

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION: ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

Analysis of Superpower National Interests 1946-1950

Directions: Using information from the documents and resources listed below, as well as your previous knowledge of the subject, prepare for an in-class debate on the following question:

Some historians argue that the Cold War began because of Soviet aggression followed by American containment policies. Other historians contend that it was America who was aggressive and the Soviets who reacted to protect their interests. What is your evaluation of these two positions?

DOCUMENT A: Soviet Losses in the Second World War Source: Louis L. Snyder, *The War 1939-45* (New York, 1960).

- * 22-27 million military and civilian dead
- * 25 million homeless civilians
- * 800,000 square miles of productive land destroyed
- * 13,000 railroad bridges destroyed
- * 4,100 railroad stations destroyed
- * 186,000 railway cars and locomotives destroyed
- * most major cities in European Russia destroyed or badly damaged
- * major industrial sites and regions destroyed by retreating German Army

OPERATION BARBAROSSA [German Invasion of Soviet Union]

Origin of attack: staging areas in eastern Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Rumania.

Attacking forces: German army with important support from allies -- Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria.

DOCUMENT B: Interpreting American Foreign Policy Resource: John W. Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II* (New York, 1962).

Passage that begins:

The American dream of postwar peace and Big Three [United States, Great Britain, USSR] cooperation was to be shattered as the Soviet Union expanded into Eastern and Central Europe, . . .

DOCUMENT C: Soviet Military Weaknesses Source: U.S. Intelligence Report (1945)

A 1945 U.S. intelligence report listed Soviet military weaknesses and, after each one, the time required to correct each problem. The report assumed that the Soviets would not risk a major war until these weaknesses had been corrected. Their conclusion was that the Soviets would not risk such a war for about fifteen years.

1. War losses in manpower and industry: 15 years
2. Lack of technicians: 5 years
3. Lack of long-range bombers to reach Europe or the United States: 5-10 years
4. Lack of a modern navy: 15-20 years for a war involving major naval operations (for example, an attack on the United States)
5. Poor condition of railway and military transportation systems and equipment: 10 years
6. Adequate preparation of oil, rail and industrial centers against long-range bombers: 5- 10 years
7. Lack of an atomic bomb: 5 years
8. Resistance in occupied countries: 5 years or less
9. Military weakness in Asia: 15-20 years

DOCUMENT D: American Involvement Resource: Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War* (New York, 1995).

Passage that begins:

The Americans had hopes of reaching a friendly settlement with Stalin, working out remaining disagreements through the United Nations Organization, withdrawing and demobilizing their forces, . . .

DOCUMENT E: Propaganda Techniques

Resource: Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and McCarthyism* (New York, 1974).

Passage that begins:

By far the most important propaganda technique of the Truman Administration was the consistent interpretation of major international events primarily in the terminology of the Truman Doctrine. . . .

DOCUMENT F: The Truman Doctrine

In February 1947, President Harry S Truman delivered the speech excerpted below to a joint session of Congress. In it, he spelled out his administration's case for sending economic and military aid to the governments of Greece and Turkey. The Greek government was being challenged by a Communist-led and Soviet-supplied guerrilla movement, and Turkey was being pressured by the Soviets to grant increased access for their navy and merchant ships to the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles:

I believe it must be the policy of the US to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation [conquest] by armed minorities or by outside pressures. . . . I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes. . . .

It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East. Moreover, the disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe whose people are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedoms and independence while they repair the damages of war. . . . Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for the rest of the world. . . . Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far-reaching to the West as well as the East.

DOCUMENT G

Resource: Georgi M. Kornienko [Soviet expert on US], in *Sources of the Cold War* (1990).

Passage that begins:

In any case, it was simply preposterous to speak in 1950 of the existence of a Soviet plan -- in terms of a practical course of action -- to establish domination over the world or as a start just over the European continent. . . .

DOCUMENT H

Resource: Louis Halle [US historian], *The Cold War as History* (1982).

Passage that begins:

If you put a scorpion and a tarantula together in a bottle, the objective of their own self-

preservation will impel them to fight each other to the death. For the moment, at least, no understanding between them is possible. . . .

DOCUMENT I

Resource: Dean Acheson [Truman's Secretary of State], Present at the Creation (1969).

Passage that begins:

It was true and understandable to describe the Russian motivating concept as being that "no state is friendly which is not subservient" and ours that "no state is unfriendly which, in return for respect for its rights, respects the rights of other states." . . .

DOCUMENT J

Letter from Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace to President Truman, 23 July 1946. [NOTE: Truman requested and received Wallace's resignation after reading this letter.]

To the Russians all of the defense and security measures of the Western powers seem to have an aggressive intent. Our actions to expand our military security system -- such steps as extending the Monroe Doctrine to include the arming of the Western Hemisphere nations, our present monopoly of the atomic bomb, our interest in outlying bases and our general support of the British Empire - - appear to them as going far beyond the requirements of defense. I think we might feel the same if the US were the only capitalistic country in the world, and the principal socialistic countries were creating a level of armed strength far exceeding anything in their previous history. From the Russian point of view, also, the granting of a loan to Britain and the lack of tangible results on their request to borrow for rehabilitation purposes may be regarded as another evidence of strengthening of an anti-Soviet bloc.

Finally, our resistance to her attempts to obtain warm water ports and her own security system in the form of "friendly" neighboring states, seems, from the Russian point of view, to clinch the case. After twenty-five years of isolation and after having achieved the status of a major power, Russia believes that she is entitled to recognition of her new status. Our interest in establishing democracy in Eastern Europe, where democracy by and large has never existed, seems to her an attempt to reestablish the encirclement of unfriendly neighbors which was created after the last war and which might serve as a springboard of still another effort to destroy her.

DOCUMENT K

Source: Winston S. Churchill, "Iron Curtain" Speech, 5 March 1946, at Fulton, Missouri.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.

. . . If now the Soviet Government tries, by separate action, to build up a pro-Communist Germany in their areas, this will cause new serious difficulties in the British and American zones, and will give the defeated Germans the power of putting themselves up to auction between the Soviets and Western Democracies. Whatever conclusions may be drawn from these facts -- and facts they are - this is certainly not the liberated Europe we fought to build up. . . .