# Chapter 38

# Origins of the Cold War

***How did the United States and the Soviet Union become Cold War adversaries?***

## 38.1 Introduction

In spring 1945, as World War II wound down in Europe, a historic encounter took place between U.S. and Soviet troops in Germany. Up until that time, the Americans and Soviets had been allies in the war but had not actually fought together. Now the two forces prepared to meet as they moved into Germany, pressing in on the Nazis from both west and east.

As the U.S. Army advanced eastward, it sent small patrols ahead of the main force to search for Soviet troops. Lieutenant Albert L. Kotzebue, a 21-year-old officer from Texas, led one such patrol. On April 25, as his men approached the Elbe River near the German city of Torgau, they spotted a Soviet patrol on the opposite bank. Shouting and waving their arms, they caught the Soviet soldiers' attention. The men on the other side screamed, "Americanski, Americanski," pointing and waving back. Lieutenant Kotzebue found a small boat near the shore and made his way across the river. The Soviet and U.S. soldiers greeted each other warmly.

Several such meetings took place along the Elbe. Later, the senior commanders of the two armies exchanged more formal visits. Photographers recorded the historic occasion, capturing an image of a GI and a Soviet soldier shaking hands. Working together, the Allies would soon bring an end to the war in Europe. That would be an event, noted President Harry Truman, "for which all the American people, all the British people and all the Soviet people have toiled and prayed so long." Furthermore, the friendly meetings on the Elbe suggested that an ongoing partnership between the United States and the Soviet Union was possible.

However, the days of U.S. and Soviet soldiers hugging and shaking hands would not last. Before long, the United States and the Soviet Union would engage in a grim struggle for world power known as the **Cold War**. As one momentous global conflict ended, another was about to begin. The two countries would soon become bitter enemies.

The Granger Collection, New York

The red star and the hammer and sickle were symbols of the Soviet Union. The star stood for the Communist Party. The hammer and sickle represented Soviet workers. The hammer was for industrial workers and the sickle was for agricultural workers. These symbols were featured on the Soviet flag and on propaganda designed to win support for Soviet communism.

◀ U.S. and Soviet soldiers meet in Germany, April 1945

In 1945, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin met at Yalta, a resort on the Black Sea. There they discussed plans for postwar Europe. It was Roosevelt's last meeting with his World War II allies, as he died shortly afterward.

## 38.2 Forming an Uneasy Peace

During the war, the United States and the USSR formed an alliance based on mutual interest. Although they had differences, the two nations set these aside to focus on the shared goal of defeating Germany. The differences resurfaced, however, as the war ended and the Allies began to plan for the postwar era.

**A Wartime Alliance Begins to Erode** In February 1945, Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill met in the Soviet city of Yalta for the **Yalta Conference**. In mostly amicable talks, they agreed to collaborate in shaping postwar Europe. They decided to divide Germany into four occupation zones, each controlled by a different Allied country. They also declared their support for self-government and free elections in Eastern Europe. Roosevelt returned from Yalta with hope that the wartime allies could maintain friendly relations. Soon, however, that relationship began to weaken.

In July, with Germany defeated, the Allied leaders met again in Potsdam, near Berlin. Harry S. Truman now represented the United States, having become president after FDR's death three months earlier. Churchill, later replaced by new prime minister Clement Attlee, and Stalin also attended. At the **Potsdam Conference**, the Allies finalized their postwar plans for Germany, including the division of Berlin into occupation zones.

The mood at Potsdam was tense. During the conference, Truman learned that the United States had tested its first atomic bomb. He hinted to Stalin that the United States had a powerful new weapon, but he did not name it. This fueled Stalin's distrust of the United States. Truman also felt wary of Stalin. The Soviet army still occupied much of Eastern Europe, and Truman was suspicious of Soviet intentions. The Soviet leader had promised to allow free elections in Eastern Europe but had not yet fulfilled that promise. In fact, in Poland the Soviets had helped rig elections to ensure a communist win.

