

The Cold War

Credit: Stanford History Education Group “Think Like a Historian”

Key Historical Question: *Who was primarily responsible for the Cold War – the United States or the Soviet Union?*

Introduction:

Historians have offered vastly different interpretations of the origins of the Cold War over the past 5 decades. Few historical events have been subject to such an array of revisionist and neo-revisionist accounts. In this lesson, students enter the fray through exploring a variety of documents highlighting various issues and perspectives that led to the Cold War and address the question: Who was primarily responsible for the Cold War, the United States or the Soviet Union?

Background Review:

- US and Soviet Union were allies in WWII.
- After WWII, Europe was in ruins, and former colonial empires were crumbling. This set the scene for increased competition between the two superpowers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.
- The Soviet Red Army remained in Eastern Europe after the war, which led to the Soviet Bloc. At the same time, the United States developed policies of containment – in particular, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.
- Over the past decades historians have disagreed over this question. Today, we are going to look closely at some Cold War documents in order to address the question for ourselves.

Tasks:

1. **Timeline and Origins of the Cold War PowerPoint.** Examine the Cold War Timeline and work through the PowerPoint slides to draw attention to key events: The Iron Curtain speech, The Truman Doctrine, The Marshall Plan, NATO, and the Warsaw Pact. Keep in mind the key historical question: **Who was started the Cold War, the United States or the Soviet Union?**
2. **Document Analysis:** Actively read Documents A and B, along with the Guiding Questions. Following your reading, answer the questions and record your initial hypothesis regarding the key historical question.
3. **Document Analysis:** Actively read Documents C and D, answer questions, and record your second hypothesis.
4. **Reflection:** In a one-page response, discuss the following:
 - Who was primarily responsible for the start of the Cold War? What evidence do you have to support your claim?
 - Which of these documents do you believe is most trustworthy? Why?

- Did anyone's hypothesis change? How and why?
- What other evidence would you need to strengthen your claim?

The Origins of the Cold War

The Iron Curtain



Winston Churchill with President Truman just before the Iron Curtain Speech



Map of the "Iron Curtain"

The Truman Doctrine, 1947



President Truman outlined the Truman Doctrine to a joint session of Congress in March of 1947



President Truman in 1945

The Marshall Plan, 1947



Nations that had received Marshall
Plan aid by 1950

Marshall Plan, 1947

Two years after the war Stuttgart's inner city still reflected the destruction of urban centers during wartime bombing.

1947 1955

Marshall Plan funds helped provide for the rebuilding of cities. Photos on these two pages were taken from the same spot.



Stuttgart, Germany before and after Marshall Plan aid

NATO Treaty, 1949. Warsaw Pact, 1955.



Central Historical Question:
Who started the Cold War?

Timeline of the Early Cold War

1945: February 4-11 - Yalta Conference

1945: August 6 - United States first used atomic bomb in war

1945: August 8 - Russia enters war against Japan

1945: August 14 - Japanese surrenders, ending World War II

1946: March - Winston Churchill delivers "Iron Curtain" speech

1947: March - Truman announces Truman Doctrine

1947: June - Marshall Plan is announced

1948: February - Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia

1948: June 24 - Berlin blockade begins

1949: July - NATO treaty ratified

1949: May 12 - Berlin Blockade ends

1949: September - Mao Zedong, a communist, takes control of China

1949: September - Soviets explode first atomic bomb

1955: May – Warsaw Pact

Document A: The Iron Curtain Speech (Modified)

It is my duty, however, to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe.

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 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.

In a great number of countries, far from the Russian frontiers and throughout the world, Communist fifth columns are established and work in complete unity and absolute obedience to the directions they receive from the Communist center.

I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines.

But what we have to consider here today while time remains, is the permanent prevention of war and the establishment of conditions of freedom and democracy as rapidly as possible in all countries.

Source: *Excerpt from the “Iron Curtain Speech” delivered by Winston Churchill, March 1946 in Fulton, Missouri.*

Document B: The Truman Doctrine (Modified)

The United States has received from the Greek Government an urgent appeal for financial and economic assistance...Greece is in desperate need of financial and economic assistance to enable it to resume purchases of food, clothing, fuel, and seeds.

The very existence of the Greek state is today threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists, who defy the government's authority. . . . Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy. The United States must supply this assistance. . . . No other nation is willing and able to provide the necessary support for a democratic Greek government.

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion.

It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East. . . . Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching to the West as well as to the East.

The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world. And we shall surely endanger the welfare of this nation.

Great responsibilities have been placed upon us by the swift movement of events.

