11 The Cold War

WILLIAM MALEY

KEY DATES

5 March 1946 In a speech at Fulton, Missouri, Churchill refers to an 'iron curtain' dividing Europe

24 June 1948 Stalin cuts off rail and road links with Berlin, thus beginning the 318-day Berlin Blockade

25 June 1950 Outbreak of the Korean War

5 March 1953 Death of Stalin

25 February 1956 In his 'Secret Speech', Khrushchev condemns Stalinist repression

23 October – 4 November 1956 Uprising in Hungary against the Soviet-installed communist government

13 August 1961 Construction of the Berlin Wall begins

16–28 October 1962 The Cuban missile crisis marks the height of Cold War tension

20 August 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia

17 November 1969 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the United States and the Soviet Union begin in Helsinki

27 December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

11 March 1985 Selection of Mikhail S. Gorbachev as Communist Party general secretary

9 November 1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall

Opposite An East German soldier looks through a hole in the Berlin Wall, November 1989.

Between the end of World War II in Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the dominant pole of tension in international relations was between the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its satellites. This was by no means the only serious strategic and political fault-line during this period, but it carried by far the greatest risk of a strategic nuclear exchange that could have wrecked a large portion of the earth's surface. The Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 represented the high point of this tension. Yet in one obvious sense, the expression 'Cold War' is somewhat misleading. While direct military confrontation between the United States and the USSR was avoided, the Cold War witnessed a large number of peripheral conflicts between forces that were either allied to or inspired by the Cold War principals. The Korean, Vietnam and Afghanistan wars, the Hungarian Revolution, and conflicts in Third World theatres of confrontation such as Angola cost vast numbers of lives. Furthermore, fear of communist penetration provided a rationale for the use of coercion against perceived internal enemies in countries as diverse as Chile and Indonesia.

ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

When Nazi Germany invaded the USSR early in World War II, the Soviet Union was driven into an immediate relationship with the United Kingdom. The British prime minister, Winston Churchill, had previously been an active supporter of efforts to destroy the Bolshevik regime that had come to power in Russia in October 1917, but the exigencies of the time dictated a common effort to overthrow the Nazi regime, a struggle that became truly global following Germany's declaration of war against the United States after Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. Towards the end of the war the three main Allied war leaders – Churchill himself, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and US President Franklin D. Roosevelt – met face-to-face in Yalta in the Crimea in February 1945. Roosevelt was dying of congestive heart failure, which claimed his life only two months later, but Churchill and Stalin battled vigorously in the working sessions over the distribution of influence in postwar Europe.

The central problem was that the ultimate shape of Europe would largely be determined not by leadership negotiations, but by the specific geographical areas that the different parties controlled at the moment when the Nazis were defeated. By the time of Yalta, the Nazi regime was close to its death throes, and the huge Soviet assault from the east that was launched in early 1945 ensured that much of Eastern Europe – including Poland, in defence of which the British had actually gone to war with Germany in 1939 – was Soviet-dominated. It was this that led to

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Winston Churchill, Fulton, Missouri, 5 March 1946

Churchill's famous speech given in March 1946, at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, in which he warned that an 'iron curtain' had descended across the continent of Europe.

However, if it is relatively easy to identify a moment at which a sense of looming confrontation set in, it is markedly more complex to determine why such a confrontation occurred at such a time. Explanations in terms of ideology, very popular in some Western circles during the Cold War, asserted that the USSR was driven by the logic of Marxism-Leninism to a confrontational world view. Other explanations saw the Cold War as rooted in a Soviet sense of insecurity, driving it to establish a glacis of subordinated states in Eastern Europe that would protect it against future threats. Others cited opportunism, maintaining that the USSR – through organizations such as the Comintern, the international organization of the Communist Party, which had existed from 1919 to 1943 – had long supported communists from Eastern Europe, and in 1945 seized the chance to put them in positions of power.

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Above Children eagerly await a plane bringing supplies into blockaded West Berlin, 1948.

Opposite Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin meet in Yalta, Crimea, to determine spheres of influence in postwar Europe, February 1945.

PHASES OF THE COLD WAR

The initial phase of the Cold War ran from Churchill's Fulton speech in 1946 to the death of Stalin in 1953. This was marked by a number of dramatic developments: the Soviet consolidation of control in Eastern Europe; the Berlin Blockade – the Soviet attempt in 1948–49 to force the Western powers out of West Berlin by preventing the movement of supplies on the ground; the Soviet test of a nuclear device in 1949 (see box on p. 212); the occupation of Beijing, led by Chinese communists under Mao Zedong, and the establishment in 1949 of the People's Republic of China; and the Korean War. However, it also witnessed the first major split in the communist world, namely the rift between the Soviet leadership and Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito, in whose capital of Belgrade the new Communist Information Bureau ('Cominform') had been established in 1948.

A second phase lasted from 1953 to 1962, running from the death of Stalin to the Cuban missile crisis. This period on the one hand was marked by a certain optimism, since Stalin's successor as first secretary of the Presidium of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, set out a doctrine of 'peaceful coexistence' between capitalist and socialist systems, and even paid a visit to the United States. On the other hand, it witnessed a number of severe upheavals: the 1953 uprising in East Berlin; the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956; the slow-burning Berlin crisis that culminated in the building of the Berlin Wall; the shooting down of a US U-2 surveillance aircraft over the USSR in 1960; and of course the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the missile crisis itself.

