

A grayscale photograph of an astronaut in a space suit, floating in space. The astronaut's helmet is visible, reflecting the interior of the suit. A large, diagonal watermark reading "SAMPLE" is overlaid across the center of the image. The astronaut's suit has an American flag patch on the sleeve. The background is a hazy, light gray, suggesting the vastness of space.

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the cold war

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Chapter Overview

'War consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting: but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known.'

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651.

By the end of 1947 the high stakes rivalry between two ideologically opposed blocs was firmly entrenched in the world's psyche. With much of Europe and Asia still recovering from the devastating effects of the Second World War, the new bipolar world would threaten to ignite another World War and be the dominant and recurring theme of international relations for the next forty-five years.

It is a difficult task to identify the precise moment that the Cold War began. Some historians, like L.C. Gardner and N. Gordon Levin, look back to the Russian Revolution in October 1917, the attempts to isolate Russia from the Treaty of Versailles and the Western Allies' initial steps to support the White Armies through foreign intervention during the Russian Civil War. Official US recognition of the Soviet regime was not forthcoming until 1933. This perhaps is evidence of an initial ideological mistrust between the two emerging powers. Such mistrust was temporarily eclipsed by the common desire to defeat Nazism during the Second World War, but even the conventional war in Europe was an indication of future conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. The US-controlled D-landings to liberate France and alleviate Soviet burdens in the East were delayed until 1944, whereas an earlier landing may have helped the Soviets defeat the Nazis more quickly. Stalin, an inherently suspicious leader, believed the Anglo-American strategy in the war was to let the Soviets fight to the last man and defeat the Germans thus allowing the American and British troops to sweep through on the Western Front with comparatively few casualties. This is most clearly emphasised by Stalin's agreement to join the Pacific War at the Yalta Conference. It is clear, however, that tensions existed between the USA and the USSR as the Second World War drew to a close. The camaraderie that existed between American and Soviet troops when they met at the River Elbe in Germany in April 1945 was to be short-lived.

Timeline: 1943–1991

1943–45		Soviet Union expands westward during the Second World War
1946	5 March	Winston Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech in Missouri, USA
1947	12 March	Harry S. Truman's 'Truman Doctrine' speech to the US Congress
	5 June	Secretary of State George Marshall's 'Marshall Plan' speech
	September	Andrei Zhdanov's 'Two Camps' speech
1948	June	Berlin Blockade and the beginning of the Berlin Airlift
1949	April	NATO established
	May	Berlin Blockade ends
	19 August	Soviet Union detonates its first atomic bomb
	1 October	Chinese Communists win civil war and establish the People's Republic of China
1950	February	Sino-Soviet Treaty established
	25 June	Korean War begins
1953	5 March	Joseph Stalin dies
	27 July	Korean armistice signed
1954	September	First Taiwan Straights crisis
		Battle of Dien Bien Phu
		Geneva Conference divides Vietnam into North and South
1955	14 May	Warsaw Pact concluded
1956	23 Oct–4 Nov	Hungarian Uprising defeated by the Soviet Union
1958	September	Second Taiwan Straights crisis
1959	December	Castro's Revolution in Cuba
1961	August	Building of the Berlin Wall commences
	April	Bay of Pigs Invasion
1962	October	Cuban Missile Crisis
		Sino-Indian War
1963	March	Sino-Soviet split becomes apparent

1964	August	Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
1968	January	Tet Offensive in Vietnam
	21–27 August	Soviet Union invades Czechoslovakia
1972	February	President Nixon visits China
	May	President Nixon visits Moscow
	May	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) and Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty signed
1973		Paris Peace Accords
1975	April	Vietnam War ends
1978	December	Vietnam invades Cambodia
1979	February	China and Vietnam go to war
	December	Soviet Union invades Afghanistan
1980		Rise of Solidarity in Poland
1981	January	President Ronald Reagan inaugurated
1982	November	Brezhnev dies and is succeeded by Andropov
1983	March	Reagan announces Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)
	August	Korean Airlines 007 shot down
1984	February	Andropov dies and is succeeded by Chernenko
1985	March	Chernenko dies and is succeeded by Gorbachev
	1 November	Superpower Summit between Reagan and Gorbachev, Geneva
1986	2 October	Superpower Summit between Reagan and Gorbachev, Reykjavik
1988	December	Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan
1989	June	Elections in Poland
	September	Hungarian border opens
	9 November	Berlin Wall opens
	November	Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia
	December	Romanian Revolution
1991	August	Communist coup against Gorbachev
	26 December	Soviet Union dissolved

Origins of Mutual Distrust

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The Long Telegram 1946

George Kennan was the US State Department's Soviet expert, who had been assigned to Moscow in 1933 after the United States recognized the Soviet regime. In 1946 he was charged with giving an overview of Stalin's foreign policy and current Soviet thinking. He responded with an 8 000 word cable to Washington that warned of a significant threat to the Western way of life. It would have a profound impact on the direction of US foreign policy.

From Kennan's February 1946 'Long Telegram':

*[The Soviet Union is] a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with the US there can be no permanent modus vivendi, that it is desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken, if Soviet power is to be secure...*¹

Question

1. Summarize Kennan's perception of the Soviet Union in 1946.

Mr X Article

In July 1947 a mysterious article appeared in the journal Foreign Affairs, attributed only to 'Mr X'. It soon became public knowledge that the author was George Kennan. Given his new role as Head of the State Department's new Policy Planning Staff, it gave the article the aura of official administration policy toward the Soviet Union.

From Kennan's 'Mr X' article, 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct' in Foreign Affairs, July 1947:

*The main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies ... it will clearly be seen that the Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy.*²

Question

1. What was Kennan suggesting the United States should do to counter Soviet action?

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Identified by Winston Churchill in his 'Iron Curtain' speech delivered in Fulton, Missouri on 12 March 1946, the ideological division in Europe soon developed into an international rivalry between the communist USSR (the East) and the liberal democracy of capitalist USA (the West). Part of the urgency of the Soviet movement westward during the Second World War was Stalin's desire to create a 'buffer zone' in Europe that would protect his state from future attacks. Stalin saw his move as a legitimate act of protection while much of the West interpreted Soviet action as an offensive attempt at expanding his communist empire. By 1947 Britain was in the grip of economic crisis, prompting it to cease giving aid to European and Asian countries such as Turkey and Greece, the latter struggling against internal communist opponents. In the months following the end of the Second World War, as Stalin installed communist regimes in those states behind the 'iron curtain', the United States decided on two key strategies with the aim of rebuilding Europe and containing the spread of communism. These strategies would define US foreign policy for the rest of the century.

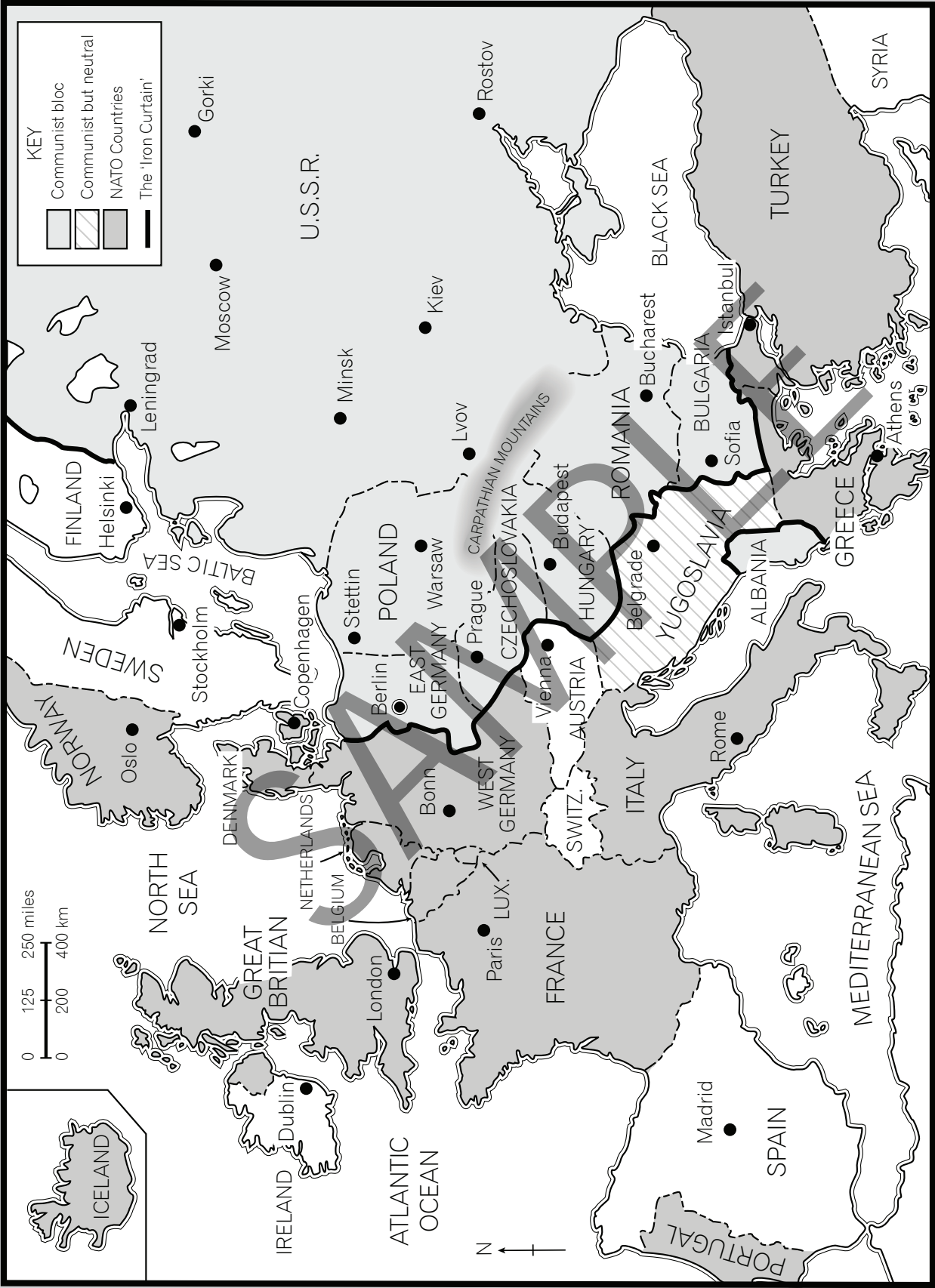
On 12 March 1947 President Harry S. Truman addressed Congress on the urgency of US action in Europe. He outlined the nature of the 'free' Western political model against the subjugation implicit within Soviet communism. In what would become known as the Truman Doctrine of containment, he argued 'that 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'.³ Truman had not threatened to attack the Soviet Union or to overthrow communism worldwide, but he had signalled the United States' intention to contain Soviet expansion. Initially this would be approached through economic means, where the United States would provide funds to the economically crippled European states in an attempt to bolster support for democracy and prevent these states from falling to communism. As Truman had said in his speech to Congress 'The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want'.⁴ US Secretary of State, General George Marshall, announced what would become known as the Marshall Plan in June 1947, which injected thirteen billion US dollars into the European economy. Marshall was careful not to isolate the Soviets and insisted this was money to alleviate poverty, 'Our policy is not directed against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos'.⁵ When European states met to discuss the practicalities of the Marshall Plan in Paris on 16 July 1947, the invited Eastern European states were absent because of a ban on their attendance by Stalin. The Paris Conference Boycott was another example of the growing split between the two major blocs, and Stalin eagerly denounced the Marshall Plan as an attempt by the United States to interfere in the sovereign states of Europe.

