

Student Name: _____

**T° OIB History Theme 2:
The Post-War Bipolar World and Challenges to Bi-polarization
(1945-1970s)**

Chapter 1 Resource Pack

The end of WW2 and Emergence of the Cold War, 1944-50

This chapter sheds light on the parallel and contradictory developments in the immediate post-war era: the desire to create a stable new world order at the same time as the breakdown of the Grand Alliance and emergence of superpower rivalry between the USA and the USSR which led to two competing spheres of influence and formed a new world order of tensions between East and West.

Key topics from World War Two for explaining the origins of the Cold War:

- i) The occupation and effective division of Europe (particularly Germany) by the two emerging superpowers,
- ii) The Bretton Woods Agreement
- iii) Yalta and Potsdam
- iv) The opening of the UN
- v) The American use of the atomic bomb

Key topics for explaining the development of the Cold War between 1945 and 1950:

- i) The Iron Curtain speech, 1946
- ii) The Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan and containment policy, 1947
- iii) The Berlin Blockade and Airlift, 1948/9
- iv) The Creation of NATO, 1949
- v) The outbreak of the Korean War, 1950

Reference Points

- Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan
- Berlin Blockade and Airlift
- 38th Parallel and outbreak of the Korean War

Key Questions

1. Why did wartime cooperation break down so quickly at the end of WWII?
2. To what extent are the origins of the Cold War to be found in WWII?
3. To what extent did the US and the USSR contribute to establishing a stable post-war order up to 1950?
4. Why did the United States support the establishment of the United Nations?
5. Why did the Allies establish War Crimes Trials?
6. Why did the United States provide Marshall Plan assistance to Europe?

Chapter Learning Objectives

- ❖ **Understand** the significance of the war crime trials (Nuremberg and Tokyo).
- ❖ **Understand** the emergence of superpower rivalry (Stalin and Truman at Potsdam).
- ❖ **Analyze** the importance of key doctrines and events in the early Cold War.
- ❖ **Analyze** the significance of the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950.
- ❖ **Assess** the significance of the Bretton Woods agreement and creation of the UN in identifying US economic, diplomatic and military influence and power.

Key Terms

Bretton Woods: this established a system of payments based on the dollar, which defined all currencies in relation to the dollar, itself convertible into gold, and above all, "as good as gold" for trade. U.S. currency was now effectively the world currency, the standard to which every other currency was pegged.

Yalta Conference: February 1945 meeting between the big three and although there were tensions about Poland- Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill - managed to agree to **split Germany** into four zones of occupation, and to allow **free elections** in Eastern European countries.

Potsdam Conference: July 1945 follow up meeting. Roosevelt had died and Churchill had lost the 1945 election - so there were **open disagreements**. Truman came away angry about the size of reparations and the fact that a communist government was being set up in Poland. Truman did not tell Stalin that he had the atomic bomb.

Iron Curtain: The Iron Curtain was a political boundary dividing Europe into two separate areas from the end of World War II in 1945 until the end of the Cold War in 1991. The term symbolizes the efforts by the Soviet Union to block itself and its satellite states from open contact with the West and its allied states

Berlin Blockade and Airlift: The Berlin Blockade was one of the first major international crises of the Cold War. During the multinational occupation of post-World War II Germany, the Soviet Union blocked the Western Allies' railway, road, and canal access to the sectors of Berlin under Western control. The Soviets offered to drop the blockade if the Western Allies withdrew the newly introduced Deutschmark from West Berlin. In response, the Western Allies organized the Berlin airlift to carry supplies to the people of West Berlin.

Containment: the strategy of "**containment**" was a **Cold War** foreign policy of the United States and its allies to prevent the spread of communism after the end of World **War II**. Containment represented a middle-ground position between detente (relaxation of relations) and rollback (actively replacing a regime).

Truman Doctrine: the policy of President Truman, as advocated in his address to Congress on March 12, 1947, to provide military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey and, by extension, to any country threatened by Communism or any totalitarian ideology.

Marshall Plan: The Marshall Plan was an American initiative passed in 1948 for foreign aid to Western Europe. The United States transferred over \$12 billion in economic recovery programs to Western European economies after the end of World War II.

Cominform: an organization (1947–56) established by the Communist parties of nine European countries for mutual advice and coordinated activity in order to ensure ideological unity.

COMECON: The **Council for Mutual Economic Assistance** was an economic organization from 1949 to 1991 under the leadership of the Soviet Union that comprised the countries of the Eastern Bloc along with a number of socialist states elsewhere in the world. Comecon was set up initially to prevent countries in the Soviet sphere of influence from moving towards that of the United States in response to the Marshall Plan.

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, formed in Washington in 1949 and comprising the 12 nations of the Atlantic Pact plus Greece, Turkey and the Federal Republic of Germany, for the purpose of collective defence against aggression.

Warsaw Pact: a military alliance of communist nations formed in 1955. It was dissolved in 1991.

Summary of the Cold War, 1945-50

What was the Cold War?

The end of the Second World War saw the emergence of two superpowers, the USA and the USSR, who were locked in a struggle which lasted for 45 years. This was known as the Cold War.

The term Cold War was first used in 1947 to describe the conflict. It was a war of words, of propaganda and of threat between the USA and the USSR, but it did not involve the two Superpowers in direct confrontation. They both took part in proxy wars – that is they helped their allies to fight the other Superpower or their allies but did not become directly involved in the conflict themselves.

Why did the Cold War begin?

The Cold War began due to a mixture of long and short term causes.

Long Term Causes:

- ***Differing Ideologies:***

In 1917 Russia became the first communist country in the world. Both the USA and the USSR believed that their system was the best way of organizing a country and that other countries should follow their example.