The 1962 missile crisis inaugurated a third phase of the Cold War that lasted until the end of the 1960s, marked by the replacement of Khrushchev in a 'palace coup' in October 1964; domestic toughening in the USSR, as demonstrated by the trial of the writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuly Daniel in 1966; a significant Soviet arms build-up under the new leadership headed by Leonid Brezhnev; and, perhaps most dramatically, the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 by the Soviet Union and by Eastern European forces it controlled in order to crush a flowering of unorthodox opinion that had gone by the name of the 'Prague Spring'. Yet this was also a period in which the United States and other Western countries were increasingly preoccupied by events seemingly more remote from the immediate US–Soviet relationship, such as the Vietnam War and the Six-Day War in the Middle East in June 1967 (see Chapter 12), while the Soviet Union was faced with clashes on the border with China, and the latter was preoccupied with the massive disruptions caused by the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution'.

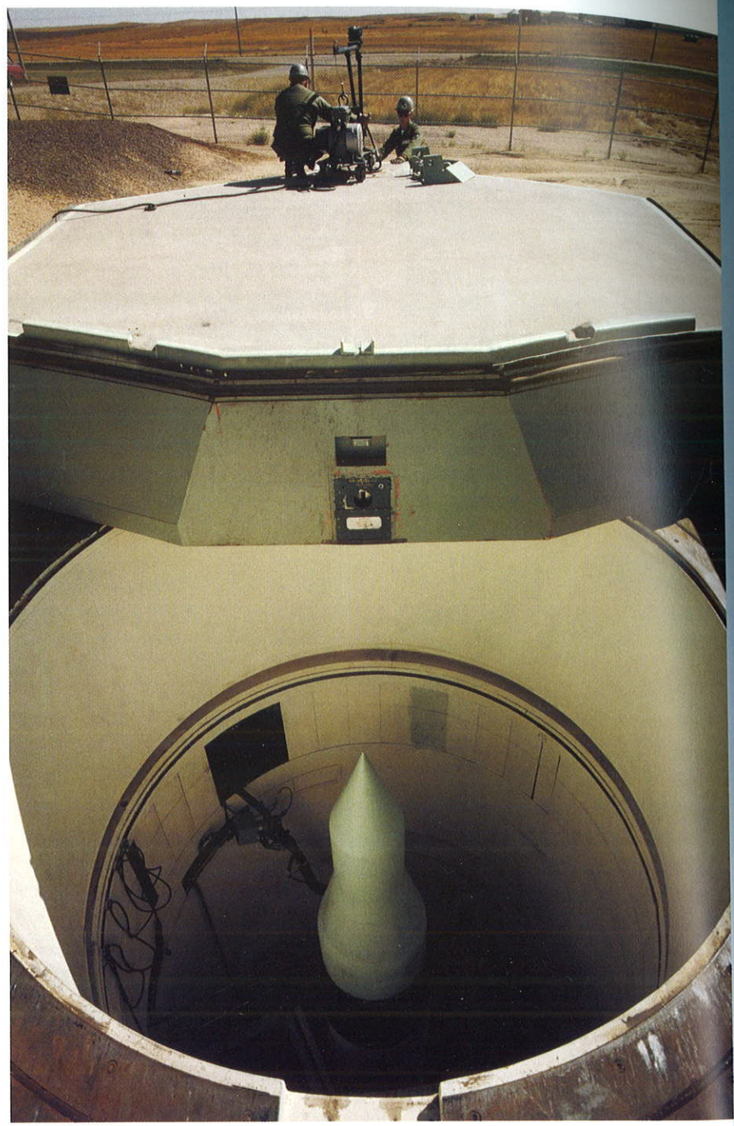
The fourth phase of the Cold War, classically associated with the diplomacy of US President Richard M. Nixon (in office 1969–74) and his close adviser Henry Kissinger, secretary of state from 1973 to 1977, as well as with the Ford administration and the early years of the Carter presidency, was dominated by the concept of détente ('relaxation'). This witnessed the successful negotiation of a major Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) in 1972. Nevertheless, it also witnessed the victory of communist forces in the Vietnam War, as well as the bloody advent of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia that resulted in genocidal slaughter of perceived 'enemies' within the Cambodian population.

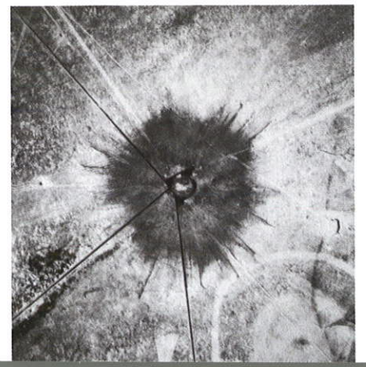
The fifth phase of the Cold War was inaugurated by the Soviet invasion of

Nuclear Weapons

Nuclear weapons create vast explosive force through the fission of atoms in a chain reaction. The idea of a nuclear weapon arose from fundamental developments in theoretical and experimental physics in the 1930s, and the actual development of a US atomic bomb, inspired by the fear that Nazi Germany might be pursuing such a capability, was the task of the so-called 'Manhattan Project', on which physicists such as Enrico Fermi, Leo Szilard, Ernest O. Lawrence, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Hans Bethe and Richard Feynman worked under the military leadership of Brigadier General Leslie R. Groves. The first atomic bomb was tested in New Mexico on 16 July 1945, at a site known as Jornada del Muerto ('Journey of Death'), producing a yield equivalent to 18,600 tons of the conventional explosive TNT; atomic bombs subsequently destroyed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August.

