Nikita Khrushchev predicted that eventually people “will give their preference to the truly free world of communism and turn their back on the so-called `free world' of capitalism.” What were the foundations of the Cold War?  Could it be argued that in the Cold War the Americans and Soviets insured that no one was truly free?

The Cold War was fought for freedom. However, nobody was quite sure what that freedom was. To some, it was communism, in which “social equality and collective living” (Strayer 930) was the definition of freedom. To others, that freedom was capitalism, in which a free market represented the freedom of the people. The United States and the Soviet Union represented the most powerful countries on each side, with the United States representing capitalism and the Soviet Union representing communism. In their effort to spread freedom, both superpowers attempted to coerce outsiders to side with them, fighting wars (both literal and metaphorical) to accomplish their goals. In essence, the Cold War was based around the idea of communism and capitalism representing two conflicting forces that could only thrive upon the other’s death. However, in an attempt to help their brands of freedom propagate, the Americans and the Soviets ensured that nobody could truly be free, trapped between the forces of communism and capitalism.

The ideals of communism inherently clashed with the ideals of capitalism. Communists desired “security and control” (Strayer 948), while capitalists desired “open and democratic societies with ties to the capitalist world economy” (Strayer 948). To capitalists, the spread of communism was abhorrent, and communists thought the same about capitalism. Capitalists thought that state control automatically meant the loss of both political and social freedom, while communists believed that the mere idea of capitalism created greed and corruption. Both sides also believed in the inherent freedom of their system. To capitalists, the ability to own companies and produce products based on supply and demand represented freedom. Communists, however, cherished the social freedoms provided by state control of industry. In theory, power would no longer be held by the rich and everyone would be on a level playing field, one that had no class divisions. However, there was one thing these two sides could agree on: the defeat of their opponent was the only way to create a free society. As long as the other existed, the world was still fettered. To simply put it, the existence of communism meant that capitalists would never achieve the freedom they desired, while the existence of capitalism meant that communists would never create their perfect society.

In order to accomplish their goal of making the world free, both sides decided to increase their spheres of influence, and improve the strength and quantities of their military hardware. Increasing spheres of influence would help both countries in two ways. On one hand, it represented more power for themselves and the creation of a new ally, while on the other hand, it represented one less area that the opponents could take and the diminishing of their potential sphere of influence. If there were more opposing countries, either the United States or Soviet Union would lose power, something neither country desired. Both sides also used the tensions of the Cold War to justify “a continuing emphasis on military and defense industries” (Strayer 956). In theory, a strong military would both act as a deterrent to invaders and as a means of decisively defeating political opponents. At the same time, an “arms race in nuclear weapons” (Strayer 952) began, with each side wanting the ability to annihilate the other in a worse-case scenario. This also kept the war “cold”, as everyone knew that true war would mean the end of the world as it was known. In essence, both sides desired to influence a greater percentage of the world, have armed forces able to slaughter their enemies, and make sure that their opponents were unable to fight.

Although both the United States and the Soviet Union claimed that they were fighting for freedom, in the process of doing so, they took away political freedom (to a degree). In truth, the United States and the Soviet Union secretly controlled worldly affairs, backing groups and “persuading” countries in an effort to gain greater spheres of influence. Conflicts such as the Vietnam War were actually sponsored by the United States or the Soviet Union in some form or another. Communist North Vietnam was “armed and supported by the Soviets and Chinese” (Strayer 950), while the United States attempted to fight alongside capitalist South Vietnam, but pulled out of the conflict due to “growing protest at home.” (Strayer 951) In a similar manner, the Soviet Union backed Afghan communists, while the United States sent “aid to Afghan Guerrillas” (Strayer 952) in order to stop communism from spreading in Afghanistan. In both of these conflicts, the Soviet Union and United States attempted to sway political affairs in a particular direction—their own. In both cases, the Soviet Union aided the communists, while the United States aided those who were fighting against the communists. Besides fueling conflicts, the United States and the Soviet Union also tried to reshape the third world. The United States, for example, was willing to support “corrupt and authoritarian regimes” (Strayer 953) simply because they did not believe in communism. In a similar manner, both countries tried to convert “countries emerging from colonial rule” (Strayer 953) to either capitalism or Communism. In essence, these countries had no choice. Instead of being allowed to choose what they wanted, countries were the rope in a game of tug-of-war (so to speak), sometimes not having any say in the process of economic independence. In either scenario, political freedom was gone, replaced by the influence of the two superpowers.