The Grand Alliance that had defeated Nazism had broken down and this was exacerbated by a meeting in Poland in September 1947 to establish the Communist Information Bureau (COMINFORM). Only



President Harry S. Truman

The Division of Europe



Questions

1. Identify the neutral nations. What forms of government did these countries have?
2. What did Winston Churchill mean when he describe an iron curtain dividing Europe?

Eastern European states and French and Italian communist parties were invited. Stalin's representative at the meeting, Andrei Zhdanov, made Soviet perceptions clear. In what has become known as his 'Two Camps' speech, Zhdanov described US involvement in Western Europe as an attempt to build a base in Europe that would facilitate an all-out attack on the Soviet Union. According to Zhdanov, 'A new alignment of political forces has arisen. The more the war recedes into the past, the more distinct become two major trends in post-war international policy, corresponding to the division of the political forces operating on the international arena into two major camps: the imperialist and anti-democratic camp, on the one hand, and the anti-imperialist and democratic camp, on the other.'⁶ As each power bloc criticised the other and postured on the international arena, it became clear that a new ideological conflict had been born. The first salvos of this early phase of the Cold War were rhetorical, but it would not be long before tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union would escalate over the divided city of Berlin.

ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR – HISTORIOGRAPHY

There are three main schools of historiographical thought with regard to the origins of the Cold War. The orthodox interpretation, influenced by the correspondence of George Kennan, asserts that the Soviet Union's *raison d'être* was Marx-Leninism. The Soviets would, therefore, pursue class struggle in the hope that it would lead to international revolution. This was an obvious threat to the United States. Similarly, to exert domestic control and consolidate their leadership, the Soviet hierarchy needed to emphasise the external threat posed by the United States. The orthodox view can be critical of Roosevelt and Truman for not understanding the true nature of the Soviets and 'acquiescing' to their demands for a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. The orthodox, pro-Western view was commonly held by American historians in the early phases of the Cold War.

The revisionist school of thought originated by William A. Williams and perpetuated by members of the New Left, disputes the notion that the USSR started the Cold War. The revisionists are much more critical of the United States, believing that the liberal capitalist economy of the USA needed constantly increasing trade and investment to grow and they were therefore pursuing their own political

expansion to enhance markets. This led to the need to contain their Soviet rivals. Revisionists often cite the state of the Soviet Union after the Second World War, where their economy and much of their infrastructure was in ruins. The Soviet desire for a buffer zone was justified, they argue, because of persistent invasion and destruction in the region in the first half of the twentieth century.

The post-revisionist school of thought is the most modern interpretation of the origins of the Cold War and it seeks to understand the complexities of the period rather than apportion one-sided blame. Historians like John Lewis Gaddis have written in the period since the Cold War ended and have extensively used former Soviet archives to present a more balanced view. Gaddis sees the inability of the Allies to successfully direct Soviet policy towards the end of the Second World War as significant. The resultant policy of containment was designed to address the problems that emerged from the Second World War—problems that were, arguably, easier to approach than the prospect of a Nazi-dominated Europe threatened to be in 1939. It is the post-revisionist school of thought that dominated Cold War historiography at the end of the twentieth century.

Containment

*The Soviets were not subverting Greece, and they were not moving against Turkey.*⁷ - Thomas G. Paterson

*Containment grew from [American] expansion, because in order for the United States to expand it had to restrict the power of others.*⁸ - Thomas G. Paterson

*The analysis [of initial US Cold War strategy] began not by emphasizing "the traditional Russian sense of insecurity" but by assuming that Stalin's policy was shaped by a combination of Marxist-Leninist ideology, which advocated revolution to defeat the capitalist forces in the outside world, and the dictator's determination to use "capitalist encirclement" as a rationale to regiment the Soviet masses so that he could consolidate his own political power.*⁹ Walter LaFeber

Questions

1. How does Paterson's assertion in the first quote contradict US action?
2. What evidence can you cite to support Paterson's critique of United States' foreign policy?
3. What two possible motivations for Soviet action does LaFeber highlight, and which do you think was the most significant in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy after the Second World War? Provide examples to support your view.

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The First Confrontation - Berlin 1948

The Potsdam Conference in 1945 divided Germany into four zones, each to be governed by one of the victorious powers; USSR, USA, France and Britain. The intention was to prohibit Germany from once again rising as a military threat in Central Europe, but the consequence was severe administrative confusion. Berlin was also divided into four separate zones, but the city was in the centre of the USSR's German zone and the three other powers required Soviet acquiescence to access their part of Berlin. Specific roads and railway lines were given to the Western Powers to allow passage through Soviet-controlled Germany to supply their sectors in Berlin.

Soviet and US interpretations of the German problem were also vastly different. Having suffered the indignity of invasion and massive destruction of Soviet agriculture and industry by both advancing and retreating Nazis, the Soviet Union demanded massive reparations from the Germans as compensation. Aware of the consequences of reparations forced on Germany after the First World War, the United States sought to promote growth in Germany. They believed that if they could help establish an economically strong, democratic Germany it could occupy a central role in Europe's post-war recovery. The US also sought to unite the three Allied sectors of Germany into one West German state, something Stalin strongly opposed. As administrative bickering between the Eastern and Western sectors increased, a dispute over currency led to the Soviets closing off all access routes from West Germany into West Berlin on 24 June 1948. Power supplies from the Eastern sector to the Western sector were also cut off as the Soviets attempted to enforce their own currency in Berlin, avoid the unification of the three Allied sectors of West Germany and, perhaps, even banish Western influence from the entire city. On 28 June, Stalin had expelled Tito's Yugoslavia from Cominform for deviations from strict party line, so this made it even less likely that he would agree to a loss of sovereignty in Berlin lest the strength of his leadership be questioned. The 2.3 million West Berliners faced being starved of basic food and

fuel unless the Allies were able to find a solution to the problem. General Clay, the US military governor in Germany, wanted to send troops down the access routes and force the Soviets aside, firing their weapons if necessary. President Truman, however, took a more cautious line as he did not want the conflict over Berlin to escalate into a broader war with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had over two million men in the Red Army in Eastern Europe, and the United States would be unable to challenge the Soviet Union's conventional might. The only military advantage the United States had was its nuclear weapons as the Soviet Union had not yet been successful in developing this new destructive weapon.

The decision was eventually made to fly Allied planes filled with supplies from West Germany into the Western sectors of Berlin, bringing in around 4 500 tons of supplies daily such as coal, flour and petrol to the beleaguered West Berliners. By December 1948 the effort had become so concerted that flights were landing every ninety seconds during the day, with planes being unloaded in less than seven minutes. Pilots had to endure bad weather, overloaded planes, difficult landings on small airstrips and, occasionally, interference from Soviet fighter jets. Many of the US pilots had been flying similar sorties to Berlin during the final years of the Second World War to destroy the city so they appreciated the irony of now being employed to save it.

By 1949 the Soviets realized their blockade had been unsuccessful. Due to the massive Berlin Airlift, enough supplies had arrived in West Berlin for their industry to actually increase, while the East Berliners were suffering the effects of an Allied counter-blockade. On 12 May the Soviets finally lifted the blockade and the West could supply its last remaining outpost behind the Iron Curtain by rail and road once more. The West had won a significant propaganda victory and by the end of the month a West German state had officially been created. The declaration of an official East German state soon followed. Allied ingenuity had won through without resorting to armed conflict while the Soviets emerged from the Berlin Blockade appearing oppressive and indifferent to the lives of over two million West Berliners. Although it was not known in the West at the time, this would be the only Cold War conflict to occur with the nuclear balance of power so clearly in favour of the United States. Through spies in the Manhattan Project the Soviet Union would soon successfully test their own nuclear weapon, significantly shifting the geopolitical balance of power and creating an effective nuclear parity between the two ideological blocs.



West Berlin children watch as the Allies' Berlin Airlift breaks the Soviet blockade of the city.