The Soviet Union, benefiting from information conveyed by its agent Klaus Fuchs, tested a nuclear weapon in 1949, and both the United States and the USSR proceeded to develop ever more destructive thermonuclear weapons. The development of these capacities, and then of intercontinental ballistic missiles as means of delivery, was seen by some analysts as enabling each side to deter the other from mounting an attack on its core interests.





Above In 1960, the US Air Force began constructing 1,000 underground sites for the Minuteman nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile. They would remain on alert for nearly thirty years.

Left Aerial view of the crater left by the first test explosion of a nuclear weapon, Alamogordo, New Mexico, 16 July 1945.

A young woman, accompanied by her partner, stands precariously near the top of the Berlin Wall to talk to her mother on the East Berlin side, 1961.

Afghanistan in December 1979 and lasted until Gorbachev became general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985. This was a period of high tension, marked not only by the chill in relations that the invasion of Afghanistan produced, but also by the collapse of meaningful strategic arms control negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union, and by a near-catastrophic crisis following the latter's shooting down on 1 September 1983 of a Korean Airlines passenger aircraft, with 269 people on board, that had strayed into Soviet airspace in the far east of the country.

The final phase of the Cold War followed Gorbachev's elevation, and was marked by a public de-ideologization of Soviet foreign policy in favour of a doctrine of 'new thinking' (*novoe myshlenie*) that emphasized the imperative of avoiding nuclear confrontation for the sake of the common interests of humankind. This culminated in the breaching of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe in 1989. Two years later the Soviet Union had disintegrated.

THE COLD WAR AND SOVIET–AMERICAN RELATIONS

The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two strongest powers at the end of World War II, but they varied enormously in their specific attributes. The United States, which had a surprisingly small army when the war in Europe began, emerged afterwards as the sole nuclear power, in a world in which deterrence was poised to displace classic notions of power-balancing as the key organizing principle of strategic relations. It had also largely escaped the direct ravages of the war, with

A German poster promoting the 'European Recovery Program', otherwise known as the Marshall Plan, c. 1948.

only Hawaii and the Aleutian Islands experiencing direct attack. The USSR, by contrast, suffered enormous direct damage as a result of the German invasion, with casualties in the many millions. Nonetheless, at the end of the war it was the largest land power that the world had ever seen, and in a dominant position in a range of Eastern European states. Furthermore, while the US nuclear monopoly might have appeared to give it the capacity to dictate the terms of postwar international relations, this was not really the case. On the one hand, any threat to use nuclear weapons unilaterally would have been at odds with the provisions of the new Charter of the United Nations, which the United States had actively supported and which prohibited the threat or use of force in any but strictly limited circumstances. On the other hand, the Soviet Union had a convenient hostage in the form of the French, British and American sectors of the divided city of Berlin, which constituted an isolated enclave deep within Soviet-controlled territory.

The broad US posture towards the Soviet Union came to be known as 'containment', given the physical difficulties of 'rolling back' Soviet control of Eastern Europe. This had been traced out in what came to be known as the Truman Doctrine, which President Truman (in office 1945–53) outlined in an address to the US Congress on 12 March 1947. While in an immediate sense Truman's address was concerned with aid to beleaguered Greece and to Turkey, the principles underpinning it, namely the need to bolster states that could be vulnerable to communist penetration, were of broader import, and shaped Washington's approach for nearly two decades. Just months later, it was reinforced by Secretary of State George Marshall's famous promotion of a 'European Recovery Program' that came to be known universally as the Marshall Plan.

The adoption of a policy of containment was not without its costs for Truman and his Democratic Party colleagues, especially Dean Acheson, secretary of state from 1949 to 1953. Republican hardliners, coalescing around a populist junior senator from Wisconsin, Joseph R. McCarthy, accused the administration of having 'lost China', and McCarthy made frenzied charges that the upper echelons of the State Department had been penetrated by Soviet agents. McCarthy caused enormous grief to Truman, and it was only when he foolishly continued his campaign of smears following the inauguration of the Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953 that the Senate finally censured him. There was an interesting parallel on the Soviet side: Stalin in his last years was increasingly gripped by paranoia, reputedly remarking 'I trust no one, not even myself.' This led to great fear of further purges on the eve of his death, and even to lingering suspicions as to whether he had died of natural causes.

The Truman Doctrine proved highly durable, but it was given a new twist in 1969 by President Nixon, who had been Eisenhower's vice-president from 1953 to 1961. Facing significant constraints because of the quagmire the United States confronted in Vietnam, he enunciated what became known as the 'Guam Doctrine' or the 'Nixon Doctrine', which foreshadowed key roles for major US allies as guarantors of regional security with US support. A principal beneficiary was Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, shah of Iran, whose regime became the recipient of substantial US aid. However, the overthrow of the shah in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was to expose the central conceptual flaw of this approach. Superpowers cannot easily or safely engage in outsourcing.

