

Origins and Development of the Cold War in Europe, 1945-1955

Impact of WW2 on Europe

Introduction: At the end of WW2

- The United States and the USSR played important roles in defeating Germany in WW2.
- This cooperation was symbolised by **Elbe Day**.

Elbe Day

- On 25 April 1945, a US Army patrol moved into Torgau, a small German town on near Berlin on the banks of the River Elbe.
- Germany was close to defeat in WW2 by then.
- The US commander became aware that there were Soviet troops on the other side of the river.
- He grabbed a US flag and waved it at them. The Soviet commander saw the flag and realised that the troops across the river were their American allies.
- The two forces met halfway on a damaged bridge across River Elbe and exchanged handshakes and gifts.

- This was publicised by newspapers and radio networks of the allies, which spread the news of the event.
- It also featured the camaraderie between the United States and the USSR far and wide.
- However, relations between the United States and the USSR started worsening after Germany's defeat as things quickly devolved into the **Cold War**

Impact of WW2 on Europe: Europe in Ruins

- By the time Germany surrendered in May 1945, much of Europe was a devastated war zone.

Examples

Type	Description
Casualties	36 million Europeans killed
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roads, railways, bridges, canals destroyed by fighting or bombing. - No gas, electricity, or running water in many areas
Health	Disease and malnutrition were widespread, as there were desperate shortages of food and medicine
Homelessness	Over 50 million people had lost their homes or had been forced to leave their homes

This devastation led to difficulty in maintaining and restoring law and order and thus tensions between the USA and the USSR over how to deal

with these problems.

This thus contributed to the outbreak of the cold war.

Situation in Eastern Europe

- Even more dire
 - Violence between ethnic groups where people killed one another for ethnic reasons.
 - Massive resistance in some areas towards USSR, which had come in and imposed themselves on the region.
- The situation in Eastern Europe would contribute to Cold War tensions as disagreements between the USA and the USSR over how to deal with these problems will arise.

Decline of Western European Powers

- In 1939, there were three great European powers:
 - Britain
 - France
 - Germany
- By the end of the war, Britain had exhausted its resources during the war and had become virtually bankrupt despite never being invaded or defeated.
- In 1940, France was occupied by Germany. It was liberated in 1944 but was no longer the power it used to be.
- By 1945, Germany lay in ruins, after being defeated in WWII.

In a post-war Europe, Britain, France, and Germany were no longer dominant players on the world stage.

- This created a power vacuum that the USA and the USSR moved to

fill, creating competition and tension between the two superpowers that contributed to the cold war.

Emergence of New Superpowers

- In contrast, both the United States and the USSR emerged from the war as superpowers.

The term "superpower" was first used in 1944 to describe the two countries being in a different league from the existing major powers. This was due to their geographical size and population, as well as the economic output and military strength they continued to possess after the war

Thus, as the USA and the USSR both emerged as superpowers in the wake of WW2, this created competition and tension between the two countries, contributing to the Cold War.

Early Tensions Between the United States and the USSR

Early Tensions: Competing Ideologies

Considering the history between the two countries and differences in ideology, it was surprising that there was even a wartime alliance between the United States and the USSR.

Ideology - A set of beliefs or ideas, usually about politics and government, but it can be about economic and social issues as well.

From the very beginning of communist rule in the USSR, the United States and other democratic countries had opposed communism.

- This was because most politicians and business leaders in the United States hated and feared communist ideas. They felt that communism would threaten their way of life and had supported the Whites in the Russian Civil War against the establishment of communist rule in Russia.

On the other hand, the USSR believed that the United States was acting selfishly to build its own economic empire and political influence in the world.

Differences in Ideology

Beliefs	USA	USSR
Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To spread democracy and ensure that individuals have the right to choose their own government- To create a world where individual liberty in areas such as freedom of speech, religious freedom, freedom of assembly and the right to own property are protected.- To sustain the capitalist world economy and prevent other countries from being communist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To destroy capitalism through class struggles and communist revolutions- To create an ideal and utopian world where all people are equal, with all property and work shared equally among the people.

