

# 2

## The Nature of the Cold War

### TIMELINE

- 1917 Nov:** Bolshevik Revolution in Russia
- 1918 Jan:** US president Woodrow Wilson delivers his 'Fourteen Points' speech
- 1919 Mar:** Comintern founded
- 1941 Aug:** Atlantic Charter issued
- 1942 Jan:** Declaration by United Nations (UN) agreed
- 1943 Nov:** Tehran Conference
- 1945 Apr:** UN established  
**Aug:** US drops A-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- 1950 Jun:** start of Korean War
- 1955 Apr:** Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) founded
- 1956 Oct:** Suez Crisis  
**Nov:** Hungarian Uprising crushed
- 1960 Jul:** start of crisis in the Congo
- 1961 Sep:** Belgrade Conference of NAM
- 1965 Apr–Sep:** Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan
- 1967 Jun:** Arab–Israeli War
- 1971 Oct:** Communist China recognised by US as official representative for China in UN
- 1973 Oct:** Arab–Israeli War (Yom Kippur War)
- 1974 Apr:** revolution in Portugal  
**Jul:** Turkey invades Cyprus
- 1975 Nov:** civil war begins in Angola
- 1978 Mar:** Israel invades Lebanon
- 1979 Dec:** Soviet forces sent into Afghanistan
- 1980 Jul–Aug:** Olympic Games in Moscow
- 1984 Jul–Aug:** Olympic Games in Los Angeles
- 1989 Apr–Dec:** collapse of regimes in Eastern Europe
- 1991 Dec:** collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War

### Introduction

Before dealing with the origins and development of the Cold War, it is necessary to establish the most significant features of its nature. Most historians consider that the Cold War ended in either 1989 or 1991, so for most students it is a phenomenon that ended before they were born. Some political commentators and historians saw the Cold War like a massive chess game, with major implications not just for those 'playing the game', but also for the rest of the world. Some people even believed the Cold War would lead to the destruction of the entire world. Certainly there were occasions on which nuclear weapons were deployed during the various crises that marked the different stages of the Cold War. Some of those involving US nuclear weapons are shown in **Source A**.

Outlining the main aspects of the nature of the Cold War is not straightforward, especially as historians do not always use the term in the same way. However, something most historians agree on is that, for much of the time, the Cold War presented itself as a regional and global contest between two rival states and their respective allies: the USA and the West *v.* the USSR and the East. How this rivalry varied over time, and the broader effects it had on different aspects of 20th-century life and history, will be examined in the following pages.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- What is meant by the term 'Cold War'?
- What were the main phases of the Cold War?
- What were the main features of the Cold War?

### Overview

- After the Second World War, a Cold War developed between what became known as 'the East' and 'the West'. This Cold War is considered to have ended, at the latest, in 1991. Historians, however, disagree over exactly when it started and the dates of its different phases.

- Historians also disagree over the essential nature of the Cold War, so there are many different explanations for the phenomenon.
- Part of the Cold War involved a contest between two superpowers – the USA and the USSR. However, not all historians see this as a contest between equals.
- There were many aspects to the Cold War, including a propaganda war based on the different ideologies of the two superpowers.
- The Cold War affected many aspects of politics and society in the countries involved, particularly the operation of the United Nations (UN).
- Other features of the Cold War included: an arms race; cultural, scientific and sporting competition; spying and covert activities; and public fears about a Third World War.

**SOURCE A**

Incidents in which US strategic nuclear forces were involved, 1946–73.

Incident	Date
US aircraft shot down by Yugoslavia	November 1946
Inauguration of president in Uruguay	February 1947
Security of Berlin	January 1948
Security of Berlin	April 1948
Security of Berlin	June 1948
Korean War: security of Europe	July 1950
Security of Japan/South Korea	August 1953
Guatemala accepts Soviet bloc support	May 1954
China–Taiwan conflict: Tachen Islands	August 1954
Suez crisis	October 1956
Political crisis in Lebanon	July 1958
Political crisis in Jordan	July 1958
China–Taiwan conflict: Quemoy and Matsu	July 1958
Security of Berlin	May 1959
Security of Berlin	June 1961
Soviet emplacement of missiles in Cuba	October 1962
Withdrawal of US missiles from Turkey	April 1963
Puerto seized by North Korea	January 1968
Arab–Israeli War	October 1973

Bledman, B. and Kaplan, S. 1978. 'Force Without War'. Washington, DC, USA. The Brookings Institution. p. 48. Quoted in Halliday, F. 1989. *The Making of the Second Cold War (2nd ed)*. London, UK. Verso. p. 50.

## 2.1 What is meant by the term 'Cold War'?

### SOURCE B

The Cold War was a period of intense antagonism between the two superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union – lasting from 1945 to 1991. Because there was no direct armed conflict between the two continental giants the description 'Cold War' remains an accurate one. Now that it is over, and we know the outcome, it is tempting to re-define this period of recent history as the 'long peace'.

Mason, J. 1996. *The Cold War: 1945–1991*. London, UK. Routledge. p. ix.

This quotation from John Mason's introduction seems to summarise the essence of the Cold War; however, it actually raises several more complicated issues. These include:

- definitions of the main characteristics of 'Cold War'
- the actual starting date
- the meaning of the term 'superpower'.

Perhaps the most contentious point is the suggestion that the period 1945–91 can be seen as the 'long peace'. While this description may arguably be applied to Europe and North America, and to relations between the USA and the USSR, the inhabitants of many countries in Asia, the Americas and Africa might question the application of the word 'peace' to their experience of the Cold War in the 20th century.

### Interpretations of 'Cold War'

The term 'cold war' had been used before 1945 to describe situations characterised by extreme international tension between states, but which avoided tipping over into 'hot wars' (those in which direct fighting took place).

After 1945 – and especially after 1947 – the term was quickly applied to the deteriorating relationship between the USSR and the USA/the West. In this context, it is particularly associated with US journalist Walter Lippmann (see 4.3, What were the main points of tension in Europe from 1947 to 1949?).

When considered in relation to the events of the second half of the 20th century, the term 'cold war' has a dual meaning:

- 'cold' in the sense that relations between the main protagonists were paralysed or frozen, and so not friendly or 'warm'
- 'cold' in the sense that although relations were bad, they were not so bad as to have led to a full-blown 'hot' war in Europe. However, it should be remembered that at different times this 'cold' war also involved very bloody 'hot' wars between the main players' allies in regions beyond Europe.

One problem faced by students studying the Cold War is that different historians mean slightly different things by the term. Some use it in a broad sense – referring to the tensions and conflict between the two camps throughout the whole post-war period from 1945 to 1991. However, some even argue that the name 'Cold War' refers to the globalised

### QUESTION

What do you understand by the terms 'Cold War' and 'superpower'?

**Fact:** 'Cold War' was a term first used by the 14th-century Spanish writer Don Juan Manuel, who distinguished between 'hot' and 'cold' wars when describing the conflict between Christendom and Islam. In 1893, the term was used by Eduard Bernstein, a German Marxist leader of the socialist SPD, to describe the arms race that was developing between the new state of Germany and its neighbours, Britain, France and Russia, during the late 19th century.

or international social conflict between capitalism and communism that had existed since the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917. This idea will be considered in Chapter 3.

Other historians apply the term only to particularly tense periods in the years following 1945. In this sense, the name 'Cold War' refers to phases that are halfway between the two extremes of all-out 'hot' war and **détente** (periods of accommodation, cooperation and agreements).

Applying the name 'Cold War' to the *whole* period between 1945 and 1991 can give the false impression that relations between East and West during this time remained essentially the same. In fact, there were significant variations in East–West relations with regard to aspects such as threats of direct conflict between the main protagonists, 'hot' wars around the regions of the world, the arms race and cooperation.

As discussed below, there is much disagreement about when the Cold War started so this book will examine the history of the years 1946 to 1991 by dividing it into five periods, as follows:

- 1 1946–53 The First Cold War
- 2 1954–68 Fluctuating Relations
- 3 1969–79 Détente
- 4 1979–85 The Second Cold War
- 5 1985–91 The Final Stages

**détente:** This is a French word which means a lessening of tensions and an increase in cooperation. It is normally applied to the period 1969–79, although there were several other attempts between 1945 and 1991 to improve relations between East and West.



Figure 2.1 The main stages of the Cold War, 1941–91

## 2.2 What were the main phases of the Cold War?

As we will explore in Chapter 3, historians disagree about the origins of the Cold War. They also differ in their interpretation of the conflict's time-scale and the chronology of its different phases – not only when it began (suggested dates include 1917, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946 and even 1948), but also when it ended. Some argue that it ended in 1989, with the collapse of the Eastern European states and the various international agreements. Others consider the date of its official ending to be 1991, when the USSR itself collapsed.

Most historians, however, accept that there was a First Cold War, which began sometime after the end of the Second World War and which ended at some point in the 1950s. Debate continues over whether a further one or two periods of the Cold War followed.

The important thing to grasp is that while there has been a continuous underlying rivalry and mistrust, which led to tensions and conflict between two different economic and social systems since 1943 (or even 1917), there have been fluctuations throughout the period and the process, with periods of relaxation and improved relations – often referred to as a **thaw** or 'détente'.

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**thaw:** This refers to a lessening of tensions in Cold War relations, compared to a previous period of hostility. It is particularly associated with the years 1953–55, immediately following Stalin's death.

### Nature of the Cold War

Most historians would accept the summary of the essential nature of the 20th-century Cold War put forward by the US historian Anders Stephanson:

- Both sides appeared to accept for most of the period that, ultimately, coexistence with the other political and social system was impossible, and so were determined to weaken each other by any means short of all-out war – including the establishment, training and arming of terrorist groups.
- As a result of what was increasingly a bi-polar conflict – at least until the 1950s, when the emergence of Communist China made it a multi-polar one – there was an intense arms race between the USA and the USSR, and their allies, involving both conventional and nuclear weapons.
- As part of this 'cold' conflict, both sides suppressed or sought to control their internal dissidents, the 'enemy within', and were often prepared to ally themselves with regimes and movements that conflicted strongly with their stated political ideology and beliefs.