- The USSR – one party state, no free elections, state owned industry and agriculture. The government planned the economy and what should be produced. There was a lack of freedom and strict censorship.
- The USA – democratic and capitalist, free elections, industry and agriculture were privately owned and run for profit. Free press and freedom of movement.

Both sides feared the other was out to destroy it. The Soviets believed the west was out to destroy communism. The West believed Soviets wanted to spread communism around the globe.

- ***Stalin's Suspicion of the West***

- The USSR had been attacked previously, Germany had invaded Russia in 1914, in 1918, Allied forces had invaded Russia during the Civil War. Hitler had invaded in 1941. Stalin believed it was essential to have friendly countries on his border to prevent this happening again.
- Stalin did not trust the West. The West had been appeased Hitler in the 1930s - Stalin believed they had wanted Hitler to destroy communism. The West was also slow to open the Second Front during the Second World War to help the Russians fight Hitler.

- ***The USA's change of policy***
- The USA was determined not to repeat its isolationist policies of the interwar years. The USA believed appeasement did not work, and that dictators had to be confronted and democracy supported.
- As the richest and most successful country in the world the USA expected to have a say in the way the world was run. It was confident no other power had nuclear weapons.
- The USA did not want to return to the Depression and wanted to secure markets for its goods, it did not believe that the communist countries would buy American goods and so was determined to prevent the spread of communism. It was not in the USA's economic interests to allow the spread of communism.

Short Term Causes

The Yalta and Potsdam Conferences

Yalta Conference (February 1945)

The leaders present were Stalin (USSR), Roosevelt (USA) and Churchill (Britain).

Agreements:

- Stalin agreed to join the war against Japan once Germany was defeated



- All 3 agreed to join the United Nations.
- Germany to be divided into four zones of occupation (Br, Fr, USA, USSR)
- Berlin to be divided into four zones, as Germany
- Stalin to have '**a sphere of influence**' in Eastern Europe.
- 'Free elections' to be held to decide governments countries liberated from Nazi occupation
- USSR to join the war against Japan once Hitler had been defeated

However there was a dispute over Poland:

- Stalin insisted on a 'friendly government' in Poland. The West demanded free elections in Poland.

Potsdam Conference (July 1945)

The leaders present were Stalin (USSR), Truman (USA), and Attlee (Britain)

Personality clash: Truman, the new President of the USA, was fiercely anti-communist. He was not prepared to negotiate with Stalin. This, in turn, angered Stalin.



Photo # USA C-1860 "Big Three" & Foreign Ministers at Potsdam, ca. July 1945

Agreements:

- USSR to gain eastern Poland and Poland to be compensated with some German territory - the German border was settled at the Oder-Neisse Line.
- Nazi Party to be banned and Nazi war criminals to be put on trial.
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Disagreements:

- Stalin demanded harsh reparations from Germany for the USSR - demanded \$20 billion compensation. This figure was rejected by Truman and Attlee – they did not want to make the same mistakes as at Versailles.
- Stalin was denied a naval base in the Mediterranean
- Stalin had set up a communist government in Poland without free elections being held – this angered Truman and Attlee and made them suspicious of Stalin's motives.

The Atom Bomb

On 16th July, during the Potsdam Conference, the USA successfully tested their first A Bomb. Truman informed Stalin about it, but was not willing to share the technology. This made Stalin even more suspicious of the West and encouraged him to begin an arms race to make the USSR's weapons equal in force to those of the USA

- The Arms Race was pushed along by fear.
 - Until 1949 the USSR could not risk a war against USA. When the USSR exploded own nuclear weapon in 1949, USA no longer had a monopoly and needed to rethink its strategy. The USA began to develop the H bomb.
 - In 1952 the USSR exploded its own H-bomb.

- The USA began to build bomber aircraft, to deliver the H-bomb, in the mistaken belief that the USSR had more bomber aircraft than the USA did.

Soviet Expansion in the East



The USSR responded to its nuclear inferiority by strengthening its control over Eastern Europe.

Rigged elections, violence, intimidation and other methods were used to gain control over Eastern European states including Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

By 1947 all eastern European states apart from Czechoslovakia had communist governments (Czechoslovakia came under communist government in 1948)

No free elections had been held as agreed to at Yalta.

The USSR justified its actions as follows:

- It had created a buffer zone against the West.
- It was afraid of the USA's A-bomb monopoly.
- It was afraid of an attack by the West in the near future.
- It had created a '*sphere of influence*' as agreed at Yalta.

The USA claimed;

- The USSR had seized control of Eastern Europe and rejected free elections as agreed at Yalta.
- The USA feared that the USSR was determined to extend its influence into Western Europe (and then the rest of the world!!)

The USSR claimed that their measures were defensive, but the USA claimed they were aggressive and a threat to the west.

The Truman Doctrine

Between 1945 and 1949 the USA sought to *contain* the spread of communism, first in Europe but later around the globe. The USA believed that the USSR was determined to expand and that the USA should use any means possible to stop that expansion.

Greece was the first country to benefit from this policy. During WW2 the Greek resistance to the German occupation had been divided into supporters of the monarchy and the communists. At the end of the war British troops had helped to restore the monarchy but were now under attack from the communists. By 1947, Britain could no longer afford to continue to keep troops in Greece and so they asked for help from the USA. The USA provided money to keep the British troops in Greece



In 1947 President Truman outlined the USA's response in what became known as the Truman Doctrine.

"I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures ."
President Truman 12 March 1947

This policy was designed to stop the spread of communism - it was called containment

US policy was driven by a belief in the 'Domino Theory' – the USA should prevent one country from falling to communism to stop others from following suit.