THE COLD WAR IN EUROPE

Europe was the first theatre in which the rivalries of the Cold War were played out. At Yalta the competing claims to authority of the Polish government-in-exile and the communist Lublin Committee were promoted by Churchill and Stalin respectively. The situation on the ground resolved the struggle in favour of the latter. In various territories occupied by Soviet troops, communist groups were able to work their way into positions of power. This was most readily accomplished in the Soviet sector of occupied Germany, which became the German Democratic Republic, but it was agonizingly played out in both Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In the former, the Stalinist leader Mátyás Rákosi employed what he called 'salami tactics' to eliminate his opponents slice by slice, and in Czechoslovakia pre-war figures such as Edvard Beneš and Jan Masaryk were targeted, with Masaryk ultimately dying in very dubious circumstances.

It is hardly surprising that these autocratic (and some might say totalitarian) systems, imposed under Soviet pressure, caused a great deal of suffering for their subject populations. Only months after the death of Stalin, there was an uprising in East Berlin in June 1953 that was crushed with tanks. A far more dramatic development occurred in Hungary in October 1956. In February 1956 Nikita Khrushchev, at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, had delivered a speech entitled 'On the

A protester shot during the Berlin Uprising of 16–17 June 1953 is helped by German police. The Russians had imposed martial law, using tanks and shooting on demonstrators in order to break up the workers' rebellion.

'Today at daybreak Soviet forces started an attack against our capital, with the obvious intention to overthrow the legal democratic Hungarian Government. Our troops are fighting. The Government is in its place. I notify the people of our country and the entire world of this.'

Hungarian prime minister Imre Nagy, 4 November 1956

Cult of Personality and Its Consequences', which denounced in vivid terms some of the excesses of Stalin's rule. This, of course, undermined the position of a whole raft of East European leaders who had been promoted while Stalin was alive, and struck particularly hard at the Hungarian party leadership. The result was a revolutionary uprising against the whole system of state socialism, in which, paradoxically, a long-time communist, Imre Nagy, came to play a leading part. After a certain amount of agonizing within the Soviet leadership, the revolution was brutally suppressed, with thousands of Hungarian refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries and the cardinal archbishop of Esztergom, József Mindszenty, seeking asylum in the US embassy; he remained there for the next fifteen years, a symbol of the way in which the aspirations for freedom in his country had been snuffed out.

Just over a decade later Czechoslovakia found itself in a somewhat similar position, although without a revolutionary situation developing on the ground. In this case a new leader from within the Slovak party organization, Alexander Dubček, sought to articulate a gentler vision of 'socialism with a human face', allowing freer

'All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin. And therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words "Ich bin ein Berliner".'

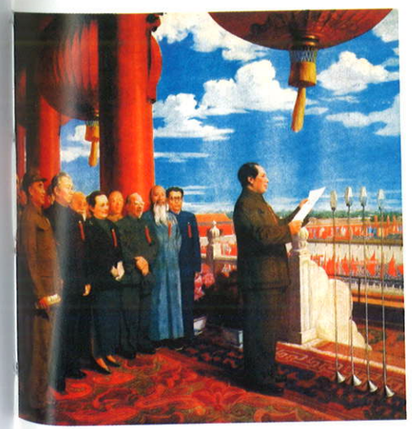
US President John F. Kennedy, Berlin, 11 June 1963

discussion of political issues than the Soviet leadership found appetizing. The result was the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the articulation in Moscow of the so-called 'Brezhnev Doctrine', which maintained that a threat to the gains of socialism in any one socialist state was a threat to the gains of socialism in all, justifying intervention to prevent such an outcome. But as things worked out, this was the last invasion to be defended in such terms: in 1981 in Poland, a country where the domination of the communist Polish United Workers' Party had been challenged by the emergence of the Solidarity free trade union, the threat of a Soviet invasion was averted by a declaration of martial law by the military under General Wojciech Jaruzelski.

Confronted with these events, there was relatively little that the United States and its allies could do; if anything, encouragement to the Hungarian revolutionaries through the broadcasts of the US-funded Radio Free Europe did more harm than good, stimulating the naive belief that Western powers might come directly to their aid. What the United States was able to do was act robustly to defend territories not under Soviet domination. A 1948 Soviet blockade of West Berlin was broken by an airlift of supplies transported through Tempelhof airport, and in June 1963 President John F. Kennedy memorably expressed solidarity with its citizens by standing in the heart of Berlin, near the Wall, and proclaiming 'Ich bin ein Berliner'. In institutional terms, the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 committed the United States to the defence of Western Europe. In parallel, the USSR established the Warsaw Treaty Organization, more commonly known as the Warsaw Pact, to provide a framework for common military action with its East European satellites, an arrangement reinforced with the establishment of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, known more commonly as the CMEA or COMECON.

Opposite Soviet tanks line a street in Prague, 28 August 1968. The invasion was intended to halt the democratic reforms instituted during the 'Prague Spring'.