Besides controlling the political sector, both governments attempted to indoctrinate their citizens into worshipping one economic system while demonizing the other. All sorts of propaganda appeared during this period, and no matter where someone went, somebody or something was extolling the virtues of the country’s economic system. From posters to cartoons, no expense was spared in order to brainwash the public. Some American cartoons did both at the same time, depicting the horrors of communism and the virtues of capitalism. In the cartoon *Make Mine Freedom*, a Satan-like salesman tries to sell a worker, a politician, an executive, and a farmer bottles of “Ism” He gives the men all sorts of (false) promises, but before they down the contents, another man extols the virtues of capitalistic society, claiming that it allowed Americans to purchase “more food, clothing, travel, and entertainment” (Documents, week twelve) than any other country in the world, and tells the other four to drink the bottles. Upon drinking the “Ism”, the four men realize how terrible communism is and how, as described by Ralph Jimenez, it “meant that freedoms would be forfeited and all people would be subjected to rule by the state” (Discussion, week twelve). On the other hand, some Soviet cartoons chose to depict the corruptive power of money. In *The Millionaire*, a bulldog inherits a large sum of “crooked money” (Documents, week twelve), and uses it to gain status and power. Both of these cartoons depict the danger of the opponents in some way or another. *Make Mine Freedom* presents communism as a system in which the government controlled anything, while *The Millionaire* presented capitalism as a system in which only the rich had power. Either way, propaganda cartoons such as these presented one-sided arguments created specifically to convince the public that one economic system was vastly superior compared to the other. In this case, the freedom involved was the freedom of independent thinking. Instead of being able to form opinions based on facts, people were forced to create one-sided opinions based on biased information fed to them by the government. In essence, there was no freedom of opinion. Either one believed in the same economic system as his or her country, or that person was a traitor.

Is taking away freedom to provide freedom truly freedom? That is the question of the Cold War. In order to force their brands of freedom onto the rest of the world, the United States and the Soviet Union became rather bellicose. The capitalistic United States abhorred the level of state control in the Soviet Union, while the communistic Soviet Union loathed the unequal distribution of wealth in the United States. The mere existence of the other seemed to mean that the world was never truly free, and as a result, both superpowers tried to weaken (or wipe out) the other. By creating nuclear weapons, expanding their spheres of influence, and by strengthening their armed forces, the two superpowers launched themselves into what is now known as the Cold War. However, the Cold War took away more freedom than it created. The citizens of developing countries often saw the United States and the Soviet Union meddle in their political affairs, while the citizens of the United States and Soviet Union were basically brainwashed into worshipping their economic systems. Despite being a war fought based on freedom, the Cold War was unable to create any freedom.

In a class covering so much material, we often lose track of the impact of individuals. Choose ONE individual from our work together that had significant impact on the course of world history and explore their contributions. To what extent did that individual’s impact rely on the work of others?

Despite the importance of group efforts in world history, and despite the insignificance of a single person in the grand scheme of things, sometimes, one person is able to make a significant impact on world history. Individuals may be able to majorly contribute to certain events or start chain reactions that eventually lead to significant milestones. Either way, individuals can impact world history more than some may think. Nicolaus Copernicus was one of these individuals. Copernicus initiated the Scientific Revolution, planting a seed that would transform the world into the place that it is today. Although he planted the seed that would lead to a fundamental transformation in the “understanding of the universe” (Strayer 667), the work of others helped to make the deceased Copernicus into one of the greatest scientific figures in world history. His book detailing heliocentric theory would affect both the scientific and religious worlds, vastly transforming both of them and leading to both the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment; however, if it wasn’t for the work of others, such as Galileo Galilei, Copernicus would have not impacted history to the degree that he did.