Source: *Excerpt from the "Truman Doctrine Speech," delivered by President Truman to Congress on March 12, 1947.*

Document C: Soviet Ambassador Telegram (Modified)

The foreign policy of the United States, which reflects the imperialist tendencies of American monopolistic capital, is characterized in the postwar period by a striving for world supremacy. This is the real meaning of the many statements by President Truman and other representatives of American ruling circles; that the United States has the right to lead the world. All the forces of American diplomacy -- the army, the air force, the navy, industry, and science -- are enlisted in the service of this foreign policy. For this purpose broad plans for expansion have been developed and are being implemented through diplomacy and the establishment of a system of naval and air bases stretching far beyond the boundaries of the United States, through the arms race, and through the creation of ever newer types of weapons. . . .

During the Second World War . . . [American leaders] calculated that the United States of America, if it could avoid direct participation in the war, would enter it only at the last minute, when it could easily affect the outcome of the war, completely ensuring its interests.

In this regard, it was thought that the main competitors of the United States would be crushed or greatly weakened in the war, and the United States by virtue of this circumstance would assume the role of the most powerful factor in resolving the fundamental questions of the postwar world.

Source: *Excerpt from a telegram sent by Soviet Ambassador Nikolai Novikov to Soviet Leadership in September 1946.*

Document D: Henry Wallace (Modified)

I have been increasingly disturbed about the trend of international affairs since the end of the war.

How do American actions appear to other nations? I mean actions [like] the Bikini tests of the atomic bomb and continued production of bombs, the plan to arm Latin America with our weapons, and the effort to secure air bases spread over half the globe from which the other half of the globe can be bombed. I cannot but feel that these actions must make it look to the rest of the world as if we were only paying lip service to peace at the conference table.

These facts rather make it appear either (1) that we are preparing ourselves to win the war which we regard as inevitable or (2) that we are trying to build up a predominance [largest amount] of force to intimidate the rest of mankind.

Our interest in establishing democracy in Eastern Europe, where democracy by and large has never existed, seems to [the Soviets] an attempt to reestablish the encirclement of unfriendly neighbors which might serve as a springboard of still another effort to destroy [them].

Source: *Secretary of Commerce and former Vice President Henry A. Wallace letter to President Harry S. Truman, July 23, 1946. Truman asked Wallace to resign shortly after this letter.*

Guiding Questions

Iron Curtain Speech

1. *Sourcing*: Who was Winston Churchill? Why would Americans trust what he has to say about the Soviet Union?
2. *Close reading*: What does Churchill claim that the Soviet Union wanted?

Truman Doctrine

1. *Close reading*: Why did Truman believe Greece needed American aid in 1947?
2. *Context*: What does Truman mean when he claims, "Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching to the West as well as to the East"?
3. *Close reading*: Does Truman present American policy as offensive or defensive? What words or phrases does Truman use to present policy this way?

Record your first hypothesis: *Who was primarily responsible for the Cold War - the United States or the Soviet Union?*

Soviet Ambassador Telegram

1. *Sourcing*: Who was Nicholas Novikov? When did he write this telegram?
2. *Close reading*: How does Novikov describe the United States? What evidence does he use to support his description?
3. *Context*: What does Novikov claim the United States planned during the Second World War?

Henry Wallace Letter

1. *Sourcing*: Who was Henry Wallace? When did he write this letter?
2. *Close Reading*: What is Wallace's main argument?
3. *Corroboration*: How does Wallace's description of American foreign policy compare to Truman's and Novikov's?

Record your second hypothesis: *Who was primarily responsible for the Cold War - the United States or the Soviet Union?*

The Cold War

Cold War Instructional Guide: In order to complete this instructional activity, you may utilize the articles listed below and/or use available external resources.

Note to students: It is recommended that you don't complete the entire assignment in one sitting, rather work on your Social Studies assignment for 30-45 minutes a day. Use the weekly checklist and consider breaking up the tasks into smaller chunks. When assigned in its entirety this lesson should take approximately 3-5 days to complete.

Student Instructions:

1. Read the content summary.
2. Read the assigned articles highlighting key information.
3. Respond to the key questions in a 1-2 page reflection
4. Complete an extension activity

Time: 3-5 days

Vocabulary:

● Blacklist ● Cold War ● Containment ● Domino Theory ● Iron Curtain ● Marshall Plan ● Massive Retaliation ● Sputnik

Content Summary:

During World War II, the Soviet Union and the United States fought side by side as allies. However, the relationship between the two countries was never one of close friends. These two superpowers had ideological differences - the United States favored capitalism and democracy, while Joseph Stalin had an iron grip on his communist country. As Soviet goals of expansion became evident, many Americans began to fear that Russia would try to spread communism and control the world. The official policy of the United States was one of "containment", with the goals being to prevent communism from spreading. During this time, both countries entered an arms race, with the Soviets testing their own atomic bomb in 1949. At times during the Cold War, the world came dangerously close to nuclear annihilation. The Cold War also reached space. On October 4, 1957, the Soviets launched the world's first artificial satellite into Earth's orbit. President Dwight Eisenhower created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958. The Americans won the space race on July 20, 1969, when Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon. Throughout the 1980s, Soviet influence began to diminish and in 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, marking a symbolic fall of communism and the Soviet Union's power. By 1991, the Soviet Union itself fell apart and the Americans were left as the only global superpower. In the midst of the Cold War, the United States also fought two wars; one in Korea and another in Vietnam.