Brinkmanship 1949–1962

1949 was a significant year in the development of the Cold War. Three major events led to a seismic shift in the balance of power between the two blocs; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Pact was signed, the USSR detonated its first nuclear weapon in August, and the communists won the Chinese Civil War and pledged to support the Soviet Union.

In the final months of the Berlin Airlift, the US policy of containment led to a military commitment to protect Western Europe and this manifested itself in the NATO Pact, signed on 4 April 1949. NATO, an alliance comprising the United States, Canada and ten Western European states, was founded on a commitment to come to each other's aid if they were attacked. At the same time, US Congress approved a program to improve Western Europe's armed forces through aid and advisors. The formation of NATO not only consolidated the military allegiances throughout Western Europe but was considered a provocative, threatening act by the Soviet Union. By 1955 the Soviet Union had established the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance between the USSR and the satellite states of Eastern Europe.

SEATO

The South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was created in 1954 between Australia, New Zealand, the United States, France, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United Kingdom. It was a defensive treaty that involved collaborative military exercises between members and sought to halt the spread of communism, particularly through South-East Asia. SEATO was branded as ineffectual after the Vietnam War and was disbanded in 1977.

Another significant development in 1949 was the world's most populous state becoming communist. Since the fall of the last Chinese Emperor in 1911 there had been conflict in China as local warlords and regional powers sought to consolidate power. By 1927 the ruling Nationalists (KMT) attempted to eradicate the communists from China and a brutal civil war raged until the communists finally triumphed in 1949. Chiang Kai-shek's KMT, who had been supported by the USA during the civil war, fled to the island of Taiwan (then Formosa) and established the Republic of China. Chiang was joined by two million supporters and claimed to be the official government of China in exile. On 1 October 1949, Mao Tse-Tung proclaimed the People's Republic of China on the mainland. The Soviet Union had given Mao limited support during the civil war and, even though their interpretation of Marxist thought and understanding of geopolitical reality would differ greatly in the years to come, they signed a Treaty of Friendship in February 1950 that extended the 'communist stain' on the world map from Europe down into Southern Asia.



Mao Tse-Tung addressing followers during the late 1940s.

On 4 April 1950, the United States Government received the top-secret report from the National Security Council NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security, highlighting a marked shift in US strategic thought. In the early years of the Cold War, it was argued, the United States had opposed the Soviet Union through economic and political means. NSC 68 suggested that if these methods continued, the West would lose. There should therefore be a willingness to resort to military action and to facilitate this the military budget should be expanded. In 1951, after adopting NSC 68, the US United States military requested, and was granted, an increase in its budget from 13.5 billion US dollars to 48.2 billion US dollars.¹⁰ Less than two months after the release of NSC 68, the Soviet Union would escalate tensions on the Korean peninsula, highlighting the United States Government's policy prescience.

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Selected excerpts from NSC 68

(classified until 1975)

In the broadest terms, the ability to perform these tasks requires a build-up of military strength by the United States and its allies to a point at which the combined strength will be superior ... both initially and throughout a war, to the forces that can be brought to bear by the Soviet Union and its satellites ...

It would probably involve:

- 2. A substantial increase in expenditures for military purposes adequate to meet the requirements ...*
- 3. A substantial increase in military assistance programs, designed to foster cooperative efforts, which will adequately and efficiently meet the requirements of our allies ...*
- 10. Reduction of Federal expenditures for purposes other than defense and foreign assistance, if necessary by the deferment of certain desirable programs.*
- 11. Increased taxes ...*

The threat to the free world involved in the development of the Soviet Union's atomic and other capabilities will rise steadily and rather rapidly. For the time being, the United States possesses a marked atomic superiority over the Soviet Union which, together with the potential capabilities of the United States and other free countries in other forces and weapons, inhibits aggressive Soviet action. This provides an opportunity for the United States, in cooperation with other free countries, to launch a build-up of strength which will support a firm policy directed to the frustration of Kremlin design ...¹¹

Questions

1. What does NSC 68 assert is the best way to hinder Soviet action?
2. What domestic consequences might NSC 68 have had in the United States?
3. Using your broader historical understanding, in what other ways could the United States have challenged the Soviet Union during the Cold War?

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Korean War 1950-53

The successful development of a nuclear weapon, combined with the communists' victory in China, gave Stalin a great deal more confidence in his policy in Asia, particularly Korea. Korea had been a Japanese colony and when Japan surrendered at the end of the Second World War, Korea was split at the 38th parallel, with the North being administered by the USSR and the South by the USA. In 1947 the newly formed United Nations held elections in the South where the Republic of Korea emerged with its capital in Seoul. The Soviet Union set up the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, led by Kim Il Sung, with its capital in Pyongyang. Both governments sought to eventually reunite the Korean peninsula, but it was the North who first took the initiative. In the wake of the events of 1949, Stalin encouraged Kim Il Sung to invade the South, contributing equipment but not personnel. On 25 June 1950 the North Koreans launched a surprise attack on the South and made massive gains within the first three months.

President Truman interpreted the attack as evidence of a changed policy with the Soviet Union, telling the American people that, 'The attack on Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war.'¹² The North Korean invasion seemed to present a direct threat to the policy of containment and appeared to represent the very manifestation of the Domino Theory. If the United States allowed South Korea to become communist, then Mao would almost certainly launch an attack against Taiwan and from there communism could spread throughout South-East Asia. Determined to resist the marauding North Korean troops, Truman appealed to the United Nations, which ordered that the North Koreans withdraw to the 38th parallel. The North Koreans refused and the United Nations Security Council agreed to sponsor military intervention under the command of US forces. It is worth noting that the USSR was boycotting the Security Council at the time due to the UN's decision to recognize Taiwan as the legitimate representative from China, rather than the communist mainland government. Had the USSR not been taking this action, they could have vetoed UN intervention in Korea.

The North Koreans had almost won the war by September 1950, pushing the South Korean forces back to Pusan at the southern end of the Korean peninsula. However the UN supported invasion at



American paratroopers in flight.



American bombers dropping their cargo.



The destruction of a Korean village.



American forces under fire.

Inchon, near Seoul, turned the tide in favour of the South and within a month South Korean and UN troops had advanced past the 38th parallel and approached the border with China. The Chinese then entered the war and pushed the South Korean and UN troops back beyond the 38th parallel, where the war of movement became a war of fixed positions for two years. On 27 July 1953, after several hard fought victories by the South Koreans, an armistice was signed and the border was returned to the 38th parallel. Over five million Koreans were killed during the war, while the United States lost more than 54 000 troops.



An American aircrew member celebrating the end of the Korean War.

The Korean War had several significant consequences. Firstly, it suggested that internationalism, through the United Nations, could actually be successful in meeting military challenges throughout the world unlike the flawed League of Nations established after the First World War. This ideal would soon be dismantled, however, as the USSR rejoined the Security Council. Over the remainder of the Cold War, the Soviet Union would use its veto more than 1 000 times to make it practically ineffective as a means of solving global disputes. More significantly, however, the Western world perceived the ideology of communism and specifically the Soviet Union as expansionist and threatening in a global context, rather than just in Eastern Europe. In this atmosphere, as the McCarthy era engulfed the United States domestically, the worldwide containment of communism became the primary driver of US foreign policy. Although the United States and the Soviet Union would come into direct conflict only once in (1962), the two superpowers would engage each other in a number of proxy wars that would constantly challenge the established balance of power. In these proxy wars forces supported or allied to the superpowers fought each other as 'representatives' of the United States or the Soviet Union. A key factor in this was the development of the Arms Race.



American commanders in the field. General Douglas MacArthur is in the foreground. When Chinese forces entered the conflict MacArthur advocated a larger scale war, requesting that strikes be made against China itself. At one point he also advocated the use of nuclear weapons. MacArthur ultimately fell out of favour with President Truman after he made statements to the press about military policy. In April 1951 MacArthur was relieved of his command.

'MCCARTHYISM'

In early 1950, as it became clear that spies working in the United States had given atomic secrets to the Soviet Union and facilitated the proliferation of nuclear technology, an atmosphere of fear began to spread through the USA.

Joseph McCarthy, a junior Republican Senator from Wisconsin, found an issue that could launch him into the spotlight – anti-communist hysteria. On 9 February 1950 he announced that there were fifty-seven 'card carrying communists' in the US State Department, as well as 205 communist sympathisers in their employ. McCarthy never



Joseph McCarthy.

substantiated his claims, but in the atmosphere of a country that had lost nuclear secrets through espionage, he did not really need to. The term 'McCarthyism' became known as the practice of accusing people, without substantial evidence, of being communists or communist sympathisers. He accused the Roosevelt and Truman administrations of being soft on communism and blamed Truman for losing China to 'the Reds'. People found to have left wing sympathies were blacklisted, which meant companies refused to employ them. McCarthy's accusations were directed at universities, the Pentagon and Hollywood, where a number of famous actors and directors were forced to explain their beliefs in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Elia Kazan, director of *On The Waterfront* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, was one of the most high profile people in Hollywood to 'name names', and some have never forgiven him for his complicity. Many were persuaded to confess their own associations, apologise for their 'sins' and then forward the names of others they knew to be communist sympathisers. Thousands of people were smeared on the basis of their personal associations or even, for example, if they had attended a communist party meeting during the 1930s, when left wing politics in the United States was quite popular.

McCarthy's virulent politics assisted the successful ascension of the Republican Party to the White House in 1952, after twenty years of Democrat presidents. The new President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was always repulsed by McCarthy's tactics but had been careful not to earn his ire as the Wisconsin Senator rose to become one of the most powerful men in the United States.

