

RISE OF THE SUPERPOWERS



Who were the Superpowers?

The superpowers were the USA & the USSR as they had emerged from WW2 in strong positions.

Both countries had large populations & strong economies as both had benefitted from supplying arms & munitions during WW2.

These two powers competed with each other both economically & politically over the next 50 years. This became known as the **Cold War**.



Causes of the Cold War

1. Political differences:

- The USA believed in democracy (a government by the people, for the people) while the USSR believed in **dictatorship** (a one-party government).
- The USA believed in **capitalism** (industry/property to be owned by private individuals) while the USSR believed in **communism** (government ownership of business & industry).

2. Legacy of WW2:

- Now that Hitler had been defeated, the superpowers wanted different things.
- They came into conflict — USA wanted European democratic governments while the USSR wanted European communist governments.

3. USSR — 'Buffer Zone'

- The USSR believed that it had suffered most during both WW1 & WW2 as it had been invaded twice by Germany & had lost more lives than any other country.
- The USSR wanted to create a **buffer-zone** that would protect them from attacks.
- After WW2, Stalin's armies occupied most of Eastern Europe & installed communist governments in these countries. Countries became **puppet-states** of the USSR.
- Europe was divided into communist & capitalist countries — Winston Churchill called this an **Iron Curtain**.

4. Truman Doctrine:

- President Truman of the USA said that he would help countries resisting the spread of communism — known as **containment**. This policy was called the 'Truman Doctrine'.

5. Atomic Bomb:

- During WW2, America developed & used the atomic bomb against Japan — America was the only country with this powerful technology & would not share information about it with the USSR.

6. Marshall Aid:

- After WW2, Europe was in ruins — unemployment, homelessness, poverty & hunger were common. This attracted people to communism.
- To prevent the spread of communism, **George Marshall** (US Secretary for State) proposed **Marshall Aid** — providing billions of dollars to rebuild Europe.
- Stalin forced his communist puppet-states to refuse Marshall Aid.

The Berlin Blockade, 1948-49

Post-war Germany:

- Divided into four zones — British, French, American & Soviet.
- Berlin (capital) was divided into four sectors — British, French, American & Soviet.
- Large parts of Germany were given to Poland.

Causes:

- The USA wanted to revive the German economy but not its military. They also wanted a strong democratic government — the Soviet Union disagreed.
- A new currency — the **Deutschmark** — was introduced in the the British, French & American sectors of the Berlin to help revive the German economy.

Course:

- In an effort to prevent the new currency from being introduced in the Soviet sector of Berlin, Stalin cut off all road, rail & canal links to West Berlin. This was known as a **blockade** — military forces prevented entry into an area. Stalin hoped that the blockade would force the Western powers to give up their sectors of Berlin so that the USSR would have complete control over it.
- In response, the USA & its Allies organised **Operation Vittles** to fly supplies into Berlin — known as the **Berlin Airlift**. The goods included food, medical supplies, petrol & coal.
- The people of Berlin were suffering due to shortages while electricity was also cut.
- Stalin was reluctant to attack any of the planes & therefore, he lifted the blockade, allowing supplies to be brought in.

Results:

- Britain, France & the USA unified their sectors into one country — The Federal Republic of Germany — while the USSR declared its sector a country called the German Democratic Republic.
- Marshall Aid helped West Germany to recover economically. East Germany was far poorer, leading to people escaping to West Germany. The East German government tried to stop this by closing the border with the West & building the **Berlin Wall**.
- **NATO** (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) was set up to defend its members against potential Soviet Attacks. It included the USA, Canada & ten Western European countries.



The Korean War, 1950-53.

Post-war Korea:

- Divided along the 38th parallel.
- North Korea — controlled by the Soviet Union.
- South Korea — controlled by the USA.

Causes:

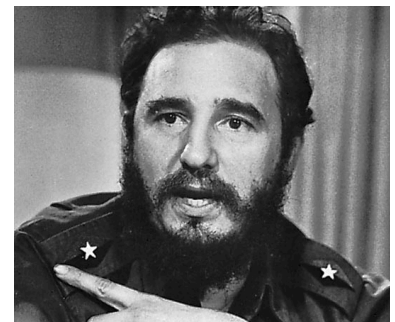
- In 1947, Korea was divided into two countries:
 - The Communist People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) — led by **Kim Il Sung**.
 - The Republic of Korea (South Korea) — led by **Syngman Rhee**.
- North Korea decided to invade the South to unite the whole country under communist control — they took most of the country.

