The Cold War

# Origins of the Cold War

* The key is to recognize that much of the study of the Cold War has an **IDEOLOGICAL** focus – there is a huge amount of information (especially since much of it has now been declassified) and varying interpretations (**HISTORIOGRAPHICAL** variance)
* **T**he time period was basedon **MUTUAL FEAR AND SUSPICION BETWEEN THE US AND USSR**

Following WWII, tensions between the US and USSR increased because of:

1. US seemingly had a **MONOPOLY ON ATOMIC TECHNOLOGY**, thus giving them a clear advantage

2. The end of WWII marked **THE END OF ‘GREAT POWER’ STATUS** of previously dominant European powers and instead saw the rise of two superpowers.

3. **DIFFERENCE IN WORLD CLIMATE** since 1939 – decolonization, isolationism in foreign affairs not an option

Major world powers (**UK, US**) had made it clear prior to the end of WWII that they would work together to combat totalitarianism (**ATLANTIC CHARTER**), but with the inclusion of the USSR as an ally against Germany and Japan, these three nations (**UK, US, USSR**) were instrumental in shaping a post-war vision.

* **YALTA CONFERENCE, 1945** (division/occupation of Germany, Polish self-determination, creation of UN)
  + The establishment of the United Nations proved that there was a common goal of peacekeeping, international stability
* **POTSDAM CONFERENCE, 1945** (reaffirming policies agreed upon at Yalta)

Winston Churchill’s “**IRON CURTAIN SPEECH**”

* Attacked USSR for dominating Eastern Europe
* Claimed Europe was divided into ‘totalitarian Eastern Europe’ and ‘free Europe’ and that it was the duty of free nations to help prevent the spread of communism

Stalin retaliated with critical comments regarding British hegemony in the English-speaking world. Many previous commitments, promises and agreements between Soviets and Western powers began to be ignored.

POLICY OF CONTAINMENT – (George Kennan)

1. Starts with the **TRUMAN DOCTRINE (1947)**
   1. Offers aid to Greece and Turkey to strengthen, stabilize their governments and economies in order to prevent the spread of communism
2. **MARSHALL PLAN, 1947** and the **EUROPEAN RECOVERY PLAN, 1947**
   1. US aid to all countries in Europe (even the USSR)
   2. Only communist country to accept aid was Czechoslovakia, which resulted in a

bloodless coup in which all political parties in power were overthrown, replaced

by USSR

Numerous other issues served to increase tension between the US and USSR:

* **BERLIN AIRLIFT** (showed US commitment to ‘containment’)
* **FORMATION OF NATO** (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)
* **OFFICIAL DIVISION OF GERMANY** into East and West
* **SOVIET TEST OF ATOMIC BOMB** (1949)
* **CHINESE COMMUNISM** (1949)

# Development and Impact of the Cold War

**NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT** (29 countries)

* Faced with the creation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, countries in Asia and Africa wanted to form an alliance that would help prevent their involvement in tensions between the East and West.

**1955** – Initial meeting to discussion formation of movement

**1961** – Formal organizational meeting – Key countries included:

* + **EGYPT** (Nasser) – wanted to limit western influence in Egypt, Middle East and North Africa, idea of **PAN-ARABISM**
  + **INDIA** (Nehru)
  + **INDONESIA** (Sukarno)
  + **YUGOSLAVIA** (Tito)
  + **GHANA** (Kkrumah)
  + **CUBA** (Castro) – wasn’t at the initial meeting, but became very active in the movement

**CONCERNS:**

* Responding to the **threat of nuclear war** and emergence of superpower blocs
* Wanted to find **common ways to deal with transition from colonialism to independence**; support independence movements
* Sought means to **avoid a neocolonial dependency** by creating the movement; strength through the group
* Wanted to address economic issues and **inequalities among nations**

The Non-Aligned Movement did not attempt to create a formal political organization, but rather used the UN as a forum and meeting place.

The organization gained their legitimacy from the UN Charter and the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

* NAM members on the UN Security Council attempted to present a **UNIFIED VOTING BLOCK**
* Throughout the 1960s, the NAM provided a means by which **THIRD WORLD NATIONS COULD COLLECTIVELY IDENTIFY (AND CONDEMN) COLONIALISM AND WESTERN MILITARY PRESENCE**.
* Members could not enter into alliances or defense pacts with superpower nations.