McCarthy's unsubstantiated claims continued and his smear campaigns against former Secretary of State Dean Acheson and General George C. Marshall – the very men who first sought to restrict the Soviet Union's expansion – began to expose the ludicrous behaviour of an increasingly irrational Senator. When McCarthy turned his attention to the US Army in October 1953, Eisenhower abruptly commissioned an investigation into McCarthy's background and found he had sought preferential treatment for one of his political aides who had been called up for national service. In a series of nationally televised hearings in 1954 dubbed the Army v McCarthy Hearings, McCarthy began to visibly crack in the face of the sort of incessant questioning with which he had pursued others. He had been drinking heavily and his bullying and irrational accusations were finally challenged by Joseph N. Welch, counsel for the US Army, who finally said, to significant applause, 'Senator ... you have done enough. Have you no decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?'¹³ Within days he was officially censured for bringing the US Senate into disrepute. He further alienated himself several days later when he attacked President Eisenhower by name and, driven by the ignominy of his sudden and public downfall, he drank himself to death by 1957. The effects of his anti-communist driven hysteria, however, ruined the careers and family lives of thousands of ordinary US citizens.

Arms Race

Once the USSR had developed its own nuclear weapon, plans began in the United States to create an even more destructive nuclear weapon – the hydrogen bomb – which would be thousands of times more destructive than the atom bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The atom bomb is created by a process of nuclear fission, where an atom's nucleus is split. The hydrogen bomb, however, is caused by nuclear fusion, where subatomic particles are simultaneously joined together to create far more energy and, therefore, a far larger explosion. On 1 November 1952 the United States successfully detonated its first hydrogen bomb in the Pacific Ocean. On 23 November 1955 the Soviet Union detonated its own hydrogen bomb. Billions of dollars were spent producing stockpiles of these devastating weapons, enough to destroy the world several times over. Despite the pall of nuclear annihilation that hung over the world for the rest of the Cold War we can, in hindsight, see the benefits of the arms race. The United States and the Soviet Union knew that if they launched nuclear weapons against each other there would be a massive retaliation from the attacked country and both their countries would be destroyed. It was known as Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) and its very real threat probably prevented the superpowers from going to war like they may have before nuclear weapons existed.

ZHDANOVISM AND SOVIET ANTI-COSMOPOLITANISM

After the Soviet victory in the Second World War there was an upsurge in nationalism that had a direct effect on Soviet intellectual life. Zhdanovism was organized by Andrei Zhdanov who was head of the Party in Leningrad. He sought to purge Soviet life of all foreign, bourgeois influences. Applied to most fields in the arts such as literature, cinema, theatre art, music and philosophy, Soviet artists were instructed to make their art ideologically pure and more in line with Soviet thought. Soviet art suddenly became a vehicle for propaganda and indoctrination and Zhdanov called it 'genuine ideological armament'. This cultural repression was maintained long after Zhdanov's death in 1948 and resulted in a series of dreary, ideologically determined characters filling the pages of formerly vibrant Soviet literature.

An extension of Soviet nationalism was the anti-cosmopolitan campaign during the last years of Stalin's life. Cosmopolitanism is the idea that everyone, regardless of their political beliefs, forms part of the same society. Stalin and Zhdanov believed this was a threat to the Soviet way of life perpetrated by US imperialists. *Pravda* highlighted these people as being anti-Soviet, claiming 'They are persons devoid of a sense of duty toward the people, the state, or the party. It is our pressing task, therefore, to smoke them out of their lairs.' The main focus was the Jews, although this was never explicitly stated. Jewish theatres were closed, Hebrew teaching was banned, Soviet Jewry was expunged from Soviet history books and the names of Jewish war heroes were removed from monuments. In July 1952 twenty-four Jews were executed after being accused of plotting to create a Zionist base for US imperialism in the Crimea. The culmination of the anti-cosmopolitan movement was the Doctor's Plot in 1953, when *Pravda* announced that a number of Jewish physicians had been arrested for plotting to kill Soviet officials. Anti-Semitism increased across the Soviet Union as Jewish children were harassed in school, Jewish doctors were dismissed from hospitals and many patients refused to take prescribed medicines. Stalin died in 1953 and much of his paranoia vanished with the liberalization of Soviet life. Within a week of his death, the Doctor's Plot was exposed as a fraud and the surviving physicians released from prison.



Andrei Zhdanov

It was not, however, just the weapons themselves that formed part of the arms race. Weapons delivery systems were crucial in developing a strategic advantage. The atom bombs that had fallen on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 were delivered via planes, but there were obvious limitations to this method, particularly the fact that a plane could be shot out of the sky before it dropped its weapon. The United States and the Soviet Union had nuclear fleets and submarines capable of patrolling the world's waters by the early 1960s, but the most effective way to deliver a nuclear weapon was via missile. The United States had missile bases in Turkey that could hit most targets within the USSR and, although the Soviet Union could hit cities in Europe, it did not have the capacity to hit targets within the USA. This gave the United States the balance of power and was a key cause of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Eventually both superpowers would develop inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of travelling several thousand kilometres and being launched from the Soviet Union to the United States or vice versa. In the early 1980s President Reagan proposed the 'Star Wars' program, which would construct a system of satellites and lasers in space above the United States that could shoot down any incoming missiles. This would have restored the United States' first strike capability without the threat of mutually assured destruction, and thus its advantage in the Cold War balance of power. Despite the billions of dollars spent on the program, however, the system never became a reality.

source box

Nuclear Weapons and the Defence of Europe

Included below are three quotes from historians and political analysts assessing the importance of nuclear weapons in the defence of Western Europe. Each assessment was made during the Cold War.

*In the interest of maintaining the substance of Europe and particularly Germany, NATO must ... have troops and weapons on a scale ample to make non-nuclear aggression appear hopeless.*¹⁴ L. Friedman

*The nuclear element, chiefly provided by the United States, became the essence of [NATO's] defensive potential.*¹⁵ Lawrence Martin

*If nuclear weapons were now disinvented, if all the hope of the nuclear disarmers were fully realized, the Soviet Union would automatically emerge as the dominant power on the continent, fully capable of invading and conquering Western Europe.*¹⁶ Edward N. Luttwak

Questions

1. In a nuclear world, why would the West have been concerned by the prospect of non-nuclear aggression?
2. According to Luttwak, how important were nuclear weapons in maintaining the balance of power? Do you agree?

source box

Dissent in the Eastern Bloc

As the 1950s progressed, severe discontent within the Eastern Bloc began to emerge and the USSR's political grip on its satellite states came into question. This was seen by the numbers of East Berliners moving to the West but even more vehemently by the Polish Uprising and large scale demonstrations in Hungary in 1956.

Following the death of Josef Stalin in 1953 several years of political manoeuvring saw Nikita Khrushchev become leader of the Soviet Union. In one of his first public speeches at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, he attacked Stalin's ruthlessness and made the world aware of the extent of his purges. Khrushchev had earlier spoken about the natural power and success of communism, which meant that war with the West was no longer necessary. It highlighted a change in Soviet style that was understood both in the West, but also in the authoritarian regimes of Eastern Europe. The people within the satellite states saw an opportunity for change reflected in Khrushchev's speeches. Strikes broke out against low wages, which inevitably turned into general protests throughout Poland and Hungary. Compromise ended the Polish crisis, but the Hungarian crisis continued. Khrushchev agreed to replace the unpopular Hungarian leader Rakosi with Imre Nagy, a reformist, but on 1 November 1956 Nagy announced that he would withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and seek Western support. With conflict beginning in Egypt over the Suez Canal, Khrushchev could ill afford for Soviet power to be challenged in Eastern Europe. On 3 November, Khrushchev ordered Soviet troops, along with 4 000 tanks, to surround Budapest. The following morning they attacked in a bid to topple the Nagy Government and reinstate a government loyal to Soviet rule. Within two days the mission had been accomplished with the loss of 700 Soviet soldiers and around 25 000 Hungarians.



Hungarians burn a picture of the Communist Soviet leader Josef Stalin during the anti-Communist revolution in 1956.

Khrushchev had demonstrated how important he regarded control of the satellite states and such determination was understood in Washington as well. President Eisenhower feared that US intervention in Hungary would lead the Soviet Union to respond with full scale war so the decision was made not to intervene behind the Iron Curtain. As Eisenhower said to an adviser at the time, 'I assure you that the measures taken by the Soviets are just as distressing to me as they are to you. But to annihilate Hungary, should it happen to become the scene of a bitter conflict, is in no way to help her.'¹⁷

While internal dissent was quashed throughout Eastern Europe, there remained one relatively easy way for people to defect to the West. West Germany's economy had recovered with US assistance and the overt prosperity was in sharp contrast to the rationing and dreary life in East Germany. Between 1945 and 1961 one sixth of the entire East German population had fled to the West, more than 250 000 per year in the late 1950s. Most of these refugees were young, skilled workers whose talents were desperately needed in West Germany to support its economic boom. In the face of such haemorrhaging, Khrushchev wanted to eject Western troops from West Berlin, draw it into East Germany and reconstruct the whole of Berlin as a socialist city. However the United States was unwilling to lose their capitalist outpost behind the Iron Curtain so Khrushchev changed tactics. To prevent the continual loss of East Berliners to the West, Khrushchev decided to close the border. In the early hours of 13 August 1961 barbed wire

HUNGARY V USSR, WATER POLO, MELBOURNE OLYMPICS



During the height of tensions between the Soviet Union and Hungary in 1956, the two states played each other in a game of water polo at the Melbourne Olympics. In a game that became known as the 'Blood in the Water' match, both sides showed little regard for the ball and attacked their opponents mercilessly. Legend has it that the pool in which they were playing turned red with blood. The match was ended by the referee and Hungary was declared the victor. They went on to win the gold medal.

was rolled out along the 28.5 mile border that separated East and West Berlin. East Germans woke up that morning locked out of West Berlin and they would not be able to visit the West for another twenty-eight years. East German troops protected the Wall and were given orders to shoot anyone who sought to breach it. In time the barbed wire was supplemented by a brick wall that acted as a physical manifestation of the Iron Curtain and confirmation that the USSR would maintain strict control of its satellites.

