

A World Divided

1 Capitalist Block

1.1 The United States. Leader of capitalist world

The **USA** was the leader of this bloc and had two main stages:

■ Between 1945 and 1960 there were many anti-communist measures implemented by the Republican presidents **Harry S. Truman** and **Dwight Eisenhower**. A blacklist was drafted with all those likely communist sympathizers within the **USA**. It is the so-called **McCarthyism** or **Witch-Hunt**.



[Jean-Frédéric.](#)

[Anticommunist literature](#)

[1950s](#) (Dominio público)

■ The Democrat **John Fitzgerald Kennedy** became the president in 1961 and tensions with the eastern bloc were reduced. Moreover, there were mobilizations in favor of civil rights for black people led by **Martin Luther King** against racial segregation. **Civil Rights Act** was finally passed in 1964.

1.2 Western Europe

Some European democracies agreed on the foundation of some common institutions to create a European identity: The British Prime Minister, **Winston Churchill**, suggested in 1946 that Europe could compete with the **USA** and the **USSR** as a leading nation. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Robert Schuman**, proposed on 9th May 1950 the creation of a common market of coal and steel to avoid rivalries and to be more competent.

Hence, that day is commemorated as the **Day of Europe** since it is considered the foundations of the **European Union**.



[Danlaycock. European Community 1957](#)

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Shortly after, some treaties were signed by some European countries in order to fulfil that goal:

Benelux Customs Union (1948). It was an agreement that was signed by **Belgium**, the **Netherlands**, and **Luxembourg** in order to remove customs and to promote free movement of capital, goods, and workers.

Treaty of Paris (18th April 1951). It involved the creation of the **European Coal and Steel Community** (ECSC) It was signed by France, Western Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. It created a free-trade area for coal and steel in the signing countries.

Treaty of Rome (25th March 1957). It constituted the creation of the **European Economic Community** (EEC) or **Common Market**. Its main objectives were the free movement of people, goods, services, and capitals by suppressing the customs duties among the member countries. It was signed by West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. It also involved the creation of **Euratom** (European Atomic Energy Community) for the development and research of the nuclear energy with pacific goals as well as creating a common market of nuclear fuels.

2 Communist Block

2.1 The USSR

[*Khrushchev and Kennedy, Vienna, 961*](#)

(Dominio público)



When Stalin died in 1953 he was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev, who began a process of De-Stalinization to fight the abuse of power of cult of personality of the previous leader. Khrushchev allowed some level of freedom and speech. The relations with the capitalist bloc enhanced a lot in this period. However there were some critical moments due to Cuba or Berlin.

Leonid Brezhnev led the USSR between Khrushchev's death in 1964 and 1982. He stopped all Khrushchev's reforms. His external policy switched from coexistence to tension with the USA

2.2 Eastern Europe

The USSR controlled Eastern Europe. By 1948, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Albania and Bulgaria had pro-soviet Communist governments controlled by USSR (Stalin). Under these governments big companies and banks were nationalised and heavy industry was developed. The land was distributed among the peasants. All these People's Republics were integrated into Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance)

But there were serious problems:



[Direktor, Eastern bloc members \(CC BY-SA\)](#)

- Yugoslavia had a Communist government, led by Josip Tito, but it was not pro-soviet, so Stalin opposed Tito's power.
- Polish workers in Poznan went on strike (1956) but were soon controlled by Russian troops.
- In Hungary, the people of Budapest (1956) protested against the harsh government of Rakosi. They were treated differently at first allowing them to hold free elections, ending communism there. But Soviet tanks invaded Hungary, killed a lot of people (20,000 Hungarians) and the new Premier Minister, Kadar, was loyal towards Russia.
- In Berlin, 2,5 million people left East Berlin for the West, half of them were young people. A 30 mile barrier (wall) was erected (13th August 1961) across the city of Berlin dividing the Eastern sector from the West.

