

Part I: Mapping World War II and the Cold War

Europe at the end of WWII

During WWII, the United States sided with Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union against Germany, Italy and Japan.

1. On your world map, please label the following:

Allies: Great Britain, France, USSR, USA

Axis Powers: Germany, Italy, Japan

Color Allies green and Axis yellow

Create a key

In February 1945, when it became clear that the Allies would win the war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt met with Joseph Stalin (USSR) and Winston Churchill (Great Britain) to discuss the fate of postwar Europe. The leaders divided Germany into quarters to be occupied by American, French, British, and Soviet forces. Stalin agreed to allow elections in Poland, which was occupied by Soviet forces.

2. On your map of Europe, label the following:

Germany: Draw a line from the northwest corner of the German border with Czechoslovakia (go ahead and label this) north to the Baltic Sea. The area to the west of this line will be West Germany (the combined quarters of USA, France and Britain) and the area to the east of this line will be East Germany (USSR). Color East Germany red.

Poland: Color red.

The division of Europe

The USSR gained control over parts of Eastern Europe that Germany had captured during the war.

3. On your map of Europe, label the following and color them red:

Albania and Bulgaria: Occupied by the USSR in 1944, communist-controlled by 1948

Czechoslovakia: Communist-controlled by 1948

Hungary and Romania: Communist-controlled by 1947

East Germany: Occupied by the USSR after the war, communist government established 1949

4. As the USSR established satellite nations, the US collected allies among Western European nations. In 1949, the US joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to counter Soviet power in Europe. On your map, please label the following and color them blue:

Great Britain

France

West Germany

Norway

Belgium

Italy

Turkey

Greece

Netherlands

Denmark

Portugal

Create a key

Part II: Cold War Diplomacy

American goals: American leaders wanted to ensure the continued health of its economy, so it wanted to see governments with similar economic and political systems established in Europe. Although this foreign policy met American economic needs, Americans saw these goals not as self-interest but as a crusade to bring freedom, democracy, and capitalism to the world. They therefore tried to “contain” the spread of communism all over the world.

Soviet goals: The Soviet Union suffered incredible losses—including 20 million deaths and heavy damage to industry and agriculture—during WWII. Joseph Stalin wanted to protect the USSR from further attack by establishing “satellite nations” that were sympathetic to communism along its western borders. Stalin claimed he was protecting Soviet interests in Europe, just as the US was protecting its interests. Suspicious of the US, Stalin did not participate in agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which helped establish capitalist economies in Western Europe.

Speech by Winston Churchill

Winston Churchill delivered this famous speech at Westminster College in Missouri on March 5, 1946.

...From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow...

Source: Internet Modern History Sourcebook

1. Looking at your map, draw a line that separates the Soviet-bloc nations from the Western European nations that were members of NATO.
2. What phrase does Churchill use to describe Soviet influence in Eastern Europe?

Why might this scare an American audience in 1946?

Joseph Stalin's response to Churchill

Printed in The New York Times (p.4) on March 14, 1946 (interview with Pravda)

... Mr. Churchill now stands in the position of a firebrand of war. And Mr. Churchill is not alone here. He has friends not only in England but also in the United States of America.

In this respect, one is reminded remarkably of Hitler and his friends. Hitler began to set war loose by announcing his racial theory, declaring that only people speaking the German language represent a fully valuable nation. Mr. Churchill begins to set war loose, also by a racial theory, maintaining that only nations speaking the English language are fully valuable nations, called upon to decide the destinies of the entire world.

The German racial theory brought Hitler and his friends to the conclusion that the Germans, as the only fully valuable nation, must rule over other nations. The English racial theory brings Mr. Churchill and his friends to the conclusion that nations speaking the English language, being the only fully valuable nations, should rule over the remaining nations of the world....

As a result of the German invasion, the Soviet Union has irrevocably lost in battles with the Germans, and also during the German occupation and through the expulsion of Soviet citizens to German slave labor camps, about 7,000,000 people. In other words, the Soviet Union has lost in men several times more than Britain and the United States together.

It may be that some quarters are trying to push into oblivion these sacrifices of the Soviet people which insured the liberation of Europe from the Hitlerite yoke.

But the Soviet Union cannot forget them. One can ask therefore, what can be surprising in the fact that the Soviet Union, in a desire to ensure its security for the future, tries to achieve that these countries should have governments whose relations to the Soviet Union are loyal? How can one, without having lost one's reason, qualify these peaceful aspirations of the Soviet Union as "expansionist tendencies" of our Government?...

