

## INTERNATIONAL POST-WORLD WAR II RELATIONS: THE BEGINNING OF THE "COLD WAR"

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**Abstract:** The post-World War II era was a period marked by rising tensions between former allies, notably the United States and the Soviet Union. These tensions sparked the onset of the Cold War, a period of political, military, and ideological rivalry that shaped international relations for decades. This article examines the origins, motivations, and key events that contributed to the Cold War's inception, alongside an analysis of its initial impact on global alliances, diplomacy, and military strategies. By understanding the historical context and early diplomatic maneuvers, we gain insights into the Cold War's lasting influence on contemporary international relations.

**Keywords:** Cold War Origins, Post-World War II Relations, Ideological Rivalry, United States-Soviet Union Tensions, Containment Policy, Marshall Plan, Nuclear Arms Race, Iron Curtain, Berlin Blockade, NATO and Warsaw Pact.

### INTRODUCTION

The end of World War II in 1945 left the world divided between two superpowers with contrasting ideologies: the United States, promoting capitalism and democracy, and the Soviet Union, advocating for communism and centralized control. As former allies who united against a common enemy, the disintegration of this alliance gave rise to the Cold War. This paper explores the origins of these hostilities, from ideological differences and power struggles to the specific events that heightened tensions in the early post-war years.

Historical Context and Ideological Differences

#### 1. End of World War II and Shifts in Power:

The conclusion of WWII redefined global power structures. Both the United States and the Soviet Union emerged with unprecedented influence, but their opposing ideologies set them on a collision course.

#### 2. Capitalism vs. Communism:

A major cause of tension was the ideological rift between capitalist democracy and communist socialism. The United States sought to promote freedom and democratic governance, while the Soviet Union aimed to expand communism.

### 3. The Role of Europe:

Europe became the focal point of this rivalry, with Eastern Europe under Soviet influence and Western Europe aligning with the United States. The division of Germany, particularly Berlin, symbolizes this divide.

#### Key Events that Escalated the Cold War

##### 1. The Iron Curtain Speech (1946):

Winston Churchill's speech famously described the division of Europe as an "Iron Curtain" descending across the continent, highlighting the growing divide between the East and West.

##### 2. Truman Doctrine and Containment Policy (1947):

The United States formally adopted a policy of containment, aiming to prevent the spread of communism by supporting allies economically and militarily.

##### 3. The Marshall Plan (1948):

This U.S. initiative to provide economic aid to rebuild Europe was perceived by the Soviets as a threat, reinforcing the East-West divide.

##### 4. Berlin Blockade and Airlift (1948–1949):

The Soviet Union attempted to force the Allies out of Berlin by blocking access routes. The Western allies responded with the Berlin Airlift, showcasing the determination to resist Soviet pressure.

#### Analysis: Why Did the Cold War Begin?

- **Mutual Suspicion and Paranoia:**

Both superpowers distrusted each other's intentions, suspecting ulterior motives in policies and alliances.

- **Nuclear Arms Race:**

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki set the stage for a nuclear arms race, which further fueled competition and fear between the superpowers.

- **Establishment of NATO and the Warsaw Pact:**

In response to perceived threats, both blocs formed military alliances, heightening the global divide and formalizing the Cold War structure.

#### Conclusion

The Cold War began not as an outright conflict but as a complex web of political, ideological, and military rivalry. The policies, speeches, and events in the early post-war years laid the groundwork for a prolonged period of tension that influenced international relations throughout the 20th century and beyond. Understanding these beginnings provides insight into the nature of superpower relations and the enduring impact of the Cold War on today's geopolitical landscape.

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