However, according to historians such as Fred Halliday, the Cold War periods proper had some additional aspects. Halliday identified six main features:

- 1 conventional and especially nuclear weapons build-up and arms race
- 2 intense propaganda, including the suppression of accurate or balanced information in both competing states; in particular, the West tried to depict the USSR as a 'totalitarian' equivalent of Nazi Germany, while the USSR painted capitalism as an inherently warmongering system
- 3 no common ground or successful negotiations, and a deep division between the two camps across the 'Iron Curtain'
- 4 conflict between capitalism and communism, which often spilled over into developing countries
- 5 tightening of controls and repression of dissidents in both camps
- 6 East–West conflict was paramount.

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**Iron Curtain:** This is the term used to describe the boundary between capitalist Western Europe and communist Eastern Europe. Winston Churchill described this divide as extending from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic. As the Cold War intensified, the frontiers – especially in Germany – became physical and visible to both sides.



Figure 2.2 Italian soldiers arrest communist activists during the strikes and demonstrations against the Marshall Plan in 1948

**QUESTION**

How do you think this photograph relates to the West's claim to have a greater tolerance of political dissidents than that shown by the USSR?

**Détente**

Détente can be seen as having seven main features:

- 1 a retreat from the all-out arms race
- 2 repeated public calls for peace
- 3 a pursuit of agreed levels of armament – although no substantial disarmament occurred, some limits were set on the arms race
- 4 a greater tolerance of the other social order, and more interest in and accurate information about its character
- 5 agreements on the Developing World and Europe – achieved by summits, long-running conferences and visits by heads of state, events which were in marked contrast to the paralysis of the frozen hostility of the Cold War
- 6 attempts by the West in particular to extricate itself from Developing World confrontations, and to attempt to draw a line in the face of the revolutionary forces it had been combating
- 7 looser emigration controls in the Eastern bloc in the early 1970s, following on from the internal 'thaw' that started in Russia following the death of Stalin.

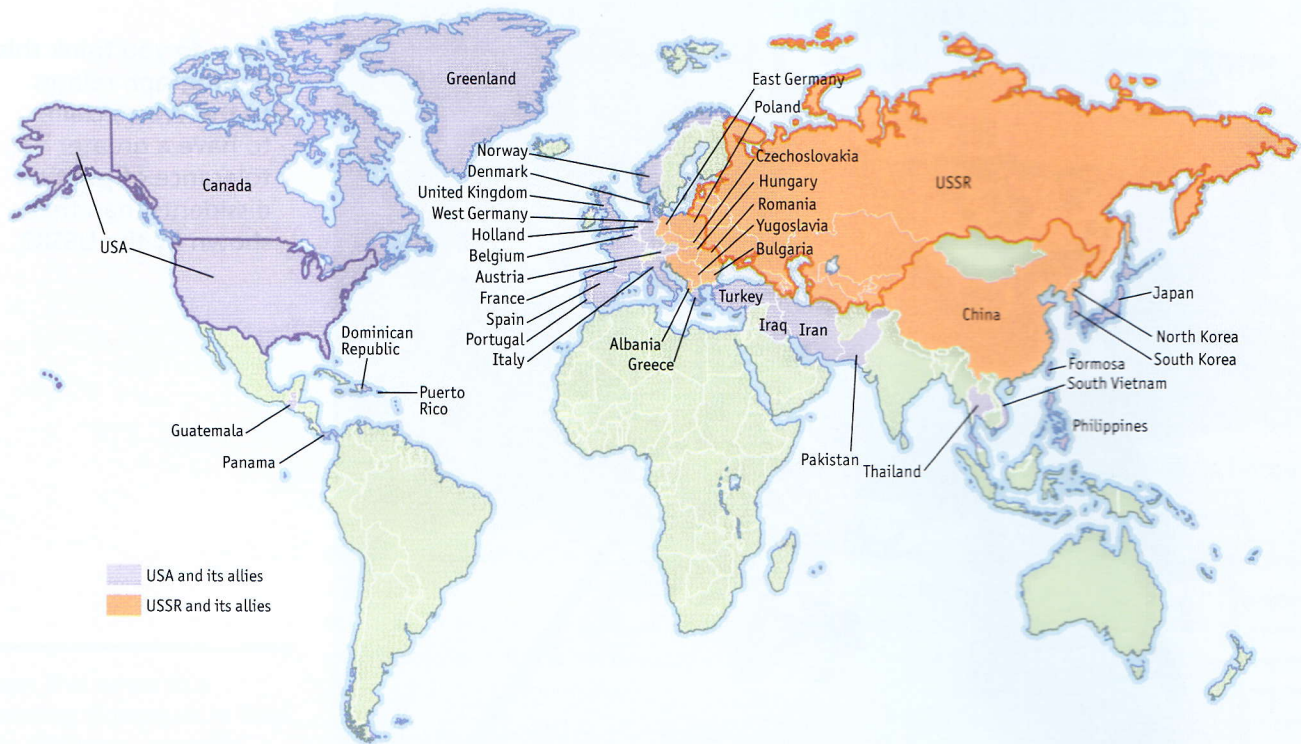
Overall, during such periods of détente, there were attempts by both sides to separate the various international tensions that had periodically been bound together by the long-standing conflict between the rival social systems of East and West.

**QUESTION**

What were the main features of the periods during the Cold War known as the 'thaw' and 'détente'?

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**Figure 2.3** This map shows the alliances of the USA and the USSR in the 1950s. At this time, the USSR felt 'surrounded' by Western allies

### QUESTION

Look at the map. Does it suggest that the security fears of the USSR in the decade following the end of the Second World War were justified?

**NATO:** This is the military alliance organised by the West in response to the perceived threat from the Soviet Union, following its takeover of Eastern Europe and the Berlin Crisis of 1948–49. Initially, the Western European states had formed the Brussels Treaty Organisation in 1948, but this became the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) when the USA joined and assumed leadership in January 1949.

### The rival 'camps'

As we have seen, the most obvious signs of the Cold War proper were the division of Europe by the Iron Curtain between East and West, an ideological contest, and an arms race which at times seemed to threaten nuclear annihilation. This was accompanied by the emergence of two hostile political and military alliances – the West's **NATO** (1949) and the East's **Warsaw Pact** (1955).

As the Cold War developed, the 'conflict' widened, drawing in many other countries. Both sides were keen to establish alliances, although the USA was really the only superpower able to construct a truly global network. As we will examine later, several historians thus see the Cold War as essentially an unequal contest from its very beginning.

Direct 'hot war' between the two superpowers was avoided, but there were many international crises during the Cold War, and several vicious 'hot wars' involving the allies, or 'client states', of the rival superpowers in the so-called **Third World**.

The Cold War also had an impact on various international institutions, especially the United Nations (UN).









		NATO	Warsaw Pact
Armed forces		8 million	7.7 million
Tanks		16,000	38,000
Bombers		2,260	1,600
Submarines		292 (incl. 32 nuclear)	507 (incl. 12 nuclear)
Cruisers		66 (1,107 escorts)	30 (189 escorts)
Battleships and aircraft carriers		76	0
Intercontinental ballistic missiles		450	76
Medium-range ballistic missiles		250	700

Figure 2.4 The relative strengths of the two military alliances in 1963

**Warsaw Pact:** This was the defensive military alliance formed six years after the formation of NATO. Technically known as the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO), it was established shortly after West Germany was allowed to join NATO and rearm in May 1955. This alarmed the USSR, prompting an alliance with its satellite states in Eastern Europe.

**Third World:** This term was at first used to describe those countries in the Americas, Asia and Oceania, and Africa and the Middle East that were economically un- or under-developed. The First World was made up of economically advanced capitalist states in the West (Europe and the USA), while the Second World encompassed those states (mainly European) in the communist bloc. More recently, the term 'Developing World' has replaced the use of 'Third World'.

**SOURCE C**

Ever since World War II, when America assumed a leadership position in the capitalist world, nuclear weapons have been seen as the symbol and effective guarantee of that role, as the bastions of US security in the conflict with the USSR. ... US security throughout the 1950s and 1960s rested upon a real superiority. ...

US government officials [in the 1980s] deny they are pursuing military superiority. Instead the talk is of 'modernisation' ... of 'restoring the balance' when the word 'balance' refers to a previous *imbalance* in the USA's favour.

Halliday, F. 1989. *The Making of the Second Cold War*. London, UK. Verso. p. 48.