It was believed that it was America's duty to protect democracies from the threat of communism. It would do this by providing money, aid, advisors or even weapons to any country threatened by communism.

USA showed this policy in action when it installed ballistic missiles in Turkey - the USSR had no such missiles and therefore saw this action as hostile.

The Marshall Plan



The Marshall Plan is another example of the Truman Doctrine in action

Europe's economy had been shattered by WW2. Europe had to tackle the devastation caused by the war, the impact of the bombing, the loss of lives, the destruction of industry, refugees and a mountain of debt. Europe owed the USA \$11.5 billion.

US Secretary of State George Marshall believed that countries suffering from poverty and unemployment were more likely to turn to communism. The aim of the Marshall Plan was therefore to rebuild the shattered European economy so that it could resist the spread of communism. A fund of \$15 billion was made available to any nation who applied for it.

The Marshall Plan aimed to:

- Raise living standards in western Europe to reduce the appeal of communism.
- To rebuild Germany
- To weaken Soviet control over Eastern Europe

- To help the US economy by increasing US exports to Europe. They did not want a repeat of the 1920s.

The US government was initially unsure about providing so much aid to Europe, however, events in Czechoslovakia soon changed their minds

Czechoslovakia, 1948

By 1948 Czechoslovakia was not under the control of the communists. The government considered accepting Marshall Aid. Elections were due to take place in spring 1948 and the communists were expected to do badly. A communist coup saw the non-communists removed from office, Jan Masaryk, a minister who supported the west was murdered. The communists took control of Czechoslovakia.

This angered people in the west. US Congressmen who had been reluctant to grant Marshall Aid, agreed to the money for the Marshall Plan.

Stalin's Reaction to the Marshall Plan

Stalin called the Marshall Plan '*dollar imperialism*' and claimed the USA was trying to control industry and trade in Europe. He believed that it sought to undermine communism and to promote the spread of capitalism across the globe. He refused to accept any economic aid and stopped any Eastern bloc country applying for it.

How did Stalin react to the actions of the West?

Cominform (1947) and Comecon (1949)

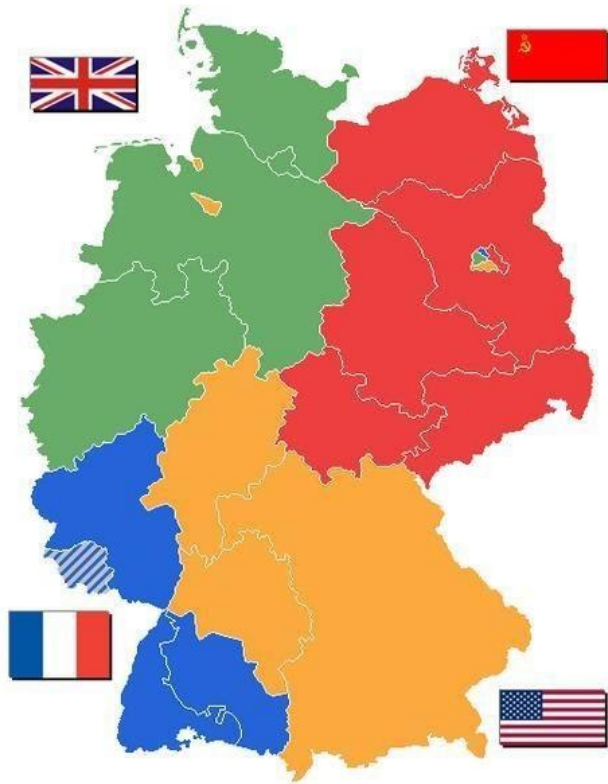
To try to prevent any eastern European countries applying for aid and to strengthen his grip on the countries on his borders Stalin offered help and support to eastern Europe by setting up two organisations, Cominform (1947) and Comecon (1949).

Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) was an alliance of European communist parties to help them plan and to work together and spread Stalin's ideas. It increased the control Stalin had over these countries, and limited their independence. Only Marshal Tito, the communist leader of Yugoslavia, would not accept Stalin's total leadership and split with Moscow.

Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Aid) was set up to coordinate the production and trade of the eastern European communist countries. They were expected to trade with each other and not the West. However, it favoured the USSR more than any of its other members.

The Berlin Crisis: 1948-49

Germany, and Berlin, had been divided in 1945 into zones of occupation. This was a source of tension which peaked during the Berlin Crisis of 1948-49.



Map showing the division of Germany and Berlin in 1945

Causes of the Berlin Crisis/Berlin Blockade:

- Britain, France and the USA had merged their zones of West Germany into one in March 1948
- Britain, France and the USA had then introduced a new currency to western Germany, which was intended to help it become economically stronger.
- Capitalism was drawing many people away from the communist east towards greater opportunities and freedoms.

As a result:

- Stalin felt threatened by Germany's growing strength
- Stalin was angry that the west had not consulted him before making changes in their zones of Germany
- Stalin wanted the 'cancer' of west Berlin to be removed from East Germany.

What happened?

In June 1948 Stalin cut off all road, rail and canal links to West Berlin – the Berlin Blockade. The city only had 6 weeks supplies of food and fuel. Stalin aimed to starve the 2 million inhabitants in West Berlin into submission. He believed that Truman would either have to give up West Berlin or go to war.

But the West responded with a massive airlift - food, fuel and supplies were flown into Berlin for 10 months. Stalin dared not shoot down any planes – it would be an act of war.

Stalin called off the Blockade in May 1949.

Outcomes:

- A propaganda victory for the West - Truman had shown he would not allow the policy of containment to fail.
- Stalin was humiliated - the USSR had failed to extend its influence
- The division of Germany into two separate states - in May 1949 the new Federal Republic of Germany was set up. In October the eastern zone became the German Democratic Republic.
- The formation of NATO.
- Deepened hostility between East and West.

