advisors made them reverse this pledge.

**Tiananmen Square Massacre:** 1989 confrontation between pro-democracy activists and the communist government in Beijing, China. After protesters occupied Tiananmen Square in the center of the city the government ordered the military to break up the protest resulting in hundreds, possibly thousands of deaths.

**Fall of the Berlin Wall:** The demonstrations and reverse of East German policy in November, 1989 that led to the opening of crossing points between East and West Berlin, and the subsequent destruction of the Berlin Wall by the people of Berlin.

**Reunification of Germany:** 1990 joining of East and West Germany. The East German government ceased to exist and the capital of Germany was moved from Bonn to Berlin.

**1991 Coup:** Attempt to overthrow the Soviet government of Gorbachev by hard line leaders and generals in August 1991. It failed when the military refused to follow orders from the coup leaders. Gorbachev was returned to power but was weakened, leading to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

**Fall of the Soviet Union:** December 25, 1991. The various republics of the Soviet Union became independent nations and the Soviet government and communism in the former Soviet Union ceased to exist. This was the final end of the Cold War



## TEXTS

**Shanghai Communiqué:** Joint statement by China and the United States in 1972 as part of Nixon’s visit to China. The two nations agreed to normalize relations.



## Q U E S T I O N   F I F T E E N

# DID ANYONE WIN THE C O L D W A R ?

It's hard to say who won the Cold War. On one hand, it seems easy to point the failure and fall of communism as evidence that the United States and our allies in the West were victorious. But, although the communist economic system has vanished, political oppression and dictatorship live on in many of the nations that were our Cold War enemies.

In 1992, American writer Francis Fukuyama published a book entitled "The End of History and the Last Man" in which he argued that, with the end of the Cold War, liberal democracy and the free market system had finally triumphed, marking the end of the evolution of human government. Do you think he is correct? Did our economic system and form of government win the Cold War?

Or perhaps, insightful, calculating leaders are responsible for the victory? Certainly, presidents Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan would fall into this category.

Then again, maybe this is the wrong way to think about victory. Rather than assigning a win to a country or a person, we should think about who benefited most from the outcome. Perhaps we should say that humanity won the Cold War since the threat of nuclear war has fallen and because so many more people enjoy basic freedoms and greater prosperity.

But of course, can anyone really win a war in which there were no face-to-face battles? Can you say that someone won a war if it took more than forty years to achieve victory? With all the suffering that the conflict caused, did anyone win?

What do you think? Who won the Cold War?



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