OBJECTIVES**:**

* Support of **self-determination** and **national independence**
* Opposition to **apartheid**
* Non-adherence to specific military pacts and the independence of non-aligned countries from **great power or bloc influences and rivalries**
* Support the struggle against imperialism in all its forms and manifestations
  + **Colonialism, neocolonialism, racism, foreign occupation, domination**
* Support **disarmament**
* Non-interference into the internal affairs of states and promote **peaceful coexistence** among all nations
* Strengthen the **United Nations**
* Socioeconomic development and **restructuring of economic systems**

Today the Non-Aligned Movement primarily deals with economic issues.

**SUEZ CRISIS (1956)**

* The status **EGYPT**, and that of President Gamal Abdel **NASSER**, was greatly enhanced by events surrounding the Suez Crisis in 1956. His ability to stand up to Western Powers and manipulate the situation in a way that put Egypt in a position of power was inspiring to many NAM nations.
  + Contributed to the **FURTHER DECLINE OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE**
  + **EVOLUTION OF THE UN AS A PEACEKEEPING ORGANIZATION**
* The EISENHOWER DOCTRINE (1956)
  + US agreed to use military force to combat aggression toward the US (even what was deemed **potential aggression**)
  + Gave **warmaking powers** to the President of US (previously had only been Congress)
  + Targeted **Middle Eastern nations** and was created in response to Nasser’s rising popularity in the region

**THE CONGO CRISIS (1960-1964)**



**Historical Context**:

Post-WWII led to dissolution of

African colonies and creation of new African states

Belgian Congo was an

**INCREDIBLY VALUABLE COLONY**

**Diamonds, gold**, tin, cobalt,

manganese and zinc

Large land size (1/4 size of US)

and very diverse

4 major tribal groups (over 200

tribes) and over 700 identified languages

**BELGIUM WAS MAKING SO MUCH MONEY** **→** reluctant to allow Congolese independence **→** not much of a Congolese class of native leaders prepared to govern or make economic decisions

* **1959:** Belgium forced to allow independence after nationalist rioting in Congo
* **1960:** National elections
  + **120 different political parties**
  + **Exceptionally difficult to unite the government**
  + Patrice **LUMUMBA** became Prime Minister, Joseph **KASAVUBU** became President. There was **a lot of tension between them** – neither wanted to share power.
  + Within 2 weeks the army mutinied and fighting began.

**WE KNOW NOW THROUGH DECLASSIFIED GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS THAT BELGIUM EXPECTED THE CONGO TO SPLIT INTO PIECES, BUT THAT IT INTENDED TO KEEP CONTROL OVER THE MORE VALUABLE PROVINCES (ESP. MINING AREAS OF KATANGA)**

* **LUMUMBA** asked for UN assistance – claiming that **this was NOT a civil war**, but instead a “foreign-sponsored attempt at breaking up the Congo.”
  + This is **similar to the start of the Korean War** – was not seen as a civil war, but instead as a Soviet threat to democracy.
* **UN troops were sent in** (no US contingent), but as peacekeepers (could not use force)
  + The reality was that the **UN didn’t support LUMUMBA** and was pressured by Belgium to **remain neutral**.
* **LUMUMBA** asked the US for help **→** denied.
* L**UMUMBA** turned to the **USSR for help** (twice) **→ received money, weapons, advisors**
  + This furthered US fears that the Soviets would take advantage and gain a foothold in Africa
  + **Seen as “evidence” by the US that LUMUMBA was a communist**

Assassination Attempt by the CIA

* **EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION** ordered an assassination attempt on **LUMUMBA** in 1959, but the CIA agent (Larry Devlin) in the Congo refused to follow orders
* **He thought that it was ill-timed and would backfire, causing greater problems for the US**
* The method intended was **death by viral toothpaste** – Devlin was supposed to sneak a tube of poisoned toothpaste into **LUMUMBA’s** bathroom.
* **1961: LUMUMBA was arrested, beaten and assassinated by Katagan rebels** (neither the US nor Belgium intervened to stop his arrest or assassination, earning both nations criticism from many nations – mostly communist)
* **Four different political groups gained control** of the Congo following the death of **LUMUMBA** – it definitely **appeared to be the start of a CIVIL WAR**.
  + **UN sent in** – this time with military capabilities (**could use force**)
  + 3 of the 4 groups (**all but TSHOMBE in Katanga**) agreed to a unified government
  + **UN sent troops to Katanga** to force cooperation **→** **success**.