# 2

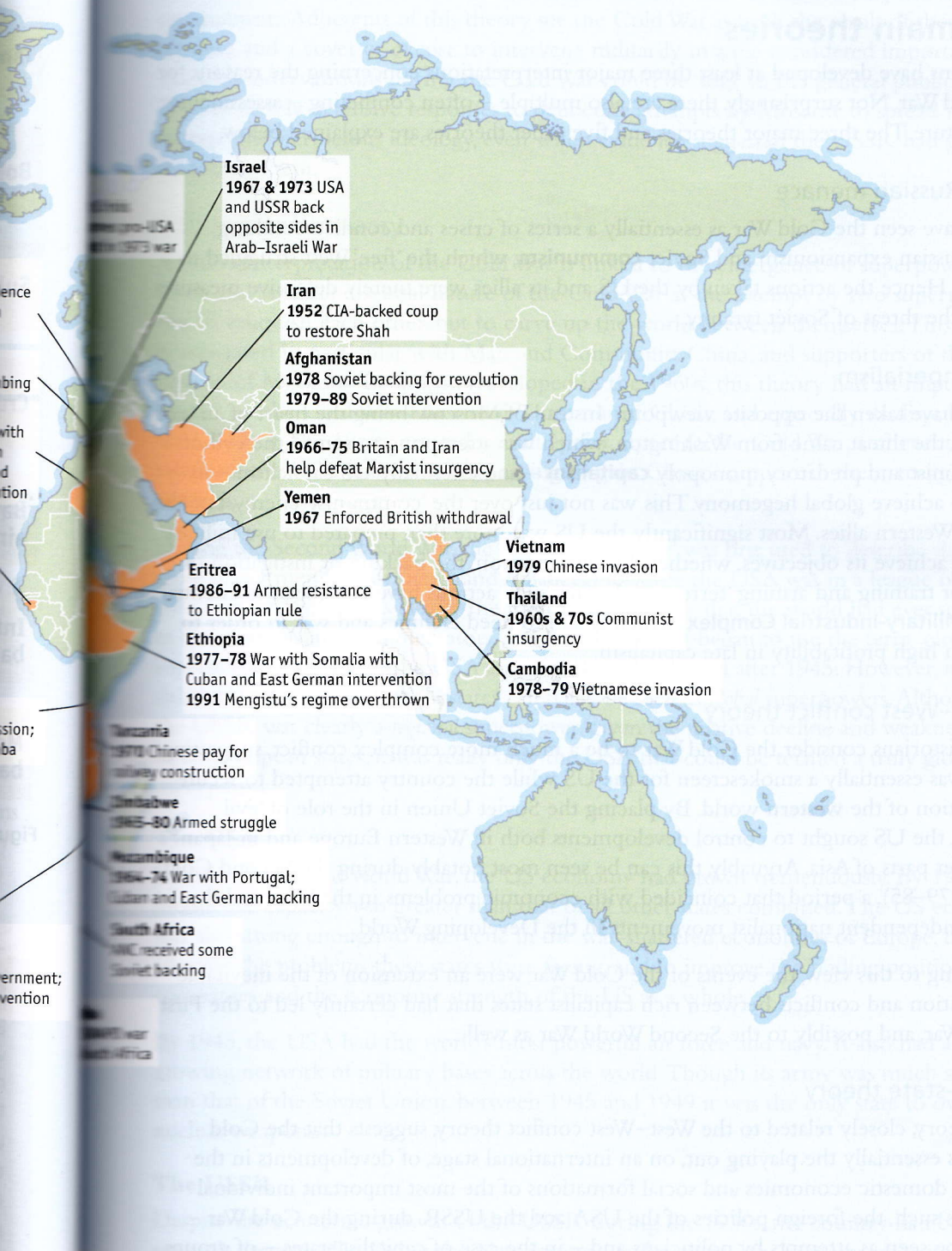
## The Nature of the Cold War

### QUESTION

Look at the map, figure 2.3, again and compare it to the map here. Why might the US have been concerned about some of the developments shown by these sources?



**Figure 2.5** This map shows some of the Cold War conflicts and interventions in the Developing World, 1952–89



## 2.3 What were the main features of the Cold War?

### The main theories

Historians have developed at least three major interpretations concerning the reasons for the Cold War. Not surprisingly, there are also multiple – often conflicting – assessments of its nature. The three major theories and five other theories are explained below.

#### 1 The Russian menace

Many have seen the Cold War as essentially a series of crises and conflicts resulting from Russian expansionism and Soviet **communism**, which the ‘free’ West struggled to contain. Hence the actions taken by the US and its allies were merely defensive measures against the threat of Soviet tyranny.

#### 2 US imperialism

Others have taken the opposite viewpoint. Instead of Moscow being the heart of an ‘evil empire’, the threat came from Washington, which was attempting to spread the evil of expansionist and predatory monopoly **capitalism** – and essentially US capitalism – in order to achieve global hegemony. This was not just over the ‘communist’ enemy, but also over its Western allies. Most significantly, the US was more than prepared to use military force to achieve its objectives, whether through invasion, the backing or instigation of coups, or training and arming ‘terrorists’. In fact, such actions have been seen as essential to the **Military-Industrial Complex**, which is said to need enemies and war in order to maintain high profitability in late capitalism.

#### 3 West–West conflict theory

Some historians consider the Cold War to be a much more complex conflict, suggesting that it was essentially a smokescreen for the US while the country attempted to secure domination of the western world. By placing the Soviet Union in the role of ‘evil empire’, the US sought to control developments both in Western Europe and in Japan and other parts of Asia. Arguably, this can be seen most notably during the Second Cold War (1979–85), a period that coincided with economic problems in the West and the rise of independent nationalist movements in the Developing World.

According to this view, the events of the Cold War were an extension of the inevitable competition and conflicts between rich capitalist states that had certainly led to the First World War, and possibly to the Second World War as well.

#### 4 Intra-state theory

This theory, closely related to the West–West conflict theory, suggests that the Cold War was essentially the playing out, on an international stage, of developments in the internal domestic economies and social formations of the most important individual states. As such, the foreign policies of the USA and the USSR during the Cold War should be seen as attempts by politicians and – in the case of capitalist states – of groups of companies, to use international events as opportunities to resolve internal tensions and overcome competitors.

**communism:** A social and economic system which, according to Marx and Engels, should be based on the ownership, control and self-management of all major parts of an economy (land, industries, banks) by the whole of society, not just the wealthy capitalist classes. This classless society would be preceded by a socialist stage of development in which, for the first time since early human history, the ruling class would be the majority (i.e. working) class.

**capitalism:** A social and economic system based on the private ownership of all major parts of an economy by a dominant or ruling minority class of individuals, families, companies and/or wealthy shareholders, who make all the important decisions concerning investment, production and employment. The state and society as a whole has no or very little say over such issues. It is often referred to a ‘market’ or a ‘free enterprise economy’.

**Military-Industrial Complex:** This refers to the top US military leaders (the Pentagon) and large US armaments companies. Some people, including Eisenhower, expressed concern that the M-I-C worked together to persuade US presidents that increased defence expenditure was vital to respond to the Soviet ‘threat’ when, in fact, it was not.

### 5 Class-conflict theory

Although similar to the West–West and intra-state theories, the class-conflict theory is much more clearly based on Marxist analysis and the centrality awarded to national and international class struggles. Hence the Cold War, and the tensions between the superpowers, should be seen as a result of the historic conflict between capitalism and communism. Adherents of this theory see the Cold War as both the result of these tensions and a cover or excuse to intervene militarily in areas considered important. Such US interventions during the Cold War could be ‘sold’ to the general public in the West as merely defensive responses to deliberate attempts by Moscow to spread its ‘evil empire’ and pernicious ideology, even when evidence suggested the USSR had played no role in them.

### 6 Superpower theory

Another interpretation of the Cold War is linked to the emergence of superpowers after 1945, and sees the essential nature of the Cold War as the attempt by two superpowers not to vanquish each other, but to carve up the world between themselves. This view is associated in particular with Mao and Communist China, and supporters of their version of Marxism–Leninism. Developed in the 1960s, this theory had an important impact on the Cold War. The rise of Communist China, and especially its dispute with the USSR in the 1960s, created a multi-polar aspect to the Cold War, and eventually saw both the USA and the USSR trying to gain China’s support in their struggles and rivalries.

During the Second World War, the term ‘superpower’ was first used to describe the three major members of the Grand Alliance. However, the USA was in a league of its own, and by 1945 it was clearly the most powerful state that the world had ever seen up to that point. Many commentators, and later historians, began to use the term ‘global superpower’ to describe the USA and USSR in the period after 1945. However, it is debatable whether both these states can really be seen as *global* superpowers. Although the USSR was clearly a *regional* superpower, given the relative decline and weakness of other European states, it was really only the USA that could be termed a truly global superpower.

#### The USA

During the Second World War, the US economy had grown tremendously. By 1945, its productive capacity was greater than that of all other states combined. The US economy was also strong enough to intervene in the war-shattered economies of Europe, both to alleviate the problems these states were facing, and to improve the trading position of US companies and the economic strength of the US as a whole.

By 1945, the USA had the world’s most powerful air force and navy. It also had a growing network of military bases across the world. Though its army was much smaller than that of the Soviet Union, between 1945 and 1949 it was the only state to own nuclear weapons.

#### The USSR

Despite the economic growth of the USSR during the 1930s, the country had been set back dramatically during the Nazi invasion and occupation. In many areas, it was necessary to begin again. Economically, the USSR was no match for the USA in 1945 – in particular, the efficiency and productivity of its factories were much lower.

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**Fact:** Halliday suggests that the Second Cold War stemmed from the economic dominance of capitalist firms in California and those associated with the defence industry. He also links it with the rise of Christian fundamentalism and the ‘New Right’ in the USA.

**Fact:** As an example of the multi-polar nature of the Cold War, in the 1970s the USA, under Nixon, was able to achieve rapprochement [improved relations] with Beijing, putting pressure on the USSR, which then had to secure its borders against an erstwhile ally. As a consequence, the USSR was more willing to consider deals with the USA to lessen tensions in Europe and around the world.

**Fact:** Given its stronger economy, its much greater wealth and productive capacity, the USA was determined to ensure that pre-war tariff systems and trade blocs were replaced by ‘liberal’ or ‘open’ free-trade conditions. Under such conditions, the mechanics of a world capitalist market economy would operate to the advantage of the most efficient companies – most of which were based in the USA.

**Fact:** The Soviet Red Army had liberated most of its Eastern European neighbours from Nazi occupation, and was now based in these countries. This gave the USSR clear military domination in a very unstable area.

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In order to defeat the Nazi invaders, Stalin had built up the world's largest land army. However, this was less well-trained than the armies of the West. Also, the USSR had suffered approximately 30 million deaths during the war, and was exhausted.

Finally, the USSR did not develop nuclear weapons until 1949 – four years after the USA had deployed its first nuclear device. For most of the Cold War, the USSR's nuclear technology trailed that of the USA.

### 7 Arms race

Other Cold War historians have seen it as essentially driven by a new factor that emerged only in 1945 – nuclear weapons. They take the view that the Cold War was dominated by attempts by both superpowers to stop and even reverse the arms race as an issue of paramount importance to the survival of the human race. At times, the 'logic' of nuclear 'defence' seemed beyond the control of political leaders, and both sides carried different degrees of responsibility for escalating the nuclear arms race at different times.

### 8 North–South divide

The last major theory put forward by some historians focuses on developments in, and the growing importance of, what was for many years called the Third World. This theory suggests that the history of the period after 1945 was mainly a series of conflicts between powerful states such as the USA and the USSR over the control of weaker countries, which were of economic or strategic importance to them – or as a way of weakening their superpower rival. The issue was complicated by indigenous or local political movements in the Third World, which were intent on taking control themselves. These groups were often prepared to oppose superpowers, or to use them for their own ends.