Over the twenty-eight years of the Berlin Wall's existence, at least 191 East Germans were killed trying to cross the wall into West Berlin. It was the scene of dozens of secret, ingenious attempts at escape. Some families dug tunnels several hundred metres long under the wall and escaped from East to West. One group even made a rudimentary hot air balloon and floated over the wall. Some apartment blocks on the border in East Germany had windows that opened into the West and, in the days after the wall was constructed, several people jumped from these windows to freedom. The windows were soon bricked up.

While Berlin had become the site of European conflict between the two superpowers, (Khrushchev had once called Berlin the 'testicles of the West'), the United States was soon to be challenged in its own sphere of influence in what would be the most dangerous and tense phase of the entire Cold War.

The Cuban Revolution and its consequences

The island of Cuba, about 150 kilometres from the US mainland, had long been a playground for wealthy Americans and US influence there was significant. Many of the casinos were owned or controlled by US interests (including organized crime syndicates) and there was heavy US investment in local industries, particularly sugar. They had also built a large naval base at Guantánamo Bay. The ruling Batista Government was corrupt, however, and a peasant uprising led by the communist leader Fidel Castro soon challenged for power. In 1959 the Cuban Revolution was successful and Castro became President of Cuba, nationalising most industries in February 1960. US interests were suddenly taken over by the Cuban people, and, in response, the United States Government placed sanctions on Cuba, refusing to trade their sugar. In desperation Castro turned to the Soviet Union, who eagerly agreed to sustain the small country in the US sphere of influence.

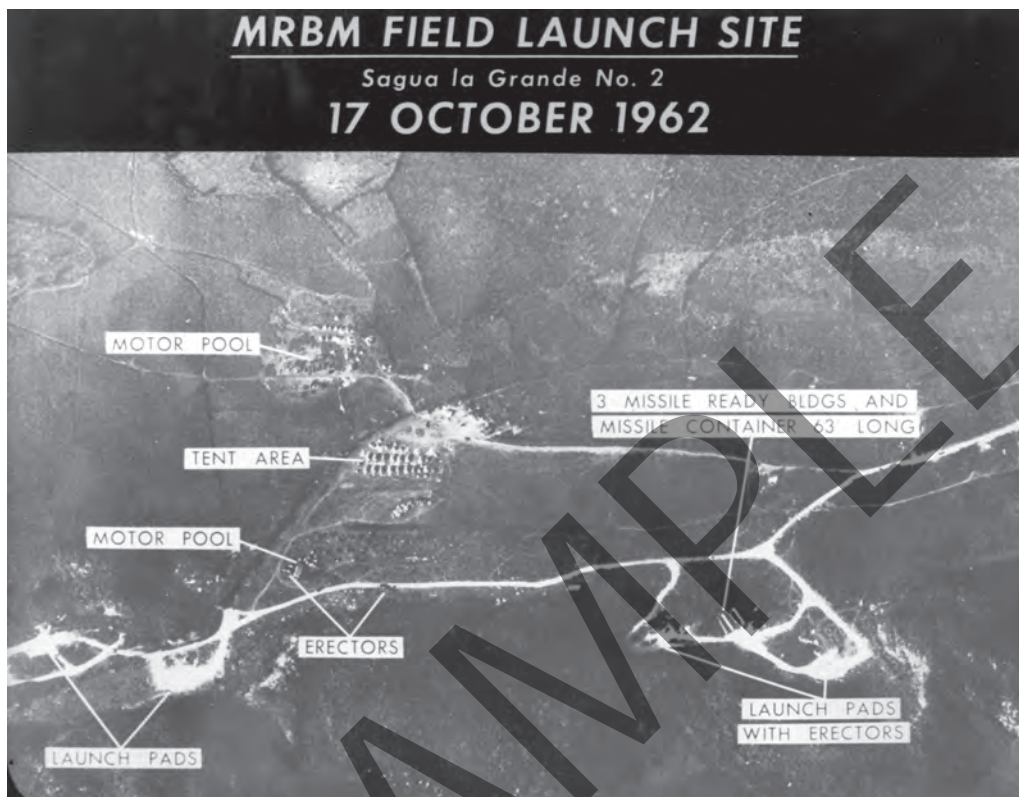
Angered by the rise of a left wing government the United States Government attempted to overthrow Castro's regime. There were several plots to assassinate him, all of which failed. There was even a plot to poison his famous cigars to make his beard fall out, which the CIA believed would reduce his appeal to the Cuban people. Terrorist attacks were also carried out on Cuban industry with factories being blown up in the middle of the night. In some instances, cats were set on fire and let loose through the sugar plantations in an attempt to destroy crops. The most serious plot, however, was an invasion of the island that was planned by the Eisenhower administration but executed by the Kennedy administration in April 1961. According to the plan, Cuban exiles were supposed to land at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, establish a base from which they would gain the support of the local people and then attack and overthrow Castro. However the 1 500 CIA-trained exiles that landed in Cuba met a force of over 20 000 Castro loyalists, who quickly defeated the invaders. As it was a covert operation, Kennedy had refused to commit sufficient aerial support to the exiles in order to make it appear like a spontaneous uprising rather than a US Government intervention. The Bay of Pigs invasion was a disaster and a huge propaganda victory for Castro, who could now legitimately claim that his socialist regime was being threatened by one of the world's superpowers. To help protect his country, Castro again turned to the Soviet Union.

Since 1956 the USA had regularly used the Lockheed U-2 high altitude reconnaissance planes to photograph the Soviet Union. These planes would fly at 75 000 feet,



Fidel Castro.

far beyond the range of Soviet anti-aircraft guns and fighter jets. The U-2 would photograph important sites with minute detail. These U-2 flights had been used over Cuba since Castro's revolution. On 29 August 1962 photographs from a U-2 mission seemed to highlight missile sites being built in Cuba and, on 15 October, it was finally confirmed that nuclear weapons were being set up. Kennedy regarded nuclear weapons in Cuba as totally unacceptable because it put virtually all US cities under direct threat of a nuclear attack. It was an attempt by the Soviet Union to achieve nuclear parity because US missiles in Turkey were capable of hitting most cities in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Kennedy would not tolerate such an alteration to the balance of power.



U-2 photograph of Cuban ballistic missile bases in October 1962.

A number of different options were canvassed, with much of the military advice to Kennedy suggesting that the United States should launch a surprise air attack on the missiles. Kennedy decided against this hawkish advice. Kennedy's decisiveness, in hindsight, saved the world from nuclear war. US intelligence at the time believed there were 10 000 Soviet troops and 100 000 Cuban troops in Cuba. Air strikes were planned to weaken their defences, which would have been followed by an invading force of 180 000 US soldiers. In reality, the Soviets had 40 000 troops and there were 270 000 Cuban troops. The US invasion would have been disastrous. Similarly, the Soviets possessed a number of short range nuclear missiles that were intended for battlefield use. Incredibly, the local commanders had been given authorisation to use them without obtaining permission from Moscow and would certainly have done so in the face of a US invasion.

Kennedy decided to 'quarantine' all Soviet ships on their way to Cuba. It was a carefully chosen word because a 'blockade' was regarded in international law as an act of war. The quarantine came into effect at 10.00 am on 24 October. The Soviet ships steamed towards Cuba, while 300 US ships waited to intercept them. Khrushchev had warned Kennedy that if the United States Navy attempted to stop Soviet passage through the sea, Soviet submarines would sink its ships. In this atmosphere of tension Kennedy waited to see if the crisis really would spark a Third World War. At 10.25am, however,

some Soviet ships stopped short of the quarantine line and turned around. In the short-term conflict had been avoided. A relieved Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, claimed, 'We were eyeball to eyeball and I think the other fellow just blinked.' Khrushchev had ordered all ships with 'sensitive' cargo to turn around, while those carrying ordinary supplies were allowed to continue to Cuba. The first phase of the Cuban Missile Crisis had passed peacefully, but the USSR still had missiles in Cuba that were being hastily constructed and were predicted to be operational within weeks.



Kennedy and Khrushchev at Vienna Meeting. 1961.

An invasion plan was constructed to destroy the missiles but the United States Air Force could not guarantee that it would destroy all the missiles. They projected a US troop loss of around 20 000. Kennedy realized that an invasion would probably escalate into nuclear war, one that could destroy American cities within minutes if missiles were successfully launched from Cuba, so he decided to seek a diplomatic solution. Kennedy told Khrushchev that the United States would lift the quarantine and promise not to invade Cuba if the Soviet Union's weapons were removed. Secretly, the US also pledged to remove their own missiles from Turkey, and this was done in 1963 with the United States describing them as obsolete.

For thirteen days the world had endured a crisis that threatened to spill into nuclear war on several occasions. Many people in the United States and the Soviet Union expected the missiles to be fired and spent their days at home with their family, waiting to be incinerated. Those who had fallout shelters in their backyards lived there for days. Both Kennedy and Khrushchev claimed victory, while Castro fumed at being deceived by the Soviets. As a result of the crisis a direct communications 'hotline' between the Kremlin and the White House was set up in an attempt to more easily defuse future crises. It was first used during the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1967. The Cuban Missile Crisis marked the peak of the Cold War and, in its aftermath, both the US and the Soviet Union looked towards détente and arms control. Of course there would be a number of conflicts that would occur before the Cold War would officially end, but never again would the two superpowers come to the brink of nuclear war in pursuit of their national interests.