Truman and Stalin clearly held very different visions of postwar Europe. Security concerns drove many of Stalin's decisions. Germany had attacked the Soviet Union in two world wars, using Poland as its invasion route. Stalin wanted to create a buffer zone of friendly communist states to protect the USSR. Viewing control of Eastern Europe as critical to his nation's security, he claimed the region as a Soviet sphere of influence. Truman, on the other hand, wanted to allow Eastern European nations to determine their own form of government. He believed that given free choice, they would pick democracy.

**The U.S. and the USSR Count Up the Costs of War** The United States and the USSR viewed Europe's future differently in part because of their very different experiences in World War II. The USSR had suffered enormous casualties. As many as 20 million Soviet citizens died in the war, including at least 7 million soldiers. Many were killed or died of disease in German labor camps. Others starved when Nazi invasion forces stripped the Soviet countryside of crops, farm animals, and equipment and torched farms and villages. In addition, the Nazis leveled several Soviet cities, including Stalingrad and Kiev. Flying into the USSR in 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower noted, "I did not see a house standing between the western borders of the country and . . . Moscow."

**Availability of Goods in the USSR, 1941–1945, as Compared to 1940**

| | 1941 | 1942 | 1943 | 1944 | 1945 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clothing | 61% | 10% | 10% | 11% | 18% |
| Shoes | 65% | 8% | 7% | 10% | 15% |
| Cloth | 73% | 14% | 14% | 19% | 29% |

Source: Istoriia Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny, Vol. 6, in *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, I. C. B. Dear, ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Soviet citizens suffered greatly during World War II. Some 20 million died. The survivors endured hunger, loss of land, and shortages of basic goods. The table shows the steady decline in availability of household goods as the war progressed. For example, in 1942 the Soviet Union produced only 10 percent as much clothing as it had in 1940.

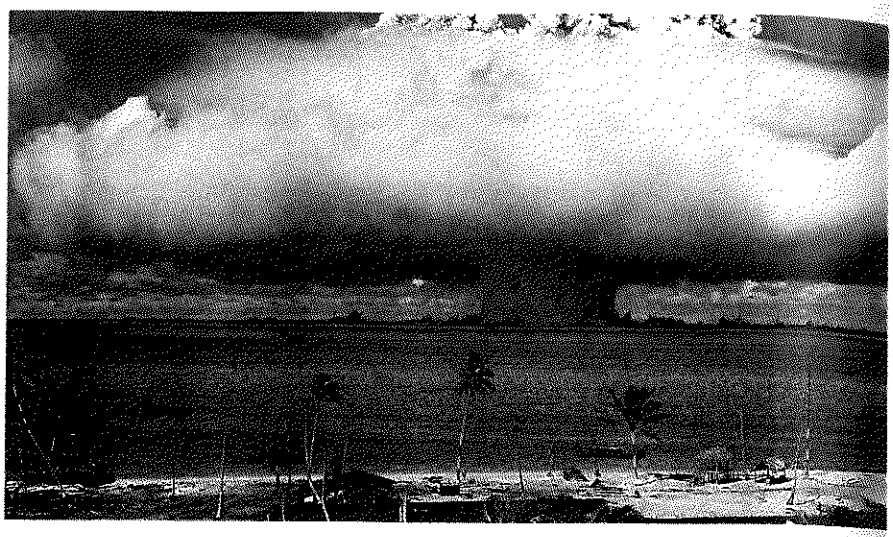
In contrast, the United States suffered far less from the war. Approximately 290,000 U.S. soldiers died, but civilian casualties were limited to those killed or wounded at Pearl Harbor. Other than that attack, no fighting took place on U.S. soil. No cities were bombed, and no farms or factories were destroyed. In fact, the U.S. economy boomed during the war. By 1945, the United States was producing more than half of the world's total industrial output. The United States had spent at least $320 billion financing the war, but most Americans felt the money was well spent. President Truman called it "an investment in world freedom and world peace."

Like the rest of Europe, the Soviet Union hoped for aid to rebuild after the war. It asked the United States for a loan, but Truman, angered by Stalin's broken promises and disregard of the Yalta agreements, decided on a "get tough" policy toward the Soviets. Shortly after Germany fell, Truman stopped all lend-lease shipments to the Soviet Union. Even American ships already traveling to the Soviet Union returned home. Stalin called this action "brutal."