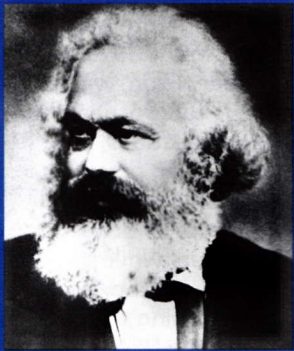
## Clash of ideologies – myths and realities

Having examined some of the main historical and political theories about the nature of the Cold War, we will now look at some of its practical manifestations in the period 1945 to 1991.

An important aspect of the underlying nature of the Cold War was that it was a war of ideology and propaganda, with each side or camp making its proclamations in an uncompromising and absolutist way. On the basis of analyses made by **Karl Marx** and **Vladimir Ilyich Lenin**, the Soviet Union believed that the development of capitalist competition invariably led to periodic economic crises and, as a consequence, to regional and global wars. It thus saw victorious worldwide communist or socialist revolutions as the only hope for world peace and adequate living standards for all.

The USA, on the other hand, believed that capitalism, a market economy and individual political rights would secure good living standards for all, and that the only way to achieve world peace was to contain and eventually 'roll back' communism wherever it existed. In this area alone, then, their respective and conflicting ideologies seemed to lead the two powers down a road to inevitable collision.

There were several similarities as well as significant differences between these two social systems. In reality, during the 1920s and 1930s – and after 1945 – there were many variations of these 'ideals'. This was true of both camps.



**Figure 2.6 Karl Marx (1818–83)**

Marx was a German philosopher and historian who developed the materialist concept of history, arguing that class struggle and conflict were the most important factors behind social and economic – as well as intellectual and political – change. Along with his close collaborator Friedrich Engels (1820–95), he wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, which urged the industrial working classes in developed capitalist states to bring about revolution in order to achieve a socialist and then a classless communist society, based on greater freedom and abundance. His ideas inspired many revolutionaries, including Lenin and Trotsky.

## The ideals of capitalism and communism

### Ideals of capitalism

One important belief of capitalism is that the main businesses should be privately owned and run by individuals, families or companies, and not be restricted by the state – the free competition of a market economy is the most efficient way to run an economy. The wealth created by companies and wealthy individuals will lead to new jobs and will ‘trickle down’ to benefit the poorer sections of society.

Supporters of capitalism believe in a liberal parliamentary system, based on indirect democracy or representation, and that individuals should also have political rights, such as free speech, freedom of the press, information, assembly and religion, and the right to protest peacefully.

### Ideals of communism

An important communist ideal is the creation of a classless society, based on abundance, which would mean that all citizens have equal chances and opportunities. To achieve this, the most important parts of the economy should be socially owned and controlled (by either the state, local councils or co-operatives), with self-management by employees.

Politics should be wider and more democratic than the capitalist parliamentary system, and be based on a multi-party system with regular elections and **direct democracy**. Organised religions should be tolerated, but their involvement in education and people’s lives should be controlled, and the state should actively encourage atheism.

### Realities of capitalism

After 1945, many of the ideals of capitalism were met to a greater or lesser extent in most states in the Developed World. However, this was not usually the case in those Developing World countries that had capitalist or market economies. In the latter, there was extensive poverty, disease and even periodic starvation. At times, even much-needed education and health programmes were reduced at the insistence of capitalist banks based in developed capitalist states.

Many Developing World capitalist states were also either dictatorships, with no individual rights (torture of opponents was not unknown), or were corrupt political systems with power in the hands of powerful élites or families. In such states, elections were of little significance.

Furthermore, even in developed capitalist countries during the 1920s and 1930s, governments actively intervened on the side of the employers during industrial disputes, often using the police or the army to defeat strikes. In several capitalist countries – notably Italy and Germany – major capitalist banks, companies and even political parties actively supported the rise and rule of fascist dictatorships, as a way of protecting their financial interests during economic crises (such as the Great Depression) and against increasingly radical workers’ trade union and political movements.

### Realities of communism

In the Soviet Union, a one-party system had been established as early as 1921, even though this was acknowledged to be a temporary departure from Marxist principles. While there is still fierce historical debate about whether Lenin eventually intended

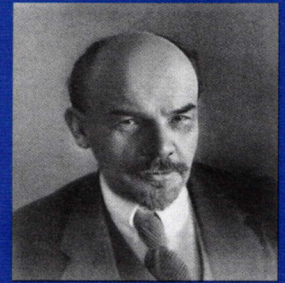


Figure 2.7 Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924)

Lenin’s real name was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov. He joined the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, a Marxist party, in 1898. He provoked a split in the RSDLP in 1903, and formed the Bolshevik faction. Exiled from Russia until April 1917, he returned and, in November that year, pushed for the Bolsheviks to overthrow the provisional government.

**direct democracy:** The right of voters to recall, between elections, any elected official who is felt to have broken their promises.

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to restore the Soviet multi-party democracy that had existed for several years after the Revolution – between 1917 and 1921 – once Stalin was in control, all other political parties were banned. Only the Communist Party was allowed to exist, and the USSR became a one-party dictatorship in both theory and practice, with Stalin's form of Marxism–Leninism justifying such a system.

In fact, the Communist Party as a whole was not influential, coming as it did under the control of a small minority at the top of the party. During Stalin's leadership, the party was, in practice, under his control alone.

Moreover, despite the ideals of early communists, industries in the USSR were state-owned and run by bureaucrats, with the citizens and workers having no real say over investment, work rates or priorities. In addition, elite political and economic managers in the USSR had established a range of economic privileges for themselves which were not available to the rest of Soviet society.

### Communism and capitalism – similarities and differences

So by 1945 there were marked differences between the ideals and realities of both these ideologies. In addition, both systems accepted that violence was justified at times. Communism embraced the need for revolution, arguing that everyday capitalist inequality resulted in the early and preventable deaths – as well as wasted abilities – of thousands of people across the world. For this reason, the USSR sometimes offered support to revolutionary political movements in the Developing World.

Supporters of capitalism also believed violence was needed, in order to protect societies from revolutions that would result in the confiscation of the wealth and property of rich capitalists. Consequently, the US and the West often intervened in social conflicts around the globe to resist or destroy revolutionary movements – even if this meant giving support to, or installing, undemocratic and even vicious dictatorships.

#### SOURCE D

The idea of communism was simple and noble – the creation of a society based on the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need' rather than a [capitalist] system based on greed and profit ... the vision of society adumbrated by the founders of communism was a far cry from what became known as 'actually existing socialism' as it was in the Soviet Union (1917–91) and China (1949–89). ... Engels has always stressed that a workers' movement and its victory was inconceivable without freedom of the press and assembly. It is, he insisted, 'the air it needs to breathe'.

Ali, T. 2009. *The Idea of Communism*. London, UK. Verso. Inside front cover.

By 1945, the Western allies – who had joined with the Soviet Union in destroying the pre-war fascist regimes – tried hard to emphasise to their citizens, and the rest of the world, the contrasts between the ideals of Western capitalism and communism. However, in point of fact, they tended to ignore the wider global realities of their own system, and to equate the practices of Stalinist 'Marxist–Leninist communism' with the ideals and practices of communism proper.

**Fact:** While significant steps were taken to provide real improvements in the provision of education, health care and housing for everyone, the top leadership in the USSR enjoyed special perks and privileges, as well as access to luxury goods not available to the bulk of society.

Meanwhile, in the USSR, the state ignored the real achievements and benefits of capitalism in the West, and instead told its citizens of the sufferings of the workers in capitalist states. It claimed that its own practices were in accordance with the early ideals of Marx. By 1940, Stalin had executed most of the original 'Old Guard' Bolsheviks who could have challenged this, so it was difficult for Marxist dissidents to make their case.

By 1945, the gap between political practices in the West and those in Stalin's Russia was widely visible. Not surprisingly, the realities surrounding these different systems and their ideals were much affected – and complicated – by the start and development of the Cold War. For instance, although Western governments were aware, often through their intelligence services, of the genuine liberalisations taking place in the USSR after Stalin's death in 1953, and especially after Nikita Khrushchev's reforms post-1956, it often suited their purposes to speak and act as if the USSR was still run in the same way it had been under Stalin.

#### SOURCE E

The tendency to perpetuate 'Stalinism' by backdating it to 1917 and extending it to the end of the Soviet Union, pertains to those 'uses and abuses' of history of which there are many examples.

In this respect, mention should be made of the *Historikerstreit* (the 'historians' controversy) set off by conservative German historians ... counting on Western connivance encouraged by the Cold War. They wished us to believe that Hitler's madness could somehow be attributed to Stalin. ... The anti-communist indoctrination characteristic of the Cold War permitted this kind of ideological manoeuvre in the West.

Lewin, M. 2005. *The Soviet Century*. London, UK. Verso. pp. 4–5.

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**Fact:** Ignoring the genuine liberalisations after the death of Stalin was also the stance taken by the well-known Soviet writer and dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn. When his book *The Gulag Archipelago* was published, he made no mention of the fact that, following Stalin's death, the Gulag he had known and suffered no longer existed. Instead, he preferred to act and speak as if Stalin's Russia continued to operate in the post-Stalinist years. Such writings were eagerly used by governments in the West during the 1960s and 1970s to justify, to their citizens and the world in general, their opposition to the 'evil empire'.

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## The Cold War and the United Nations (UN)

Another aspect of how the Cold War played out in the period 1945–91 is evident in the way in which it affected the operations of the UN. During the Cold War, both the main superpowers used their place on the UN Security Council, and their allies in the General Assembly, to block decisions they didn't like, and to protect their allies – even if their allies were in the wrong.

The UN had been agreed in the **Atlantic Charter** of 1941 – mainly advocated by Franklin D. Roosevelt of the USA and Winston Churchill of Britain – and was set up after the Second World War to replace the League of Nations, which was seen as being partly responsible for the failure to prevent the outbreak of war in 1939. In 1945, the Allies seemed willing to cooperate with each other to achieve stability, peace and security throughout the world. By establishing the UN, this stability was intended to be achieved through collective security, with peacekeeping to be carried out with the approval of UN member states. Like the League of Nations, the UN had no independent military force.