What was NATO?

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in April 1949 by the Western powers. This was during the period of the Berlin Blockade, and was partly in response to Stalin's aggression.
- The original twelve members of NATO in 1949 were the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg.
- NATO was a military alliance that committed all members to the defense of all the others.
- But NATO was more than a promise of American help in an emergency. The alliance was to be supported by large numbers of troops on the ground.
- In particular, there were a large number of troops in West Germany. By 1953, 5 divisions of US troops were permanently based there.
- Stalin, unsurprisingly, saw NATO as a threat to the USSR and Eastern Europe.

What was the Warsaw Pact?

The Warsaw Pact was set up in 1955.

- The Warsaw Pact was a defensive military alliance of the USSR and its satellite states in Eastern Europe.
- It was intended as a counter-force to NATO, which was a military alliance of western powers.

- The Warsaw Pact, like NATO, relied on collective security – if one nation was attacked, the others would come to its support.
- The Warsaw Pact helped to make Eastern Europe an effective 'buffer zone' for the USSR against the West.



For the next three decades, NATO and Warsaw Pact forces faced each other and prepared for war.

China becomes Communist: 1949



You are not expected to know the details of the Communist revolution in China, but you should be aware that the fact of such a large country becoming Communist gave the USA further 'evidence' that Communism was a danger and that it was spreading.

The USA feared a 'domino effect' whereby one country after another would fall to communism. This is one reason why the USA was so keen to get involved in the conflict in Korea.

The Korean War: 1950-53

You will be expected to know about the events of the Korean War and understand that the USSR and USA were supporting opposing sides in the war.

Truman viewed the Korean War as a test of his policy of containment.

Key Events:

- In June 1950 Communist North Korea invaded the South and the Korean War began.
- Truman immediately sent advisers, supplies and warships to help South Korea.
- Truman then put pressure on the United Nations to condemn North Korea's actions.
- Eighteen states provided troops or support to the UN force in Korea, but it was dominated by the USA.
- UN army had early success and pushed the North Koreans back beyond the 38th Parallel.
- But they did not stop. Despite warnings from Mao that China would support North Korea, the UN army pressed on into the North. By October 1950 they had reached the border with China.
- 200,000 Chinese troops joined the North Koreans, bringing with them modern tanks and planes supplied by the USSR.
- By January 1951 UN forces had been pushed back to the 38th parallel.
- Fighting continued for another two years, but no progress was made on either side.
- After the replacement of Truman with Eisenhower in 1952 and the death of Stalin in March 1953, steps were taken to bring the conflict to an end.

The armistice was signed in July 1953

Learning Objective: Assess the significance of the Bretton Woods agreement and creation of the UN in identifying US economic, diplomatic and military influence and power.

Established in 1944, the [Bretton Woods Agreement](#) remains to be one of the most historical achievements ever made through global cooperation and coordination. The agreement was established to streamline the management of monetary & exchange rates. The agreement was reached in July of 1944 at the U.N. Monetary and Financial Conference that went down in New Hampshire's Bretton Woods. The Bretton Woods Agreement pegged currencies to the cost of gold and made the U.S. dollar the standard global currency. The agreement remains one of the most important decisions ever made in the global financial history.



The Mount Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire was the venue of the conference.

The creation of the [Bretton Woods Agreement](#) involved all the World War II Allied countries. 730 delegates from 44 countries met in Bretton Woods with the aim of creating a new and standard international monetary system. The primary objectives of the meeting was to improve economic growth, alleviate competitive devaluations and establish a system for foreign exchange rates. It took a period of more than 2 years just to prepare for the event.

United Kingdom's [John Maynard Keynes](#) and the Treasury Department's [Harry Dexter White](#) were the two key figures of the Bretton Wood System. The two were

the primary designers of this system with Keynes proposing the creation of a global central bank that would be called Clearing Union and White proposing limiting the resources and powers of each country. Although both proposals were considered in developing the system, the Bretton Woods Agreement leaned more on the side of White's proposal.

Every country that was involved in the creation of the agreement agreed to ensure that their central banks would have to preserve the fixed exchange rates between the standard currency (the dollar) and their own currencies. One of the strategies that these countries would implement to ensure this was purchasing its currency from the foreign exchange markets in the event that the value of their currencies dropped in relation to the dollar. This would as a result minimize the supply of the said currency and ultimately raise its value. For currencies that grew stronger, banks would print more to raise the supply and lower the value. I'll also publish a separate article on [Currency Debasement](#) and also put some videos out.

Countries that participated in the event also came to an agreement aimed at preventing trade warfare. One way of achieving this was that the member countries agreed not to lower the value of their currencies with the aim of boosting trade. They were also required to regulate their currencies in some instances.

The Bretton Woods System was implemented and went fully operational in 1958. While it was taking effect, currencies were also becoming convertible. For currency conversion, nations were required to settle international balances strictly in dollars. The U.S dollars were on the other hand convertible to gold. At the time the system was just beginning to gain traction, the applied exchange rate was \$35/ounce. The United States was charged with the duty of keeping fixed the prices of gold and appropriately adjusting the dollar supply.

Results of the Bretton Woods Agreement

The most notable outcome of the Bretton Woods Agreement was the creation of two bodies that would transform the international trade scene. The IMF – [International Monetary Fund](#) was among the bodies that were created following the agreement. IMF was very crucial to the success of the system. It was largely important since

member countries would occasionally need to be bailed out if the value of their currencies dropped. The IMF would also monitor exchange rates to ensure that the standards were met.

