**Learning Objective:**

Explain the continuities and changes in Cold War policies from 1945 to 1980.

**Thematic Focus:**

*Diplomatic, economic, cultural, and military interactions between empires, nations, and peoples shape the development of America and America’s increasingly important role in the world.*

1. United States policymakers engaged in a cold war with the authoritarian Soviet Union, seeking to limit the growth of Communist military power and ideological influence, create a free-market global economy, and build an international security system.
2. As postwar tensions dissolved the wartime alliance between Western democracies and the Soviet Union, the United States developed a foreign policy based on collective security, international aid, and economic institutions that bolstered non- Communist nations.
   1. Negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union broke down at the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences near the end of World War II. The war’s end exposed the ideological differences of these two former allies.
   2. The major international issue following WWII involved the shape of the new world and what new political alliances would be formed. This question would become the major source of contention between the world’s two leading political-economic systems, capitalism and communism. This power struggle between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was called the “cold war,” because there was no actual combat as there is in a “hot war.”
   3. By the end of 1945, the Soviet Union controlled most of Eastern Europe, Mongolia, Manchuria, North Korea, and several islands. By 1947 it took over Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. These “satellite states” remained under the influence and control of the Soviet Union.
   4. Winston Churchill stated that an “iron curtain” had been spread across Europe separating the democratic states from the authoritarian communist states.
   5. Ten Western European nations joined with the United States and Canada to form a defensive military alliance called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Soviet Union and its communist satellite nations were collectively known as the Warsaw Pact. The NATO alliance marked a decisive break from America’s tradition of isolationism to a policy of collective security.
3. Concerned by expansionist Communist ideology and Soviet repression, the United States sought to contain communism through a variety of measures, including major military engagements in Korea and Vietnam.
   1. Overview
      1. Containment was a foreign policy designed to contain or block Soviet expansion. It was based on the belief that the USSR would not take risks and would back down if faced with determined opposition.
      2. Containment was the primary U.S. foreign policy from the announcement of the Truman Doctrine in 1947 to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1987.
      3. George Kennan was an American diplomat and specialist on the USSR. Kennan wrote an influential article known as the Long Telegram, which advocated that the U.S. focus its foreign policy on containing the spread of Soviet influence.
   2. Marshall Plan
      1. As postwar tensions dissolved the wartime alliance between Western democracies and the Soviet Union, the United States developed a foreign policy based on collective security, international aid, and economic institutions that bolstered non-Communist nations.
      2. World War II left Western Europe devastated and vulnerable to Soviet influence.
      3. The Marshall Plan was a program of economic aid designed to promote the recovery of war-torn Europe while also preventing the spread of communist influence.
      4. The Marshall Plan provided $12 billion in aid to help Europe rebuild its cities and economy. In return for that money, countries were expected to become American allies. Although money was offered in Eastern Europe, no countries in the Soviet sphere participated in the program.
      5. The Marshall Plan was an integral part of Truman’s policy of containment.
      6. Stalin viewed the Marshall Plan as further evidence of U.S. imperialism.
   3. Berlin Airlift
      1. The U.S., France, and UK decided to merge their sectors of Germany into one country and bring it into the Western economy, drawing the ire of the USSR.
      2. Fearing a resurgent Germany, the USSR cut off Western land access to West Berlin, located deep within the Soviet zone.
      3. President Truman ordered a massive airlift of food, fuel, and other supplies to the beleaguered citizens of West Berlin.
      4. The Berlin Airlift marked a crucial and successful test of containment, as the U.S. refused to allow the USSR to take control of West Berlin.
   4. Truman Doctrine
      1. In 1947, Communist insurgents threatened to take over both Greece and Turkey, and since the UK was weakened from WWII, it could no longer prop up these nations.
      2. President Harry S. Truman was determined to block the expansion of Soviet influence into Greece and Turkey.
      3. In March 1947, Truman asked Congress for $400 million in economic aid for Greece and Turkey.
      4. Truman justified the aid to Greece and Turkey by declaring that the United States would support “free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugations by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” This sweeping pledge became known as the Truman Doctrine.
   5. China
      1. Between 1945 and 1948, the United States gave over $2 billion in aid to the Nationalist Chinese under Chiang Kai-shek and sent George Marshall to settle the conflict between the Nationalists and Chinese Communists.
      2. Led by Mao Zedong, the Chinese Communists defeated the Chinese Nationalists and declared the People’s Republic of China both an independent and a communist nation. The Nationalists retreated to Taiwan.