The UN Charter gave permanent seats on its Security Council to the USA, the USSR, Britain, China and, later, France, but each member of the Security Council could veto

**Atlantic Charter:** The agreement signed by Roosevelt and Churchill in August 1941, prior to US entry into the Second World War, setting out their aims for the post-war world, and in particular their desire for a more popular and effective organisation to replace the League of Nations. The new organisation – which eventually became the UN – was to defend self-determination for nations and to work towards world peace. In January 1942 this was confirmed by the signing of the United Nations Declaration. In August 1944, a conference at Dumbarton Woods in the USA agreed the structure of the UN.



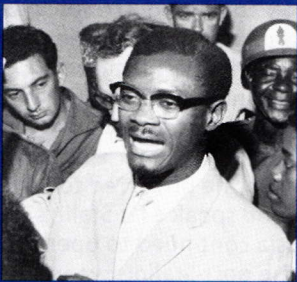
## The Nature of the Cold War

the decisions of this body. In the event of a veto, the matter passed to the General Assembly. In reality, the US and the USSR tended to dominate the Security Council, as they were the two most powerful states. With these two states – increasingly at odds with each other after 1945 – on the Security Council, it soon became clear that the UN would find it hard to follow an independent and neutral line in any crises that seemed to threaten peace and security.

As the US and the USSR adopted policies in their respective ‘spheres of influence’ in Western and Eastern Europe, the UN was sidelined. For example, it was powerless to intervene during the Berlin Blockade and Airlift of 1948–49 (see 4.3, The 1948 Crisis in Berlin – the Berlin Blockade). One historian, David J. Whittaker, summed up the position of the new UN with these words: ‘Europe’s collective security relied on the superpowers pulling back from the brink, without any prospect of UN intervention.’

A whole range of different conflicts that the UN attempted to solve via mediation – in order to avoid becoming completely irrelevant – thus, in turn, influenced and were influenced by the events and development of the Cold War. By 1950, the USSR increasingly saw the UN as a tool for Western capitalism, evidenced by its refusal to recognise the new communist government of China in 1949. Meanwhile, as early as 1948, US president Harry S. Truman had described the UN as ‘a God-given tool’ to resist the actions of the USSR and to protect US interests.

Of the many conflicts or crises that involved and affected the UN during the Cold War, a good example is provided by events in the Congo from 1960 to 1964.



**Figure 2.8 Patrice Lumumba (1925–61)**

Lumumba wanted the Congo to be independent and, in 1958, founded the non-tribal National Congolese Movement (MNC – Mouvement National Congolaise), which campaigned for independence from Belgium. After Belgium suddenly announced its decision to pull out, Lumumba became the Congo’s first democratically elected prime minister. He favoured a non-aligned foreign policy, and wanted to address problems of poverty, health and education. This worried the US, and the CIA began to consider various options. Lumumba was brutally murdered on 17 January 1961, following a vicious civil war.

## The Congo, 1960–66

In 1960, Belgium unexpectedly ended its colonial rule of the Congo, leaving the newly independent country and government totally unprepared for self-rule. Within weeks the new country’s army – the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC) – mutinied against the government, headed by the president, Joseph Kasavubu, and the prime minister, **Patrice Lumumba**.

As there was still a large expatriate Belgian community in the Congo, the Belgians sent in their own troops. At the same time – and with encouragement from Belgium, Britain and France – the leader of another political party, Confederation of the Tribal Associations of Katanga (CONAKAT, – Confédération des Associations Tribales du Katanga) Moïse Tshombe, declared the mineral-rich province of Katanga to be independent. The new Congolese government then appealed to the UN for help.

At first, this African crisis did not seem to affect the interests of the two superpowers. When Lumumba approached both the USA and the USSR for help, they referred him to the UN. Despite Britain and France abstaining, the Security Council agreed to send in a UN force – the Opération des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC).

When this force failed to take serious action against the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC) and the breakaway province of Katanga, Lumumba became convinced that the UN was not prepared to challenge the interests of European imperialist powers. As a result, he appealed again to the Soviet Union for assistance, and received some military equipment from them. He also began to make anti-Western statements. He was dismissed as prime minister by President Kasavubu. At the same time, the UN closed all the country’s airports and the main radio station. This caused great difficulties for

Lumumba, but helped the various rebel groups. In the UN, the Soviet Union denounced the ONUC as a tool of Western imperialism. In September 1960, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev made a strong speech attacking both the UN and its secretary-general.

In mid-September, the ANC carried out a coup and, with Kasavubu's support, expelled all Soviet and Eastern bloc diplomats – an event which only strengthened Soviet fears about Western plots. At first Lumumba sought protection from the UN but, when the UN General Assembly (with Western encouragement) seemed indirectly to acknowledge the new military Congolese government, Lumumba left the UN compound.

What happened next was the subject of intense speculation for many years. However, research in Belgian archives by the Belgian historian Ludo de Witte, as well as recently released CIA documents, show that Lumumba – who had already been the subject of an unsuccessful CIA plot to assassinate him with a tube of poisoned toothpaste – was quickly captured by ANC troops. ONUC refused his appeal for assistance, on direct orders from the UN headquarters in New York.

Instead, Lumumba was publicly humiliated and beaten in front of international journalists and TV cameras, before being handed over to the forces in Katanga. There he was murdered, with the direct involvement of Belgian officers and CIA agents, acting on instructions approved by US president Dwight D. Eisenhower himself, who saw Lumumba as a potential Soviet puppet.



Figure 2.9 Former Congolese prime minister Patrice Lumumba (centre) is captured in December 1960

The crisis in the Congo continued, but after Lumumba's murder the UN was no longer particularly divided about it along Cold War lines. By 1961, both superpowers favoured a unified Congo.

In general, during the 1960s, the UN was able to operate as peacekeeper in areas that were not of vital interest to either of the two superpowers. However, where this was not the case, Cold War divisions often meant that the UN could play no effective part. For example, the UN was not involved in either the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, or the growing military conflicts in Vietnam and other states in Indo-china.

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**Fact:** Even the British secret service had decided that killing Lumumba was the best 'solution' to the crisis in the Congo.

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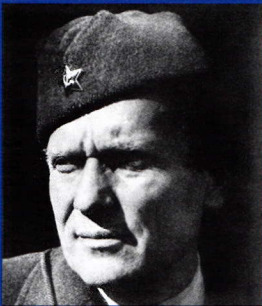
**Fact:** The UN tried for some time to bring about a unified Congo, but its actions against the province of Katanga were often limited and unsuccessful. By then, the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement began to pressure the UN to take tougher action. Eventually, the ONUC forces took control of Katanga, and the Congo was unified once more. In 1964, ONUC forces were withdrawn.

# 2

**Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):** This was an attempt by various small states in developing countries – mostly in Asia and Africa – to remain neutral as the two superpowers began forming alliances.

## QUESTION

What do you understand by the term 'Non-Aligned Movement'?



**Figure 2.10** Marshal Tito (1892–1980)

Tito's real name was Josip Broz. He became a leading member of the Yugoslav Communist Party after the First World War and, during the Second World War, he organised partisan resistance against the Axis forces. In 1945, he ignored Stalin's instructions to form a coalition government with non-communist parties and instead established a communist government. His continued differences with Stalin eventually led to Yugoslavia's expulsion from the communist bloc in 1948. From then on, Tito followed a policy of non-alignment. He continued to rule Yugoslavia until his death in 1980.

## The Nature of the Cold War

Throughout the Second Cold War (1979–85), UN influence declined even further. No agreements on peacekeeping missions could be made within the Security Council, as the two superpowers adopted strongly antagonistic Cold War attitudes.

## The Non-Aligned Movement and the Developing World

The role of the UN and the actions of the two superpowers were also affected by the emergence of what became known as the **Non-Aligned Movement**.

During the 1950s and 1960s, many former European colonies in Africa and Asia achieved independence, sometimes after wars of liberation against the colonial powers. It was from among these states, struggling with the effects of decolonisation and trying to resist new forms of imperialism, that many members of the Non-Aligned Movement were drawn. Although their anti-imperialist stance was directed against the former European colonial powers at first, the USA's association with these states often meant that anti-imperialism took on a strong anti-American flavour. Despite the fact that the US had mainly opposed the pre-war colonialism and empires of European states such as Britain and France, the US was often seen as following a more modern informal version of colonialism – that of economic imperialism, often known as 'neo-colonialism' or 'dollar imperialism'. This was true especially of the 1950s and 1960s, when the US was trying to create a global pattern of 'spheres of influence' in order to protect its economic and security interests.

The idea of the Non-Aligned Movement was first put forward by **Marshal Tito**, the ruler of communist Yugoslavia, who was resisting pressure from Stalinist Russia. Instead, he tried to avoid allying with either of the two superpowers. In 1954, the Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, used the term 'non-aligned' in a speech about Sino-Indian relations. Another of its early leaders was Gamal Abdul Nasser, who became leader of Egypt in 1954. He followed a strongly nationalist and anti-colonial policy, directed towards removing all European influence from Egypt and the rest of the Middle East and North Africa.

The creation of NATO by the US and the West in 1949, and then the formation of the Warsaw Pact by the USSR in 1955, led to a meeting of those states wishing to remain neutral at the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955. Twenty-nine mainly Asian and African countries were represented at this conference. In 1961, at the Belgrade Conference in Yugoslavia, they decided to formally establish the Non-Aligned Movement. Their aims were to resist colonialism and imperialism in all its forms, and to develop Afro-Asian cooperation in order to achieve economic growth. They were also willing to follow Tito's lead on the need to resist the increasing nuclear arms race between the two superpowers. The members of the Non-Aligned Movement hoped their neutrality would enable them to gain advantages by playing off one superpower against the other.

The establishment of the NAM meant that the UN General Assembly now contained a sizeable group of states prepared to resist the power politics of the USA, the USSR and the former European colonial powers. By the mid 1960s, the number of NAM nations within the UN had grown to 115. This removed a source of power from the USA, while at the same time making the USSR less suspicious of the UN, which it felt had often acted as a rubber-stamp for US foreign-policy objectives. The original NAM group was joined in 1964 by the **Group of 77**, which also tried to influence decisions in the UN.