**Differing Ideologies Shape the U.S. and the USSR** The differences between the United States and the Soviet Union resulted from more than just wartime experiences. They also represented sharp differences in ideology, or the set of beliefs that form the basis of a political and economic system.

The U.S. system centered on a belief in democratic government and capitalist economics. In capitalism, individuals and private businesses make most of the economic decisions. Business owners decide what to produce and consumers decide what to buy. Most property, factories, and equipment are privately owned. The United States hoped to see capitalist democracy spread throughout Europe.

The USSR also hoped European countries would accept its system, which was communism. Communists regard capitalism as an unjust system that produces great social inequalities and denies the **proletariat,** or working class, a fair share of society's wealth. Communism revolves around single-party rule of politics and government control of the economy. The state owns and runs most businesses and decides what goods will be produced. Such a system is also known as a command or centrally planned economy. In this type of system, small farms are often joined together in collectives, which the state and the farmers own together. This economic arrangement is known as **collectivism**.



After the war, Truman ordered atomic tests on Bikini Atoll, a remote island in the Pacific Ocean. The island's inhabitants became casualties of the Cold War. Forced to leave in March 1946, they were never able to return because of the radiation caused by the bomb.

## 38.3 Adjusting to a Postwar World

By 1946, the balance of power in the world was shifting. Two global wars and the destruction of economic infrastructure had greatly weakened formerly strong countries such as Britain, France, and Germany. The United States and the Soviet Union now stood alone as leading powers in the world. Their size, economic strength, and military prowess enabled them to dominate global affairs. They became known as **superpowers**—nations that influence or control less powerful states. Most nations chose or were forced to align with one superpower or the other. The world was dividing into two power blocs.

**Tensions Rise Between Two Superpowers** In February 1946, Stalin gave a speech attacking capitalism. He declared that peace was impossible as long as capitalism existed. He said that capitalist nations would always compete with one another for raw materials and markets for their products and that such conflicts would always be settled by "armed force." War, he said, was inevitable "under the present capitalist conditions of world economic development." He seemed to suggest that communism should replace capitalism.

George Kennan, a U.S. diplomat at the American Embassy in Moscow, studied Stalin's speech and sent a long reply to the U.S. secretary of state. This "Long Telegram," as it became known, helped shape U.S. foreign policy for decades to come. In it, Kennan described the Soviets as being "committed fanatically" to the belief that the U.S. system and way of life must be destroyed "if Soviet power is to be secure." To prevent this outcome, he said, the Soviet Union must be "contained" within its present borders. After he returned to the United States, Kennan expanded on this notion in an article for a foreign policy journal. In that article, he wrote, "It is clear that . . . 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."

Kennan later pointed out that he viewed the policy of **containment**—the restriction of Soviet expansion—as a political strategy, not a military one. He did not want war. He felt that in time, containment would lead to either communism's collapse or its transformation into a milder, less hostile system.

By the time Kennan wrote his famous telegram, U.S. leaders had grown very uneasy. They feared that the USSR planned to spread communism beyond Eastern Europe to other parts of the world. These concerns deepened in March 1946, when the Soviets refused to withdraw troops from northern Iran. During the war, Britain and the Soviet Union had shared control of Iran. In refusing to leave, the Soviets ignored a 1942 agreement with Britain stating that both countries would withdraw within six months of the war's end. This action generated the first major postwar crisis. It ended peacefully after the USSR gave in to U.S. pressure and withdrew. Tensions, however, were clearly rising.