Questions (respond in a 1-2 page response):

1. Explain the domestic effect of the Cold War.
2. Explain the causes and impact of the Korean and Vietnam War.
3. How have the changes or developments during the Cold War shaped American society today?

Extension Activities (Optional):

Problem-Solution: Identify the problems during the Cold War, describe the government's response to each problem and add your reflections on the information you have gathered.

Presidential Address: Imagine you were the president of the United States during the Cold War. Prepare a speech to be delivered to the nation that highlights the issues of the Cold War but also calms the fears of the people. Consider recording your speech and sharing it with peers or a caregiver.

Cold War, warm hearth

By Elaine Tyler May, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History on 11.03.19

Word Count **1,693**

Level **MAX**



Image 1. Families walk down the driveway while touring a model home with a concrete basement fallout shelter in Texas in 1961. Photo: Shel Hershorn/Getty Images

In the summer of 1959, a young couple married and spent their honeymoon in a fallout shelter. Life magazine featured the "sheltered honeymoon" with a photograph of the duo smiling on their lawn, surrounded by dozens of canned goods and supplies. Another photograph showed them kissing as they descended 12 feet underground into the 22-ton, steel and concrete, 8-by-11-foot shelter where they would spend the next two weeks. The article quipped that "fallout can be fun" and described the newlyweds' adventure as 14 days of "unbroken togetherness."

As the couple embarked on married life, all they had to enhance their honeymoon were some consumer goods and their privacy. This is a powerful image of the nuclear family in the nuclear age: isolated, sexually charged, cushioned by abundance, and protected against impending doom by the wonders of modern technology.

The stunt was little more than a publicity device; yet, in retrospect, it takes on symbolic significance. For in the early years of the Cold War, amid the uncertainties brought about by World War II and its aftermath, the home seemed to offer a secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world. The message was ambivalent, however, for the family also seemed

particularly vulnerable. It needed heavy protection against the intrusions of forces outside itself. The self-contained home held out the promise of security in an insecure world. It also offered a vision of abundance and fulfillment. As the Cold War began, young postwar Americans were rushing into this vision of marriage and family life.

Demographic indicators show that in the period immediately following World War II, Americans were more eager than ever to establish families. The bomb-shelter honeymooners were part of a cohort of Americans of all racial, ethnic, and religious groups, of all socio-economic classes and education levels, who lowered the age at marriage for both men and women, and quickly brought the birthrate to a 20th-century high after more than a hundred years of steady decline, producing the "baby boom." Although the nation remained divided along lines of race and class, family fever swept the nation and affected all Americans. The trend of early marriage and relatively large families these young adults established lasted for more than two decades. From the 1940s through the early 1960s, Americans married at a higher rate and at a younger age than did their European counterparts.

Less noted but equally significant, the men and women who formed families between 1940 and 1960 also reduced the divorce rate after a postwar peak. Marriages forged in the late 1940s were particularly stable. Even those couples who eventually divorced remained together long enough to prevent the divorce rate from rising until the mid-1960s. Although the United States maintained its dubious distinction of having the highest divorce rate in the world, the temporary decline in divorce did not occur to the same extent in Europe.

Why did postwar Americans turn to marriage and parenthood with such enthusiasm and commitment? Scholars frequently point to the family boom as the inevitable result of a return to peace and prosperity. They argue that postwar Americans were eager to put the disruptions and hardships of economic depression and war behind them and enjoy the abundance at home. There is, of course, some truth in this claim, but prosperity followed other wars in our history, notably World War I, with no similar increase in marriage and childbearing. Peace and affluence alone are inadequate to explain the many complexities of the postwar domestic explosion. The demographic trends went far beyond what was expected from a return to peace. Indeed, nothing on the surface of postwar America explains the rush of young Americans into marriage, parenthood and traditional gender roles.



It might have been otherwise. The Great Depression of the 1930s brought about widespread challenges to traditional gender roles that could have led to a restructured home. The war intensified these challenges and pointed the way toward radical alterations in the institutions of work and family life. Wartime brought thousands of women into the paid labor force when men left to enter the armed forces. After the war, expanding job and educational opportunities, as well as the increasing availability of birth-control devices, might well have led young people to delay marriage or not marry at all, and to have fewer children if they did marry. Indeed, many observers

at the time feared that these changes seriously threatened the stability of the American family. Yet, the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that postwar American society experienced a surge in family life and a reaffirmation of domesticity that rested on distinct roles for women and men.