Course:

- President Truman moved to South Korea to help. He believed in **containment** — he didn't want communism to spread. He asked the **United Nations** to support an invasion of South Korea to combat the North's aggression.
- The UN organised armies from the USA & 15 other countries. The forces, led by Douglas MacArthur, pushed the North Koreans back in their invasion of South Korea which was won back within a month.
- Truman ordered MacArthur to invade North Korea.
- The communist government in China, led by **Mao Tse-Tung**, joined the war, backing North Korea, driving the UN forces south. A counter-attack led by MacArthur pushed the Chinese back to the 38th parallel.
- Truman fired MacArthur as he wanted to invade China & also proposed to use the atomic bomb.

Results:

- The war ended in 1953. Truman had been replaced by Eisenhower as president & Stalin had been replaced by Khrushchev.
- Peace was agreed & both sides held onto the same border on the 38th parallel.
- 54,000 American soldier deaths — 400,000 South Koreans — 500,000 North Koreans — 200,000-500,000 Chinese.
- America found a new ally in Japan who began to supply war materials.



The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962.

Cuban Revolution:

In 1959, communist rebels led by **Fidel Castro & Ernesto Guevara** overthrew a corrupt dictatorship in Cuba & established a communist country only 160km from the USA.

Castro **nationalised** American businesses & the US refused to trade with Cuba in response.

Castro turned to **Nikita Khrushchev** (USSR leader) who agreed to buy all of Cuba's sugar (its main export), an agreement which angered the Americans.

Course:

- The American government gave their support to an unsuccessful invasion of Cuba — defeated at the **Bay of Pigs**.
- This invasion forced Castro to ask Khrushchev for more help in protecting Cuba from attack.
- Khrushchev sent military equipment to Cuba.
- Soviet missile bases were being built secretly in Cuba — this was discovered when US President **John F. Kennedy** sent U-2 spy planes to Cuba. These bases would be able to reach the USA within 3 minutes of launch & could destroy entire cities.
- Kennedy decided to blockade Cuba using US Navy ships until the missiles were removed.
- He announced that if any missiles were shot from Cuba, the USA would launch a full-scale attack on the USSR — the world was on the brink of a **nuclear war**.
- Khrushchev ignored Kennedy's statement for two days & Soviet ships continued on their way to Cuba. However, he ordered them to stop as they neared Cuba.

Results:

- Both sides agreed that they would never risk a nuclear war again.
- A telephone hotline was set up between Washington & Moscow so that both leaders would be in direct communication.
- Both territories decided to ban testing nuclear weapons on land or sea.



Fidel Castro

John F. Kennedy

End of the Cold War

There were many conflicts following the end of the Cold War:

1. **America vs. Vietnam** — the USA were defeated by the Soviet-backed communist North Vietnamese (4 million deaths).
2. **USSR vs. Afghanistan** — the USSR tried to install a communist government in Afghanistan but faced resistance backed by the USA & other countries.
3. **USSR vs. Hungary** — Hungarians staged an uprising against Soviet interference in its affairs. Soviet tanks & troops crushed the uprising.
4. **Arms race** — both the USA & the USSR tried to build more weapons & bombs than each other during the Cold War.

Reform of the USSR

Under Gorbachev, the USSR was reformed:

1. **Perestroika (economic)** — private ownership of industry (moving away from communism into capitalism).
2. **Glasnost (open discussion of USSR policies)** — political prisoners were released while media censorship was reduced.
3. Borders between Eastern & Western Europe were opened & the Berlin Wall was torn down.

A named leader involved in one of the crises during the rise of the superpowers

President Truman — Berlin Blockade

As president of the USA, Truman supported the **Truman Doctrine & Marshall Aid** which would help to stop the spread of communism in Europe (known as **containment**).

After WW2, Truman agreed to the division of post-war Germany into 4 zones & Berlin into 4 sectors controlled by the USA, France, Britain & the Soviet Union. The USA wanted to revive the German economy — the Soviet Union disagreed. Truman launched a new currency — the **Deutschmark** — in the the British, French & American sectors of the Berlin to help revive the German economy. In an effort to prevent the new currency from being introduced in the Soviet sector of Berlin, Stalin cut off all road, rail & canal links to West Berlin. This was known as a **blockade**.



In response, Truman organised **Operation Vittles** to fly supplies into Berlin — known as the **Berlin Airlift**. The goods included food, medical supplies, petrol & coal. The people of Berlin were suffering due to shortages while electricity was also cut. Stalin wanted Truman to leave Berlin or to abandon his currency plans. However, Truman would not give in. Stalin was reluctant to attack any of the planes & therefore, he lifted the blockade, allowing supplies to be brought in. Truman had one the first victory of the Cold War!

Truman & his allies unified their sectors of Berlin into one country — The Federal Republic of Germany — while the USSR declared its sector a country called the German Democratic Republic. Truman set up NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) to defend its members against potential Soviet Attacks. It included the USA, Canada & ten Western European countries.