Space Race

Along with the arms race, the United States and USSR engaged in a space race which began in earnest on 5 October 1957 when the Soviet Union successfully sent a satellite, called Sputnik, into orbit. On 3 November Sputnik II was launched into orbit for ten days containing a dog named Laika, proving that living things could survive in space. This undermined the USA's self-perception that its education system and technology was inherently superior to that of the Soviets. As a result, efforts to match the Soviets increased. The United States launched its own successful satellite in January 1958, which was followed by the announcement of a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to coordinate efforts in the space race.

THE SPACE RACE

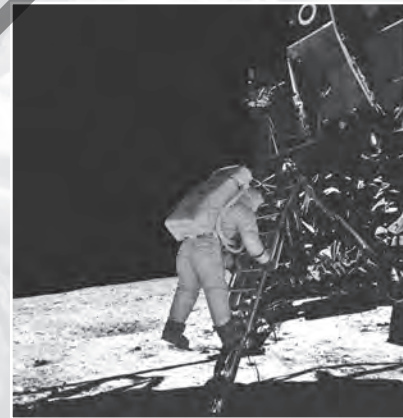
Date	Mission	Event	Power
4 October 1957	Sputnik 1	First artificial satellite	USSR
October 1957	Sputnik 2	First animal in orbit,	USSR
8 December 1958	Project SCORE	First American communication satellite	USA
12 April 1961	Vostok 1	First man in space, Yuri Gagarin	USSR
5 May, 1961	Mercury-Redstone 3	First US person in space: Alan Shepard	USA
20 February 1962	Mercury-Atlas 6	First US person to orbit the Earth: John Glenn	USA
16 – 19 June 1963	Vostok 6	First woman in space: Valentina Tereshkova	USSR
26 July 1963	Syncom 2	First geosynchronous satellite	USA
18 March, 1965	Voskhod 2	First space walk by Aleksei Leonov; Pavel Belyayev	USSR
23-24 April, 1967	Soyuz 1	Cosmonaut Valdimir Komarov dies during landing; first person lost during a space flight	USSR
21 – 27 April 1968	Apollo 8	First people to orbit the moon: Frank Borman, James Lovell, William Anders	USA
16 – 24 July 1969	Apollo 11	First moon landing: Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin; Michael Collins remains in command module.	USA



The NASA control room now looks rather antiquated.



Sputnik 1 was the first satellite of the Space Race. This first step provided the Soviet Union with an early lead in the symbolic struggle between East and West during the Cold War.



The culmination of President Kennedy's dream of the United States reaching the moon first. Here Neil Armstrong prepares to take the 'small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind'

The race to send a manned craft into space was again won by the Soviets when Yuri Gagarin circled the earth and landed safely back in the USSR on 12 April 1961. In response, President Kennedy pledged to land a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s. Even though Kennedy would not live to see it, the USA won this final element of the space race when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon in 1969. Although the space race seems insignificant when compared to some of the major conflicts of the Cold War, it is a good example of the mentality that pervaded superpower rivalry. The superpowers were unwilling to fall behind their rival in any way. Both superpowers saw the space race as a way of refining and improving technology that could assist their triumph in the arms race. Certainly, satellite imagery technology assisted the gathering of intelligence within both blocs. The USSR's pursuit of technology in the arms race and space race would eventually bankrupt its already fragile economy and precipitated its eventual collapse.

Quagmire and Détente

While Kennedy successfully extricated the United States from a nuclear conflict with the USSR over Cuba, he escalated US commitment to another conflict that would be immensely costly by its conclusion – the Vietnam War. President Eisenhower had sent a small group of advisors to South Vietnam to assist President Diem in resisting aggression from the North. In Kennedy's inaugural address in 1961 he had stated that the United States would 'pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty'. To advance this cause, Kennedy then sent money to the South Vietnamese Army as well as one hundred more military advisors. The number of military advisors steadily increased and, by the time of Kennedy's assassination in November 1963, there were 15 000 US 'military advisors' in Vietnam. Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, sent US ground troops into Vietnam and they numbered more than half a million in 1968.



President John F. Kennedy.



THE ASSASSINATION OF A PRESIDENT

John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35th American President in 1961. Young and adept at the use of television, Kennedy initiated a range of significant domestic and international policy initiatives including involvement in Vietnam, the 'New Frontier' social program, support of the civil rights' movement and the launch of the American space program.



The funeral of Kennedy was attended by his wife, Jackie, his daughter, Caroline and son John Jr. Robert Kennedy, JFK's younger brother follows the family group in this photograph. In 1968 during the preliminary rounds of the Democratic Party's presidential primaries Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles.

The assassination of Kennedy occurred on the 22 November 1963 in Dallas, Texas. Investigations into Kennedy's death conducted by the Warren Commission, established that Lee Harvey Oswald had fired three shots at Kennedy from the Texas School Book Depository Building. Oswald, the Commission concluded, acted alone. Arrested shortly after the assassination, Oswald was shot and killed two days later by Jack Ruby. While the Warren Commission identified Oswald as the assassin there are countless alternate explanations, ranging from the plausible to the absurd. The catalyst for these theories may well lay in subsequent American government investigations that suggested that Oswald had not acted alone.

Regardless of the cause of his death, Kennedy's assassination has an important place in popular culture. Most people recall what they were doing and where they were on hearing the news. For many Kennedy's death is also seen as marking an end of an American era.



Left: American troops carry an injured colleague in the quagmire of the Vietnam War.

Right: Notionally independent of the North Vietnamese Army, the Vietcong sustained a guerrilla campaign against the western forces engaged in the Vietnam conflict. This soldier, in the typical attire of the Vietcong, prepares to enter a tunnel system which Vietcong forces frequently used.

The Vietnam War was intensely unpopular domestically and it was the only time in the twentieth century that the United States was defeated in war. It is sometimes difficult to fathom the reason for such a strong US commitment to what was, in reality, a nationalist struggle in Vietnam. John Lewis Gaddis describes a blinding commitment to the Cold War policy of containment rather than strategic considerations. Gaddis writes 'What had happened was that the process of containment had come to be regarded as of greater importance than precision as to who, or what, was being contained.'¹⁸ The Vietnam War became a quagmire that cost more than 100 billion US dollars.¹⁹ It also had an enormous human toll; more than a million Vietnamese were killed, about 58 000 American servicemen died and roughly 700 Australians. When President Richard Nixon came to power in 1969 he announced the Guam Doctrine, which would reduce the US involvement in South-East Asian affairs and conflicts. On 30 April 1975 the North Vietnamese finally took Saigon, renamed it Ho Chi Minh City, and reunited Vietnam as they had sought to do since defeating the French in 1954. For the remainder of the Cold War the United States would restrict its involvement in proxy wars.



A burning Viet Cong base camp.



Flying under radar control with a B-66 Destroyer, Air Force F-105 Thunderchief pilots bomb a military target through low clouds over the southern panhandle of North Vietnam.

CAMBODIA / POL POT

Cambodia's ruler during the Vietnam War, Prince Sihanouk, managed to prevent his country from becoming embroiled in the war despite allowing the Vietcong to use Cambodian territory in their fight against the United States. While in Europe in 1970 he was overthrown by General Lon Nol, who was subsequently overthrown when the communist Khmer Rouge captured the capital Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975. Led by Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge subscribed to a peculiar brand of communism that pursued a pure, agrarian utopia. Upon taking power, Cambodians were compulsorily herded out of the cities and forcibly relocated into the countryside to toil as peasants. The mass evacuations, inadequate food supplies and subsequent murderous purges led to the deaths of close to two million Cambodians. Some were murdered because they wore glasses and appeared 'intellectual' and many died from famine. Much of Cambodia's middle class was tortured and slaughtered, which the Khmer Rouge documented with photographs of their activities. Over one quarter of the Cambodian population died. The Khmer Rouge declared the beginning of their regime as 'Year Zero' and believed they would create a new, simplistic society unencumbered by the excesses of middle class culture and intellectualism.

Ethnic minorities were also targeted by the Khmer Rouge, particularly the Vietnamese, and their zeal to expel the Vietnamese from Cambodia resulted in repeated incursions into Vietnamese territory. Sensing the danger and fearing the threatening hand of China, Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978 and overthrew the Khmer Rouge. Pol Pot fled to Thailand and began a guerrilla campaign against the new regime, which was comprised of a number of ex-Khmer Rouge who had defected to avoid the purges in the final months of Pol Pot's reign.

After years of guerrilla campaigns, all sides agreed to United Nations sponsored free elections in 1991, although the Khmer Rouge boycotted these elections when they were held in 1993. A revolt within the Khmer Rouge eventually ousted Pol Pot from power and he was sentenced to life in prison in a very public show trial covered by the Western media. He died in 1998, reportedly of heart failure, without ever showing regret for the policies that had ended in the deaths of over a quarter of the Cambodian population.



The brutality of Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia is readily illustrated in this pile of skulls.

Prague Spring, 1968

In January 1968 Alexander Dubcek became Secretary of the Czech Communist Party and embarked upon a program of reform that he called 'socialism with a human face'. He did not seek to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact but sought to modernize the economy and abolish censorship. Such reformism alarmed the Soviet Union and their response was swift and brutal. On 20 August 1968 600 000 Warsaw Pact troops were sent to occupy Czechoslovakia and reinstate the hardline communists, who eventually regained power under Gustav Husak in 1969. The bloodshed was less than it was in Hungary in 1956 but it was nevertheless a brutal action by the invading troops. For months after the invasion, individuals who had expressed their opinions during the time of greater freedoms were imprisoned.