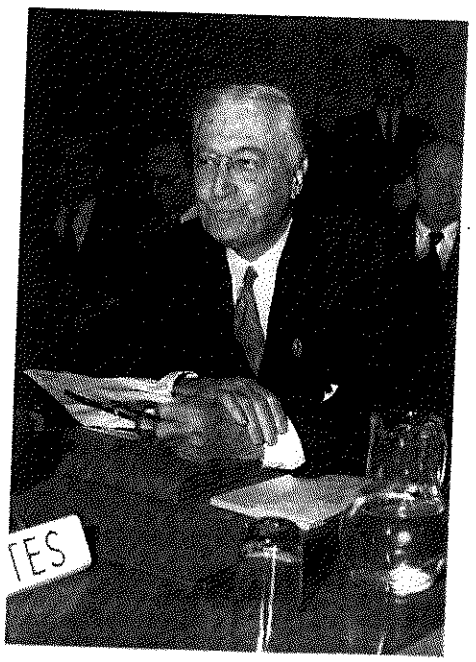
**New Nuclear Technologies Raise the Stakes for Both Sides** Conflicts between nations have always prompted fears of war. In the new age of the atomic bomb, the possible effects of a superpower conflict became even more frightening. The threat of a nuclear attack compelled both countries to show restraint in their use of force, but it also fueled the race to develop nuclear weapons.

After World War II, the United States continued to test and improve its nuclear capability. In the summer of 1946, American scientists conducted tests of two atomic bombs at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands of the Pacific Ocean. Scientists studied the impact of atomic bombs on naval vessels, using a fleet of more than 90 battleships and aircraft carriers as targets. Many battleships were old; some were captured enemy ships. Nuclear testing on Bikini Atoll continued into the 1950s. For three years, the United States was the only country with an atomic bomb. But Soviet scientists were working hard to develop their own atomic weapon.

**Turning to the United Nations to Mediate Conflicts** Truman and his advisers knew the damage an atomic bomb could do, and they sought ways to control this powerful new weapon. They asked the United Nations to help limit the development and use of **atomic energy,** the power released by a nuclear reaction.

In June 1946, Truman sent a key adviser, Bernard Baruch, to the United Nations to explain U.S. goals to the **UN Atomic Energy Commission**. He told the panel that the United States wanted the United Nations to enact strict controls on raw materials used in bomb making and a ban on the making of any future bombs. Baruch's proposal, known as the Baruch Plan, would allow the United States to retain its small nuclear stockpile for the time being. However, it would deny the Soviet Union and other nations the right to build bombs. The plan called for UN inspections of nuclear plants and stiff sanctions on nations found making such weapons. Under the plan, UN Security Council members would not be allowed to use their veto power to prevent UN sanctions.

The Baruch Plan prompted strong opposition from the Soviet Union. Soviet delegate Andrei Gromyko asked why the United States should be allowed to keep its atomic bombs while denying the Soviet Union the right to develop its own weapons. He declared that further talks on international control of atomic weapons could take place only after the United States destroyed all of its atomic weapons. Until then, he refused to discuss the terms of the Baruch Plan. He also declared that the Soviet Union would not give up its veto power in the Security Council. Because neither side would budge, this early effort at nuclear arms control came to an end.



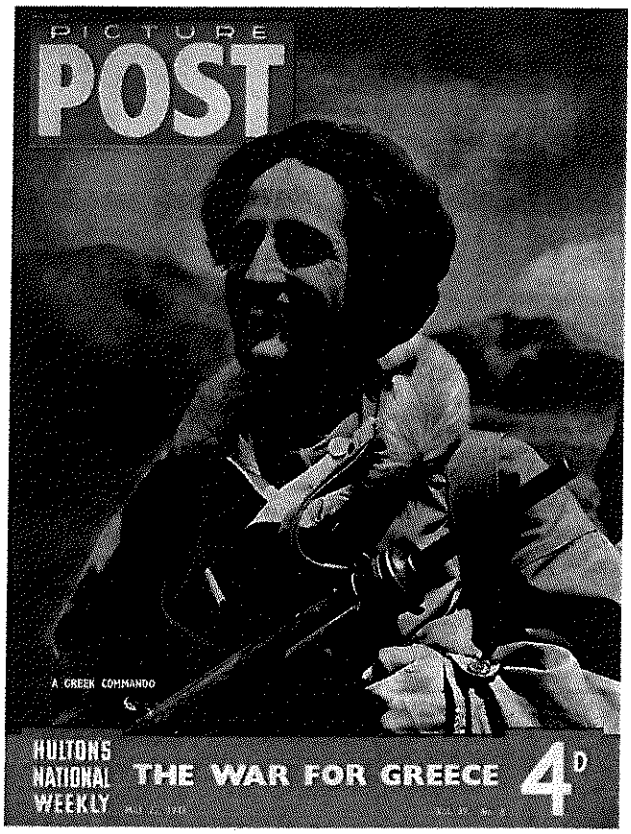
At the United Nations in 1946, presidential adviser Bernard Baruch proposed a plan for international control of atomic energy. However, the Baruch Plan failed to win Soviet support.