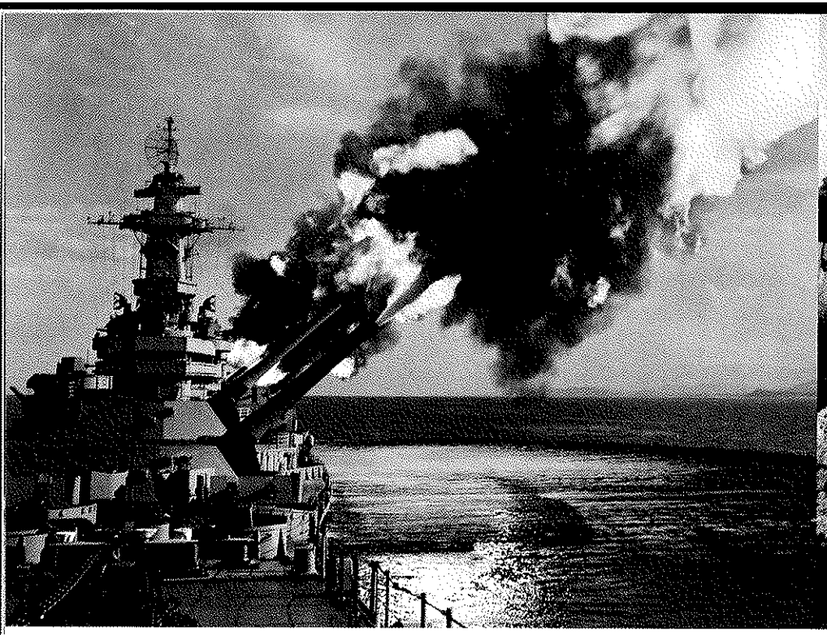
Below Chairman Mao proclaims the birth of the People's Republic of China, 1 October 1949.

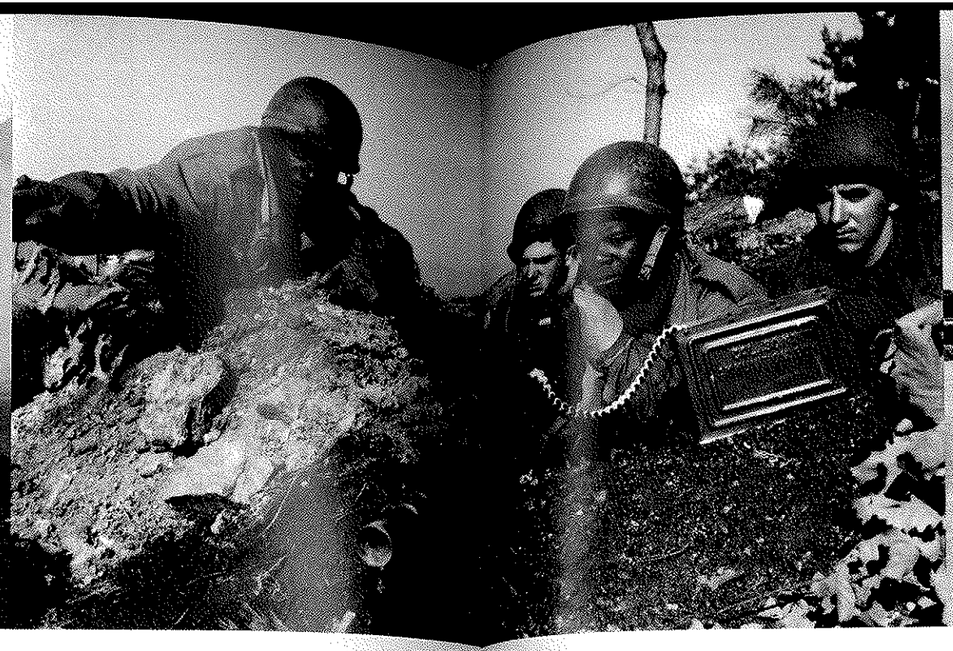


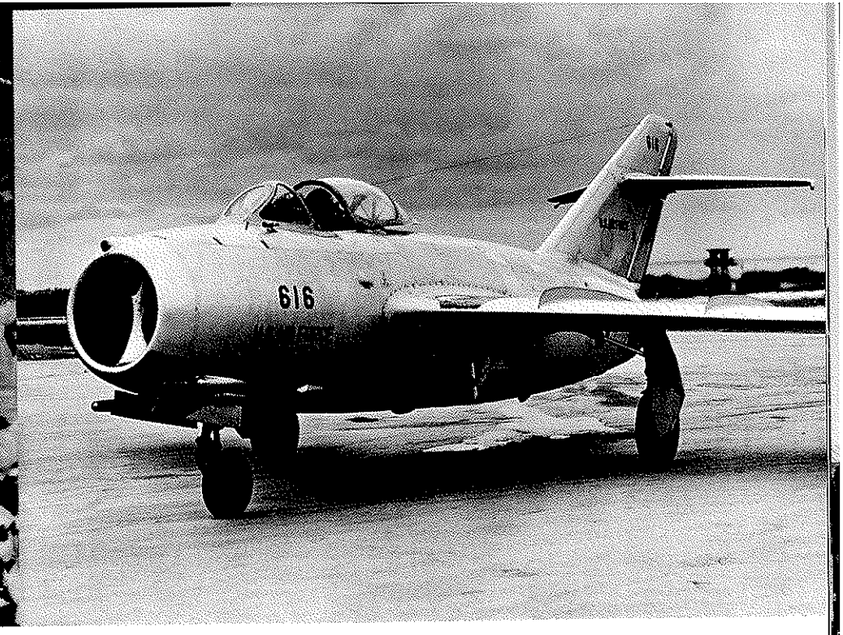
THE COLD WAR IN ASIA

Making sense of the Cold War in Asia is somewhat complicated by the entanglement of ideological and power-political questions with the wider issues of decolonization and nationalism. In China the communist takeover was proclaimed by Mao with the assertion that China had 'stood up'. In Indochina (modern Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) the experience of French domination, decisively terminated by the defeat of French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 (see pp. 202–3), had shaped the orientations of a generation of Vietnamese communists. Even in Korea, a sense of Korean consciousness existed alongside the undoubted desire of Stalin to strike a blow against an American presence in Asia that had been burgeoning ever since the occupation of Japan in 1945.