Once again, the USSR had demonstrated its willingness to use force in ensuring the obedience of its satellite states. In November 1968 Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev released a statement that explained the repression of the Prague Spring. This policy became known as the Brezhnev Doctrine. Not only did the Brezhnev Doctrine retrospectively justify Soviet action, it warned of dire consequences for future recalcitrance, 'When the internal and external forces hostile to socialism seek to turn back the development of any socialist country to restore the capitalist order, when a threat emerges to the cause of socialism in that country, a threat to the security of the Socialist Commonwealth as a whole, this is no longer a matter only for the people of the country in question, but it is also a common problem, which is a matter of concern for all socialist countries.'²⁰ The Brezhnev Doctrine warned of military consequences but also had significant economic effects. Wary of being accused of contradicting socialism, states gradually abandoned experiments seeking to modernize their economies and increase competitiveness. The Eastern bloc's reversion to old-style centrally planned economies saw them gradually lose pace with the Western bloc and, by the 1980s their economies were rupturing due to increased interest rates, poor production and involvement in a long and expensive war in Afghanistan.

US Sphere of Influence

It was not only the Soviet Union that pursued a strict policy of compliance in its sphere of influence, however. The United States was unsuccessful at the Bay of Pigs in overthrowing a left wing government close to its border, but throughout the 1960s and 1970s it successfully prevented left wing governments from taking power in South America. In an extension of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 that prohibited any European power from extending its political system into Latin America, the USA financially supported right wing groups that opposed socialism in South America, sometimes including the provision of arms and training. More than an ideological opposition, the United States was concerned that a socialist government in its sphere of influence would be susceptible to pressure and assistance from the USSR, which could then gain a foothold and directly challenge US hegemony in the region.

In 1954 the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had organized the removal of President Arbenz in Guatemala after he nationalized some land and industry and was seen to be seeking advice from communists within the Guatemalan trade unions. Guatemalan exiles were armed by the CIA and, supported by US air power they drove Arbenz from power replacing him with a right wing military dictatorship. Operation Mongoose was an unsuccessful plan to remove Castro from power and though the US promised not to invade Cuba after the Cuban Missile Crisis, the plan to remove Castro was never cancelled. In 1965 the United States invaded the Dominican Republic after reports of a left wing coup.

CHE GUEVARA

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara was born into the middle class in Argentina in 1928. Guevara's father had supported the anti-Franco resistance during the Spanish Civil War, engaged in an anti-Nazi campaign in Argentina during the 1930s while his mother had been arrested for political activism. Further his father opposed Peron's dictatorship in Argentina after the Second World War. Both parents would support Guevara's chosen direction.

In Guatemala in 1954, Guevara tried to organize resistance to the CIA-directed coup against Arbenz, but was appalled that he could not raise more support. He escaped to Mexico where he met a group of Cuban exiles, including Fidel Castro, and became dedicated to the overthrow of the corrupt Batista regime in Cuba. It is with the Cubans that he earned his moniker 'Che' which loosely translates as 'Hey, buddy!' in Argentinian. On 25 November 1956, Guevara, Fidel Castro and eighty other guerrillas sailed from Mexico and invaded Cuba. Fighting as a guerrilla in the Cuban mountains and jungles, Guevara began as a troop doctor and was eventually appointed Commander by Castro. Once the revolution had succeeded, Guevara took responsibility for much of the Cuban economic planning and was instrumental in the move towards socialism. After several years of US sanctions, however, Cuba's economy began to fail and there was widespread food rationing by 1963, resulting in Guevara losing all his economic responsibilities and retaining only his diplomatic role. His relationship with Castro deteriorated after Guevara criticised the Soviet Union for their unwillingness to give aid to developing countries and promote international revolution. Castro knew that Cuba was reliant on Soviet military and economic aid and did not want to alienate his main ally. Guevara's perceived economic mismanagement was drawing criticism, as was the fact that he was not Cuban (despite the fact that he had been granted Cuban citizenship in the wake of the revolution), and he soon left Cuba to further the cause of world revolution. It seemed clear that the business of government did not appeal to Guevara and he yearned for the days as a heroic guerrilla fighter. By July 1965 he was in the Democratic Republic of Congo pursuing socialist revolution on the African continent.



When revolution failed to eventuate in the Congo, Guevara travelled to Bolivia where he attempted to repeat the success of the Cuban Revolution by overthrowing the military junta that had seized power in 1964. From there Guevara hoped the revolution would spread throughout Latin America. His band of guerrillas were unable to develop the same sort of following he and Castro had gained in the Cuban insurgency however and, with CIA assistance, the Bolivian Government tracked down and executed Guevara on 8 October 1967. After his death he became a cult hero around the world, his popularity traversing barriers between East and West. Castro exonerated him for his economic mismanagement in Cuba and he became regarded as the champion of the downtrodden and a revolutionary leader. Castro, who had been falsely accused of sending Guevara to Bolivia to be killed, summed up what many at the time felt, 'If we wish to express what we want the men of the future generations to be, we must say: "Let them be like Che."' ²¹

The most significant example of US involvement in South America was their determination to prevent socialist Salvador Allende from becoming President of Chile. In 1958 and 1964 the US Government had bankrolled Allende's opponents' election campaign to the tune of 20 million US dollars and, despite their contribution in 1970, Allende won with a small majority. It was the first time that a Marxist President had been democratically elected. One of Allende's main policy platforms was to nationalize the copper industry, much to the chagrin of the US companies that drew large profits from these mines.

The United States applied an economic embargo on Chilean goods and persuaded nations in the Western bloc to cease lines of credit to the Allende Government. The Chilean economy fell apart and there were massive demonstrations through the centre of Santiago in 1972 and 1973 from conservatives seeking economic reform. These were matched by Chilean socialists who marched in favour of Allende and who were critical of US interference. President Nixon said that the Chilean economy would be 'squeezed until it screams', but he had maintained his government's traditional support of the Chilean military, who were secretly plotting Allende's overthrow. On 11 September 1973 Allende was about to call a plebiscite to seek a popular mandate when the Chilean military attacked the Presidential Palace with US-supplied jet fighters. Allende was trapped inside and killed, and the military coup was successful. Augusto Pinochet was installed as Head of State and ruled as a dictator for the next seventeen years. Thousands of Allende's supporters were tortured and murdered in the ensuing years as Pinochet consolidated his rule with the consent of the US Government. Even though Allende had been democratically elected, the United States was determined to avoid communism taking root in its immediate sphere of influence. As Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger said at the time, 'I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people.'



The last photograph taken of President Allende. He is looking to the skies as the Presidential Palace is suffering an aerial bombardment during the military coup. He was killed hours later.

This policy would extend even into the 1980s with the Reagan Government's support of the guerrilla 'Contras' in Soviet-backed Nicaragua. Even though the Soviet Union and the USA were entering a period of détente and increased cooperation during the late 1960s and 1970s, their pursuit of ideological goals within their own regions was rigidly maintained.

The Decline of the Soviet Empire

Détente

In the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and with significant fissures appearing in domestic and regional societies, the United States and the Soviet Union embarked upon a program of improved relations. Inspired partially by West German leader Willy Brandt's policy of Ostpolitik, the USA and the USSR engaged in a series of summits. Realising that Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) virtually ensured a conflict between the two superpowers would not occur both sides pursued arms limitation treaties, with limited practical success, but it certainly promoted improved relations between the two superpowers. In July 1971 then National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, was secretly dispatched to China to meet with Mao, and the following year Nixon himself made an official visit, becoming the first American President to visit China since the Communist Revolution. In hindsight, it seems clear that the United States was seeking to exploit the poor relationship between the Soviet Union and China at the time, but the practical result was recognition of China and the expulsion of Taiwan from the UN Security Council, to be replaced by Communist China.

In 1972 an ABM (anti-ballistic missile) Treaty was signed between the USA and the USSR to prevent missile defence from reintroducing the prospect of a first strike capability unencumbered by the reality of MAD. In the same year, SALT I (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) was signed limiting the number of offensive weapons. The Helsinki Conference in 1975 finally recognized the borders of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union's control over the region. West Germany also officially recognized East Germany. Talks soon began on SALT II and further agreement was made in 1979, but the US Congress never ratified the Treaty. When the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Carter abandoned SALT II and ordered an increase in military spending. Although détente promoted friendlier relations between the two superpowers, proxy conflicts still occurred and often resulted in the United States and the Soviet Union supporting opposing sides. The 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the 1975 Angolan conflict and the 1977–78 Ethiopian-Somali war are all examples of conflicts that represented little realistic strategic interest to either superpower, but their involvement turned them into major Cold War theatres of contention and further diminished the achievements of détente.



Henry Kissinger,



Nixon meets Mao, 29 February 1972

Afghanistan

Often called the USSR's Vietnam, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War. It was the final, large scale international conflict during the Cold War and it would eventually contribute to the collapse of the Soviet economy.

The USSR had been sending aid to the Afghanistan Government since 1955, and had signed a Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighborliness and Cooperation on 5 December 1978. Afghan President Amin had, however, begun to make overtures to the West and seemed incapable of dealing with the Muslim threat within his own country. On 24 December 1979, Brezhnev sent Soviet troops into Afghanistan. Brezhnev's health was deteriorating and the decision to invade Afghanistan was made while he was drunk. The invasion's aim was to shore up support for the communist regime and avoid losing power to the large Muslim groups that had become more vocal in their opposition to the atheistic communists since the success of the Ayatollah Khomeini's fundamentalist Revolution in Iran in January 1979. It was also important, the Soviets asserted, to maintain a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and Pakistan, which had recently become supporters of Soviet rival China.