This demographic explosion in the American family represented a temporary disruption of long-term trends. It lasted only until the baby-boom children came of age. The parents, having grown up during the Depression and the war, had begun their families during years of prosperity. Their children, however, grew up amid affluence during the Cold War; they reached adulthood during the 1960s and 1970s, creating the counterculture and a new women's liberation movement. In vast numbers, they rejected the political assumptions of the Cold War, along with the domestic and sexual codes of their parents. This generation brought the 20th-century birthrate to an all-time low and the divorce rate to an unprecedented high.

Observers often point to the 1950s as the last gasp of time-honored family life before the '60s generation made a major break from the past. But the comparison is shortsighted. In many ways, the youths of the '60s resembled their grandparents, who came of age in the first decades of the 20th century. Like many of their baby-boom grandchildren, the grandparents had challenged the sexual norms of their day, pushed the divorce rate up and the birthrate down, and created a unique youth culture, complete with music, dancing, movies and other new forms of amusements. They also behaved in similar ways politically, developing powerful feminist and civil rights movements, strong grassroots activism on behalf of social justice, and proliferation of radical movements to challenge the status quo. It is the generation in between — with its strong domestic ideology, pervasive consensus politics, and peculiar demographic behavior — that stands out as different.

What makes the postwar demographic explosion even more curious and remarkable is its pervasiveness across all groups in society. Americans of all backgrounds rushed into marriage and childbearing, even though many of these newly formed families — most notably large numbers of Americans of color — were excluded from suburbia, the site of the "American way of life." Racial and class divisions were concealed beneath an aura of unity in the aftermath of the war. Post-World War II America presented itself as a unified nation, politically harmonious and blessed with widespread affluence. Emerging triumphant from a war fought against racist and fascist regimes, spared the ravages of war-torn Europe and Asia, and prosperous from the booming wartime economy, the United States embraced its position as the "leader of the free world."

But major challenges lay ahead if the nation was to maintain its leadership in the world. The atomic blasts that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked both the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War. The United States now faced its former ally, the Soviet Union, as its major foe. The Cold War was largely an ideological struggle between the two superpowers, both hoping to increase their power and influence across the globe. The divisions in American society along racial, class, and gender lines threatened to weaken the society at home and damage its prestige in the world. In the propaganda battles that permeated the era, American leaders promoted the American way of life as the triumph of capitalism, allegedly available to all who believed in its values. This way of life was characterized by affluence, located in suburbia, and epitomized by white middle-class nuclear families. Increasing numbers of Americans gained access to this domestic ideal — but not everyone who aspired to it could achieve it.

Poverty excluded many from suburban affluence; racism excluded others. Nevertheless, experts and officials insisted that the combined forces of democracy and prosperity would bring the fruits of the "good life" to all. Racial strife, they asserted, was diminishing. Workers, they argued, were prosperous. But anxieties surrounding these issues did not disappear. Policymakers perceived racial and class divisions as particularly dangerous because dissatisfied workers and racial minorities might be drawn to left-wing political agitation, leading to socialism or even communism. According to the Cold War ethos of the time, conflict within the United States would harm our image abroad, strengthen the Soviet Union, and weaken the nation, making it vulnerable to communism. The worst-case scenario was a Communist takeover and the defeat of the United States in the Cold War. Although strategists and foreign policy experts feared that the Soviet Union might gain the military strength and territorial expansion to achieve world domination, many leaders, pundits, and other observers worried that the real dangers to America were internal: racial strife, emancipated women, class conflict and familial disruption.

To alleviate these fears, Americans turned to the family as a bastion of safety in an insecure world, while experts, leaders and politicians promoted codes of conduct and enacted public policies that would bolster the American home. Like their leaders, most Americans agreed that family stability appeared to be the best bulwark against the dangers of the Cold War era. Because of the political, ideological and institutional developments that converged at the time, young adults were especially eager for the comforts and security that the nuclear family promised. Like the young couple who honeymooned in the fallout shelter, postwar Americans set their sights on the affluent and protected home as the location of their own personal pursuit of happiness.

Elaine Tyler May is a professor of American studies and history at the University of Minnesota and the author of "Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era" (2008), and "Pushing the Limits: American Women, 1940–1961" (1994).

Causes of the Vietnam War, 1945-1954

By Kennedy Hickman, ThoughtCo.com on 11.21.19

Word Count **1,050**

Level **MAX**



(From left) Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union, Mao Zedong of China and Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam attend a banquet in Beijing, China, October 1, 1959, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of communist rule in China. Photo by AP

The causes of the Vietnam War trace their roots back to the end of World War II. A French colony, Indochina (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) had been occupied by the Japanese during the war. In 1941, a Vietnamese nationalist movement, the Viet Minh, was formed by Ho Chi Minh to resist the occupiers. A communist, Ho Chi Minh waged a guerrilla war against the Japanese with the support of the United States. Near the end of the war, the Japanese began to promote Vietnamese nationalism and ultimately granted the country nominal independence. On August 14, 1945, Ho Chi Minh launched the August Revolution, which effectively saw the Viet Minh take control of the country.