West Berliners were suddenly separated from their relatives in the East for the next 30 years. No more people could leave East Berlin for the West. Those who tried to escape were shot dead

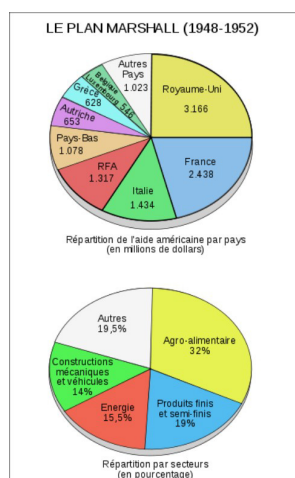
■ In Czechoslovakia, in 1968, the Czech government, led by Dubcek, tried to install its own type of socialism (Socialism with a Human Face). This was called the Prague Spring. But the troops of the Warsaw Pact invaded Praga and suppressed the attempt

2.3 The Cold War

The Cold War was a state of political and military tension after World War II between powers in the Western Bloc (the United States, its NATO allies and others) and powers in the Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and its satellite states). Historians do not fully agree on the dates, but a common timeframe is the period between 1947, the year the Truman Doctrine (a U.S. policy pledging to aid nations threatened by Soviet expansionism) was announced, and 1991, the year the Soviet Union collapsed. The term "cold" is used because there was no large-scale fighting directly between the two sides, although there were major regional wars supported by the two sides

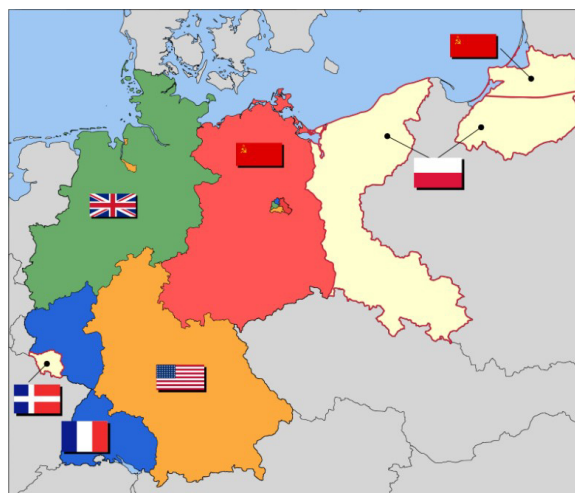
After the Second World War the peace was not stable. The USA and the USSR were now the major superpowers in the world but they were very different, ideologically, economically and politically and this ended in a diplomatic conflict called the **Cold War**. It was called the Cold War because there was no fighting, instead both sides tried to “win” by forming alliances and making plans. Both sides had atomic weapons and were afraid of nuclear war.

The USA was worried about the spread of communism. President Truman was determined to stop the spread of Communism in two main ways:



[Historicair. Plan Marshall](#)

(CC BY-SA)



[52Pickup. Map of Germany 1945](#) (CC BY-SA)

1. He promised that the USA would support any nation threatened by a communist invasion. This was called the **Truman doctrine**. The USA helped the Monarchy during the Greek Civil War.
2. He promised American aid to European countries to help rebuild their damaged economies. This aid was called the **Marshall Plan**.

In 1948 the USSR and the West disagreed over Berlin:

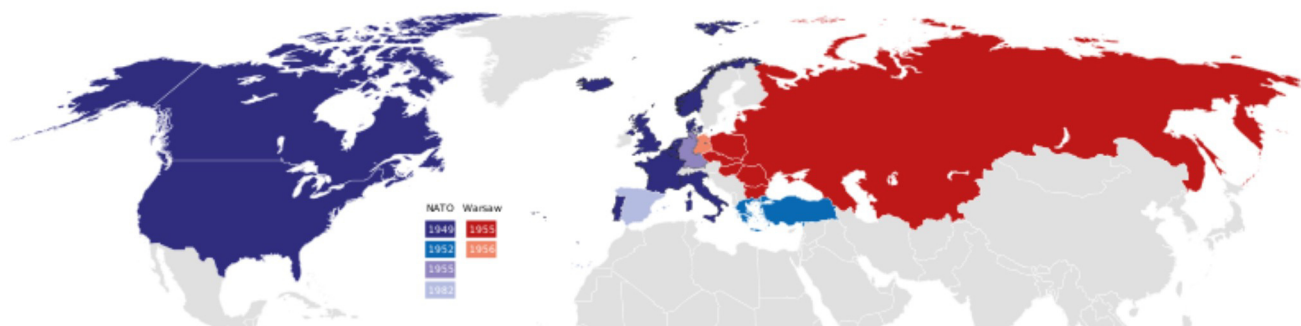
The Western allies (the USA, Britain and France) agreed to a single government in their zones.