The capital of Afghanistan, Kabul, was captured swiftly by Soviet troops and the unstable President Amin was killed, replaced by pro-Soviet Babrak Karmal. By the end of 1980 there were more than 125 000 Red Army soldiers in Afghanistan and, although they were initially supposed to be in an advisory and support capacity to the Afghan army, they soon began to engage in conflict with the Afghan rebels known as the mujahidin. The mujahidin were financially assisted by the United States, who channelled funds through Pakistan to support their anti-Soviet cause. One of the mujahidin's key supporters was Osama Bin Laden. Much like the US experience with superior firepower during the Vietnam War, the Soviet Union's superior technology was no match for the guerilla tactics and ideological imperative of the mujahidin. Over the duration of the war the USSR lost 20 000 troops, while almost one million Afghans were killed. Costing several billion dollars a year to fund, the Soviet Union's engagement in Afghanistan placed further strain on its rupturing economy and eventually forced its withdrawal following negotiations in Geneva in 1988. The Soviet-backed communist government continued to maintain power, but it did not control much territory. The Geneva negotiators did not consult with the mujahidin, however, who refused to accept the terms. They continued to fight the communist government until they entered Kabul in 1992 and finally overthrew the government. The mujahidin was, however, a deeply



Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980. For the Soviets the experience of Afghanistan resembled that of the American in Vietnam.

divided group. Even though they had cooperated in their fight to rid Afghanistan of the communists, once they gained power their alliance soon collapsed and the country fell into a destructive civil war.

source box

Soviets in Afghanistan

The following is an extract from *Pravda*, the main Soviet newspaper, on 23 December 1979. It has been translated from the original Russian.

Soviet Troops in Afghanistan? Pure Fabrication

Recently Western, and especially American, mass news media have been disseminating deliberately planted rumours about some sort of "interference" by the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. They have gone so far as to claim that Soviet 'military units' have been moved into Afghan territory.

All these assertions are pure fabrication, needless to say. But their underlying motive is ominous -- it pursues political goals that endanger the Afghan people and peace in this region.

It is common knowledge that relations between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan are based on a firm foundation of good neighbourliness, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and equal, mutually advantageous cooperation. These relations have become considerably stronger since the April [1978] revolution, when power in Afghanistan shifted to the hands of the people, who have begun the construction of a new life.

The Soviet Union's diversified aid to the friendly Afghan people has repeatedly received the highest praise from the republic's leaders. Speaking recently in Kabul to personnel of the educational system, H. Amin, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, stated: 'The Soviet Union has always shown profound respect for our independence and national sovereignty, for what we hold sacred. It has never infringed on our sovereignty and national independence, on our national traditions and honour, is not now doing so, and never will. It is for this reason that we are drawing fraternally closer to the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.'

Soviet-Afghan cooperation does not suit the Afghan revolution's foes. They are dreaming up schemes to sow poisonous seeds of distrust in relations between the Afghan and Soviet peoples, isolate the young Afghan republic from its true friends and create conditions for open interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs.²²

Questions

1. What is the purpose of this article?
2. What bias can you identify in the above extract?
3. How effective would an article like this have been in the Soviet Union during the Cold War?

source box

Political Instability

By the end of the 1970s Leonid Brezhnev was aged and infirm and frequently under the influence of alcohol. He had had a stroke in 1976 and had not been in total control of the Soviet political machinations since. When he died in 1982 he was replaced by Yuri Andropov who had been head of the KGB. Andropov too was an ailing figure and, even though he had begun a process of reform that included an attack on corruption in the vast Soviet bureaucracy, he died on 9 February 1984. He was replaced by Konstantin Chernenko who was dying of emphysema and was one of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's old guard. In his short time as General Secretary of the Communist Party, those in the Politburo spent much of their time planning for who would succeed him, and it was the Head of the Secretariat, Mikhail Gorbachev who emerged as a frontrunner. Gorbachev was from a new generation of Soviet communists and, in late 1984 he gave a speech that introduced two new concepts that would direct the reforms he saw as necessary to save the USSR. He talked of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said 'I like Mr. Gorbachev. We can do business together'. When Chernenko died in March 1985, Gorbachev was elected unopposed by the politburo as the new leader of the Soviet Union.

As Soviet leadership underwent stagnation and then rebirth, the United States elected ex-actor Ronald Reagan to the Presidency in 1981. A vehement conservative and anti-communist, Reagan increased the military budget from 171 billion US dollars in 1981 to 367.5 billion US dollars in 1986. In 1983 he labelled the USSR an 'evil empire'. This rhetoric was matched with the announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative, commonly known as 'Star Wars'. In March 1983 a Korean Airlines flight from Alaska to Seoul strayed far into Soviet airspace and was shot down by a Soviet jet, killing all 269 civilian passengers on board. Soviet-American tensions rose further and it appeared to all that a new Cold War was beginning. This tension was alleviated significantly by Gorbachev's rise to power and the initiation of Superpower Summits in November 1985.



Gorbachev and Reagan at the first Superpower Summit in Geneva, 19 November 1985

Poland – Solidarity Forever

The anti-Soviet movements that had spread within the satellite states in 1956 and 1968 had been suppressed by the USSR but by 1980 the superpower was again facing a challenge to its rule in Poland. Food prices had risen to prohibitive levels and 17 000 workers held a strike in the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk on 14 August 1980. The strikes soon spread and their demands for the right to strike and practice religion were reluctantly acceded to by the Polish Communist Party. Within a month a national labour party had formed, Solidarity, and its membership reached ten million, including most of the labour force in Poland.

As the economic woes worsened, general strikes grew again and the Soviet Union put Poland on notice by mobilising Warsaw Pact troops along its border. After persuading the USSR not to invade, Polish President Jaruzelski declared martial law on 13



Lech Wałęsa, the leader of the Solidarity movement, addresses followers in a Worker's Centre.

December 1981 and banned Solidarity. Solidarity leaders, including Lech Wałęsa, were arrested and imprisoned. Jaruzelski had avoided a repeat of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, but he was intensely unpopular and presiding over a declining state. Wałęsa was released in 1982 and he worked with the Church to organize opposition to the Soviet-backed government. Jaruzelski tried to improve the economy, but the USSR itself was slowly collapsing and by 1988 a severe recession led to further widespread protests. Wałęsa and Solidarity seized the moment and agreed to talks with Jaruzelski, who proposed free elections in June 1989. It would mark the start of massive change throughout Eastern Europe and within two years would lead to the total collapse of the Soviet Union.

1989

1989 was a momentous year in Eastern Europe. It saw the Soviet Union lose total control of its satellite states. The four Superpower Summits that Gorbachev and Reagan had initiated between 1985 and 1988 had made limited agreement about the reduction of arms, notably intermediate range weapons and the commitment to end the arms race. An initial agreement had been made to eliminate all nuclear weapons, but talks broke down on this issue in 1986 when Reagan refused to abandon the Star Wars program. In December 1988, during the last month of Reagan's Presidency, Gorbachev addressed the United Nations General Assembly and declared a unilateral reduction in Soviet ground troops of 500 000. In the same speech he alluded to the fact that Eastern European people should have more choice in the composition of their governments. Gorbachev had signalled a clear break with the Brezhnev Doctrine and it did not take long for the peoples of Eastern Europe to test the sincerity of Gorbachev's assertion.

In January 1989 Hungary's parliament legalized the formation of opposition parties and scheduled free elections in 1990. The border with non-communist Austria was re-opened and thousands of people fled across the border. When elections were held in 1990 a non-communist party was elected to government.

In Poland, Solidarity was legalized in April 1989 and in June was elected by a huge majority, winning ninety-nine of one hundred seats in the senate. In August a non-communist Prime Minister was announced and in 1990 Lech Walesa was elected Polish President. The USSR did nothing as these transformations were made, except to declare that their former satellites could do it 'their own way'.

East Germany had closed the border with Czechoslovakia to stop the constant drain of East Germans leaving through Hungary but, by the end of October, hundreds of thousands were protesting against the communist government. The border with Czechoslovakia was reopened, on Gorbachev's advice, but the protests continued. On 9 November the East German Government announced that it would grant visas to anyone wanting to visit the West the following day. Excitedly, thousands of East Germans converged on the Berlin Wall to wait for their visa. The massive crowd was matched on the other side of the wall in West Berlin and, as it became clear that arranging visas for tens of thousands of people was impractical, the border guards decided to open the gates that night. At first people crossed warily, but when they realized it was not a trap they crossed in the thousands, often reuniting with family and friends they had not seen in twenty-eight years. Within the next year the wall would be torn down, often by individuals with a hammer and chisel, and tourists would be able to buy little pieces of the wall that was once the symbol of division in Europe. The East German secret police, the Stasi, was disbanded and even though Gorbachev continued to oppose a united Germany that could once again dominate Central Europe, within a few months he would relent and moves to reunite the country began. Even though not all Eastern European states would make peaceful transitions to democracy, the pace of change remained dizzying. Within months the Soviet Union and the United States would cooperate in a conflict that may previously have turned into another proxy war, and soon after that the Soviet Union would cease to exist altogether. The Cold War, the elongated conflict that had threatened the world's destruction, was over.

Further Reading

John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War*, London, 2005.

Drawing on a life of studying the Cold War, this survey provides a valuable analysis of events, ideas and historiography.

Leslie Derfler and Patricia Kollander (eds), *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth Century European History*, Sydney, 2002.

The readings contain different interpretations of key ideas and events during the Cold War.

Martin McCauley, *The Origins of the Cold War 1941-1949*, 2nd Edition, Sydney, 1995.

Includes a number of important primary documents and discussion of historiography with regard to the beginning of the Cold War.

PBS, *People's Century 1900-1999*.

An excellent documentary series for the entire Twentieth Century that interviews actual participants in the events. *Brave New World* (1945) and *People Power* (1991) are particularly effective in their treatment of the beginning and end of the Cold War.

T. E. Vadney, *The World Since 1945: The Complete History of Global Change from 1945 to the End of the Twentieth Century*, London, 1998.

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Endnotes

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- 17 Mike Sewell, *The Cold War*, New York, 2002, p.64
- 18 Gaddis, *Russia*, p.262.
- 19 Gaddis, *Russia*, p.263.
- 20 Leonid Brezhnev, *The Guardian*, 14 November 1968.
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- 22 *Pravda*, 23 December 1979 from <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/20/1st.draft/pravda.html>