The French Return

Following the Japanese defeat, the Allied Powers decided that the region should remain under French control. As France lacked the troops to retake the area, Nationalist Chinese forces occupied the north while the British landed in the south. Disarming the Japanese, the British used the surrendered weapons to rearm French forces that had been interned during the war. Under pressure from the Soviet Union, Ho Chi Minh sought to negotiate with the French, who desired to

retake possession of their colony. Their entrance into Vietnam was only permitted by the Viet Minh after assurances had been given that the country would gain independence as part of the French Union.

First Indochina War

Discussions soon broke down between the two parties and in December 1946, the French shelled the city of Haiphong and forcibly reentered the capital, Hanoi. These actions began a conflict between the French and the Viet Minh, known as the First Indochina War. Fought mainly in North Vietnam, this conflict began as a low-level, rural guerrilla war, as Viet Minh forces conducted hit and run attacks on the French. In 1949, fighting escalated as Chinese communist forces reached the northern border of Vietnam and opened a pipeline of military supplies to the Viet Minh.

Increasingly well-equipped, the Viet Minh began more direct engagement against the enemy, and the conflict ended when the French were decisively defeated at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

The war was ultimately settled by the Geneva Accords of 1954, which temporarily partitioned the country at the 17th parallel, with the Viet Minh in control of the north and a non-communist state to be formed in the south under Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem. This division was to last until 1956, when national elections would be held to decide the future of the nation.

The Politics Of American Involvement

Initially, the United States had little interest in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, however, as it became clear that the post-World War II world would be dominated by the U.S. and its allies and the Soviet Union and theirs, isolating communist movements became of increased importance. These concerns were ultimately formed into the doctrine of containment and domino theory. First spelled out 1947, containment identified that the goal of communism was to spread to capitalist states and that the only way to stop it was to "contain" it within its present borders. Springing from containment was the concept of domino theory, which stated that if one state in a region were to fall to communism, then the surrounding states would inevitably fall as well. These concepts were to dominate and guide U.S. foreign policy for much of the Cold War.

In 1950, to combat the spread of communism, the United States began supplying the French military in Vietnam with advisers and funding its efforts against the "red" Viet Minh. This aid nearly extended to direct intervention in 1954, when the use of American forces to relieve Dien Bien Phu was discussed at length. Indirect efforts continued in 1956, when advisers were provided to train the army of the new Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) with the goal of creating a force capable of resisting communist aggression. Despite their best efforts, the quality of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) was to remain consistently poor throughout its existence.

The Diem Regime

A year after the Geneva Accords, Prime Minister Diem commenced a "Denounce the Communists" campaign in the south. Throughout the summer of 1955, communists and other opposition members were jailed and executed. In addition to attacking the communists, the Roman Catholic Diem assaulted Buddhist sects and organized crime, which further alienated the largely Buddhist Vietnamese people and eroded his support. In the course of his purges, it is estimated that Diem had up to 12,000 opponents executed and as many as 40,000 jailed. To further cement his power,

Diem rigged a referendum on the future of the country in October 1955 and declared the formation of the Republic of Vietnam, with its capital at Saigon.

Despite this, the U.S. actively supported the Diem regime as a buttress against Ho Chi Minh's communist forces in the north. In 1957, a low-level guerrilla movement began to emerge in the south, conducted by Viet Minh units that had not returned north after the accords. Two years later, these groups successfully pressured Ho's government into issuing a secret resolution calling for an armed struggle in the south. Military supplies began to flow into the south along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and the following year the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (Viet Cong) was formed to carry out the fight.

Failure And Deposing Diem

The situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate, with corruption rife throughout the Diem government and the ARVN unable to effectively combat the Viet Cong. In 1961, the newly elected Kennedy Administration promised more aid, and additional money, weapons and supplies were sent with little effect. Discussions then began in Washington, D.C., regarding the need to force a regime change in Saigon. This was accomplished on November 2, 1963, when the CIA aided a group of ARVN officers to overthrow and kill Diem. His death led to a period of political instability that saw the rise and fall of a succession of military governments. To help deal with the post-coup chaos, Kennedy increased the number of U.S. advisers in South Vietnam to 16,000. With Kennedy's death later that same month, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson ascended to the presidency and reiterated the U.S.' commitment to fighting communism in the region.