**Consequences of the crisis**:

* Showed that the **UN could use force in a civil uprising** to an agreeable end
* Helped **define the role of the UN Secretary General** → that they are instrumental policymakers
* **UN humanitarian aid seen as vita**l in preventing the spread of disease and famine through provision of food, medicine
* **1963**: As President Johnson came to power in the US, **CHE GUEVARA** met with African leftist leaders.
  + He believed the **Congo** would be critical for launching a socialist revolution in Africa, but **his efforts to create a Pan-African leftist movement failed**.
  + **Nasser warned Che** that he would “***look like a White Tarzan leading black troops***”.
  + **GUEVARA** returned to Cuba **→** he and Castro continued to plot further involvement in Africa
* **1965**: **MOBUTU** (seen as anti-communist, pro-Western) **took power** (with help from CIA) and remained in power until 1996.
  + The **US support of the MOBUTU coup** in 1965 was in response to the newly discovered **Cuban involvement in Africa (ANGOLA**) and growing US involvement in Vietnam.
  + While he was in power the region remained stable, but **MOBUTU was known for his greed, corruption, brutal human rights violations and violent oppression**.

At the same time that the US was dealing with the Congo Crisis, it was also facing more direct conflicts in Berlin and Cuba.

Both conflicts are illustrative of the policy of ‘brinkmanship’.

**BERLIN CRISIS (1961)**

* **Khrushchev** (and the Soviet government believed) **that Western forces would eventually abandon their commitment to West Berlin**, allowing that part of the city to be absorbed by the Soviets
* After attempts to force the UK, US and France out of Berlin (**Berlin Ultimatum**), Khrushchev abandoned his plan to wait out the Western powers and **constructed the Berlin Wall**.
* While aggressive, it **did prevent any future conflicts** between US and USSR.

**CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS (1962)**

* After the failure of the **Bay of Pigs Invasion** (1961), **CASTRO** felt he needed to protect himself against future US attacks (invasion or assassination).
* The **Soviets were interested in extending the revolution** that had started in Cuba to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean and wanted to build a missile base on the island.
  + While **CASTRO** wasn’t particularly interested in having the missiles in Cuba, he **needed an ally against the US** and, more importantly, **needed Soviet money**.
* Following the withdrawal of the missiles after a tense 13 days, **CASTRO** was angrier with Khrushchev than he was with Kennedy because **Khrushchev hadn’t consulted CASTRO** before deciding to remove the weapons.
* Fifty years after the crisis, US political scientist Graham Allison wrote:

“***Fifty years ago, the Cuban missile crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear disaster. During the standoff, US President John F. Kennedy thought the chance of escalation to war was ‘between 1 in 3 to even,’ and what we have learned in later decades has done nothing to lengthen those odds. We now know, for example, that in addition to nuclear-armed ballistic missiles, the Soviet Union had deployed 100 tactical nuclear weapons to Cuba, and the local Soviet commander there could have launched these weapons without additional codes or commands from Moscow. The US air strike and invasion that were scheduled for the third week of the confrontation would likely have triggered a nuclear response against American ships and troops, and perhaps even Miami. The resulting war might have led to the deaths of 100 million Americans and over 100 million Russians.”***

In both of these cases, the notion of ‘peaceful coexistence’ trumped brinkmanship, and war was averted. Nuclear deterrence (based on the fear of ‘mutually assured destruction’) seemed to work better than the idea of nuclear war.

**VIETNAM WAR**

**1945-1954**: France wanted to regain control of “French Indochina” following WWII, but nationalist leader **HO CHI MINH wanted his new communist Vietnam** (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) to remain independent.