However, the unity of the NAM eventually began to dissolve. The first sign of this was the Sino-Indian border war of 1962, in which two important NAM members fought

each other. From the late 1960s, many leading figures in the NAM either died or were removed from power, while Cuba's membership clearly raised issues of neutrality. Developments – especially in Africa – saw several states beginning to move closer to the Soviet camp. In part this was a result of the USA's policy of containment, which meant it did not want to support the NAM for fear its anti-colonial stance would alienate key Western allies such as Britain. At the same time, the USSR was willing to give economic assistance to radical regimes, while the US increasingly would only give aid to those states that were strongly anti-communist.

In 1979, at the NAM Conference in Havana, Cuba, Fidel Castro, then the chair of NAM, suggested that, for all nationalists, a 'natural alliance' with the USSR made sense. Initially this gained some support, but after Soviet troops were sent into Afghanistan in December of that year, the NAM began to split. Many Muslim countries were particularly angered by this Soviet action. During the Second Cold War, the NAM thus began to lose influence. Although membership continued to grow, the focus was increasingly on economic rather than political issues.

## Aid

The superpowers also vied with each other in trying to help poorer countries by giving them financial and technical aid. The main aim of this was to increase their respective spheres of influence by widening their rival global networks of potential allies, and securing bases in strategically important areas of the world. The USA started from an initial advantage in 1945, as the USSR had no allies at all until it began to establish control over Eastern Europe. However, the victory of the communists in China in 1949 gave the USSR – for a time at least – an ally outside Europe. Under Khrushchev, the Soviet Union began to offer money, technicians, equipment and loans. However, as with the arms and space races (see The space race, later in this chapter), such measures were very costly and added to the burdens already being placed on the fragile Soviet economy. Once again, the USSR found it was unable to compete with the much wealthier USA.

## Cultural and sporting competition

Apart from international crises, another aspect of the nature of the Cold War was an almost constant competition between the two main superpowers to be the best in cultural and sporting matters. For instance, the CIA funded certain artistic movements so that the freedom of artists in the West could be contrasted to the more restricted and old-fashioned representational art fostered by the Soviet state.

On the other hand, the USSR poured money into chess, and through most of the Cold War it was able to maintain dominance at least over the chessboard through the achievements of brilliant chess masters such as Mikhail Tal, Mikhail Botvinnik and Anatoly Karpov.

In sport, Khrushchev was the first Soviet leader who encouraged competition with the USA. Starting with the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia, Soviet athletes challenged US domination of the medals table. State funds were made available so that Soviet athletes could spend more time training. At the Olympics in Rome, Italy, in 1960, the Soviet Union won more medals than any other country. This Soviet dominance in sport continued until the end of the 1970s.

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**Fact:** Inspired by Yugoslavia's successful resistance to Soviet pressure and neutral stance, countries such as India and China were encouraged in the 1960s to avoid being drawn into the bi-polar international relations created by the Cold War. For India in particular, the NAM was a way of countering US support for Pakistan (which was strongly anti-communist), without having to join the USSR in any firm alliance.

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**Group of 77:** Set up on 15 June 1964, this was a loose coalition of developing countries. It was formed after differences within the NAM (including the Sino-Indian War), as some felt that the NAM was moving too close to a pro-Soviet-anti-US stance.

### KEY CONCEPTS QUESTION

**Significance:** What was the potential significance of the Chinese Revolution of 1949 for the Soviet Union in the developing Cold War?

# 2

## The Nature of the Cold War

**Fact:** The next Olympics after the boycotted Moscow Games were held in Los Angeles in the USA, in 1984. In a tit-for-tat response, the USSR and some of its allies boycotted those Games. Many people – especially athletes who had trained hard for the preceding four years – were angry that the two superpowers were hijacking international sport to make a political point.

Both states made a great deal of fuss when their athletes did well in the Olympic Games, and each liked to beat the other. At times, the sporting politics of the Cold War became even more overt. In 1980, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the USA refused to participate in the Olympic Games due to take place in Moscow. The USSR had spent enormous sums on preparations for the Games, and were annoyed when several of the USA's allies joined the boycott.



Figure 2.11 Successful Soviet athletes at the Olympic Games in Rome, 1960

**A-bomb:** The *atomic bomb* was the first type of nuclear weapon, and was dropped by the US on Japan in August 1945. At first, these were only deliverable by special strategic bombers.

**H-bomb:** The *hydrogen bomb* was a thermo-nuclear weapon, much more destructive than the earlier A-bombs. These were eventually deliverable by rocket missiles. The US developed the first H-bomb in 1952; the USSR followed in 1953.

**Sputnik:** The world's first orbiting satellite, launched by the USSR in October 1957. The word means 'traveller'. The Soviet Union went on to achieve a series of other space firsts, including the first man to orbit Earth in space.

## The arms race

The decision by the US to drop nuclear bombs on Japan in August 1945 was not only a factor in the start of the Cold War, but it also triggered one of the main aspects of the Cold War. This was the intense arms race – involving both conventional and nuclear weapons – between the two major powers. While the US had a nuclear weapons monopoly between 1945 and 1949, this ended when the USSR successfully tested its first **A-bomb**. The arms race affected the ways in which some international crises were dealt with, as well as affecting the economies of the states involved (especially that of the Soviet Union). This was, in turn, a significant factor in the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the end of the Cold War.

## Nuclear weapons

The first main step in the nuclear arms race, after both sides gained possession of the A-bomb by 1949, was the USA's development of the **H-bomb** in 1952. However, the USSR matched this the following year. The next major development came in 1957, when the USSR launched **Sputnik** – the world's first satellite (see 5.2, *Sputnik* and its impact, October 1957) – and developed long-range inter-continental ballistic missiles (**ICBMs**).

Although the US was also developing such missiles, they withheld this announcement until 1958. At the time, the US publicly claimed there was a missile gap – to the advantage of the USSR – and that the US must therefore rapidly build up its stock of ICBMs. Both Eisenhower and his successor John F. Kennedy knew this was not the case – flights of the USA's U-2 spy planes had shown them the real level of Soviet nuclear weaponry. Nonetheless, the US build-up forced the USSR to try to catch up, with serious long-term consequences for its relatively weaker economy. A particularly significant development came in 1960, when the US announced its possession of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (**SLBMs**). The USSR took until 1968 to follow this new technology but, without the global system of alliances enjoyed by the US, there were few harbours that could service Soviet nuclear submarines.

However, in 1968, the USSR beat the US to another new development – the building of an anti-ballistic missiles (**ABM**) defence system. In 1970, the US took another important step by developing multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles (**MIRVs**), which greatly increased the chances of avoiding detection by any ABM system and thus of hitting their intended targets. In addition, by 1972, the US had created its own ABM system. In 1975, the Soviet Union developed its own MIRV programme.

During all this time, while there was a massive build-up of nuclear warheads, considerable effort was also put into developing specific strategies for the use of nuclear weapons, despite the fact that early Cold War leaders such as Stalin, Khrushchev and Eisenhower all believed that a nuclear war would be a global catastrophe. However, Eisenhower also insisted that, if attacked, the US would respond with every weapon at its command, rather than attempting to pursue a 'limited nuclear war', as favoured by some of his advisers. Eisenhower's 'massive retaliation' policy was replaced under Kennedy by a more 'flexible response' strategy. This was largely the work of his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, who came up with 'counterforce' as a more limited way in which to fight a nuclear war, focusing on military but not civilian targets. However, this strategy was seen by the Soviet Union as an attempt by the USA to launch pre-emptive strikes in an international crisis short of war.

This strategy did not survive the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 (see Chapter 5, Case Study 2). It was replaced by Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), aimed at civilian and military targets to cause maximum casualties and destruction – the idea being that the risk of such a war would cause both sides to avoid any future crisis getting out of control. In many ways, this was a reversion to Eisenhower's idea of 'massive retaliation'.

After 1962, both sides came to accept that the MAD strategy was the best way of avoiding nuclear war, and in 1963 a hotline was set up to facilitate direct communication between the Kremlin and the White House. One result of such mutual fears was the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty, which banned defences against ICBMs to ensure that the 'logic' of MAD remained. In the same year, the Strategic Arms Limitation Interim Agreement tried to restrict the number of land- and sea-based ballistic missiles.

This mutual stalemate was broken by president Ronald Reagan, during the Second Cold War in the 1980s, when the US spurred on the nuclear arms race by developing

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**ICBM:** *Land-based inter-continental ballistic missiles* were rockets that could deliver nuclear weapons across much greater distances than earlier missiles. They appeared to allow the USSR to 'catch up' in the nuclear arms race, as it could potentially reach any target in the US, thus making up for its lack of allies and bases across the globe. However, Eisenhower and his advisers had wanted the USSR to be the 'first', so they could justify the development of their own ICBM system, which was already well advanced.

**SLBM:** *Submarine-launched ballistic missiles* were much more mobile and therefore harder to detect than land-based missiles. The USSR was not able to keep as many nuclear submarines at sea as the USA, because it lacked access to naval bases around the world.

**ABM:** *Anti-ballistic missile* systems were intended to knock out enemy missiles before they reached their target. Although the USSR was the first to develop these, the US followed very quickly, and soon had a big lead in this area.

**MIRV:** *Multiple independently-targeted re-entry vehicles* were missiles with multiple warheads, each one capable of being directed to a different target. To a large extent, they reduced the effectiveness of any anti-ballistic missile system.

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## The Nature of the Cold War

**Fact:** Pershing and Cruise missiles were 'new generation' nuclear weapons that were much faster, and harder to detect – especially the Cruise missiles, which could be launched from mobile missile carriers. Pershing IIs were based in West Germany, while Cruise missiles were placed in several West European states, including Britain.