Another institution created by the Bretton Woods Agreement was the [World Bank Group](#). The main objective of the institution was to deliver financial assistance to countries to aid in reconstruction after the world war.

Dissolution of the Bretton Woods Agreement

The dissolution of the Bretton Woods System occurred between the years 1968 and 1973. The U.S. dollar was overvalued, a factor that led to the rise of concerns about the exchange rates and its tie to gold prices. The then president Richard Nixon instructed for a temporary suspension of the convertibility of the dollar – this is today called the [Nixon Shock](#). This allowed countries to choose their own preferred exchange agreements.

The Bretton Woods Agreement contributed greatly to the development of the international economy and enhanced trade between countries. It also encouraged international cooperation and led to the creation of two institutions that have played a major role in the development of global economy.

<https://faisalkhan.com/2018/09/14/the-bretton-woods-agreement-and-significance/>

The United Nations

The name "United Nations", coined by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt was first used in the Declaration by United Nations of 1 January 1942, during the Second World War, when representatives of 26 nations pledged their Governments to continue fighting together against the Axis Powers.

For the Common Good: The U.S. Role in the United Nations

Over the past fifty years, the United States has had an unusually close--but often tumultuous--relationship with the United Nations. President Franklin Roosevelt believed that U.S. refusal to participate in the League of Nations had contributed to its inability to forestall the outbreak of World War II. He envisioned the UN as the

centerpiece of a post-war system of collective security backed by the power of the United States and its victorious allies. The United States initially contributed a full 40 percent of the UN budget. The world body's headquarters was established in the United States to underline the centrality of this special relationship and the shift of the locus of world power from the "old" world to the "new."

The principles and purposes of the UN, as laid out in its founding conference in San Francisco fifty years ago, largely mirror the values and interests of this country. The Charter stresses goals of conflict prevention, respect for human rights, national self-determination, international cooperation, tolerance, and economic and social progress. To forward these objectives, an inter-state decision making machinery was crafted that combines a universal one-nation, one-vote deliberative body, the General Assembly, with a much smaller and more powerful Security Council, entrusted with unprecedented enforcement authority, in which the United States and its chief World War II allies have vetoes. Other principal organizations include the International Court of Justice, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, and the staff secretariat, headed by the Secretary-General.

From 1948 until the end of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy was oriented around one all-encompassing principle: the containment of the Soviet Union and global communism. Multilateralism-based on common interests and cooperative efforts - was rarely an option for Moscow and Washington policymakers who believed that they were locked in a zero-sum competition with their adversary, where their losses were inevitably the other's gain. Under these conditions, the Security Council was frustrated by repeated vetoes-mostly Soviet-and the General Assembly became an ideological and strategic battleground. While the United States won its share of "victories" on UN votes, the organization was unable to play the central role in political and security affairs that the founders had envisioned.

Blocked in the security arena, the UN's efforts flowed into other areas where political conditions were more propitious. When the Council could not agree on taking coercive military enforcement measures, the concept of non-offensive peacekeeping with the consent of the parties to a conflict was developed. An impressive array of functional, humanitarian, and development agencies was established, and the

international financial institutions flourished, turning the UN into a global family of organizations with specialized tasks. With the support of the United States, the UN undertook major efforts to promote social, environmental, and economic development on a global scale. The United States also backed UN efforts to facilitate the decolonization process in Africa and Asia, bringing dozens of newly independent nations to life and swelling the ranks of UN member states. With the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt, a series of landmark human rights covenants and norms were codified into international law.

Edward C. Luck and Nick Birnback, 1994

<http://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/publications/se/5807/580702.html>

Learning Objective: Understand the significance of the war crime trials (Nuremberg and Tokyo).

Nuremberg War Crimes Trials

In December 1942, the Allied leaders of Great Britain, the United States and the [Soviet Union](#) “issued the first joint declaration officially noting the mass murder of European Jewry and resolving to prosecute those responsible for violence against civilian populations,” according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). [Joseph Stalin](#) (1878-1953), the Soviet leader, initially proposed the execution of 50,000 to 100,000 German staff officers. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (1874-1965) discussed the possibility of summary execution (execution without a trial) of high-ranking Nazis, but was persuaded by American leaders that a criminal trial would be more effective. Among other advantages, criminal proceedings would require documentation of the crimes charged against the defendants and prevent later accusations that the defendants had been condemned without evidence.

There were many legal and procedural difficulties to overcome in setting up the Nuremberg trials. First, there was no precedent for an international trial of war criminals. There were earlier instances of prosecution for war crimes, such as the execution of Confederate army officer Henry Wirz (1823-65) for his maltreatment of Union prisoners of war during the [American Civil War](#) (1861-65); and the courts-martial held by Turkey in 1919-20 to punish those responsible for the Armenian genocide of 1915-16. However, these were trials conducted according to the laws of a single nation rather than, as in the case of the Nuremberg trials, a group of four powers (France, Britain, the Soviet Union and the U.S.) with different legal traditions and practices.

The Allies eventually established the laws and procedures for the Nuremberg trials with the London Charter of the International Military Tribunal (IMT), issued on August 8, 1945. Among other things, the charter defined three categories of crimes: crimes against peace (including planning, preparing, starting or waging wars of aggression or wars in violation of international agreements), war crimes (including violations of

customs or laws of war, including improper treatment of civilians and prisoners of war) and crimes against humanity (including murder, enslavement or deportation of civilians or persecution on political, religious or racial grounds). It was determined that civilian officials as well as military officers could be accused of war crimes.

The city of Nuremberg (also known as Nurnberg) in the German state of Bavaria was selected as the location for the trials because its Palace of Justice was relatively undamaged by the war and included a large prison area. Additionally, Nuremberg had been the site of annual Nazi propaganda rallies; holding the postwar trials there marked the symbolic end of Hitler's government, the Third Reich.