* Wanted help from the US to fight French colonialists **→** denied
* Asked Soviet Union **→** received money, support and assistance
* Vietnam divided at **17th Parallel** (Geneva Accords) – **North (HO CHI MINH), South (NGO DINH DIEM)**
* **DIEM** was not very popular among the S. Vietnamese people and many chose to support **HO**
* US worried about **DOMINO THEORY**

**Vietnam Policy by US President**

**EISENHOWER/KENNEDY**

* + US backed **DIEM (encouraged him to return to S. Vietnam as Prime Minister)**
  + N. Vietnam invaded S. Vietnam in **1959 (People’s War)**
  + **DIEM ASSASSINATED (1963) by N. Vietnamese**

**JOHNSON**

* + Promised “**US would NOT lose Vietnam**”
  + **GULF OF TONKIN RESOLUTION (1964)** **→** gave President full power to escalate the conflict in order to “**prevent further aggression**”
  + **US escalation in Vietnam** (in an effort to ‘contain’ communism and maintain ‘security’ in the region) **→ Operation Rolling Thunder (3-year aerial bombing campaign)**
  + **US public support for the war waned** after the brutal retaliation on N. Vietnam in **1968 (TET OFFENSIVE)**
* The N. Vietnamese had every intention of **fighting until the Americans left Vietnam,** leaving US in a **QUAGMIRE.**

**NIXON**

* Policy of “**VIETNAMIZATION**” (slow withdrawal of US forces, with S. Vietnam taking increasing responsibility for the war)
  + Kissinger diplomacy talks with N. Vietnamese (1969-1973)
* **Unification of Vietnam** under northern **Communist** government (1975)
  + **Cambodia (KHMER ROUGE under POL POT)** and **Laos** became communist
  + US issued **NIXON DOCTRINE** (US would still offer aid in the struggle against communism, but would not send in troops)

**COMMUNIST SUPPORT FOR N. VIETNAM**

* Received support from both **USSR** and **CHINA**
* **USSR** much more committed → **CHINA** was more worried about **CULTURAL REVOLUTION** and were fearful of costly involvement like in Korea

**DÉTENTE**

There are many interpretations on détente and its place in the Cold War.

**SUPPORTERS**:

* Claim it was the only reasonable choice given the nuclear threat and desire to reunify Europe
* **Realizing a nuclear war would be the end of human civilization was key to détente, and insured nuclear weapons would not be used**
* Claim détente **reduced the superpower threat** to the world and allowed situations to develop that **helped end the USSR**

**OPPONENTS:**

* Neo-conservatives in the US at the end of the Cold War claimed détente was “**immoral appeasement of the Soviets**”
* Claim USSR used détente to cover up on-going plans to take over the world
* Claim **Reagan’s militarization** and **attacks on communism** as “an immoral ideology”, **taking on socialist movements** in Latin America and elsewhere, and **supporting European movements seeking to liberalize their communist regimes** in the 1980s removed the weaknesses of détente and **led to the Soviet collapse**

From the beginning of the Cold War forward, discussions of détente were broached on both sides.

* The **US** was worried that that it would somehow **‘legitimize’ communism**
* **USSR** was worried that it would somehow bring about the **end of communism**
* **Neither side pursued it much further** than cursory discussion until the **end of the 1960s**.

**What drove the USSR to pursue a policy of détente was…**

**KEY EVENT**: **PRAGUE SPRING (CZECH UPRISING) 1968**

* Led by reformer **ALEXANDER DUBCEK**
* **An attempt to liberalize the communist government** **→** economic reforms, political liberalization “***socialism with a human face***”
* Wanted to eliminate the worst parts of the government by
  + **Allowing greater freedom of expression**
  + **Tolerating opposition parties**
* Gained momentum and there was a push for even greater reform, but the **Soviets intervened** to slow down the movement
  + **Worried about a “domino effect” of liberalism** (same as US was worried about in SE Asia with communism!)