Beliefs	USA	USSR
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government chosen in free elections which could be contested by more than one party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A one-party dictatorship - Elections were held, but all candidates belonged to the Communist Party
Individual vs Societal Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Valued individual freedoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regarded individual freedoms as less important than protecting the interests of the society

Beliefs	USA	USSR
Wealth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wealth was created through the free market, resulting in great inequality between the rich and poor. - Capitalist with a free-market economy - Privately owned businesses and properties: people could own businesses and buy and sell goods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wealth would be shared through state control, resulting in low inequality and unemployment - Communist with a command economy - Believed goods should be allocated to people according to need - In the command economy, the government would control all resources needed to produce goods, including factories and farms.

Such perceptions resulted in mistrust and tensions between them, as well as competition, as each believed its ideology should be adopted by other countries, contributing to the outbreak of the cold war.

Early Tensions: History of Suspicion and Mistrust before 1939

The United States and the USSR had a history of suspicion and mistrust going back to 1917, when Russia became a communist country.

Examples

- The USSR's vision called for worldwide communist revolutions to overthrow capitalist states. The United States and Western European democratic countries were alarmed, fearing that communism would spread in their countries and cause similar revolutions.
- At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, it was decided that Germany would not be broken up. The British and Americans were worried about the possibility of Russia becoming a communist country. They thought Germany could be a barrier to communism, highlighting their suspicion towards Russia.
- Between 1918 and 1921, a bitter civil war was fought in Russia between the communists and their opponents, known as the Whites. US and British troops intervened on the side of the Whites, hoping to prevent communist victory.
- In the 1920s, there was a Red Scare in the United States. The communist flag was red, so communists were often called "Reds". During the period of the Red Scare, there was widespread fear of everything and anything that might be associated with communism and communist-related activities in the United States.
 - This led to the US government to arrest and imprison many people, usually immigrants from Russia, accusing them of being communist agents. Most of those persecuted in this way are innocent.
- In the 1930s, the British and French had a policy of appeasement towards Hitler. To some extent, this policy was driven by the fear that the USSR was trying to spread communism by force. The British hoped that Hitler's Germany would oppose communism. To the USSR, appeasement threatened its security as it seemed to imply that Hitler was allowed to take over Eastern Europe.
- The USSR signed the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact with Germany in August 1939, promising not to attack each other. Such a

pact surprised the United States and the world because earlier in the year, the USSR was in discussion with Britain and France about the formation of an alliance against Hitler. However, nothing had come out of that discussion.

This history of suspicion and mistrust between the USA and the USSR since the latter's founding created tensions between the two countries that contributed to the outbreak of the Cold War.

Early Tensions: "Marriage of Convenience"

- Given the history of suspicion between the United States and the USSR, most historians believe the wartime alliance between Britain, the United States and the USSR was a "marriage of convenience".
- Britain, the United States and the USSR had formed their wartime alliance to win WWII by joining forces against a common enemy, Germany.
- However, tensions grew within the alliance even during the war

Example

- By August 1942, the Soviet troops had been fighting against a German invasion for more than a year. One of Stalin's major concerns was the immense pressure that his troops faced because of Germany's continuous attacks. He urged the United States and Britain to quickly open a second front in France to relieve this pressure and end the war as quickly as possible.
 - However, the United States and Britain only agreed to open the second front through Operation Overlord in 1944, when they met a year earlier in 1943 during the Tehran Conference in Iran.
 - Stalin felt that the Allies were delaying the opening of the second front to minimise their own losses and even weaken the USSR.

- This deepened his distrust of the United States and Britain.
 - In the Allies' defence, Churchill argued that any attempt to land troops in Western Europe would result in heavy casualties prior to 1944 as a large buildup of forces in Britain was first necessary to ensure success.
 - He therefore wanted a strategy of attacks along the edges of the Axis empire instead, beginning with North Africa and Italy, while preparations took place for the big invasion of northwest Europe.

The distrust between the USA and the USSR during their wartime alliance resulted in tensions between them, thus contributing to the outbreak of the Cold War.

The Wartime Alliance Breaks Down: Yalta and Potsdam

The Yalta Conference, Feb 1945

- By 1945, the defeat of the Axis powers was imminent. As superpowers, the United States and the USSR had a stake in the preliminary discussions that covered key post-war matters.
 - To facilitate this, the Big Three (Britain, the United States, and the USSR) met in February 1945 at the **Yalta Conference** held in the city of Yalta, which was part of Soviet territory.
 - This was the first time they met since the Tehran Conference in November 1943
 - The United States and the USSR were dominating discussions as they had become the world's leading states.