## 38.4 Confronting the Communist Threat

On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill warned of the growing Soviet threat in a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. As British prime minister, Churchill had earned the loyalty and respect of the Allies by standing up to Nazi aggression and holding his nation together during World War II. Having known Stalin for years, he worried about the Soviet dictator's plans for Eastern Europe. In his speech, Churchill cautioned that Stalin was cutting the region off from the rest of Europe. "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic," the prime minister declared, "an iron curtain has descended across the continent." The term **Iron Curtain** came to symbolize this growing barrier between East and West.

**The Iron Curtain Divides Europe** By the time Churchill gave his speech, Stalin was already setting up Soviet-controlled governments in Poland and other countries of Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union's **hegemony** in the region had begun. Hegemony is a dominating influence of one country over others.

In Romania, for example, the Soviets forced the king to appoint a pro-communist government. Once in power, Communist Party leaders used the secret police to silence all opposition. When the United States and Britain protested, the Romanian government promised early elections. But its officials manipulated the electoral process to make sure it won a majority. Bulgaria followed a similar pattern. Backed by the Soviets, local communists used threats or violence to get rid of political leaders who opposed them. Police charged the opposition party leader with plotting to overthrow the government. A few months later, officials arrested and executed him. A similar pattern of communist takeovers occurred later in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.




In 1946, civil war broke out in Greece between communist rebels and the Greek government. The United States backed the government in an effort to halt the spread of communism. Greek commandos like the one pictured here played a crucial role in the fighting. With U.S. aid, the Greek government eventually triumphed.

Nine days after Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech, Stalin responded. He defended the communist takeovers, explaining that his country needed loyal governments nearby "to ensure its security." He questioned how one could see "these peaceful aspirations of the Soviet Union as 'expansionist tendencies.'"

**Growing Prospects of Communism in Greece and Turkey** Concerns about communist expansion were not limited to Eastern Europe. After the war, both Greece and Turkey also faced potential communist takeovers. In the fall of 1946, civil war began in Greece when communist rebels tried to overtake the Greek government. Yugoslavia, a communist country to the north, backed the rebels. Britain sent troops and money to support government forces.

Britain also tried to help Turkey, which faced growing pressure from the Soviet Union. The USSR sought control of a vital Turkish shipping channel, the Dardanelles, which linked Soviet ports on the Black Sea with the Mediterranean. In 1947, while facing severe economic problems of its own, Britain told the United States that it could no longer afford to help Turkey or Greece.

## How Did the Iron Curtain Isolate Eastern Europe?

The Iron Curtain was both a physical and an ideological barrier. The physical barrier consisted of fences that stopped the movement of people across borders. The ideological barrier was less visible, but equally real. Communist leaders worked hard to block the flow of foreign ideas into their countries.

Border fences made unauthorized travel into and out of Iron Curtain countries difficult and dangerous.

In the divided capital of Berlin, the Iron Curtain was a wall that sealed free West Berlin off from communist East Berlin.





The United States created Radio Free Europe to transmit news and information across the Iron Curtain. RFE signals were often jammed, or blocked, by communist countries.

**Truman Advocates the Containment of Communism** Not long after receiving the British message, Truman addressed Congress. In that speech, he outlined a policy that became known as the Truman Doctrine. "It must be the policy of the United States," he declared, "to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation [conquest] by armed minorities or by outside pressures." He then asked lawmakers for $400 million to use to provide aid to Greece and Turkey. He explained the importance of helping these countries resist communism:

> The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive.
>
> —Harry S. Truman, from a speech to Congress on March 12, 1947

Congress granted Truman's request. With U.S. aid and military equipment, the Greek government defeated the communist rebels. Turkey also resisted pressure from the Soviet Union and maintained control of the Dardanelles.