Nonetheless, it was in Asia, on the Korean peninsula, that the Cold War entered one of its hottest phases. The victory of the communists in China, together with the USSR's successful nuclear test in Kazakhstan on 29 August 1949, created a potentially more rewarding environment for muscle-flexing. The North Korean offensive across the 38th parallel of latitude on 25 June 1950, which triggered the Korean War, did not, however, deliver the swift victory hoped for by Stalin, and the







Above The USS *New Jersey* fires a six-gun salvo of 16-inch (41-cm) shells into enemy troop concentrations near Kaesong, Korea, 1 January 1953.

Above right A weapons squad leader points out a North Korean position to his crew, north of the Chongchon river, Korea, 20 November 1950.

Opposite A Russian-built MiG-15 – delivered by a defecting North Korean pilot – awaits testing by the US Air Force, October 1953. The Korean War was the first conflict in which jet aircraft played a significant role.

United States, backed by a resolution of the UN Security Council passed while Moscow was boycotting the council's deliberations, swung into action to defend South Korea. While initially the forces of the North enjoyed considerable success and occupied Seoul on 28 June, the Inchon landings, brilliantly executed from 15 September by forces under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, led to the North Korean army being driven out of Seoul and back to the north of the Korean peninsula. But when UN forces pursued North Korean forces across the 38th parallel in early October 1950, China entered the war, and new phases of the see-sawing struggle commenced. Seoul fell to communist forces once more in early January 1951, but was recaptured in March. From mid-1951 the conflict was effectively stalemated, which set the scene for truce negotiations. However, a 1953 truce left much unresolved, and the Korean peninsula remains divided to this day.

The sobering experience in Korea was one of the factors that prompted the United States to promote an additional set of global alliances for the containment of communist power. One of these was the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), dating from 1959, which was a successor to the earlier Baghdad Pact (a regional security treaty formed in 1955, involving Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran and Britain). With indirect US assistance it sought to shore up the so-called 'Northern Tier' states of Turkey and Iran, as well as Pakistan to the east. It was formally dissolved in 1979, in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution. Another was the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), established in February 1955 in the wake of a treaty signed in Manila on 8 September 1954. Initially the only South-East Asian members were Thailand and the Philippines. However, with the outbreak of war in Vietnam, first with Viet Cong raids from North Vietnam into South Vietnam from 1957, and from 1960 with the so-called National Liberation Front providing a

'Can you imagine Donald Duck going on a rampage without Walt Disney knowing about it?'

Edward Barrett, US assistant secretary of state, on Soviet involvement in the North Korean attack, June 1950

political framework for communist action, some SEATO member states (although not formally SEATO itself) became more heavily involved – especially as the Johnson administration escalated US involvement following the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident. This saw actual and perceived attacks on a US destroyer by North Vietnamese torpedo boats, and helped justify large-scale American engagement in the conflict.

The Vietnam War became a curse for Democrat President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Republican Richard M. Nixon. Both encountered strong domestic opposition to the price of American participation in the war. Neither had a credible strategy for success – beyond the exceedingly dubious notion of 'Vietnamization', which posited that ramshackle and corrupt South Vietnamese forces would in time be able to stand in for those of the United States and its allies – and the January 1968 'Tet Offensive', which saw even the US embassy in the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon come under attack, further sapped the conviction of the US public that Vietnam was the right theatre in which to be engaged. Fitful peace talks in Paris between 1968 and 1973 finally led to the Paris ceasefire agreement (23 January 1973) signed by Henry Kissinger for the United States and Le Duc Tho for North Vietnam. The terms of the agreement left the North in a strong position, and the fragility of the South – combined with President Nixon's weakened position in 1973–74 because of the Watergate scandal, and the exhaustion of the patience of the US Congress with a messy and divisive war – meant that when the final North Vietnamese thrust to take over all of the South began in 1975, it proved irresistible. Saigon fell on 30 April 1975.

The rationale for the heavier involvement in Vietnam of SEATO member states – which ultimately exposed the limits of SEATO's capacity and led to its dissolution on 30 June 1977 – was what came to be known as the 'Domino Theory', positing that, if South Vietnam were to fall, the remaining non-communist states of South-East Asia could (or would) fall like dominoes, constituting a catastrophic strategic failure to contain communist expansion. The weaknesses of such a deterministic theory were exposed in 1975, when Laos and Cambodia indeed succumbed to communist

Above A US Marine with a Viet Cong suspect, 24 km (15 miles) west of Da Nang air base, Vietnam, 3 August 1965.

Right Locations struck during the communist Tet Offensive in January 1968.

Vietnamese civilians try to scale the walls of the US Embassy in Saigon, hoping to claim refugee status as the North Vietnamese Army advances on the city, 30 April 1975.

rule along with South Vietnam, but states such Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines did not.