- However, the two countries had differing views about what should happen once the war ended.

Countries	Views	Reasons
USA	The USA believed in having peace, safety and prosperity in a post-war world. They believed that democracy and capitalism was a model for international development. It was also a means to gain political influence and benefit economically through trade. They also believed that the recovery of Western Europe was essential for international stability and US prosperity from trade.	This is because they were alarmed by the Soviet-supported communist parties in Eastern Europe who seemed to be making moves to seize power according to the ideas of the Communist Manifesto. Furthermore, trade with Europe was disrupted due to WWII.

Countries	Views	Reasons
USSR	The USSR wanted to establish buffer states in Eastern Europe to prevent another invasion. They believed that Eastern Europe must remain friendly to the USSR for its own security, and wanted massive war reparations from Germany to repair its own economy and ensure that Germany could not threaten it again.	This was because Russia was invaded by Germany twice through Poland. WWII also resulted in at least 20 million Soviet citizens dead and devastation of the USSR's industries and cities.

Despite their differences, the Big Three managed to agree on several important issues.

Examples of Agreements

- The USSR to enter the war against Japan once Germany surrendered.
- Germany to be divided into 4 zones: US, French, British and Soviet. Berlin (capital city), situated in the Soviet zone, was to be divided into 4 occupied zones too.
- Nazi war criminals responsible for the Holocaust to be tried before an international court.
- Countries liberated from German occupation to be allowed to hold free elections to choose the government they wanted.
- The Big Three to join the United Nations, a new organisation which aimed to keep peace after the war.
- Eastern Europe to be a Soviet sphere of influence as Stalin was

concerned about the future security of the USSR in view of the wartime sufferings it had endured.

The Big Three, however, disagreed over the issue of **post-war Poland**. Nevertheless, they seemed to be able to negotiate and compromise with one another at that point in time.

Examples of Disagreements

- Stalin wanted the Soviet border to move westwards into Poland and argued that Poland, in turn, could move its border westwards into German territory.
 - Both Churchill and Roosevelt were unhappy about Stalin's plan.
 - Churchill persuaded Roosevelt to accept it as long as the USSR did not interfere in Greece where the British were trying to prevent a communist takeover.
 - Churchill's condition was also accepted by Stalin.

The leaders were careful to put up a united front as the Conference closed.

Examples

- They posed for publicity photographs (such as the one on the right) showing how friendly they were.
- They also issued declarations stressing their unity.

In reality, relations remained tensed even though there seemed to be agreement (and compromises) among the Allies at the Yalta Conference.

Examples

- Stalin and Churchill clashed on numerous issues. In comparison,

Roosevelt seemed more willing and able to work with Stalin.

- Shortly after the Yalta Conference, Churchill wrote to Roosevelt and expressed his concerns that the USSR might jeopardise the free world.
- In May 1945, Churchill ordered his top military commanders to make plans for a possible future war against the USSR. Fortunately, that war never happened.

The tensions surfaced at the Yalta Conference due to the many unresolved issues was clear and contributed to the outbreak of the Cold War.

However, that the Big Three were still able to come to agreements over important issues is a sign that tensions had yet to lead to a breakdown in their relationship.

The Potsdam Conference, July-August 1945

- When the Big Three met again at the city of Potsdam, Germany, in July 1945, the war against Germany was over. The war against Japan was also coming to an end.
- There were other important changes in the world as well.

Change in Leadership

- The atmosphere in the Potsdam Conference was very different from the atmosphere of compromise during the previous conferences
- This was because while Stalin remained the leader of the USSR and continued to push his demands, the leaders of both the United States and Britain had changed.

The United States was now led by Harry S. Truman

- President Roosevelt had died in April 1945

- Truman did not have the same relationship with Stalin that Roosevelt had as he had assumed power after the wartime alliance between the USSR and the United States had broken down.
- In fact, he was concerned about the potential threat the USSR posed to the security of Western Europe and was thus determined to get tough and challenge Stalin on major issues.