The Truman Doctrine committed the United States to a foreign policy based on Kennan's strategy of containment. Truman hoped to stop the spread of communism, limiting the system to countries in which it already existed. Underlying his policy was the assumption that the Soviet Union sought world domination. The United States believed it had to fight this effort, with aid as needed and with force if necessary.

In this American political cartoon, the octopus stretching its tentacles around the globe represents the Soviet Union. In the late 1940s, many Americans began to believe that the USSR was set on dominating the world.

Scholars still debate how well each side understood the aims and motives of the other. U.S. leaders viewed communist takeovers in Eastern Europe as brutal efforts to suppress democracy. They saw their own attempts to control nuclear weapons through the United Nations as a noble effort to keep the peace. The Soviets, on the other hand, saw the United States and its allies as hostile powers committed to destroying communism and threatening Soviet security. They viewed efforts to restrict nuclear weapons as a way to maintain a U.S. monopoly on atomic energy. Each side talked past the other, and as one superpower acted, the other reacted.

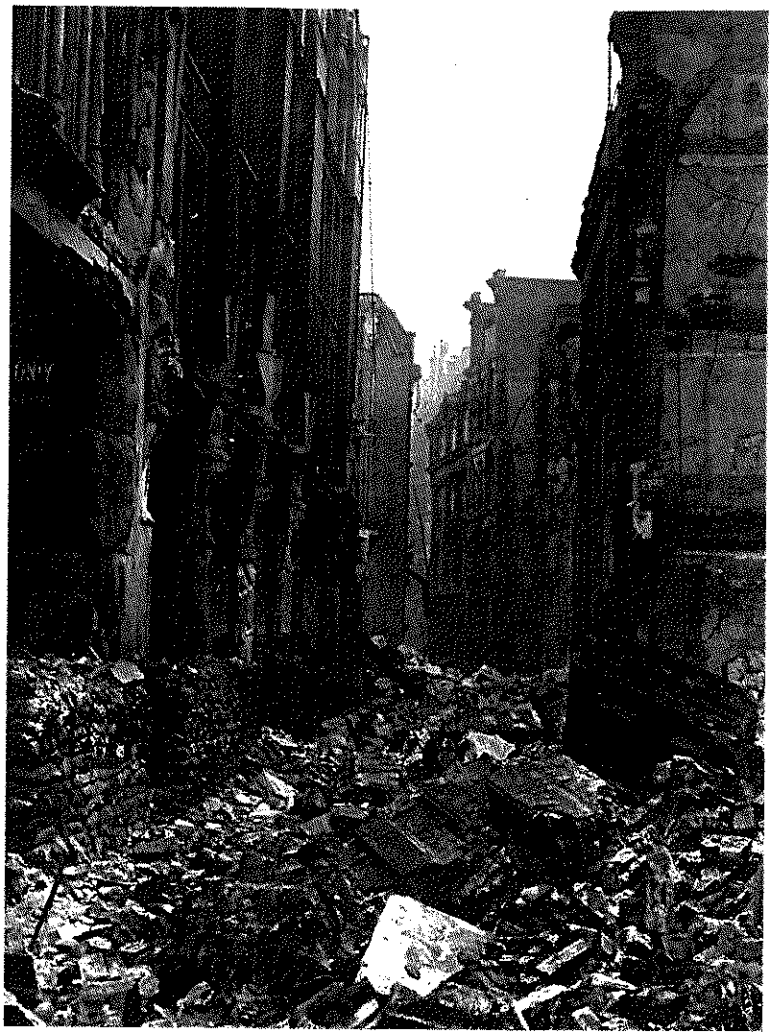
In 1947, Truman asked Congress to reorganize the government's security agencies in light of the Soviet threat. In response, Congress passed the National Security Act. This law created two new agencies, the National Security Council (NSC) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The NSC advises the president on national security issues and oversees the actions of the CIA. The CIA collects and analyzes intelligence gathered, in part, by agents operating in foreign countries.