The Cold War: An age of two global economies

By Gale Cengage Learning on 11.03.19

Word Count **1,134**

Level **MAX**



This is a general view of a plenary session of the United Nations Monetary Conference in Bretton Woods, N.H. on July 4, 1944. Delegates from 44 countries are seated at the long tables. Photo by: Abe Fox/AP Photo

World War II (1939–1945; in which France, Great Britain, the United States and their allies fought to end the aggression of Germany, Italy, Japan and their allies) was caused in part by Germany's economic frustrations, as well as tensions arising from protectionist policies. The people of Germany had grown upset at the poor condition of their country's economy, and the majority of world governments had adopted protectionist trade practices in an effort to defend their own markets from foreign goods. Western leaders realized that trade liberalization would be necessary to maintain political and economic stability and worked toward establishing a system for free international trade and financial exchange. In 1944 representatives from 44 nations met for three weeks in the United States for the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference (also called the Bretton Woods Monetary Conference after the location of the conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire), where they agreed that it was in the interests of all businesses and governments to allow the free flow of goods, services, capital and people among countries, and they established the Bretton Woods system, which served as the basis for economic policy in the globalized world until the end of the Cold War (1945–1991; an intense political and economic rivalry between the United States and the USSR). Under this system, all participants agreed to adopt the U.S. dollar as

the standard unit of international exchange, as the only currency in use still backed by gold reserves. After accepting the Bretton Woods treaty, the participating governments set up an economic system in which they could manage trade imbalances by offering gold from their national reserves to nations that were owed money.

The fundamental premise of the Bretton Woods system was that economic stability depended on exchange rates between currencies remaining fixed in their relation to one another, allowing the uninterrupted flow of financial capital between nations. The Bretton Woods system also involved the creation of two organizations: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which was responsible for lending money to governments to help them recover from World War II, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a financial pool to oversee and assist payments from wealthy nations to poor ones, for purposes of humanitarian relief or temporary assistance. Under the Bretton Woods system, the United States was the economic leader of the capitalist world. At the time, U.S. industry and finance surpassed that of Europe, and the use of the dollar as the standard unit of international exchange pinned the strength of all nations that used it directly to the performance of the United States, making American economic interests a universal concern. Other major economies participating in the Bretton Woods system included Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy.

At the same time, the USSR, China and their allies developed their own economic system, known as Communism (a system of government in which the government controls the economy and the people share all the property and wealth equally). Unlike the free-market practices of capitalist economies, in which government involvement is limited and markets are allowed to control their own prices, Communist governments directly control the economic activity of their citizens by taking possession of industry, maintaining strict control over the flow of capital and controlling the distribution of wealth. Leaders in Communist nations saw capitalism as a threat to Communism, so they took every opportunity to spread Communism and prevent capitalism. Leaders in capitalist nations thought and did the same regarding Communism. The spread of Communism and capitalism occurred primarily by alliances with the numerous nations that had gained independence from the European empires that had previously controlled them. These nations represented valuable new markets, because their economies had been based on producing raw goods, so they never developed large industries. Nations in the Middle East and Africa became particularly important as sources of important natural resources, especially oil.

USSR and China underwent rapid transformations from agriculture-based societies involved in relatively little international trade to fully industrialized economies. Trade between Communist and capitalist countries, however, was nonexistent. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) took effect in 1948 and eliminated most trade barriers between capitalist countries and prompted a new era of economic cooperation, resulting in an increased level of international investment and trade. By the 1960s many nations sought to distance their exchange rates from fixed relationships to the U.S. dollar, as its value was unstable and it carried too much national debt, leading to a brief reversion to the gold standard in some places.

European nations gained increased economic independence from the United States by creating the European Economic Community in 1958 and the European Free Trade Association in 1960, which together formed an open market for the flow of goods, capital and people in Western Europe. Such agreements between multiple nations began to replace the GATT as the main vehicle for international trade policies. The Bretton Woods system also began to falter when the United States

stopped tying the value of the dollar to its gold reserves in 1971. The dollar remained the main reserve currency, meaning that central banks continued to use it as a store of value to support their own currencies and to conduct international transactions. This was tremendously beneficial to the U.S. economy, as it made international trade very easy and ensured low interest rates on foreign loans, due to demand for the dollar.

Overall the Cold War was a period of major economic growth around the world, especially for younger and developing nations. Communist governments experienced the most economic growth, except for the oil-rich nations of the Middle East, which exploited the global demand for oil to generate huge amounts of wealth. International trade during the Cold War increased, assisted by the International Organization for Standardization, which was founded in 1947 to create standard units of measure for trade among nations. Multinational corporations (companies operating in multiple countries) rose to prominence as the most important agents in international exchange, accounting for the majority of the total value of the global economy. International finance also expanded during the Cold War, with huge growth in the banking industry and an increase in foreign investment by both governments and individuals. Economic growth in Latin America was severely hindered by a debt crisis, in which several nations accumulated so much debt that they could not make the minimum payment on their foreign loans. Investors and lenders pulled away from these nations, causing inflation, unemployment and homelessness to rise as the region's economic output decreased. The IMF rescued them by helping to reduce their debt in exchange for capitalist reforms. By the time the USSR broke apart in 1991, most of the world was involved in the global financial infrastructure, and banking had become the chief means for transferring value across borders.