In Britain, Churchill was replaced by Clement Attlee

- Churchill had lost the general election in July 1945 and was replaced by Clement Attlee halfway through the conference.
- He won the popular vote with his domestic policies as the British public saw him as a better peacetime prime minister than Churchill.
- He left the bulk of foreign policy and diplomacy to his Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin.
 - Bevin was strongly anti-communist and created policies that were closely aligned with Truman's anti-communist policies.
- Both Truman and Attlee were younger and less experienced in foreign affairs compared to their predecessors.

Increasing Soviet Control of Eastern Europe

Soviet troops now controlled most of Eastern Europe.

Examples

- The Red Army had liberated the countries of Eastern Europe from the Germans, but instead of withdrawing troops, Stalin had left them there.
- By July 1945, Stalin's troops effectively controlled the Baltic states, Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania
- In particular, Poland remained a source of tension among the Allies.

- Stalin set up a communist government in Poland, ignoring the wishes of the majority of the Poles.
- Britain and the United States protested, as they saw Stalin's actions to breaking agreements made during the Yalta Conference, which was to allow for free elections in Poland.
- The British were concerned about the USSR's actions in Poland as they had gone to war over the country in 1939.
- However, Stalin, driven by his desire for security insisted that his control of Eastern Europe was a defensive measure against possible future attacks.
- Besides Poland, he also encouraged communists in the other states to take power.

The Manhattan Project

- Since 1941, the United States had been secretly developing a new weapon to end the war - the atomic bomb.
 - This was part of a state-funded nuclear development programme called the Manhattan Project.
- The United States decided to keep it from the USSR until the Potsdam Conference in July 1945.
 - At the conference, Truman privately informed Stalin that the United States had successfully tested the atomic bomb.
 - Though Truman thought that he has caught Stalin unaware, the latter was not surprised when Truman told him about the bomb.
 - Information about the Manhattan Project had been leaked to the USSR earlier.
 - The United States' choice not to tell the USSR about the bomb earlier further deepened Stalin's suspicions towards the United States' intentions.

Disagreement over Germany

- Stalin wanted to cripple Germany completely.
 - Truman disagreed as he did not want to repeat the mistake of the Treaty of Versailles.
- Stalin also wanted compensation from Germany
 - Truman agreed at first, then changed his mind.
- Stalin thought Truman wanted to protect Germany and became suspicious of him.

Disagreement over Eastern Europe

- At the Yalta Conference, it was agreed that Eastern Europe would be a Soviet sphere of influence.
 - To Stalin, this meant he could set up communist governments loyal to him and keep them under close control.
- But this was much more than what Truman had in mind. He began to suspect Stalin of wanting to control all of Europe.

Summary

- As with the Yalta Conference, the newspapers, newsreels and radio broadcasts continued to stress the unity of the wartime allies at the Potsdam Conference.
- But with the changed circumstances and major disagreements, it was not surprising that the relations between the Big Three became increasingly tense.
 - Tensions that ultimately led to the outbreak of the Cold War

Worsening Relations after Potsdam

The Atomic Bomb

- Relations between the superpowers continued to worsen, especially after the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan and the post-war developments in Eastern Europe.
- When Truman told Stalin about the atomic bomb at Potsdam, it is likely that Truman was trying to intimidate him with this information
 - However, while this information might have concerned him, Stalin showed little reaction.
 - In fact, Stalin already knew about the atomic bomb from Soviet spies.
 - He did not react because he did not want to show Truman he was concerned.
 - Stalin had already ordered Soviet technicians and scientists to develop an atomic bomb before the Potsdam Conference.
- By 1949, both superpowers had atomic weapons.
- The acquisition of the atomic bomb by the Americans thus served to increase tensions between them and the Soviet Union, spurring them to develop the same capability and the outbreak of the Cold War

The Iron Curtain

- The issue of Eastern Europe had already caused tensions at the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences, and the situation continued to worsen.
 - This was due to Stalin's determination to control the governments of Eastern Europe to protect the USSR from future attacks.
- Although elections were held in the countries of Eastern Europe, Stalin adopted "**salami tactics**" and removed political opponents one by one to make sure that communist governments led by

politicians loyal to him took power across Eastern Europe

- Stalin succeeded
- The communist takeovers in the Eastern European countries were brutal at times.
 - The USSR would first support the establishment of coalition governments in Eastern European countries where the local communist party was influential.
 - The communists would work with other parties at the beginning.
 - But gradually, they would take control by isolating and suppressing other parties in the coalition.
 - These parties would be banned, and their leaders arrested and exiled. In some cases, they were beaten or even murdered.
 - By "slicing" the opposition bit by bit, Soviet control over Eastern Europe was achieved through Stalin's salami tactics