Here, one significant complicating factor was the spectacular 1960 Sino-Soviet split. The communist leadership in China had found Khrushchev's post-Stalinist revisionism very difficult to swallow, and ridiculed his 'goulash communism', which sought to ground the legitimacy of socialism in an ability to guarantee basic material prosperity. Domestic developments such as the economic failures of the Great Leap Forward and the leadership crisis that surfaced at the 1959 Lushan Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party also did little to improve the mood of the Chinese. To see differences between Moscow and Beijing flaring into the open was perplexing to many observers, but it gave the Cold War a fundamentally new twist: the idea of a unified world communism made little sense any more, and increasingly the Chinese and the Soviets became competitors for influence, especially in developing states.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE THIRD WORLD

What China termed the 'Third World' was increasingly the venue for competition for influence between Moscow, Washington and Beijing. A sense of distinctive consciousness in developing countries had begun to surface in the 1950s, a decade marked by extensive decolonization in Africa and increased political assertiveness on the part of post-colonial elites. This was reflected in the 1955 Bandung conference in Indonesia, which led directly to the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). This brought together leaders as diverse as Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Yugoslavia's Tito and Fidel Castro of Cuba, who in 1979 was to host a Non-Aligned Summit in Havana. This pointed to one of the peculiarities of the NAM: some of its most prominent members were anything but 'non-aligned'.

It was the overthrow of the Batista regime in Cuba in 1959 and its replacement by a Marxist regime under Castro that set the scene for the political dramas of the following three years. Such a development was extremely unwelcome in Washington: it struck at the very heart of one of the key doctrines of American foreign policy, namely the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, directed against the establishment of European colonial outposts in the Western hemisphere. A Cuba committed to supporting the USSR and enjoying Soviet backing seemed to be just such an outpost. In the early months of the Kennedy administration, in April 1961, this development led to the Bay of Pigs fiasco, in which a US-backed landing by Cuban exiles intent on overthrowing Castro failed disastrously. The exposure of this ill-judged operation severely embarrassed the new president. Even more dramatic, however, was the missile crisis of October 1962, certainly the point of gravest tension in the entire Cold War. Intelligence that the Soviet Union was building missile sites on Cuba from which nuclear-armed missiles could be launched against US targets led President Kennedy to proclaim a 'police action', to be enforced by US naval vessels, directed at preventing missiles from reaching the sites. Vigorous behind-the-scenes diplomacy complemented these public steps, and the crisis was defused when the Soviets

backed down, a decision that left Castro thoroughly infuriated. While the handling of the missile crisis was by no means the only black mark against Khrushchev in the eyes of his colleagues, it was certainly one of the factors that contributed to his removal in 1964, which was accompanied by tart references in the Soviet press to the negative consequences of 'hare-brained schemes'.

Khrushchev's departure did not in any sense put an end to Soviet interest in the Third World. In part, it was required by the threat of expanding Chinese influence, especially in the light of Chinese Marshal Lin Piao's 1965 article 'Long Live the Victory of People's War', which some analysts saw as a blueprint for national liberation movements. However, it was also driven by a sense of opportunity, in the light of grievances of various Third World populations that began to surface in the 1970s. Developments did not follow a linear pattern: in Egypt, for example, President Anwar Sadat in 1972 ordered the withdrawal of Soviet advisers – a mighty setback for Soviet influence in the Arab world. On the other hand, the USSR was able to expand its influence in the Horn of Africa, where the pro-Western regime of Emperor Haile Selassie in Ethiopia was overthrown by a leftist regime under Mengistu Haile Mariam; in southern Africa, where support was given to the MPLA in the aftermath of the 1974 Portuguese Revolution; and later in Central America, where the Sandanista movement, which came to power in Nicaragua in July 1979 after the flight of the dictator Anastasio Somoza, received Soviet support, much to the chagrin of the Reagan administration (1981–89). The US response came partly in the form of support for alternative forces; only rarely did the United States intervene directly, as it did with some success in Grenada in 1983 to prevent the leftist New Jewel Movement from coming to power.

DÉTENTE AND 'COLD WAR TWO'

Despite this rivalry in many parts of the Third World, the 1970s saw better relations between the two superpowers than had hitherto prevailed. The Soviet Union, having completed a huge build-up of its strategic nuclear arsenal in the aftermath of the

Opposite above A women's activist group demonstrates for peace at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962.

Opposite below A Sandinista flees fighting in Leon, Nicaragua. The civil war, fought between the Sandinista government and US-backed Counter-Revolutionaries (Contras) lasted from 1981 to 1989.

Right US President Richard Nixon at a banquet with the Chinese premier Chou En-lai (left) in Shanghai, 27 February 1972. Nixon's visit to China was a significant attempt to establish normal relations between the two countries.

missile crisis, had no reason to feel particularly vulnerable to the United States. The rise of China, indeed, created a certain commonality of interest between Washington and Moscow, and in the early 1970s unconfirmed rumours circulated that the USSR had approached the United States to mount a joint strike against Chinese nuclear facilities (China having tested a nuclear device in 1965) but had been turned down. At the same time the United States had significantly improved its relations with China, most notably through President Nixon's visit in 1972. This in turn sent a positive signal to Moscow: if such an ardently anti-communist figure as Nixon could reach an accommodation with the Chinese leadership, then surely there was scope for better US–Soviet relations as well. Nixon, whose entanglement in the Watergate scandal was to force his resignation in July 1974, was unable to carry this new approach forward, but Kissinger, who remained secretary of state under President Gerald Ford (in office 1974–77), succeeded in doing so.