The Major War Criminals' Trial: 1945-46

The best-known of the Nuremberg trials was the Trial of Major War Criminals, held from November 20, 1945, to October 1, 1946. The format of the trial was a mix of legal traditions: There were prosecutors and defense attorneys according to British and American law, but the decisions and sentences were imposed by a tribunal (panel of judges) rather than a single judge and a jury.

Twenty-four individuals were indicted, along with six Nazi organizations determined to be criminal (such as the "Gestapo," or secret state police). Hitler and two of his top associates, Heinrich Himmler (1900-45) and [Joseph Goebbels](#) (1897-45), had each committed suicide in the spring of 1945 before they could be brought to trial.

In the end, the international tribunal found all but three of the defendants guilty.

Twelve were sentenced to death, one in absentia, and the rest were given prison sentences ranging from 10 years to life behind bars. Ten of the condemned were executed by hanging on October 16, 1946. Hermann Göring (1893-1946), Hitler's designated successor and head of the "Luftwaffe" (German air force), committed suicide the night before his execution with a cyanide capsule he had hidden in a jar of skin medication.

Aftermath

Nonetheless, most observers considered the trials a step forward for the establishment of international law. The findings at Nuremberg led directly to the

United Nations [Genocide](#) Convention (1948) and Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), as well as the [Geneva Convention](#) on the Laws and Customs of War (1949). In addition, the International Military Tribunal supplied a useful precedent for the trials of Japanese war criminals in Tokyo (1946-48); the 1961 trial of Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann (1906-62); and the establishment of tribunals for war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia (1993) and in Rwanda (1994).

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/nuremberg-trials>

The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal

On January 19, 1946, US Army General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in occupied Japan, created the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), modeled after the International Military Tribunal (IMT) in Nuremberg.

The tribunal indicted 28 Japanese political and military leaders for crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The accusations ranged from prisoners' abuse, rape and torture, to the ill-treatment of workers, arbitrary executions and inhuman experiments. After two and a half years, six defendants were sentenced to death and executed on December 23, 1948. Most of the remaining received life sentences.

But from the outset, the IMTFE elicited significant objections, particularly the total exoneration of Emperor Hirohito and all the members of his family, even though the war was waged in the name of the emperor.

The US occupation government led by General MacArthur even manipulated the testimonies of the defendants to ensure that no one implicated the emperor.

By preventing the royal family from being indicted, the US government wanted to secure the implementation of democratic reforms in the East Asian nation. In fact, the emperor was able to secure his place in the new post-war Japanese order

unopposed. His son, the current Emperor Akihito, still strives to make sure that the country's wartime past doesn't fade from memory.

However, it was not only the blanket exoneration of the imperial family which damaged the credibility of the tribunal. The granting of immunity to Japanese Surgeon General Shiro Ishii and his colleagues also contributed to this. The US was rather interested in the results of his cruel experiments - which he conducted by subjecting wartime prisoners to biological and chemical weapons. Furthermore, the tribunal's questionable legal methods are another reason why Japanese nationalists still criticize it as a means for the dispensation of victor's justice.

For instance, there was no provision in international law at the time dealing with "crimes against peace." And a judge from the Philippines was biased as he had been captured by the Japanese during the war and subjected to the so-called Bataan Death March. In addition, press statements issued by the Allies, many of which were unexamined documents and statements, were admitted as evidence.

The dubious nature of the war crimes tribunal remains a key factor behind the strained relations between the former warring parties in East Asia. The Yasukuni Shrine, which was built in the second half of the 19th century as a war memorial, honors 14 war criminals convicted by the tribunal. Visits to the shrine by nationalist politicians such as former PM Junichiro Koizumi and incumbent PM Abe evoke strong responses from China and South Korea, which feel provoked by these actions.



Each time a Japanese leader pays a visit to the shrine, it can be perceived as a statement hinting that Japan was both right and just in terms of its war engagement. Japanese nationalists are therefore not keen to end this diplomatic row by building a new, neutral war memorial.

Nonetheless, one can assume that the war crimes committed by the Japanese would have been rarely prosecuted without the IMTFE. As the recent nuclear disaster in Fukushima showed, there is a strong tendency in Japanese society to sweep unpleasant events under the carpet, and not prosecute those responsible for the events.

<https://www.dw.com/en/the-eternal-burden-of-the-tokyo-war-crimes-tribunal/a-18986976>

Understanding, Analysing and Evaluating the history of the Cold War

THE COLD WAR

For more than a decade after the beginning of the Cold War, few historians saw any reason to challenge the official American interpretation of its origins. The breakdown of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union was, most agreed, a direct result of Soviet expansionism and of Stalin's violation of the wartime agreements forged at Yalta and Potsdam. The Soviet imposition of communist regimes in Eastern Europe was part of a larger ideological design to spread communism throughout the world. American policy was the logical and necessary response: a firm commitment to oppose Soviet expansionism and to keep American forces in a continual state of readiness.

Disillusionment with the official justifications for the Cold War began to find expression even in the late 1950s, when anti-communist sentiment in America remained strong and pervasive. William Appleman Williams's *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959) insisted that the Cold War was simply the most recent version of a consistent American effort in the twentieth century to preserve an "open door" for American trade in world markets. The confrontation with the Soviet Union, he argued, was less a response to Soviet aggressive designs than an expression of the American belief in the necessity of capitalist expansion.