Example

- Jan Masaryk, a Czechoslovak diplomat and politician. Masaryk believed passionately in democracy.
- He was an intelligent and popular politician, and he defeated the communists in several elections.
- His phone was tapped and he was followed by Soviet agents.
- In September 1947, his enemies tried to kill him with a bomb sent in a parcel.
- In March 1948, he was found dead below his bedroom window.
- The official verdict was suicide, but most historians think he was murdered.

The differing views on Soviet control of Eastern Europe:

To Stalin / USSR	To Truman / United States
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To Stalin / USSR	To Truman / United States
Controlling Eastern Europe made sense as it was the traditional route through which enemies from the West attacked Russia. If he controlled the region by creating more buffer states, it would be more challenging for others to invade the USSR through it.	Stalin's actions were evidence that he was building an empire, but many people in the United States were weary of conflict. They were wary of dragging the United States into international politics. They argued that Stalin's actions were none of their concern.

The Iron Curtain Speech

To combat the wariness of conflict felt by the American people, Truman turned to Churchill for help.

- While Churchill was no longer Britain's Prime Minister, he was still highly respected, especially in the United States.
- Truman arranged for him to give a speech at Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946 and approved the speech in advance.
- In the speech, Churchill warned of the dangers of the USSR and first used the term "the Iron Curtain".
 - He stressed the necessity for the United states and Britain to act as the guardians of peace and stability against the menace of Soviet communism, which had lowered an "iron curtain" across Europe.
 - The term "iron curtain" refers specifically to the political, military and ideological barrier created by the USSR following WWII to prevent open contact between itself and its Eastern European allies on the one hand, and the West and other non-communist regions on the other.

- The Iron Curtain speech had a huge impact.
 - It alarmed many Americans and got Truman the attention and support he wanted in getting the United States more involved in international affairs.
 - The speech also drew angry responses from the Soviet media and from Stalin himself.

Due to differing views on Soviet control of Eastern Europe and the provocative Iron Curtain speech, tensions between the USA and the Soviets were heightened thus contributing to the outbreak of the Cold War.

Change and Continuity

To what extent did foreign relations between the United States and the USSR change between 1922 and 1945?

On the surface, it seemed like the foreign relations changed for the better and relations improved quite suddenly overnight during the wartime alliance.

- However, this change was due to the change in circumstances where they were both facing the same enemy. A more cooperative relationship between the two, with a strategic alliance, was one that was necessary in order to have a higher chance of defeating Germany.

At a deeper level, the underlying reasons for their original poor relations remain the same.

- There was no opportunities for the two countries to come together to address or resolve their distrust and suspicion of each other.
- The ideological differences were simply put aside temporarily whilst

they were too busy trying to defeat Germany during the war.

To conclude, foreign relations changed for the better but the change could be a **temporary** one.

- The relationship might revert (i.e. poor relations) once the circumstances for change is removed (i.e. when they have no more common enemy or when war ends).

Development of the Cold War, 1947-1955

Introduction

- In this period, as their rivalry intensified, the United States and the USSR made a series of moves and countermoves, which increasingly contributed to a bipolar world.
- Bi-polarity in the Cold War context is often used to describe the division of Europe and the world during the Cold War, where the superpowers established competing blocs and spheres of influences

The Truman Doctrine and Containment

Developments in Turkey and Greece

Greece

- It was occupied by the Germans in WWII.
- After the war, it was run by the British until a new government could

be set up.

- Rival groups disagreed over how Greece would be run.
 - The Greek Communist Party wanted a communist state, while the Greek royalists wanted the return of the monarch.
- In 1946, a civil war broke out between the two sides.
 - The British did not have the resources to control the situation and announced their withdrawal on 24 February 1947.
 - Truman faced the prospect of yet another European country falling to communism

Turkey

- After WW2, Stalin tried to gain influence in Turkey. He wanted to get access to the **Turkish Straits** so Soviet ships could sail from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea
- Truman's Concerns:
 - Turkey became an ally of the USSR, Stalin might use it as a stepping stone to spread communist influence in the Middle East.
 - Turkey was important to the United States because of its oil reserves

Back in USA

- To gain support in the United States, Truman exaggerated the scale of the threat in Greece and Turkey.
 - American newspapers, which supported Truman's policy of increasing US involvement in international affairs, aided his affairs.
- In May 1947, the US Congress passed the Greece and Turkey Aid Bill.
 - This was a package of US\$400 million in aid to Greece and Turkey.