The Korean War

By Allan R. Millett, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History on 12.02.19

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Image 1. A column of troops and armor of the 1st Marine Division move through communist Chinese lines during their successful breakout from the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. The Marines were besieged when the Chinese entered the Korean War on November 27, 1950, by sending 200,000 shock troops against Allied forces. Photo from: Wikimedia Commons.

The Korean War was three different conflicts from the perspective of the disparate groups who fought in it. For North and South Korea, the conflict was a civil war, a struggle with no possible compromise between two competing visions for Korea's future. To the north was a coalition led by three dictators — Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong and Kim Il-sung — devoted to creating a communist Korea, a single-party state that controlled all economic assets and all aspects of the people's lives. To the south, the Republic of Korea (ROK) had a Western-style constitution and Christian-capitalist orientation and the support of the United States and the United Nations. Within Asia the war was a regional conflict over the future security of two Chinas, one communist and one Nationalist, and the containment of Japan, while for the United States and the Soviet Union, the war for Korea was a limited part of a post-1945 global competition for power.

For each member of the communist coalition — the Chinese, Russians and North Koreans — the war was one more step toward destroying Japanese imperialism on the mainland of Asia. Japan had defeated the Chinese in 1895 and the Russians in 1905, and then incorporated Korea into the Japanese empire in 1910. The Koreans had continued to struggle against Japan in China and

Manchuria and in a series of uprisings and guerrilla raids within Korea until Japan's defeat by the Allies in World War II.

With Soviet assistance, the Chinese communists defeated the Chinese Nationalists between 1945 and 1950. In February 1950, the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union signed a comprehensive alliance to oppose any intervention by the Chinese Nationalists, the Japanese and the Americans that might reverse the Chinese Revolution. The Russians had been excluded from the Allied occupation of Japan after World War II, and Stalin and Mao Zedong thought a new Japanese-American conspiracy was afoot to mount a counteroffensive against Asian communism. The first theater of that war would be Korea.

The United States had recognized Korean independence in 1882 but did nothing to stop the annexation of Korea by the Japanese. Only a handful of Americans, either Christian missionaries or educators, knew very much about Korea at all, let alone the Koreans' struggles against Chinese and Japanese imperialism or of the growth of Christianity in Korea. Koreans suffered along with the Chinese and Japanese from Americans' anti-Asian racial prejudices. Whenever the United States dealt with Korea as a foreign policy issue, it was always within the broader context of relations with Japan. The Koreans resented this approach and continue to do so.

After the Japanese surrender in August–September 1945, the United States under an agreement with the Soviet Union sent an expeditionary force of three U.S. Army divisions to Korea to disarm and repatriate 400,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians. The Soviets had already invaded and occupied northern Korea in their August 1945 campaign against Japan in Manchuria. To limit conflict between the allies, the U.S. and USSR agreed to divide Korea at the 38th Parallel as a temporary control measure. The Americans recognized that the division put two-thirds of the 30 million Koreans under U.S. protection. The southern zone included Seoul and the Han River Valley, as well as much of mountainous Korea's scarce arable land. The Soviets took over Korea's industrial heartland, gold and coal mines, fertilizer and concrete plants and hydroelectric power system. This division, intended to be temporary, destroyed Korea's economic viability.

Overwhelmed by almost 1 million Korean refugees returning from Japan and its wrecked empire, the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) and the State Department watched political events unfold with dismay. In the Soviet zone, the Red Army looted and expropriated everything of value. It defined all property as "Japanese" and had the assistance of a communist Korean security force led by an anti-Japanese partisan, Kim Il-sung. By 1948, Kim Il-sung dominated a new Korean Communist party and the Korean People's Army or KPA, created on the pretext of defending the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) from an American-South Korean-Japanese invasion.



In southern Korea, the USAMGIK faced growing nationalist hostility to a long occupation and a trusteeship approved at a U.S.-USSR conference in Moscow in December 1945. There was no obvious successor regime in South Korea, the choices being too close to the Chinese Nationalists. The Americans also faced an internal revolutionary communist movement, the South Korean Labor Party (SKLP).

From the Korean perspective, the war began in 1946 with a nationalist anti-foreign uprising against the American occupiers, the Autumn Harvest Rebellion. Conflict continued into 1947 with strikes and terrorist attacks and broke out into a national insurgency in 1948. This resistance, led by the SKLP, did not prevent U.N.-sponsored elections and the creation of the Republic of Korea (August 1948) under a returned exile nationalist leader, Syngman Rhee. To the Americans, the autocratic, messianic Rhee was the least objectionable option. He was anti-Japanese, anti-Chinese, anti-communist and even anti-American when it served his purposes. He was neither pro-democracy nor pro-human rights.