**Fact:** The US SDI system was designed to make it impossible for the USSR to respond to any US nuclear strike, because any Soviet missiles fired in retaliation would be destroyed by SDI missiles before reaching the USA.

the stealth bomber, the neutron bomb, and extremely accurate 'first strike' missiles (such as Pershing II and Cruise, first deployed in Europe in 1983). The US also announced its intention to develop the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) – better known as 'Star Wars'. This was to be a missile system based in space to intercept and destroy enemy missiles. Both the US and the USSR knew that the Soviet economy would not be able to withstand the costs of trying to match this new nuclear technology.

### Conventional weapons

While the most obvious feature of the Cold War arms race was the stockpiling of nuclear warheads and new types of weapons-delivery systems, conventional weapons also played a part. For most of the duration of the Cold War, the USSR had a huge superiority in Europe in relation to NATO in terms of numbers of troops and tanks (though not as regards a straight Warsaw Pact *v.* NATO comparison on a global scale). Given that the Soviet Union was a European state, it was not surprising that it should have more troops in this region than the US.

However, a large proportion of its conventional forces were, in fact, deployed along the borders on its Eastern Front with China, which, from the 1960s and especially during the 1970s, was another potential enemy. In 1981, the USSR felt it necessary to deploy 44 divisions on its border with China, compared to 31 divisions facing NATO in the west. In addition, although the USSR had superior numbers, the qualitative advantage in terms of both training and equipment lay with NATO. For instance, the USSR's greater number of tanks was matched by NATO's vast arsenal of sophisticated anti-tank guided missiles. This Soviet superiority in tanks was used to justify the USA's development of the neutron bomb. Yet even before then, NATO commanders were confident that they could deal successfully with any Soviet/Warsaw Pact offensive in Europe.

As regards air-force capacities, the USSR's main lead was in interceptor fighters – an essentially defensive aspect – whereas NATO had a big lead in fighter ground-attack aircraft. Finally, while the USSR greatly developed its navy during the 1960s and 1970s, and thus managed to take the numerical lead over NATO, the USA developed fewer but larger and more sophisticated ships, especially aircraft carriers. It also had a much more extensive global network of friendly ports. The USSR only had six major naval bases, all in the Soviet Union. While most attention was always focused on nuclear weapons, in fact the bulk of Cold War military spending went on conventional forces and weapons.

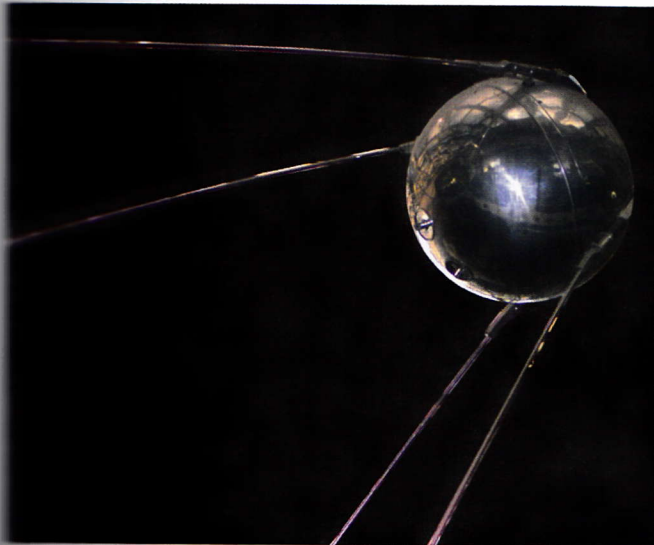
### The space race

From the late 1950s, the Cold War also manifested itself in a race between the USSR and the USA to gain a lead in a new area of scientific endeavour and exploration – space. Although this was mainly linked to military developments, such as rockets to launch nuclear warheads, there was also an important element of scientific rivalry. Each side was determined to show that its social and economic system was superior – the best system would, it was argued, inevitably win the race. Khrushchev was determined that the USSR should win this space race, and at first the USSR was able to score a series of successes.

**SOURCE F**

The *Sputniks* prove that socialism has won the competition between the socialist and capitalist countries. The economy, science, culture and the creative genius of people in all spheres of life develop better and faster under socialism.

Khrushchev, speaking about the success of the Soviet Union in 1957. Quoted in Chandler, M. and Wright, J. 1999. *Modern World History*. Oxford, UK. Heinemann. p. 242.



**Figure 2.12** The first Soviet satellite *Sputnik* – the first step in the space race

In 1957, the USSR launched *Sputnik*, the world's first satellite, and also sent the first animal into space (a dog called Laika). An even more significant first was achieved in 1961 – Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space when he went into orbit around Earth.

As in the sporting rivalry, the USSR managed to achieve dominance in the initial stages of the space race by spending vast amounts of money. However, these Soviet successes spurred president Kennedy to pour government money into a US space programme. During the 1960s and 1970s, the USA – with a much larger national 'pot' than the USSR – quickly caught up and then overtook the Soviet Union. In 1969, the USA sent the first men to the Moon. Soviet attempts to keep up in the space race played a major role in draining the weaker Soviet economy. This contributed to the eventual collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. Some people have speculated about what more might have been achieved in this arena if the two powers had cooperated instead of competing against each other.

**Spies and lies**

One feature of the Cold War that entered the consciousness of many people in both East and West was spying: Ian Fleming's *James Bond* became one of the best-known fictional characters during the Cold War period. In the real world, the activities of the CIA and



# 2

## The Nature of the Cold War

**Fact:** Real-life spies and spy-masters (as opposed to fictional ones like James Bond and 'M', or John le Carré's George Smiley) hit the headlines from time to time. Most notorious, perhaps, were the British MI5 spies Philby, Burgess and Maclean, who were later discovered to be Soviet agents. In the USA, during the era of the Red Scare and McCarthyism, some of those found guilty of being Soviet spies were executed, including Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953.

the KGB often hit the headlines, either as a result of CIA-sponsored coups to overthrow radical governments in the Developing World, or KGB assassinations of agents and double-agents.

In September 1986, Nicholas Daniloff, an American journalist working in Russia, was arrested and accused of spying for the USA. In retaliation, the USA arrested Gennadi Zakharov, a Russian embassy official working in the US, and accused him of spying. The US then used the dispute as an excuse to threaten to call off a special summit meeting on defence, which was due to take place later that year between Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev and US president Ronald Reagan.

Both sides constantly spied on each other, despite public denials of such activity. At other times, they decided to make political points by expelling or even arresting spies – or alleged spies – working for the other side.

In addition, relentless propaganda campaigns were waged by governments and the media in both the West and the East, each portraying the opposing side in the worst possible light while presenting themselves as paragons of virtue. Citizens on both sides of the Iron Curtain were frequently lied to, and many of their governments' actions – assassinations, sabotage, support for terrorists – were kept secret for many years. However, as more documents and memoirs become available for historians to study, it is clear that neither side was 'squeaky clean' in the actions they took during the Cold War.

## The general public and its fears

Another aspect of the nature of the Cold War was the fear felt by many ordinary citizens in both East and West. Many believed that the Cold War and its nuclear arms race would lead to a Third World War between the USA and the USSR, in the course of which the whole of humanity would be wiped out.

Many people soon became aware of the dreadful destruction caused by the atomic bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. In Hiroshima, almost everyone within a 3-km (2-mile) radius of where the bomb dropped was killed, and all buildings were destroyed by the heat and fire. For months afterwards, people who wore spectacles were removing fragments of shattered glass from their eyes. In the outskirts of the city, some saw thousands of people running away from the blast and thought they were African-Americans (possibly mistaken for POWs), because their skin had been blackened by the heat. Up to 8 km (5 miles) away, buildings were destroyed by a blast of hot air travelling at 800 km/h (500 mph). For years afterwards, people died from radiation sickness caused by the bomb, and many years later babies were still being born with deformities as a result of that single bomb. Soon, nuclear warheads had been developed that were a thousand times more powerful than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In an attempt to alleviate the fears such developments generated amongst the civilian population, many governments began to draw up and publicise civil defence programmes to show people how to protect themselves should a nuclear attack occur.

This often involved using internal doors removed once the warning of an attack had been issued, or hiding under beds and using rubbish bags. In addition, people were urged in the pamphlet to take the following items into their home-made shelter: 16 litres (3.5 gallons) of drinking water per person, tinned food, a portable radio, warm clothing, blankets and plastic bags, a clock, toys and magazines. Many people were not convinced these methods would offer much protection from a nuclear attack.

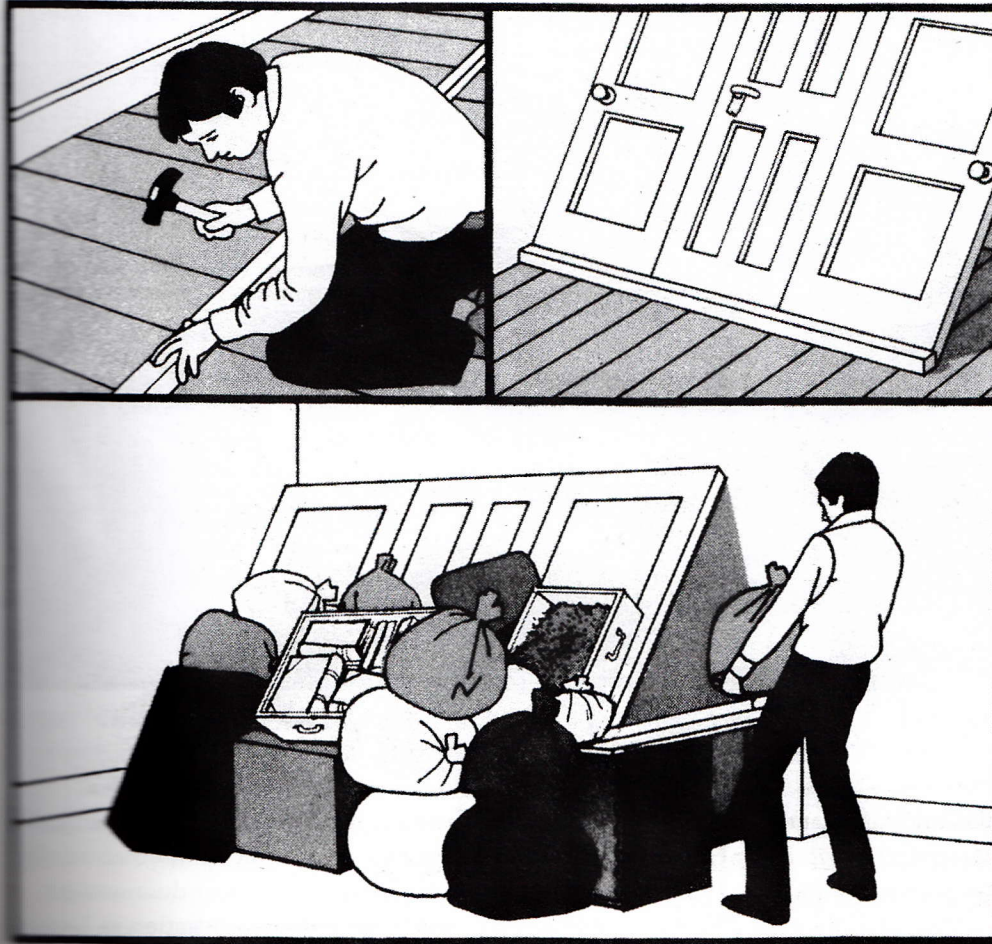


Figure 2.13 A British government pamphlet entitled 'Protect & Survive' showed people what to do in the event of a nuclear attack

**QUESTION**

In view of what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, do you think the protection methods suggested in this pamphlet would have provided any serious protection from a nuclear attack? If your answer is 'No', what might have been the government's purpose in issuing the pamphlet?