- It secured Turkey as a US ally and propped up the monarchist government in Greece.
- However, by exaggerating the threat of the USSR, Truman probably worsened relations between Stalin and himself.
 - Stalin had actually kept his promise to Churchill in 1945 not to help the communists in Greece.

Increasing Tensions Between the United States and the USSR

- The Truman Doctrine made clear that the United States could not withdraw from World affairs as it had done after the WWI. Instead, it would actively resist the spread of communism.
- People were aware at the time that the doctrine would almost certainly lead to clashes between the United States and the USSR.
 - Sure enough, the announcement of the Truman Doctrine alarmed Stalin.

The Marshall Plan

Truman wanted to use the United States' mighty economic power to prevent the spread of communism.

- He ordered US Secretary of State, George Marshall, to come up with a plan for economic aid.
- In June 1947, **the Marshall Plan** was announced to the world.

The Marshall Plan

- The United States planned to put US\$13 billion into helping Europe's shattered economies recover.
 - Starting in April 1948, food, machinery, animals and countless other items were shipped to democratic countries in Europe.
- Truman wanted people to get back to work and make money. He

wanted them to feel good about capitalism, so they would not be attracted to communism.

- The Marshall Plan was widely seen by the United States' allies as an incredibly generous gesture and they were extremely grateful
- However, the United States was also looking after its own interests.
 - First, the United States needed Europe to recover so that its industries had a market to export their goods to.
 - Second, the largest amounts of financial aid from the Marshall Plan went to the United States' closest political allies, Britain and France.
 - Third, countries which did not have democratic, capitalist systems, did not receive such financial support.
 - For example, Italy did not receive any aid until a non-communist government took power in 1948.

Impact

- In economic terms, it brought a massive boost to Western Europe and brought about speedy recovery for the countries
 - E.g. Britain and France benefited, and so did war-ravaged West Germany, to the extent that West Germany enjoyed an "economic miracle" by the early 1950s.
- It helped to bind the United States and its allies closer together against communism.
- This worried Stalin, who then retaliated by creating two new organisations, the **Communist Information Bureau (Cominform)** and the **Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon)** with his Eastern European allies.
- It strengthened the division between the American-aligned Western Europe and the Soviet dominated Eastern Europe, thus contributing to tensions between the two superpowers.

Cominform and Comecon

Stalin's reaction to the Marshall Plan

- Stalin was appalled and angered by the Marshall Plan.
 - It seemed to him that the United States was trying to control Western Europe in the same way that the USSR was controlling Eastern Europe.
 - But to Stalin, the difference was that **the United States did not need a defensive buffer zone in the way the USSR did.**
- He was concerned that US domination of Western Europe was the first step was the first step for the United States to advance into Eastern Europe and threaten Soviet control there.
- In addition, Stalin wondered if Truman's involvement in Germany's quick recovery was due to the latter's intention to use Germany against the USSR.
- Stalin could do little about what was happening in Western Europe.
- Stalin tightened his grip on the Eastern European states and ordered them to have nothing to do with the Marshall Plan.
- Then he turned them into **satellite states**
 - Satellite states - a independent country that is under heavy political, economic and military control or influence from another country.
 - The USSR set up many satellite states in Eastern Europe so that the countries closest to it would be friendly to the USSR and form a buffer zone protecting it from Western Europe
- Stalin forced these new satellite states to stay close to the USSR.
 - He did this by creating two new organisations, the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon)

Cominform

- Set up in 1947, the Cominform published propaganda that would unite the communist states in Europe and ensured that satellite states implement a Soviet-style communism and trade mainly with other Cominform countries.
- The members in Cominform included the leaders of the communist parties in Eastern Europe.
- Stalin used Cominform to tighten his control over the satellite states and ensure that the United States could not gain any political influence in them.
 - At Cominform meetings, Stalin told the Eastern European states which policies they should follow.
 - This included rejecting financial support from the Marshall Plan and cutting off trade and any other kind of contact with countries that did not belong to Cominform.
- There was no real debate within Cominform
 - The only state which argued with Stalin was Yugoslavia, led by Marshal Tito. Yugoslavia was expelled from Cominform in 1948.
 - There was a bitter, long-lasting feud between Tito and Stalin.