Source: Internet Modern History Sourcebook

1. Explain Stalin's comparison between Churchill's "iron curtain" speech and Hitler's racial theories.
2. How does Stalin defend the Soviet Union's post-World War II actions in Europe? What does the Soviet Union want, according to Stalin?

Truman Doctrine (March 12, 1947)

This excerpted speech, given by President Harry Truman before a joint session of Congress, outlined the president's plans for economic aid to Greece and Turkey.

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

I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes...

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

Moreover, the disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe whose peoples are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedoms and their independence while they repair the damages of war.

Source: Internet Modern History Sourcebook

Find Greece and Turkey on your map again.

1. Given the world context, who are the “armed minorities” and “outside pressures” who are trying to take over Greece and Turkey?
2. What kind of aid does Truman plan to give Greece and Turkey?
3. Looking at the final two paragraphs, what does Truman say will happen in Europe and the Middle East if the US does not help Greece and Turkey?
4. Truman’s foreign policy has often been described as the “domino theory.” Why has it been described this way?
5. If Stalin had issued a response to the Truman Doctrine, what do you think he would have said?

Marshall Plan (June 5, 1947)

This excerpted speech, given by Secretary of State George C. Marshall, outlined the need for American economic aid to western Europe.

...The truth of the matter is that Europe's requirements for the next 3 or 4 years of foreign food and other essential products—principally from America—are so much greater than her present ability to pay that she must have substantial help or face economic, social, and political deterioration of a very grave character...

Aside from the demoralizing effect on the world at large and the possibilities of disturbances arising as a result of the desperation of the people concerned, the consequences to the economy of the United States should be apparent to all. 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. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions exist....

1. Why does Europe need aid from the United States?
2. What incentive is there for the US to assist Europe?
3. What does Marshall mean when he says, "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos"?

National Security Council Paper 68 (April 7, 1950)

This top-secret document, an internal memo of the newly formed National Security Council, argued that only the United States could stop Soviet expansion. It advocates the policy of "containment" (definition: the act of preventing the expansion of a hostile power)

As for the policy of "containment," it is one which seeks by all means short of war to (1) block further expansion of Soviet power, (2) expose the falsities of Soviet pretensions, (3) induce a retraction of the Kremlin's control and influence, and (4) in general, so foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system that the Kremlin is brought at least to the point of modifying its behavior to conform to generally accepted international standards.

...It is quite clear from Soviet theory and practice that the Kremlin seeks to bring the free world under its dominion by the methods of the cold war. The preferred technique is to subvert by infiltration and intimidation. Every institution of our society is an instrument which it is sought to stultify and turn against our purposes. Those that touch most closely our material and moral strength are obviously the prime targets, labor unions, civic enterprises, schools, churches, and all media for influencing opinion. The effort is not so much to make them serve obvious Soviet ends as to prevent them from serving our ends, and thus to make them sources of confusion in our economy, our culture, and our body politic...

1. How does the US plan to stop Soviet expansion?

Does the document argue that the US should go to war with the USSR?

2. What are the key parts of "containment"?

3. What does the phrase "by all means short of war" mean?

4. According to the document, how is the USSR trying to increase influence over the free world? Is the USSR using armed confrontation or another method? Explain.

5. How does this threaten American institutions, and how might this threat differ from other wars, like WWI or WWII?

6. Using NSC-68, can you argue that Americans were worried that communists would "subvert" (to ruin or corrupt from within) American culture?

7. If Stalin had issued a response to NSC-68, what do you think he would have said?

Writing Assignment: Answer both

1. The year is 1950, and North Korea, a communist country, has invaded South Korea. President Harry Truman has to decide whether to commit ground troops to help the South Koreans fight the invasion, which would mean the "cold war" would become a "hot war." You are a policy analyst for the newly formed National Security Council. Write a five-sentence paragraph in which you argue for or against committing ground troops. You will need to address why the policy of "containment" applies or does not apply to the situation in Korea.

2. You are Joseph Stalin, and the year is 1950. Your top spy has just stolen a copy of NSC-68 from the US, and you are outraged by the claims it has made about Soviet expansion. Write a five-sentence paragraph in which you explain why you object to the American policy of "containment."

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