The Soviet Union was opposed to these moves. Stalin wanted to keep Germany as weak as possible so he decided to blockade Berlin:

Berlin was in Eastern Germany (controlled by the USSR). Stalin ordered that all land communication between West Berlin and the outside world should be cut off. They survived (June 1948 → May 1949) because they could obtain supplies from the outside world by air.

In 1949 **two new states** were formed: the **German Federal Republic** (West Germany) and the **German Democratic Republic**. The frontier between Eastern and Western Europe had been drawn in Berlin.

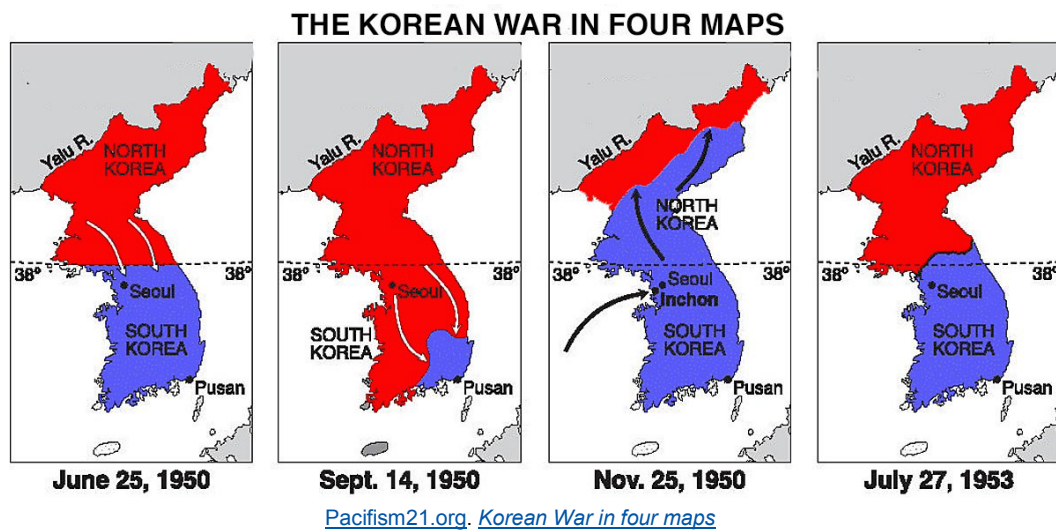
In 1949, the Western Powers formed **NATO** (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) against the communist threat. The Eastern Bloc formed the **Warsaw Pact** (1955).



[NordNordWest. *Nato vs Warsaw Pact* \(CC BY-SA\)](#)

3 Korea 1950-1953

Before the Second World War Korea was a colony of Japan. Japan was defeated and Korea was divided into North and South Korea along the 38th parallel. The North was communist and the South was under the influence of the USA and had an anti-communist dictatorship.



Communist North Korea went to war with South Korea in order to reunite the country. The USA and the Western powers intervened on behalf of the United Nations to stop the spread of communism and sent North Koreans back North of the 38th parallel.

President Truman allowed General MacArthur (UN Commander) to invade North Korea. This worried China, because they were afraid of a Western invasion. China attacked the UN forces, capturing Seoul (the capital of South Korea).

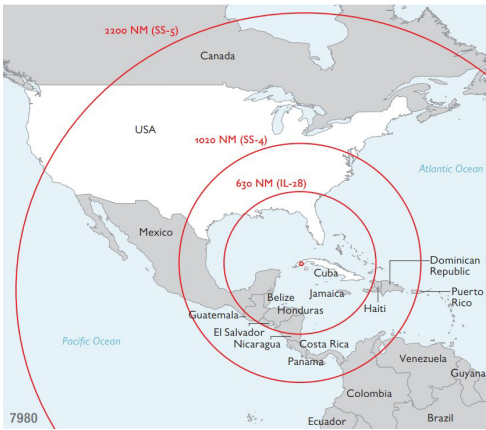
MacArthur wanted to attack China but Truman disagreed and MacArthur was dismissed. Truman looked for peace and a cease-fire was agreed on in 1953.

