

# Division and realignment in Europe, 1945-

1992 | Sample answer

## How did the Cold War develop, 1945-92? (2013)

The cold war was basically a war of ideologies between the two superpowers- America and Russia. It was capitalism and communism and how these two systems clashed and competed against each other. For example in the development of the nuclear arms programmes, i.e atomic bombs and the space race. The cold war also involved the sovietisation of Eastern Europe (Churchill referred to it as the “iron curtain”) and the ability of successive Russian leaders to enforce control of satellite states much to the annoyance of Western allies who seemed powerless and indifferent to intervene.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, we saw two separate systems develop in the west and east of Europe. In the west, the ‘Truman Doctrine’ was introduced in March 1947 by US President Truman. It included the US attempt to try and take steps to stop the spread of communism in Europe. This policy became known as containment. The US provided \$400 million to Greece and Turkey who were struggling to keep communism out of their country. In June 1947 the US Secretary of State George Marshall announced an aid package for Europe, its main motive is that poverty in Europe would only aid communist support. In reaction to this Stalin set up ‘Comecon’, its intent was to bring economies of Eastern Europe under Soviet control or direct their development in a way that would assist the Russian economy.

Following the threat of another world war after the Berlin Blockade incident, a military alliance called ‘NATO’ was established in April 1949. The US, Canada and 10 European countries signed it. The US provided three-quarters of the cost of military power and controlled the nuclear

weapons inside the alliance. The Soviet Union responded in 1955 with the Warsaw Pact. The Soviet Union and three-quarters 7 Eastern Europe countries were its members. Military alliances in the past had created many issues, i.e WW1 and WW2 so in relation to this, the countries were lapsing into similar systems.

Key crises that affected the stability of the relations between the two superpowers was the Berlin Blockade 1948 and the Berlin Wall in 1961. In 1948, France, the US and Britain united their zones in Germany to form one, it was known as Trizonia. They introduced a new currency as Trizonia. They introduced a new currency called Deutschmark on June 23rd. The next day Stalin closed all road, rail and canal access to Western zones in Berlin. Allies saw this as an attempt to push them out of Berlin, so they ordered an airlift (operation vittles), delivering over 4,000 tons of food and fuel every 90 seconds each day. On 12th May 1949, Stalin called off the Blockade. This event can be seen as a huge propaganda victory for the West and for the policy of containment. In August 1961 the Berlin wall was built. Its objectives were to hinder the mass flow of East Germans leaving for the West (2.8 million left since 1949). It was ordered by Walter Ulbricht, Prime Minister of East Germany but had the full backing of Khrushchev. The West did not intervene at the time but Kennedy did publicly condemn it in 1963 in West Berlin, with one of the most famous anti-communist speeches, "Ich Bin Ein Berliner".

Another event which sparked tensions between the two superpowers was the Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962. An American spy plane took photographs of Russian missile sites in Cuba. Khrushchev refused to remove the missile site and in response, Kennedy ordered a naval blockade of Cuba and Khrushchev sent missile ships to face it. This incident was the closest thing to come to WW3. In the end, Khrushchev backed down and ordered his ships home. As a result, in June 1963 a direct phone line was set up between Washington and Moscow. A Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed which banned the testing of nuclear weapons in outer space or under the sea.

In Hungary 1956, we saw an uprising against their communist government. It was provoked after several changes of their leaders. The Hungarians were distressed with how their country was being run and on 22 October a huge meeting of students and workers took place at a university. The following day the demonstrators marched through Budapest, attracting thousands of followers on the way. The uprising lasted until November 11th, Nagy the representative of the movement was primarily reliant on the support of the West, particularly US President Eisenhower's. The hope for their support was further fuelled when the US Secretary of State praised the Hungarians for challenging the Red Army. Khrushchev met with the US ambassador and told him he would invade, however, Eisenhower responded by saying that it was an internal matter for the Eastern Bloc. Truly the Americans had no intention of provoking a military confrontation with the Soviet Union over a state that was already communist for the main reason for their policy of containment.

In Poland, September 1980 Lech Walesa formed a union called Solidarnosc. The union had so much support initially that the government was afraid to tackle them, 80% of the workforce were members. In 1981 the movement was banned, their leader Walesa was arrested and martial law was declared by Prime Minister Jaruzelski. However, come 1983 martial law was lifted and Walesa was released. The greatest difference with this movement was that it was completely supported by the US and the West of Europe. This was in total contrast to the 1956 Hungarian Uprising and 1968 Prague Spring. Solidarity received massive amounts of money (much from the CIA and M16) which was funnelled through organisations such as Western trade unions and the Catholic church. The US even imposed severe economic sanctions when martial law was introduced in Poland.

In Eastern Europe, during the late 1980s early 1990s, the world saw the collapse of communism. By 1991 all of the satellite states had broken away from Moscow. Next was the Baltic states, in March 1990 Lithuania declared its independence and in August Estonia and Latvia did the same. In April 1991 another state within the Soviet Union, Georgia declared its independence.

Gorbachev called an emergency meeting of the states, at the meeting it was agreed that a new union would be formed in which Moscow would not control. However, this proved too much for some conservatives in Moscow government and Gorbachev was placed under house arrest in Ukraine, while a coup d'état took place in Moscow. Boris Yeltsin suppressed it and in doing so became the real hero in Russia. Yeltsin soon after, without consulting Gorbachev, met with leaders of Belarus and Ukraine signing a new Commonwealth of independent states. This ended communism, and on December 25th 1991 the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

Overall there was a lot of tension between the Allies and the Russians after the war. Both sides fearing their different ideologies spreading. The Western powers were unwilling to intervene in Eastern Europe before the 1980s and even after that, intervention was covert. The two superpowers were both apprehensive about started another world war, it took nearly 45 years to actually have successful peace talks. When the fall of communism happened in the late 1980s, the cold war was no more.