As the Vietnam War grew larger and more unpopular in the 1960s, the scholarly critique of the Cold War quickly gained intensity. Walter LaFeber's *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, first published in 1967, maintained that America's supposedly idealistic internationalism at the close of the war was in reality an effort to ensure a postwar order shaped in the American image—with

every nation open to American influence (and to American trade). That was why the United States was so apt to misinterpret Soviet policy, much of which reflected a perfectly reasonable commitment to ensure the security of the Soviet Union itself, as part of a larger aggressive design.

The revisionist interpretations of the Cold War ultimately produced a reaction of their own: what has come to be known as "postrevisionist" scholarship. The most important work in this school attempted to strike a balance between orthodoxy and revisionism and to identify areas of blame and patterns of misconceptions on both sides of the conflict. An important early statement of this approach was John Lewis Gaddis's *The United States and the Cold War, 1941–1947* (1972), which argued that "neither side can bear sole responsibility for the onset of the Cold War." Both sides had limited options, given their own political constraints and their own preconceptions. Other postrevisionist works—by Thomas G. Paterson, Melvyn Leffler, William Taubman, and others—have elaborated on ways in which the United States and the Soviet Union acted in response to genuine, if not necessarily accurate, beliefs about the intentions of the other. "The United States and the Soviet Union were doomed to be antagonists," Ernest May wrote in 1984. "There probably was never any real possibility that the post-1945 relationship could be anything but hostility verging on conflict."

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, scholars have had access to newly released Russian archives that have enriched—although not fundamentally altered—the way historians view the Cold War. John Lewis

Gaddis, in *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (1998) and *The Cold War* (2005), portrays a Cold War somewhat more dangerous than his own earlier studies, and those of many other scholars, had portrayed; and he argues that the strong anticommunist positions of Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and Pope John Paul II had a larger impact on the weakening of the Soviet Union than was previously understood. Similarly assisted by newly released archives, Odd Arne Westad, in *The Global Cold War*

(2005), roots the origins of the dangerous instability in the so-called Third World in the frequent interventions of both the Soviet Union and the United States in the Cold War era. •

UNDERSTAND, ANALYZE, & EVALUATE

1. What are the orthodox, revisionist, and postrevisionist arguments concerning the origins of the Cold War?
2. Was the Cold War inevitable?

Learning Objective: Analyze the importance of key doctrines and events in the early Cold War.

7.1 WHAT CAUSED THE COLD WAR?

(a) Differences of principle

The basic cause of conflict lay in the differences of principle between the communist states and the capitalist or liberal-democratic states.

- *The communist system* of organizing the state and society was based on the ideas of Karl Marx; he believed that the wealth of a country should be collectively owned and shared by everybody. The economy should be centrally planned and the interests and well-being of the working classes safeguarded by state social policies.
- *The capitalist system*, on the other hand, operates on the basis of private ownership of a country's wealth. The driving forces behind capitalism are private enterprise in the pursuit of making profits, and the preservation of the power of private wealth.

Ever since the world's first communist government was set up in Russia (the USSR) in 1917 (see Section 16.2(d)), the governments of most capitalist states viewed it with mistrust and were afraid of communism spreading to their countries. This would mean the end of the private ownership of wealth, as well as the loss of political power by the wealthy classes. When civil war broke out in Russia in 1918, several capitalist states – the USA, Britain, France and Japan – sent troops to Russia to help the anti-communist forces. The communists won the war, but Joseph Stalin, who became Russian leader in 1929, was convinced that there would be another attempt by the capitalist powers to destroy communism in Russia. The German invasion of Russia in 1941 proved him right. The need for self-preservation against Germany and Japan caused the USSR, the USA and Britain to forget their differences and work together, but as soon as the defeat of Germany was clearly only a matter of time, both sides, and especially Stalin, began to plan for the post-war period.

What was the Cold War?

ISSUES:

What do we mean by 'Cold War'? When and why was there a Cold War?

1 Introduction

a) What is Meant by 'Cold' War?

The armies of the USA and USSR never met in the way that American forces had faced Germans and Japanese in the Second World War. This was because new (nuclear) weaponry made the prospect of war too terrifying. Although the USA and USSR came close, they never used nuclear weapons against each other. Instead, they expressed their hostility by stockpiling the nuclear weapons, and giving varying degrees of economic and military aid to win over other countries.

How Do Historians Define the Cold War?

a state of extreme tension between the superpowers, stopping short of all-out war but characterised by mutual hostility and involvement in covert warfare and war by proxy as a means of upholding the interests of one against the other. The Cold War remained 'cold' because the development of nuclear weapons had made resort to war a suicidal enterprise ... The resulting tensions...ensured that both sides...maintained a high and continuous state of readiness for war.

Source A Michael Dockrill

The Cold War was a traditional contest between two great powers, accentuated by the role of ideology and transformed by the scope of the weapons of mass destruction available.

Source B Peter Lowe

What were the dates of the Cold War?

Historians disagree over when the Cold War started. Did it begin in 1917 with the Russian Revolution? Or during the Second World War? Or, more likely, soon after the Second World War? It is clear that Roosevelt and Stalin were on quite good terms at Yalta in early 1945, but that by 1947 relations were extremely tense. Historians also disagree over whether or not there was more than one Cold War. Some historians say there was a Cold War in Europe, another Cold War in Asia, and one in the Third World. Some contend that a first Cold War lasted from around 1947 to the early 1970s. They say a second Cold War developed during Ronald Reagan's first term as president (1981–5) and ended either with the Reagan–Gorbachev friendship, or with the collapse of the USSR and its empire (1989–91).

Why Was There a Cold War?