## 38.5 Rebuilding European Economies

On both sides of the Iron Curtain, Europe was in terrible shape after the war. One reporter described Warsaw, Poland, as "rows of roofless, doorless, windowless walls" that looked like they had been "dug out of the earth by an army of archaeologists." Times were hard in Britain, too, which was nearly bankrupt after the war. Conditions worsened during the frigid winter of 1946–47, when Britons faced grave shortages of food, fuel, and electricity. In Italy, France, and many other European countries, conditions were even worse.

**European Nations Face Widespread Devastation** The challenge of rebuilding war-torn Europe was enormous. Across the continent, governments and economies barely functioned. Warfare had devastated numerous cities, leaving many of the inhabitants homeless and unemployed. It had destroyed schools, hospitals, churches, and factories, knocked out communications systems, and ruined ports. It left many roads, bridges, and railroad lines heavily damaged. Without a usable transportation system, carrying raw materials to factories and crops and goods to market was impossible. In the hardest-hit areas, deadly diseases like tuberculosis spread rapidly.

U.S. leaders feared that conditions in Europe would give rise to political and social unrest. In some countries, workers staged strikes and demonstrations to protest the hardships of daily life. Some poor and jobless people began to look to communist ideology for answers to their problems. Many recalled how local communist groups had resisted the Nazis' rise to power. In these stressful and difficult times, communism quickly gained appeal in Italy and France.



During the war, bombing raids targeted such cities as London, Dresden, and Cologne. These raids sometimes produced firestorms with heat so intense that everything in their path was incinerated. It took years for the cities to recover. Above is a London street after a German raid.

**The U.S. Provides Aid Through the Marshall Plan** As with Greece and Turkey, Truman reasoned that rebuilding shattered economies and supporting freely elected governments would be the best way to stop communism from spreading. Truman also knew that, as the strongest economic power in the world, the United States had the money and resources to help Europe rebuild. With these factors in mind, Truman and his advisers developed a plan for European recovery. In June 1947, Secretary of State George Marshall announced the plan in a speech at Harvard University. There, he described the plan as both high-minded and practical:

> It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace. Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos.
>
> —George Marshall, June 5, 1947

**Aid to European Countries Under the Marshall Plan, 1948–1952**

| Country | Amount of Aid (in millions of U.S. dollars) |
|---|---|
| Austria | $678 |
| Belgium and Luxembourg | $559 |
| Denmark | $273 |
| France | $2,714 |
| Greece | $707 |
| Iceland | $29 |
| Ireland | $148 |
| Italy | $1,509 |
| Netherlands | $1,084 |
| Norway | $255 |
| Portugal | $51 |
| Sweden | $107 |
| Turkey | $225 |
| United Kingdom | $3,190 |
| West Germany | $1,391 |

Source: "The Marshall Plan: Origins and Implementation," U.S. Department of State Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Public Affairs, April 1967.

During the four years of the Marshall Plan, the United States provided over $12 billion in aid to 16 European countries. This amount was less than Congress had authorized, but the funds still gave an enormous boost to Western European economies.


This recovery plan became known as the **Marshall Plan**. It offered all European nations, including the Soviet Union, generous funding to rebuild their economies as long as the money was spent on goods made in the United States. The plan appealed to many U.S. leaders. Those who supported it hoped to promote democracy in Europe and oppose the spread of communism, thus reinforcing the Truman Doctrine and the policy of containment. They also wanted to open markets for American goods and further boost the economy of the United States.

Some Republicans in Congress did initially oppose what they called a "New Deal" for Europe. However, the Marshall Plan gained wide support in the spring of 1948 after lawmakers learned that the Communist Party had taken control of Czechoslovakia. That year, Congress approved over $13 billion in aid, to be spent over a four-year period, from 1948 to 1952. This aid would play a crucial role in stimulating economic growth and prosperity in Western Europe.