Korea remained as it was before the war but more than two million people died.

4 Cuban missile crisis 1962

Cuba, which was only 100 miles away from the USA, had been ruled by a military dictator, Batista, since 1940. He allowed American businessmen and the Mafia to make huge profits in a country where most people lived in poverty. In 1956, a rebel named Fidel Castro attempted to overthrow the government, but was defeated and forced into exile. In 1959, Castro began a *guerrilla* war and soon marched on Cuba's capital, Havana, and overthrew the government.

- Castro shut down casinos and brothels.
- He nationalised American-owned sugar mills.



Relative ranges of missiles staged in Cuba

(Dominio público)

The USA cut off diplomatic relations with Cuba. Castro began to cooperate with the USSR. In 1961, President Kennedy authorized an invasion of Cuba by rebels trained by the CIA. They landed in the Bay of Pigs, but they were defeated.

After this invasion Castro decided that Cuba needed Soviet military assistance: Soviet missiles were shipped to Cuba which could be used to attack US cities.

President Kennedy ordered a naval blockade of Cuba. All Soviet ships would be stopped and searched to prevent further missiles being transported to Cuba. Kennedy asked Khrushchev to withdraw his missiles.

The world was on the brink of nuclear war, but on the last minute Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba only if the US promised not to place missiles in Turkey near the Soviet border. Kennedy lifted the blockade and promised not to invade Cuba.

After this a telephone hot-line was set up between the Kremlin and the White House

5 Vietnam War

Chinese support helped to establish a Communist government in North Vietnam. South East Asia had been controlled by France, but French forces were completely defeated by the North Vietnamese in 1954 (*Dien Ben Phu*). By the Geneva Agreement of 1954 France withdrew from Indochina, losing their Empire.

Vietnam was partitioned into the communist North and the democratic South. Laos and Cambodia were set up as independent states. The Truman doctrine dictated that the USA would assist the new democracy of South Vietnam. During the cold war, the USA was terrified that many other countries might become communist and help the USSR. The domino theory of communism says that if one country is knocked over by the communist threat, soon all the nearby countries will become communist as well.

In South Vietnam there was a group called the Vietcong that wanted the South and the communist North to join. President Johnson was determined to keep south Vietnam communist

free, so he increased troop numbers from 23.000 in 1964 to 500.000 in 1967. He began a bombing campaign of North Vietnam. The offensive resulted in the loss of thousands of American lives (14,000 in 1969), most of whom were young men. The war was very expensive and public opinion soon turned against the war.



[Manhhai. Napalm effects \(CC BY\)](#)

President Nixon wanted to finish the war quickly. American troops were gradually withdrawn from Vietnam. Instead the US started training the South Vietnamese to fight the Vietcong. As a result they began heavy bombing of North Vietnam and Cambodia. In 1973 a ceasefire was arranged.

By 1975 Saigon (the South capital) had been captured by the Vietcong. The Americans were defeated for several reasons:

- US bombs killed a lot of civilians.
- Vietcong guerrillas were very skillful soldiers. American troops were not used to fight in the jungle.
- North Vietnam had the support of China and the Soviet Union.
- American public opinion turned against the war.
- The Vietcong treated the South Vietnamese well and gained their support

6 The renewed conflict and the end of Cold War

In 1972, the USSR and the USA agreed to limit their nuclear weapons and they signed the strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement (SALT 1). They planned more arms limitation but the USA refused to sign the SALT 2 agreement (in 1979) after the soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In 1980 Ronald Reagan was elected president of the USA and the period of détente ended.

The USA developed nuclear missiles which could be launched from almost anywhere. They also developed the Strategic Defence Initiative (Star Wars) for using laser weapons to shoot down soviet missiles from space. The USSR could not afford the increasing militar spending

In 1985, the USSR began to change its policies. Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and brought some changes:

- disarmament treaty was signed so the USA and the USSR agreed to remove medium-range nuclear missiles from Europe within 3 years.
- Gorbachev announced the immediate reduction of the weapons stockpile and the number of troops in the soviet armed forces.

The Cold War was ending and the USSR began to reform

Webgrafía

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