There had been antagonism between Russia and America since the late nineteenth century. The tension was exacerbated when Russia became Communist and when America intervened in the Russian Revolution. There were ideological differences between the USSR and USA. Capitalist America wanted free access to the world's markets, and disliked Communist belief in a state-controlled economy and the equal distribution of wealth. America favoured a multi-party democracy while Soviet Communism denied the need for other political parties. Although the two countries were allied during the Second World War (1941–5) there were disagreements over issues such as the future of Eastern Europe.

- ▼ By 1945 the US was clearly the most powerful country in the world. Germany and Japan were defeated, Britain and France were exhausted. With Stalin's Red Army in Eastern Europe, some Americans thought the USSR would be the great power most likely to threaten the United States. Thus the Cold War could be interpreted as a traditional great power conflict.
- ▼ There were misunderstandings over security. The US did not consider itself to be an aggressive power. The Truman administration felt that American security required free trade, democratic governments, and no imperialism. Stalin was convinced that Soviet security required control of Eastern Europe. The US interpreted that control of Eastern Europe as imperialistic, and threatening to free trade and democracy. The Soviets interpreted that American hostility as threatening Soviet security.
- ▼ Some historians blame important personalities for causing tension. Possibly Roosevelt was too sympathetic to Stalin, after which Truman seemed far more threatening to him. Churchill was always suspicious of Stalin, whom many Westerners considered to be paranoid.
- ▼ The Soviets were alarmed by American secrecy over the atomic bomb, the awesome power of which was demonstrated in Japan. The bomb demonstrated American technological and military supremacy.
- ▼ There were problems during 1945–7 over Germany, Greece, Turkey, and Iran, and also belligerent speeches from both sides, any or all of which could be said to have started the Cold War.

Excerpts from Farmer, 'Cold War'

Key Question: Why did the United States provide Marshall Plan assistance to Europe?

1 US Secretary of State, George Marshall, announcing his plan in an address at Harvard University

It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health to the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace.

Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.

E. G. Rayner, *The Cold War*, London, 1992, p. 16

2 Andrei Vyshinsky, the Soviet deputy foreign minister, speaking at the UN on 18 September 1947

The so-called Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan are particularly glaring examples of the manner in which the principles of the United Nations are violated, of the way in which the Organisation is ignored . . .

It is becoming more and more evident to everyone that the implementation of the Marshall Plan will mean placing European countries under the economic and political control of the United States and direct interference by the latter in the internal affairs of those countries . . .

An important feature of this Plan is the attempt to confront the countries of eastern Europe with a bloc of western European states including western Germany.

M. McCauley, *The origins of the Cold War, 1941 – 1949*, London, 1995, pp. 140–41

Historical-source questions

- 1 Which 'country or doctrine' does George Marshall implicitly refer to in Source 1?
- 2 Why did Marshall feel it was necessary to return 'normal economic health to the world'?
- 3 How do Sources 1 and 2 show differing views of US policies in 1947?

History Review, 'Churchill Stalin and the Iron Curtan speech'

Extract from Williamson, 'Berlin Blockade'

CNN Cold War episodes (1998) available here:

http://www.internationalschoolhistory.net/coldwar_documentary/1-comrades.htm

Extract from Farmer, 'Why was there a Cold War in Asia?'

The end of WW2 and Emergence of the Cold War

Individual Student Enquiry

PART 1. Why did wartime cooperation break down so quickly at the end of WWII?

(PARAGRAPH RESPONSES

/20pts)

Use pages 4-5 and 'Churchill, Stalin and the Iron Curtain Speech, pages 30-34

a) **To what extent was the break down of the wartime alliance inevitable** (pages 33-34 will be particularly pertinent for this response)?

b) **Write a single paragraph summary to identify the critical long term causes of the Cold War** (pages 4 and 5 will be helpful for this response as is the final paragraph on page 26 about the capitalist states which assisted the anti-communist forces in the Russia civil war).

PART 2. To what extent are the origins of the Cold War to be found in WWII?

(SHORT ESSAY RESPONSE / 20pts)

Use pages 5-7 to provide a succinct response to this question focused on the **conferences** and use of the **Atomic Bomb** and the accomplishments of the **Bretton Woods Conference** (pages 15-17). You could also refer to the superb presentation on this topic and the accompanying History Review article distributed in September about the use of the Atomic Bomb.

PART 3 (i) Why did the United States support the establishment of the United Nations?

(PARAGRAPH RESPONSE)

Use pages 17-19

Explain why the USA supported the establishment of the UN and why the effectiveness of this organization was limited in the early Cold War period.

(ii). Why did the Allies establish War Crimes Trials?

(SHORT RESPONSES)

(Graded /20pts)

Use pages 20-34

a) Why were the trials of senior Nazis held at Nuremberg?

- b) Why were criminal trials considered to be more effective than summary execution?
- c) What was the impact of the Nuremberg Trials?
- d) What was the justification for not implicating the Japanese royal family in war crimes at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal?
- e) Explain the controversy over visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by senior Japanese politicians.

PART 4 (i) Why did the United States provide Marshall Plan assistance to Europe? (SHORT RESPONSES)

Use page 29 and complete short responses to questions 1, 2 and 3.

Use pages 36-40

- a) Why was China becoming communist important?
- b) Explain what the term 'roll-back' meant and the significance of the 38th parallel.
- c) How / why was the USSR involved in the North Korean Attack on South Korea?
- d) What was NSC 68 how does it help explain US involvement in this conflict?

(ii) How and why did the Berlin Blockade occur and how was it resolved?

Use pages 11-12 and the final pages in the booklet to write a 1-2 paragraph response to this question.

(iii) Explain how NATO and the subsequent Warsaw Pact turned Eastern Europe into a buffer zone. (Graded /20pts)

Use pages 12-13, your response must explain what these organizations were in a paragraph response.

Final grade out of 20 coefficient 3