**The USSR Responds with the Molotov Plan** Although the United States painted the Marshall Plan as a generous effort to aid European recovery, Soviet leaders questioned its motives. They believed that its real purpose was to create a U.S. sphere of influence in Western Europe. Stalin viewed the Marshall Plan as an attempt to interfere in Soviet internal affairs. The Soviets knew that to receive aid, they would have to share information about their economy and resources with the United States and even allow U.S. inspectors into the country to see how the aid was being used. Stalin also felt that his government, in accepting American aid, would have to cede some control over economic planning and decision making. For these reasons, the Soviet Union chose not to take part.

Czechoslovakia, however, was eager to join the Marshall Plan. Czech leaders met with Stalin in Moscow to get his approval. They explained that two thirds of the raw materials Czechoslovakia needed for manufacturing came from Western countries. But Stalin denied their request, saying that they could not "cooperate in an action aimed at isolating the Soviet Union." In the end, at the urging of the Soviets, no Eastern European nations took part in the Marshall Plan.

To compete with its rival, in 1949 the Soviet Union created the **Molotov Plan**, named after Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov. This plan was designed to aid economic recovery in Eastern Europe. To do this, it established a new organization, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Initially, COMECON's main task was to create two-way trade agreements between the Soviet Union and other COMECON members. In the 1950s, COMECON attempted more ambitious projects. It worked to integrate Eastern European economies by encouraging member states to specialize in goods and services not produced in other states.

**A Cold War Has Begun** By 1949, the wartime alliance of the United States and the Soviet Union had turned into a relationship of mutual distrust and suspicion. Each side held a different vision for the world. The United States wanted to promote the growth of independent, capitalist democracies, while the Soviet Union wanted to surround itself with communist states that followed its lead.

The two superpowers had clashed over communist takeovers in Eastern Europe. They had confronted each other over Iran and, less directly, in Greece and Turkey. They had argued over atomic energy and plans for postwar economic recovery in Europe.

Although the hostility between the two superpowers and their allies often heated up, it never led to armed conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was for that reason that this postwar struggle became known as the Cold War.

During the Cold War, Europe and much of the world divided into two hostile camps. The United States and the Soviet Union waged a war of words, using propaganda, diplomacy, economic and military aid, and espionage as weapons. Each superpower viewed its own motives and actions as right and good, while it cast its rival's behavior in a bad light. As the conflict grew, compromise and cooperation became greater challenges. These problems worsened with the development of atomic weapons, which in turn raised fears of a deadly arms race. Both sides knew that if the Cold War turned hot, it could result in another world war, potentially the most destructive in human history.


During the Cold War, the United States and the USSR engaged in a tug-of-war over power and influence in the world. The conflict often centered on the development of atomic weapons.

## Summary

**In the postwar period, clear differences between the United States and the Soviet Union soon emerged. Communist ideology and the creation of Soviet-backed states in Eastern Europe alarmed the U.S. government. The United States responded with efforts to support European democracy and limit Soviet expansion. As the rivalry intensified, Europe divided into communist-controlled Eastern Europe and mostly democratic Western Europe.**

**Yalta and Potsdam Conferences** At Yalta, the Allied leaders met to shape postwar Europe. They divided Germany and Berlin into four occupation zones each and declared their support for self-government and free elections in Eastern Europe. At Potsdam, the leaders finalized their postwar plans for Germany. However, the relationship among the superpowers began to weaken.

**Iron Curtain** In a 1946 speech, Winston Churchill accused the Soviet Union of dividing Europe into East and West and drawing an "iron curtain," or barrier, across the continent.

**UN Atomic Energy Commission** At the United Nations, the United States offered a plan to limit the development of atomic weapons. The Soviet Union, working on its own atomic bomb, rejected U.S. efforts to retain a monopoly on atomic energy.

**Truman Doctrine** President Truman adopted a policy of containment as part of the Truman Doctrine. The doctrine aimed to limit the spread of communism and support democracy.

**Marshall Plan** This aid program reflected the Truman Doctrine's goals. It provided aid to European nations to help them recover from the war, promote stability, and limit the appeal of communism. The Soviets responded with the Molotov Plan for Eastern Europe.

**Cold War** The postwar struggle for power between the United States and the Soviet Union became known as the Cold War. Although this was largely a war of words and influence, it threatened to heat up and produce armed conflict between the superpowers.