**2nd EVENT**: **SINO-SOVIET SPLIT**

* **USSR** **worried about China** becoming a nuclear power
* **CHINA worried about Soviet threat** and pursued a relationship with US (**NIXON**)

**3rd EVENT: WEST GERMAN EVENTS**

* **OSTOPOLITIK** **→** Desire to open relations between East and West Germany
  + **Renouncing force** as a means of changing territories
  + **Accepting Democratic Republic of Germany**
  + **Recognizing existing post-war borders**
  + **Supporting nuclear non-proliferation**
  + **Diplomacy and economic ties with Warsaw Pact nations**

**4th EVENT**: **GROWTH OF US ISOLATIONISM AND EUROPEAN ANTI-MILITARISM**

* Empowered the rise of Western politicians who sought a new relationship with the USSR based **on détente rather than confrontation** (**NIXON**)

Nuclear arms limitation talks and agreements were the most well-known examples of détente, especially the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT).

SALT I (1969-1972) → Nixon and Brezhnev

* Agreed place limits on ballistic missile launchers
* Signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
* Success was considered high-point in detente

SALT II (1972-1979) → Nixon and Brezhnev

* Reduced the number of nuclear warheads
* Prevented creation of new nuclear weapons programs
* Never ratified by US, but both sides upheld until 1986 (when Reagan accused Soviets of breaking the agreement)
* Replaced by START

**FAILURE OF DÉTENTE**

The future of détente looked very bright until President Jimmy Carter introduced **MORALITY**, which was **NOT viewed in the same way** by the Soviets.

* There was the belief by many in the US that the **USSR was using détente to undermine US alliances and interests**
* **US pressure to address human rights concerns**

The most wide-reaching aspect of détente occurred in 1975 with the **HELSINKI AGREEMENT**

* Security in Europe
* Science, technology and environmental cooperation
* Human rights
  + Moscow **did NOT** intend on acting to improve human rights, but instead saw it as an agreement to “**protect itself against subversive elements**”
  + Gave **dissidents** throughout the communist world something to rally around and uphold every time there was a violation or denial of “**BASIC FREEDOMS**”
  + **Empowered Gorbechev to pursue liberalization efforts in 1980s**

Convinced that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a prelude to greater Soviet movements in the Middle East, **CARTER gave up on détente**.

* Soviets and Chinese were both critical of US criticisms of their nations → in reality both nations **HAD improved** their treatments of political dissidents
  + Asked what if **US détente efforts were contingent upon the American ability to conquer racism and unemployment**?
* Certain events made détente even more difficult…
  + By 1977, **CASTRO was in Africa**, hailed as a hero of socialist movements there and promising **more CUBAN troops** (which he quickly provided); the **SOVIETS poured aid into Africa in Ethiopia and Angola.**
  + Joint **US-SOVIET efforts to resolve Arab-Israeli tensions** were rejected by Israel. The superpowers wanted Arab recognition of Israel.
  + **US** moved toward **testing the neuron bomb**; the **SOVIETS moved toward deploying new SS-20 missiles** (worrisome to NATO)
  + Success of the **SANDINISTA movement in NICARAGUA** (1979)
  + **Opportunity to pursue normalized relations with CHINA** following the death of Mao in 1976
  + **BREZHNEV DOCTRINE** – claimed that once a country became communist, the USSR would do **everything necessary to keep it communist**. Passed after Prague Spring, but became a **frightening reality under REAGAN** in the early 1980s. In many ways a **sign of USSR weakness** since force was necessary to keep nations from leaving…

# End of the Cold War

The Cold War ended quickly and abruptly, but it was the result of long-term factors that had been in the making for decades.

* **GORBECHEV’S statement** that “allies should be able to pursue socialism in ways compatible with their histories and cultures” in many ways **led to the collapse of Soviet communism**.
* **June 1990:** Warsaw Pact agreed to the dissolution of the USSR
  + **Seen by many as the end of the COLD WAR**

The US is widely seen as the victor and the extent to which both the policies of REAGAN and BUSH contributed to this victory is one frequently debated by historians, but regardless **the COLD WAR did NOT end communism.**

* An end to bipolar world led by superpowers
* Power vacuum, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, which has led to the **BALKANIZATION** of the region, increase in **SECTARIAN VIOLENCE**