



**Key Figures**

1. Josef Stalin
2. Harry Truman
3. Adolf Hitler
4. Winston Churchill
5. Alexander Mitchell Palmer

**Ideological reasons**

The USA was a capitalist democracy, where people could own property and businesses, compete for profit, and vote for different political parties. In 1917, Russia became communist after a revolution. Communists believed the government should control factories, shops, and land to ensure equality, opposing private ownership. Both the USA and the USSR believed their system was best. The USA feared the USSR wanted to spread communism globally, so it united with other capitalist nations to stop this. The USSR, in turn, saw capitalist countries as aggressive threats, creating tensions between the two superpowers.

**World War I**

Many in the West, particularly in Britain and France, found it hard to forgive the Russian **withdrawal** from the First World War in 1917. It had left the Allies in a very difficult situation, and many felt that the Russians simply could not be trusted. At the end of the war, the Russians were not invited to the **peace talks** at the end of World War I but the agreements did much to change their country. For example, parts of Southern Russia were given to Romania and Poland. This further increased Russia's resentment of other nations.

**The Anti-Hitler Alliance, 1933; The Nazi Soviet Pact, 1939**

In 1933, Hitler became leader of Germany. He hated communism and vowed to destroy it. The Soviet leader, Josef Stalin, tried to protect his country by forming an **anti-Hitler alliance** with France and Britain; after much delay, no alliance was formed. Stalin viewed this as a sign that Britain and France were happy for Hitler to attack the USSR. In 1939, Stalin signed an agreement with Nazi Germany not to attack each other. The Nazis had persecuted communists, and communism and Nazism were seen as unquestionable enemies. By signing the pact, Stalin had taken a chance to avoid invasion and gain land in Poland. For many in the West, this proved that Stalin couldn't be **trusted**.

**March 1947, The Truman Doctrine**

In March 1947, US President Harry Truman made a speech in which he said that the USA would come to the aid – with money and military help – of any country under threat of a communist takeover. In doing this, the USA would 'contain' communism and stop it spreading from country to country. This policy of **containment** became known as the **Truman Doctrine** and was the basis of US **foreign policy** for years to come.

**1945, Disagreements begin**

In 1945, towards the end of the Second World War, the USA, Britain and France began to disagree with the USSR over what to do with the countries that had been devastated by the war. Britain and the USA felt that countries in Europe, including Germany, should be helped to recover quickly and so return to a time of peace when they cooperated and traded freely with each other.

**1949, NATO and the Warsaw Pact (1955)**

Following numerous points of tension, in 1949 the USA, Britain, France, Belgium, Canada and numerous other European countries joined forces to form a military alliance called NATO; this union was a defence against the USSR and its eastern European allies. The communist countries responded by forming the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance containing the USSR, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania. And so began a period in history known as the Cold War – a war fought by every other method except direct fighting between the USA and the USSR. A war of words, threats, bluffs and propaganda.

1917

**The Russian Civil War, 1917-22**

When the communists took control in Russia in 1917, the USA, France and Britain sent **troops** and supplies to support those fighting against the new communist government (the **White Army**). Despite this, the communists (the Red Army) managed to hold onto power.

**Key Vocabulary**

Communism  
Capitalism  
The Red Scare  
The Red Army  
Truman Doctrine  
The Marshall Plan  
The Iron Curtain  
Atomic bombs  
NATO  
The Warsaw Pact

**The Red Scare, 1919**

In 1919, in the USA, a **suicide bomb** exploded at the house of Alexander Mitchell Palmer, the man in charge of the USA's Department of Justice. Next to the body of the bomber was a **communist newspaper**, *Plain Words*. Later that year, 8 large bombs detonated simultaneously in 8 US cities. No one was ever found guilty of these bombings, but people **feared** it was the work of communists. Palmer vowed to get rid of any communist supporters in the USA. During what became known as the 'Palmer Raids', around 6000 suspected communists were arrested and put in prison across 33 US cities.

**World War II 1939-45**

When World War II broke out, Britain, France and the USA put their concerns about communism aside and fought as allies with the USSR against Hitler's Germany. When Hitler invaded the USSR in 1941, Stalin urged his allies to mount an attack on Germany as soon as possible. However, the attack (known as D-Day) did not occur until 1944, and Stalin believed that his allies had deliberately waited for the Soviets to bear the brunt of the German attacks before helping out.

**1945-1948 . The Iron Curtain falls**

Whilst the USA wanted to help countries recover from war, the leader of the USSR (**Josef Stalin**) wanted to keep Germany weak and to keep Soviet troops inside the eastern European countries he had invaded during the war. In this way, the USSR claimed Finland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia and gained land from Czechoslovakia and Romania. The USSR now either controlled these places directly, or governments under Stalin's influence ruled them. Soviet territory had expanded nearly 500km west and gained control of over 20 million people. Soon, helped by Stalin, communists took over in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland. This prompted Winston Churchill to declare that Europe had been divided by an 'Iron Curtain' with communist countries in the east on one side and capitalist countries in the west on the other. Even Germany was divided in two, Soviets in the east, French, British and American troops in the West.

**1948, The Marshall Plan**

The USA was willing to pay huge amounts of money to help European countries recover after World War II. By 1953, the USA had sent \$17 billion to help Europe rebuild. For example, \$3.2 billion went to the UK and \$2.7 billion to France.

**1949, Atomic bombs**

In 1945, the USA dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 1949, the USSR conducted its first successful test of a nuclear bomb - now the two most powerful countries in the world each had nuclear weapons. The arms race had begun.

1949