The Republic of Korea with the assistance of American weapons and advisors won the war of 1948–1950, a classic "people's war of national liberation" like the civil wars in China and Indochina. The South Korean army and police fought 600 engagements with communist guerrillas in the ROK's four southern provinces and Cheju Island. The same forces fought 200 engagements with the North Korean security forces along the 38th Parallel. In this guerrilla war, 7,500 Korean security forces and at least 34,000 other Koreans died violent deaths before June 25, 1950. Kim Il-sung wanted to invade the ROK in 1949, but Josef Stalin demanded a stronger KPA and a Chinese communist commitment to help Kim Il-sung. Kim and Stalin (with Mao Zedong's weak assurance) decided an invasion in 1950 would succeed. They believed the Americans would not intervene or would be too late to save the Rhee government. The South Koreans did not have the aircraft, tanks, artillery or enough trained troops to stop the North Korean army.

The U.S. government under President Harry S. Truman did not make a unilateral commitment to defend South Korea from invasion but did pledge to protect the ROK through the United Nations. The communists simply did not believe this pledge because the U.S. had withdrawn its last combat units in 1949, which was one of Stalin's preconditions for an invasion. Instead of keeping the units in South Korea, the United States focused on defending Japan with four army divisions, 800 aircraft, plus a small naval force stationed in Japan and the Philippines. The communists assumed that, since the United States had not used its own forces to save the Chinese Nationalists or to protect Taiwan, it would not defend Korea. In fact, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff did regard the ROK as a strategic liability in a possible future war with the USSR. The State Department, however, believed Korea had to be defended to give credibility to U.S. Cold War alliances and the role of the U.N. in collective security. Defending Korea would help correct the impression of American weakness in Asia left by the Chinese Nationalist defeat. It might discourage communists fighting in Malaya, Indochina and the Philippines.

The internationalized Korean War, from June 25, 1950, through July 27, 1953, went through four phases, shaped by different levels of commitment to unifying Korea by force. For Kim Il-sung and Syngman Rhee, the only victory could be the creation of one Korea, either communist or ultra-nationalist. The North Koreans almost succeeded that first summer, but the Rhee government and half its army survived and rallied in the southeastern part of the ROK, known as the "Pusan Perimeter." The United States committed the Eighth Army of four U.S. Army divisions and a Marine brigade, supported by Air Force and naval aviation. The Inchon amphibious landing on

September 15 and the recapture of Seoul on September 29, planned by U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, the U.N. commander, delivered the final blow to the North Korean army.

The U.S.-U.N.-ROK alliance seized the opportunity to unify Korea by invading North Korea against weakened communist resistance. From October 7 until November 26, the U.N.-ROK armies occupied much of North Korea under U.N. approval to unify the country. The ROK government tried to extend its authority by supporting an anti-communist uprising in North Korea and hunting down and killing communist officers, police and party officials. The North Korean leaders fled north, knowing that China would send support.

Mao Zedong decided to use the Chinese People's Volunteers Army (CPVA) to save North Korea, sending in a quarter of a million troops. The campaign began in late October 1950 as a desperate counterattack and continued in two offensives in November 1950 and January 1951. These unexpected offensives, marked by clever nighttime operations, drove the U.N. forces south of Seoul and the Han River Valley. The U.N. forces again rallied with reinforcements from the United States, Korea and other U.N. nations. Using massed artillery and airstrikes, the Eighth Army halted the CPVA in several seesaw battles, February–March 1951. The Chinese then launched their largest offensive, designed to unify Korea as a communist nation in April–May 1951. The U.N. forces defeated this offensive with concentrated firepower and sound maneuver, and a U.N. counteroffensive drove the communists back across the 38th Parallel. At that point, all the belligerents accepted negotiations that ensured the survival of the ROK and DPRK. The U.S. and USSR had global concerns, and the PRC now believed its northern flank was secure against a U.S.-ROK-Japan anti-communist alliance. Both Koreans had to accept the leadership of their more powerful allies.

The purpose of the extended negotiations between July 1951 and July 1953 for both sides was to build up the DPRK and ROK armies and economies to a level that ensured the survival of both North and South Korea. Major battles for marginal advantages occurred in those two years. Neither side claimed great victories, although the CPVA believed it showed it could defend against future U.S.-ROK attacks with deep mountain fortifications and new Russian weapons. The U.S. learned that major bombing campaigns against North Korea would not win the war but could stop Chinese offensives. After the U.S. ensured that Syngman Rhee would accept an armistice, the fighting stopped along the current Demilitarized Zone.

The cost of the war was horrific: 3 million Koreans and Chinese died, 2 million of them Korean civilians. U.S.-U.N. deaths from all causes were about 40,000 with 100,000 wounded. Despite a series of internal crises, both the ROK and DPRK have survived as Cold War anachronisms and are still enemies. The United States has a mutual security alliance with the ROK and maintains 20,000 troops there.

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