“In the year of his death” (Strayer 667), Nicolaus Copernicus would publish a book that would change the world forever. Entitled *Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres,* the book detailed Copernicus’s argument for a heliocentric system in which the earth orbited the sun. Contrary to what many may believe, Copernicus “published his…book with the support of several leading Catholic churchmen and dedicated it to the pope” (Strayer 670). Other Catholics had proposed that the Earth was in motion, and to these clergymen, Copernicus’s ideas were compatible with the systems of old. A heliocentric system did not mean that God cared about the Earth any less, and the fact that “the earth was no longer…at the obvious center of God’s attention” (Strayer 667) did not matter from their perspectives. Other people, inspired by Copernicus’s ideas, turned their eyes towards the stars in search of new knowledge. Johannes Kepler discovered that “the planets followed elliptical orbits” (Strayer 667); Galileo Galilei “observed craters on the moon and sunspots”, discovered “the moons of Jupiter and many new stars” (Strayer 668), and came to the conclusion that Copernicus was correct; finally, Isaac Newton determined that “all bodies whatsoever…are endowed with a principle of mutual gravitation” (Qtd. in Strayer 667). In a similar manner, others turned their eyes towards the dead, using “careful dissections of cadavers and animals” (Strayer 669) to understand the workings of the human body. Removing mysticism from the human body and replacing it with scientific understanding, these people created the beginning of modern medicine (in some ways). As knowledge advanced, the Christian world soon became the “world leader in… science” (Discussion, week five), as mentioned by Mona Osman, overtaking the Islamic World in which “philosophy and natural science were viewed with great suspicion” (Strayer 666). Other people then applied scientific principles to “human affairs” (Strayer 671), initiating what is now known as the Enlightenment. Ideas such as democracy, human progress, and new views on gender relations all appeared during this period, with thinkers applying scientific reasoning to more personal topics.

Despite the blooming of science, backwards religious people would soon throw wrenches into the works. A vocal minority of religious leaders believed that science was incompatible with religion. Copernicus managed to escape punishment because of his death, but Galileo was not so lucky, as he was forced to “publicly renounce his belief that the earth moved around an orbit and rotated on its axis” (Strayer 670). In a similar manner, “the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno…was burned at the stake in 1600” (Strayer 670) after he proclaimed that the universe was infinite. Unlike the religious leaders who supported Copernicus, these people were dissatisfied with the heliocentric model. Something was wrong about the earth orbiting another body. This idea made the earth one out of many celestial bodies rather than something unique. God would not do something like this to his planet. To some, the Scientific Revolution marked the beginning of a war between science and religion, with religion rejecting science’s evidence and believing in an alternate worldview. However, it is important to note that this view was not that of the majority. Instead, the Scientific Revolution represented the beginning of a division of powers between science and religion. Science explained the “physical universe” (Strayer 670), while religion “was…the arbiter of truth about…questions concerning human salvation, righteous behavior, and the larger purposes of life” (Strayer 670). In other words, science studied the physical, while religion studied the metaphysical. Galileo “proclaimed the compatibility of science and faith”, and the separation of science and religion fulfilled this statement, since it transformed the two into concepts that fulfilled different roles in the lives of people. These two spheres rarely interacted, and to many, the battle between religion and science ended relatively early on, instead of becoming a drawn-out war that continues to this day.

Although Copernicus was a significant figure, it is impossible to state that he revolutionized the world single-handedly. In reality, Copernicus’s impact was primarily created by the works of other. He was the spark that ignited the Scientific Revolution, but the Scientific Revolution would have never occurred without brilliant minds such as Johannes Kepler, Galileo Galilei, and Isaac Newton. Since Copernicus published his book in the year of his death, if other scientists did not rise to the challenge, Copernicus’s works would have remained a footnote in history. In some ways, the Scientific Revolution represented the works of many individuals, but in other ways, Copernicus was the keystone in the revolution. Without Copernicus, the world may have not entered the scientific age, democracy may not exist, and the idea of science being a rival to religion may have not existed. Upon the publication of his book, Copernicus led the world into a new age, even though he may have not realized it. People were now thinking based on observations instead of fitting observations to their beliefs. In other words, astronomers, scientists, and even the citizens of democratic countries have Copernicus to thank for their daily lives. However, Enlightenment thinkers and early modern scientists were the ones who truly created modern science and government. In essence, Copernicus only represents the initiator of the modern world, as he started the Scientific revolution without living until its end.

Nicolaus Copernicus represents a single individual who was able to significantly impact world history. By publishing a book about heliocentric theory, Copernicus somewhat created modern science. Inspired by his works, others would discover more about the earth and outer space, and by applying those ideas to human-related topics, other thinkers would create the beginnings of modern democracy and humanistic attitudes. At the same time, he (and other scientists) also antagonized certain members of the Catholic Church, creating the (false) view that religion and science were eternal enemies. Due to this “domino effect”, Copernicus did not single-handedly cause the world to advance. Instead, he was the spark that ignited the fire of modernization. By inspiring others, Copernicus made his mark onto world history, becoming the “father” of the scientific revolution. As the foundation of the Scientific Revolution, Nicolaus Copernicus earned his place alongside the most influential individuals in world history. His achievements, although seemingly insignificant, would set the stage for the world becoming the place that it was today.