Comecon

- Set up in 1949 in response to the Marshall Plan
 - Stalin wanted to make sure the satellite states were free from any kind of control or influence from the United States.
- The idea was that Comecon members would trade mostly with one another rather than with the West.
 - The satellite states were promised benefits similar to the Marshall Plan.
 - In reality, Comecon favoured the USSR far more than any of its other members.

- For example, Poland was forced to sell its coal to the USSR at one-tenth the price it could have sold on the open market.
- The creation of Cominform and Comecon in response to the Marshall Plan strengthened the division between the American-aligned Western Europe and the Soviet dominated Eastern Europe, thus contributing to the tensions between the two superpowers.

The Berlin Blockade

Escalation of Tensions

- The brewing tensions between the United States and the USSR would lead to a big clash over the issue of what to do with Germany.
- Germany was divided into four zones of occupation after the war. Berlin, situated within the Soviet Zone, was also divided into four zones.
 - This implementation of the four zones of occupation in Germany took reference from the **Morgenthau Plan**, drawn up by the United States in 1944.
 - The plan involved breaking up Germany and dismantling its industries so that it would never be strong enough to wage war again.
- With the increasing tensions between East and West from 1945 onwards, Truman began to see Germany as a possible future ally against the USSR.
 - The British and French were also keen for Germany to start rebuilding its economy, as controlling their respective zones was a drain on resources.
- In early 1948, the United States, France and Britain combined their

zones into a single economic unit known as the Trizone.

- A new currency was also introduced.
- To Stalin, this action seemed like the United States was rebuilding his old enemy.
 - He could not stop the Allies, but he thought he could make a point by forcing them out of Berlin.
- In June 1948, Stalin responded by carrying out a blockade of West Berlin, during which the USSR cut the rail and road links from the Allied zones into West Berlin.
 - This was known as the **Berlin Blockade**
 - He also disrupted water and power supplies.
 - It seemed like a clever scheme on Stalin's part as the people there would suffer if the Allies stayed in Berlin.
- Truman was not prepared to be driven out of Berlin.
- To counter the blockade, Truman ordered an airlift.
 - For almost a year, the United States and its allies supplied West Berlin with coal, food and medicine by air.
 - One plane reached West Berlin every 30 seconds at the height of the airlift.
 - This was known as the **Berlin Airlift**
 - Western media praised the courage and endurance of the air crews.
 - While the Soviet media criticised the constant flights as unsafe, the USSR did not prevent the airlift.
- By May 1949, the blockade was clearly not driving the United States out of Berlin, so Stalin eventually gave up and lifted it.

Consequences

The Creation of East Germany, 1949

- In May 1949, soon after the blockade, Truman announced that the British, French and US zones would be united to create the **Federal Republic of Germany**, or **West Germany**.
- Soon afterwards, in October 1949, Stalin announced that the Soviet zone would become the **German Democratic Republic**, or **East Germany**.
- **Berlin was also divided into East and West Berlin**
 - The division of Berlin would later take the form of a concrete wall dividing East and West, known as the Berlin Wall.
 - The Berlin Wall became one of the key symbols of the Cold War, separating the communist East and democratic West

The Creation of NATO, 1949

- At the height of the Berlin Blockade, the Western powers met in Washington D.C. and signed the agreement to work together.
 - This resulted in the **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)** in April 1949.
- While there were many parts to the treaty, the most important was that all NATO members agreed to go to war if any member was attacked.
 - NATO countries could provide US forces with secure bases in Europe.
 - Truman wanted to make it clear to Stalin that the United States would intervene in Western Europe, if necessary.
- Reactions
 - US allies such as Britain, were happy to have US forces in Western Europe as it guaranteed their protection from a possible Soviet attack.

- Not surprisingly, the USSR did not see the alliance in the same way.
 - They saw it as a threat by the Western powers that split the world into two military blocs.