      3. The collapse of Nationalist China was viewed as a devastating defeat for America and its Cold War allies.
      4. After the “fall of China,” the United States refused to recognize the new government in Beijing as anti-communist hysteria began to take hold in America. The U.S. interpreted the Chinese revolution as part of a menacing communist monolith.
   6. Korean War
      1. The Korean War began when North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950. President Truman took advantage of a temporary Soviet absence from the United Nations Security Council to obtain a unanimous condemnation of North Korea as an aggressor. The Korean War thus marked the first collective military action by the United Nations. The Korean War was fought under UN auspices, in contrast to Vietnam, where the U.S. did not have UN backing.
      2. Concerned by expansionist Communist ideology and Soviet repression, the United States sought to contain communism through a variety of measures, including a major military engagement in Korea. The Korean War was a limited war that extended the containment policy to Asia. Stung by the criticism that the Democratic Party had “lost” China, Truman was determined to defend South Korea. The Chinese entered the war when the UN forces approached the strategic Yalu River.
      3. General Douglas MacArthur disagreed with President Truman’s policy of fighting a limited war. MacArthur publicly favored a blockade of the Chinese coast and bombardment of Chinese bases. Truman responded by relieving the insubordinate MacArthur of his command.
      4. The combatants signed an armistice in July 1953. The armistice set the border between North and South Korea near the 38th parallel at approximately the pre-war boundary.
4. The Cold War fluctuated between periods of direct and indirect military confrontation and periods of mutual coexistence (or détente).
   1. Massive Retaliation
      1. The Soviet Union successfully tested its first atomic bomb in 1949.
      2. Massive retaliation, also known as brinksmanship, was a military doctrine association with Dwight Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. Dulles was opposed to simply containing the USSR and wanted to liberate the countries under Soviet control.
      3. In the event of an attack by the Soviet Union or any other hostile power, the U.S. would retaliate with massive force, including nuclear weapons.
      4. The threat of massive retaliation was designed to deter an enemy from launching an initial attack by emphasizing nuclear deterrents instead of the conventional use of the armed forces.
      5. The U.S. exploded its first hydrogen bomb in November 1952 while the Soviets followed with theirs in August 1953.
   2. Death of Stalin
      1. President Eisenhower hoped that the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 might improve American-Soviet relations. Initially, the new Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev offered hope.
      2. Khrushchev denounced Stalin’s totalitarianism and called for “peaceful coexistence” among nations with different economic philosophies.
   3. Hungarian Revolt
      1. Some Soviet satellite states took Khrushchev’s pronouncements as signs of weakness, and rebellions took place in Poland and Hungary.
      2. When the USSR crushed the uprisings, U.S.-Soviet relations returned to where they were in the Stalin era.
   4. *Sputnik*
      1. Launched by the Soviet Union in 1957, *Sputnik* was the first Earth-orbiting satellite.
      2. *Sputnik* stunned America, prompting President Dwight Eisenhower to establish NASA.
      3. *Sputnik* made education an issue of national security. Congress responded to the launch by passing the National Defense Education Act. The legislation significantly expanded federal aid to education by funding programs in mathematics, foreign languages, and the sciences.
   5. U-2 Incident
      1. In May 1960, the Soviet Union shot down an American U-2 spy plane.
      2. Eisenhower ultimately took responsibility for the spy plane and Khrushchev angrily called off a summit conference which was to take place a few days later.
   6. Berlin Wall
      1. After a confrontation in Berlin in 1961, President John Kennedy called up reserve and National Guard units and asked for an increase in defense funds.
      2. Soviet Premier Khrushchev responded by closing the border between East and West Berlin and ordering the erection of the Berlin Wall.
   7. Détente
      1. President Nixon and Henry Kissinger believed that the U.S. needed a new and more flexible foreign policy. Détente called for a relaxation of tensions between the U.S. and the communist world.
      2. In late 1971, Nixon stunned the nation and the world by announcing that he intended to visit China, to “normalize relations between the two countries.” Nixon visited Beijing in February 1972. His trip to China marked a dramatic example of détente.
      3. Just three months after becoming the first American president to visit China, Nixon became the first president to visit Moscow. Nixon’s visit led to a series of agreements that reduced tensions between the United States and the USSR. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) led to the SALT I Treaty, which limited the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched missiles each superpower could have in its arsenal. Another series of agreements expanded trade between the two superpowers.
      4. President Carter attempted to continue the Nixon-Ford policy of détente with China and the Soviet Union. The U.S. and Soviet Union signed the SALT II Treaty in 1979, which limited the size of each superpower’s nuclear delivery system. In December 1979, Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan, an aggressive action that ended a decade of improving U.S.-Soviet relations. Carter reacted by placing an embargo on grain exports and the sale of technology to the U.S.S.R. and boycotting the 1980 Olympics held in Moscow.