The rise of the West (Europe and, later, the United States) is a major development in modern world history. What factors contributed to the growing power of Western nation-states? What challenges exist to the continued dominance of the West in global politics?

For a brief period of time, the global West represented the seat of power in the modern world. Thanks to exploration, industrialization and imperialism, the West began to grow in power, with no end in sight; however, a series of independence movements and the growing power of the East slowly weakened the dominance of the West. The discovery of the Americas allowed Europeans to initiate the Industrial Revolution gave the West undue power, which it used to dominate other nations. When these nations became independent, the West lost a portion of its power, and later on, Eastern nations, such as China and Japan, began to become as powerful as their Western rivals. By the dawn of the twenty-first century, Western dominance was seemingly a thing of the past. Instead of being the one region that controlled the entire world, the West was reduced to one of many regions competing for world dominance.

The Age of Exploration was the true beginning of Western dominance. In this case, the natives did not have any significant technological advances (even when compared to pre-industrial Europe). As mentioned by Vincent Huang, a desire for “greater riches and possible Christian allies in different regions” (Discussion, week two) led European countries to explore to ocean. Using their positions bordering on the Atlantic Ocean, Spain and Portugal became the first two exploratory countries (Film, week two). Through the “decimation of Native American populations” (Strayer 563) (thanks to a combination of diseases and superior weaponry), the Spaniards and Portuguese created new societies in this unknown land. Eventually, other European countries, such as France, Britain, and the Netherlands all joined in the exploration bandwagon, establishing colonies of all sorts in the New World. Thanks to their increasing power, Europeans were then able to subjugate Africans and force them into the slave trade, using these slaves to gain free labor in their colonies. In a similar manner, the Spaniards forced natives to work, and in some areas, forced labor was “directly required by colonial authorities” (Strayer 565). Either way, Europeans gained essentially free labor, which could be used to milk the region until it was bone-dry. In Spanish America, “silver and gold mining” (Strayer 564) was used as a means of gaining income, and in the Caribbean, slavers were use to grow and refine sugar in contains that “reminded many visitors of scenes from hell (Strayer 568), transforming the region into “the epicenter of slavery in the New World” (Film, week four). These products were then sent back to Europe, where they would initiate a revolution.

This new influx of goods would allow Europeans “to operate in Asian markets” (Strayer 744), American items were able “to sustain a growing population” (Strayer 744), and the attitude of commercialization planted the seeds of industrialization. Combining the ideas of science and a commercial society, British inventors, in particular, began to create devices to improve industry. The steam train made Britain “decades ahead of the rest of the world” (Film,

week ten), as it allowed goods to be transported across the country at rapid speeds. In a similar manner, telegraph lines enabled rapid communication, and new methods of textile production made cloth goods cheaper than ever before. As other Western countries, such as a growing United States, began to adopt British ideas, the stage was set for a new age of European conquering: the Age of Imperialism. Instead of turning their eyes towards the Americas, Africa and Asia became the prey of the Western World. Besides Ethiopia and Liberia, the entire continent of Africa was divided among a variety of European countries in what is now known as “the ‘scramble for Africa’” (Strayer 796). In a similar manner, various areas in Asia also fell to the Europeans, with the United States joining the “party” by taking control of the Philippines. “Companies in the Congo” (Strayer 802) “”forced villagers to collect rubber” (Strayer 803) in order to fuel the demand for tires in the Western world. In a simpler manner, Indonesian “peasants were required to cultivate 20 percent or more of their land in cash crops” (Strayer 803), which were sold to the Dutch government for pennies on the dollar. In other areas, natives were forced to work for Western overlords, receiving low wages. For example, “millions of impoverished Chinese workers” (Strayer 808) flocked to Malaysia to work in tin mines, “producing some 55 percent of the world’s tin” (Strayer 808), yet receiving little pay while living in squalid conditions. In Kenya, African laborers receive too little money “to obtain accommodation which is adequate to any standard” (Qtd. in Strayer 808). In India, a sharp divide between colonizers and natives emerged, as the British considered themselves to be a race superior to all Indians. The British would also subjugate the mighty China, and even though China never became a British Colony, the result was basically the same. “The British began to use opium...to cover their persistent trade imbalance with China” (Strayer 838), importing thousands of chests of the drug in the country. When China tried to, kick the “barbarian merchants” (Documents, week nine) out of the country, and end the trade of the “injurious drug” (Documents, week nine), Britain responded by sending a fleet of ships to China to “teach the Chinese a lesson about the virtues of free trade” (Strayer 839). Thanks to the fact that Britain was industrialized while China was not, the British navy was able to soundly annihilate the Chinese. When the war was over, China was forced to sign the Treaty of Nanjing, which “imposed numerous restrictions on Chinese sovereignty” (Strayer 839). A second Opium war was just as much as a failure for the Chinese, and when it was over, China was basically Britain’s slave. The French were able to take Vietnam from China, further weakening the country. In a similar manner, Western aggression caused the once-mighty Ottoman Empire to shrink, transforming the country into a shadow of its former self. From “Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt” (Strayer 844) to various battles for independence spearheaded by Western assistance, the Ottoman Empire grew smaller with each passing year. The only reason why the empire survived was that “Europe’s Great Powers” (Strayer 846) were unable to decide how to split up the country into territories. Thanks to Imperialism, the rest of the world remained weak, making the West the center of power by default.