It made clear that there was a new reality: Europe was now divided into two camps, Western Europe and the United States versus Eastern Europe and the USSR

Continuing Tensions, 1949-1955

The USSR and its Atomic Bomb

- In August 1949, the USSR successfully exploded its first atomic bomb.
- This meant that there was atomic parity with the United States
 - Atomic parity - Parity refers to the state of being equal. Thus, atomic parity means both superpowers had the ability to produce atomic bombs.
- This alarmed the Americans.
- This contributed to a **nuclear arms race** between the two superpowers as they competed against each other for superiority in the development and accumulation of nuclear weapons.

Communist Victory in China

- The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) defeated the Guomindang (GMD) in the Chinese Civil War, leading to a communist China in October 1949.

- While the United States was concerned about the implications of China turning communist, the Soviets were delighted.
- In February 1950, the two communist powers signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance.
- The emergence of a new communist power that strengthened the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union heightened tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Outbreak of Korean War

- The Korean War was fought between North Korea and South Korea from 1950 to 1953.
 - The war began on 25 June 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea following years of hostilities between the two countries.
 - North Korea was supported by China and the Soviet Union while South Korea was supported by the United States and allied countries.
 - The fighting ended with an armistice on 27 July 1953.

Impact

- The Korean War was one of the first instances of a military conflict in the Cold War where both superpowers clashed but did not fight each other directly.
- The war led to the militarisation of NATO.
- This in turn led to the creation of the **Warsaw Pact**.
- The Korean War thus contributed towards the escalation of military tensions in Europe.

The Warsaw Pact, 1955

- In 1955, West Germany was invited to join NATO, and rearmed.
 - This proved to be too much for the USSR.
 - Stalin had died in 1953, but East-West tensions remained.
 - The USSR believed that West Germany joining NATO was a threat.
- In response, the USSR created the Warsaw Pact in May 1955.
 - All the communist states in Eastern Europe, except Yugoslavia, became members.
 - All members agreed that if one state was threatened, they would help to defend it.

Impact - Entrenched Soviet Rule in Eastern Europe

- The Warsaw Pact entrenched Soviet rule in Eastern Europe. Soviet troops, rather than the respective governments, were the ones that dealt with protests and uprisings in Eastern Europe.

Example

- On 4 November 1956, a nation-wide revolt in Hungary was forcefully quelled by Soviet tanks and troops.
 - Thousands were killed and injured, and nearly a quarter-million Hungarians fled its shores.
- Similarly, in protests in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania were crushed by Soviet forces.
- The Warsaw Pact sought to ensure that communist rule in Eastern Europe remained secure.
 - All the senior positions in the Warsaw Pact were held by Soviet officials and commands, not by anyone from the satellite states.

- Tensions between the superpowers and their respective set of allies increased because Europe was now divided into two armed camps.
- The Warsaw Pact strengthened the USSR because it gave the USSR command of all the armies of the satellite states.
- For the next 35 years, each side put much energy into plans to stop a possible invasion by the other side.
 - For example, thousands of US troops, tanks, aircraft and weapons were stationed in bases across Europe, particularly West Germany.
 - In return, the USSR and the other Warsaw Pact members trained their military forces, and stationed troops in each member's territory, in case NATO attacked.

Tensions between the superpowers and their respective set of allies increased because Europe was now divided into two armed camps.

Conclusion

- The events of 1947 to 1955 showed that bi-polarity had emerged as the post-war order.
 - The behaviours of the United States and the USSR showed that the two sides found it hard to see eye to eye on any issue as they did not trust each other.
 - Neither could accept that the other had a valid case or was acting responsibly or morally.
 - This was demonstrated by the formation of alliances like NATO and the Warsaw Pact.
- At the same time, it seemed that neither the United States nor the USSR really wanted to go to war with each other.
 - They were prepared to stir up trouble, criticise and support each

other's enemies, but they usually found a way to avoid outright war.

- A major reason was that both sides now had nuclear weapons and that the consequences of such a war were a lot more than traditional warfare.
- However, the superpowers did get involved in major clashes. They got involved in what some considered as proxy wars.
 - A proxy war - In the Cold War context is a conflict where the superpowers do not fight directly against each other but provide arms, money and other types of support to the side which shares their political views.