While 1975 will go down in US history as the year of final defeat in Vietnam, it also represented perhaps the high point of the era of détente. The Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (July 1975) in a sense constituted a post World War II 'peace conference' as well. Its Final Act represented a bargain of sorts between East and West. The boundaries of European states, and more broadly the spheres of influence in Europe, secured acceptance in exchange for Soviet agreement to a range of human rights guarantees, which provided ballast for the small but courageously articulate dissident movement in the USSR that secretly circulated self-published (*samizdat*) texts celebrating the virtues of democracy and the freedom of the individual.

'We have lost the battle for the Afghan people.'

Marshal Sergei Akhromeev, Soviet Army,
13 November 1986

Nevertheless, by the late 1970s some of the enthusiasm about détente had wilted. Despite the achievements of Helsinki, the dissident movement was under increasing pressure, with key figures at risk of incarceration in psychiatric institutions. This was at odds with the explicit emphasis on human rights that President Carter (in office 1977–81) made a centrepiece of his foreign policy. Furthermore, the Soviet deployment of SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missiles in Eastern Europe led to a decision by NATO on 12 December 1979 to deploy cruise and Pershing-II missiles in response. On the same day a small clique within the Soviet leadership decided to invade Afghanistan, which Soviet forces proceeded to do on 27 December 1979. The consequences were to prove momentous.

Afghanistan had experienced a communist coup in April 1978, but the two main communist factions, Khalq ('Masses') and Parcham ('Banner'), were soon at each other's throats, undermining the new regime's position. Pressure in early 1979 from the Afghan capital, Kabul, for the Soviet Union to become more heavily involved were wisely blocked by the chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers, Aleksei Kosygin, but by late 1979 ill health had removed him from the scene, and the party leader, Brezhnev, increasingly infirm and erratic in his decisions, was beside himself at the murder in October 1979 of the Afghan communist Nur Muhammad Taraki, who had been Brezhnev's guest barely a month before. The invasion of Afghanistan was entirely successful in removing the loathed Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin, but it had the effect of turning isolated revolts into a widespread insurgency. It also sent

Opposite above Afghan mujahideen stand on a destroyed Russian helicopter, 18 January 1980.

Opposite below Mujahideen attack Kabul by night, 14 May 1983.

East–West relations into a deathly chill. While with hindsight it is clear that the aim of the Soviet invasion was basically to save a client regime, in the wider world it was open to being interpreted as an expansion of the Brezhnev Doctrine and a manifestation of expansionism in general. As Soviet forces became bogged down in Afghanistan, and as the new Reagan administration, pursuant to the Reagan Doctrine, supported the arming of the Afghan resistance (the mujahideen), the Soviet Union staggered through a series of failing leaders – Brezhnev himself, who died in November 1982; Yury Andropov, former Soviet ambassador to Hungary in 1956 and thereafter head of the Committee for State Security (KGB), who held office from November 1982 until his death in February 1984; and finally the feeble Konstantin Chernenko, who died in March 1985. Failure in Afghanistan dogged their steps.

GORBACHEV, 1989 AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR

With the crushing of the Prague Spring in August 1968, it was clear that, if fundamental change were to come peacefully to the Soviet bloc, it would have to be through the emergence of a Dubček-like leader not in a capital of one of the satellites, but in Moscow itself. This finally happened when Gorbachev rose to the position of general secretary. Born in 1931, he had joined the Communist Party in 1952, while Stalin was still alive, but had his most formative political experiences during the thaw under Khrushchev. He had spent much of his career outside Moscow; it was only in 1978 that he moved to the capital, and only in 1980 that he became a full member of the ruling Politburo. While it took him a little while to buttress his position as general secretary through the promotion of some like-minded associates, he soon managed to put his stamp on policy, labelling the Afghanistan experience a 'bleeding wound', and exploiting the 1986 disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear plant to push for more candour (*glasnost*), as well as for broader economic restructuring (*perestroika*) and for a new foreign policy approach. He found unlikely allies in US presidents Reagan and George Bush senior, and in the British prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

Right US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet general secretary Mikhail Gorbachev meet for the first time, to discuss diplomatic relations and the arms race, Geneva, November 1985.

Opposite Germans from East and West stand on the Berlin Wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate, November 1989.

The two decisive developments that marked the path to the end of the Cold War came in 1989. The first was the completion of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, following the UN-brokered Geneva Accords of April 1988. While this did not solve Afghanistan's grave problems, which were to persist for decades thereafter, it marked a decisive break from a principle once crudely enunciated by Brezhnev to the Czechoslovakian leaders: 'What we have, we hold.' The second was even more dramatic. In November 1989 East Germans visiting Hungary discovered that the reformist Hungarian authorities were prepared to allow them to travel to the West. This made the Berlin Wall redundant, and finally, in scenes that would have been unthinkable even a year earlier, East Berliners were allowed to cross the Wall, and for good measure began to demolish it. Gennady Gerasimov, a prominent Soviet spokesman, proclaimed a new 'Sinatra Doctrine' of peoples and states following their own ways. The effect was to demolish the foundations on which the Eastern bloc stood. Gorbachev lasted only two years more, but he will undoubtedly go down as one of the most decisive figures of the 20th century. Like Samson in the Book of Judges, he pulled down the pillars that held the Temple in place. In doing so, he also brought the Cold War to an end.

'Mr Gorbachev, open the gate!
Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall!'
US President Ronald Reagan, 12 June 1987