As time went on, however, this dominance began to fade. Due to racial inequalities, Indians began to unite themselves. Using non-violence, Mohandas Gandhi, sometimes called Mahatma (Great Soul) Gandhi, protested the racism present in the country’s and fought for an independent India. Although Muslims and Hindus came into conflict with each other, resulting in the formation of Pakistan, Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and others managed to force the British to declare “their intention to leave India after World War II” (Strayer 986). In a similar manner, South Africa freed itself from British rule in the earliest twentieth century (although racism was still a major problem). Nationalist movements would proceed to free the rest of Africa and Asia by the end of the twentieth century. From “Sukarno In Indonesia” (Strayer 982) to “Nkrumah in Ghana” (Strayer 982), various men rose up to the challenge of making their realms join “the world of independent nation-states” (Strayer 982). In some areas, these freedom fighters used “guerrilla warfare” (Strayer 982) to rapidly strike the more traditional armies of the colonizers. In other areas, however, natives used non-violent resistance similar to what Gandhi’s followers used in India. Either way, the result was the same. One by one, the Western Imperial empires began to crumble, as new nations rose from the ashes of their colonies. Although these new nations were nowhere near as powerful as the weakened west, the stage was now set for new challengers to join the battle for world dominance.

While some nations took power away from the West by becoming independent, other nations challenged Western Dominance by becoming political and industrial rivals to Europe and the United States. Although China became a communist country in the year of 1949, its economy remained feeble. It wasn’t until the reign of Deng Xiaoping that China became powerful. Industrial and agricultural reform ushered the country into the modern age, causing “stunning economic growth” (Strayer 960), which transformed China into “a rapidly growing economic power” (Strayer 961). Despite the increasing divide between the rich and the poor, China remains an economic powerhouse. Instead of the feeble country controlled by Britain, China now represents a strange combination of “nationalism, consumerism, and a renewed respect for ancient traditions” (Strayer 961) that somehow managed to remain an important figure in world history. In fact, in 2014, China represented “the world’s largest economy” (Strayer 1035), beating out all Western countries. Similarly, Japan also became an economic titan for a period of time. After Japan lost its imperial empire in World War II, the country managed to retain some strength (thanks to an industrialized economy). “Japan’s economy grew at at the remarkable rate of 10 percent a year” (Strayer 919) following the war, and in 2011, represented one of the most developed countries. The Japanese Toyota company was also able to become the “wold’s largest automaker” (Strayer 1026), defeating Western companies such as General Motors. Like China, India is also rising up, with “Indian-based call centers” (Strayer 1028) commonly serving Western companies. Also, some white-collar jobs in the West, “such as computer programming” (Strayer 1032), have been outsourced to India.

The “discovery” and domination of the Americas marked the beginning of Western dominance. In this case, diseases and pre-industrial weapons were enough to crush the natives and establish a new Europe in the New World. By using the power of slaves, Europe was able to gain enough resources to industrialize, catapulting the West into the position of world dominance. In this position, the West was able to secure power by oppressing other countries. Thanks to superior technology, the West Subjugated most of Africa and Asia, and a period of Western dominance began in which Western imperial empires transformed the rest of the world into colonies and vassal states. However, recent years mark the beginning of the end of the west as the controller of world affairs. Although Western nations still retain a significant amount of power, the imperial empires of days gone by are long gone, replaced by a series of independent countries. Also, Eastern nations, such as Japan, China, and India have also gained power and in some ways, threaten to make the East represent the new center of world power. Despite the West gaining massive amounts of territory and power after the Age of Exploration, the Industrial Revolution, and the Age of Imperialism, independence movements and the rise of the East threaten the status of the West as the seat of global domination.