Public fears stimulated the emergence and growth of various anti-nuclear and peace movements, including the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in Britain. Formed in 1957, and officially launched the following year, CND soon became Europe's biggest anti-nuclear peace movement, and organised annual marches at Easter from Trafalgar Square in London to the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment near Aldermaston. Over 50,000 people took part in the 1961 and 1962 marches. Its members included many well-known writers, artists, scientists and academics, including Bertrand Russell. The organisation argued for the unconditional renunciation of all nuclear weapons.

Such movements appeared in most of the main Western states, including the USA. The folk singer Bob Dylan wrote in his song 'Masters of War' – referring, in part, to the nuclear arms race and the Cold War – of the fear the nuclear threat instilled in the general public. This included the fear of bringing children into a world where the risk of a nuclear Third World War seemed to be a possibility.

Such movements also appeared in the Eastern bloc, but these were often 'sponsored' by the state. While groups such as CND declined in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a resurgence in the 1980s. This was a result of concerns over US decisions to deploy 'first

**Fact:** At the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, many school students in the West listened anxiously to transistor radios brought into schools (against the rules!), to hear if the Third World War was about to start.

**QUESTION**

Why were the fears of nuclear war heightened during the late 1970s and the 1980s?



**Figure 2.14** The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, Berkshire, UK, established in 1981 to protest against the presence of US first-strike Cruise nuclear missiles at RAF Greenham Common

strike' nuclear weapons in Western Europe. US Cruise and Pershing missiles in particular were seen as dangerously escalating the nuclear arms race. As a result, CND membership grew to over 100,000 by 1984, and public support for unilateral nuclear disarmament increased. In 1981, over 250,000 people joined an anti-nuclear demonstration in London while, in October 1983, over 3 million people took part in simultaneous demonstrations across Europe – including 300,000 in London.

The growth of CND led to the creation of various anti-CND organisations, such as Peace Through NATO, which often claimed that CND's leaders were linked to the USSR. There was also an increase in state surveillance of CND and its supporters. The extent of this was revealed in 1985, when Cathy Massiter, an MI5 officer who had been responsible for monitoring the CND between 1981 and 1983, resigned and made MI5's activities public.

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## Chapter summary

You should now have a sound overall understanding of what is meant by the term 'Cold War', and an awareness of its general nature, along with an appreciation of some of the differences amongst historians about the nature of the Cold War and even its timescale. You should also have a general understanding of how, from 1943, growing tensions finally resulted in the start of the Cold War. This will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters. You should also be able to understand the main features of the Cold War, and how they manifested themselves in various aspects and crises of 20th-century history.

## End of chapter activities

- 1 Compile tables to illustrate the relative strengths of the two sides at different periods of the Cold War.
- 2 Produce a chart briefly summarising the eight theories about the essential nature of the Cold War. Then try to find the names of specific historians associated with each theory.
- 3 Find out about the main similarities and differences between the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Stalin concerning the state under communism.
- 4 Research and make some brief notes on the ideals behind, and the structure of, the United Nations (UN).
- 5 Draw a timeline to show all the main developments in nuclear weapons between 1945 and 1991.
- 6 Carry out your own research on the UN during the Cold War. Then make some brief notes on the following crises:
  - the Korean War, 1950–53
  - the Suez Crisis, 1956
  - Hungary, 1956
  - the Middle East, 1967–82
  - Africa in the 1970s and 1980s.

### Historical debate:

Read **Source E** in 2.3, Communism and capitalism – similarities and differences, again. Moshe Lewin raises several issues about the writing of history during the Cold War. Try to find more details about the particular controversy he mentions. Does this mean any objective historical writing is impossible while the events of a particular period are still taking place?

## Paper 1 exam practice

### Question

What message is suggested by **Source A** about the commitment to democracy in both the USSR and the West in the years after the death of Stalin in 1953? [2 marks]

### Skill

Comprehension of a source

#### SOURCE A

The new version of an extensive criminal code, and the strengthening of legal institutions [in the Soviet Union after 1953] afforded a marked contrast with the past, even if the overall framework remained undemocratic. ...

A realistic approach, which does not shy away from unpalatable facts, is bound to admit that democracies which achieve the status of great powers do not always respect rights and are not always very democratic. ... Historical realities do not necessarily correspond to ideals or propaganda claims. The West knows perfectly well whose human rights are to be promoted and whose can be neglected or even curtailed. Ardour for democratic freedoms burns or dims according to global strategic considerations.

Lewin, M. 2005. *The Soviet Century*. London, UK. Verso. pp. 200–201.

# 2

## Theory of knowledge

### Science and society:

Some scientists claim that they simply discover and explain things, and that science has no moral role to play in society. Any bad uses that result from their discoveries are the fault of society as a whole. Given what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, should scientists have kept the discovery of how to split the atom and create nuclear weapons secret from politicians?

## Examiner's tips

Comprehension questions are the most straightforward questions you will face in Paper 1. They simply require you to understand a source *and* extract two or three relevant points that relate to the particular question.

As only 2 marks are available for this question, make sure you don't waste valuable exam time that should be spent on the higher-scoring questions by writing a long answer here. All that's needed are a couple of short sentences, giving the necessary information to show you have understood the message of the source. Basically, try to give one piece of information for each of the marks available for the question.

## Common mistakes

When asked to show your comprehension/understanding of a particular source, make sure you don't comment on the *wrong* source! Mistakes like this are made every year. Remember, every mark is important for your final grade.

## Simplified mark scheme

For each item of relevant/correct information identified, award 1 mark – up to a maximum of 2 marks.

## Student answer

*Source A shows that, although the legal changes made in the Soviet Union after 1953 were an improvement on what had existed before, the overall set-up in the USSR was still basically undemocratic.*

## Examiner's comments

The candidate has selected **one** relevant and explicit piece of information from the source and has clearly understood the point being made in relation to democracy in the Soviet Union. This is enough to gain 1 mark.

However, as no point/information relating to the West's record on democracy has been identified, this candidate fails to gain the other mark available.

## Activity

Look again at **Source A** and the student answer. Now try to identify *one* other piece of information from the source, and make an overall comment about the source's message. This will allow you to obtain the other mark available for this question.

## Summary activities

- 1 Copy the spider diagram below and, using the information from this chapter and any other materials available, make brief notes under the relevant headings. For the different theories about the nature of the Cold War, try to mention specific historians.



- 2 Make your own copy of the table shown below, leaving plenty of space for each leader. Then, as you work through Chapters 3-7, begin to fill it in by adding details of the roles of these leaders in specific Cold War crises (under the relevant region column). While you are encouraged to do this for all of the twenty leaders listed, the eight most important leaders (as listed in the IB specification) are highlighted in bold, so make sure you pay particular attention to these eight.

**Table 2.1:** Cold War leaders and crises in the four regions

	<b>AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST</b>	<b>THE AMERICAS</b>	<b>ASIA AND OCEANIA</b>	<b>EUROPE</b>
TRUMAN				
STALIN				
EISENHOWER				
MAO				
<b>KIM IL SUNG</b>				
<b>KHRUSHCHEV</b>				
NAGY				
KENNEDY				
HO CHI MINH				
ULBRICHT				
CASTRO				
BREZHNEV				
JOHNSON				
DUBCEK				

*continued*

	AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST	THE AMERICAS	ASIA AND OCEANIA	EUROPE
NIXON				
FORD				
CARTER				
REAGAN				
GORBACHEV				
BUSH (Sn)				

- 3 You are also encouraged to use any other relevant sources which are available to you. Once completed, this table will help you focus specifically on the relative importance of the roles of different leaders in the origins and development of the Cold War, and in the various Cold War crises in different regions of the world.

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## Paper 2 practice questions

- 1 Evaluate the effects of the Cold War on the work of the United Nations (UN).
- 2 Compare and contrast the role of differing ideologies on the development of the Cold War?
- 3 Examine the impact of the Cold War on two developing countries, each chosen from a different region.
- 4 'The Cold War had little impact on the lives of ordinary people in the Western bloc.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 5 Evaluate the role of the nuclear arms race in the origin and development of the Cold War.

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## Further reading

Try reading the relevant chapters/sections of the following books:

Gaddis, John Lewis. 1972. *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941– 1947*. Columbia, USA. Columbia University Press.

Crockatt, Richard. 1995. *The Fifty Years War*. London, UK. Routledge.

MacQueen, Norrie. 1999. *The United Nations Since 1945: Peacekeeping and the Cold War*. London, UK. Longman.

Walker, Martin. 1994. *The Cold War*. London, UK. Fourth Estate.

Whittaker, David J. 1997. *United Nations in the Contemporary World*. London, UK. Routledge.

Young, John W. and Kent, John. 2004. *International Relations Since 1945: a Global History*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press.