

Summer Homework – History Department @ Solihull Sixth Form College.

Welcome to the History Department at Solihull Sixth Form College. We look forward to meeting you! This Summer homework is designed to get you thinking and do some background reading ahead of September. Please give it your best time and attention – we would like to see your best work.

The Summer homework focuses on background reading to our course Germany 1919-1963 as this is the first course we study in the Autumn. In particular we are asking you to use one of the articles below to gather some background knowledge about the Cold War and how it affects Germany after World War Two.

It doesn't matter if you have studied Germany before or not – this should give you an introduction and will definitely extend your current knowledge. Later in the course we will study the Mid Tudor Crisis – Edward VI and Mary I and then the reign of Elizabeth I. In year 13 you will study Russia 1855-1964.

TASK A.

1. Read the following article '*Hitler Overview*'. Then re-read it – some parts might need thinking about to understand!
2. What does this article reveal about Adolf Hitler? **Write a paragraph** explaining what the article says about him and why he came to hold absolute power in Germany. Look carefully at the ideas that are given in the article. You can include quotes but make sure you explain what you think they mean in your own words.
3. **Write down 4 or 5 questions** that would be interesting to ask about Hitler as a key individual in History. What do you want to know more about? What interests or intrigues you? Is there anything in the article you don't understand?
4. **Write a paragraph** explaining why YOU think it is important to study the rise of Hitler and his role in History. Give specific reasons and explain them. Be convincing!

Please produce all of your Summer homework as a WORD document that could be sent or uploaded to your teacher. Your homework is your first impression to your teacher and we will be looking at this work.

Hitler Overview (From History Review)



This is the best known face of the last century. Its appearance on the cover of a book or magazine is known to increase sales by 25-50%. The political career of Adolf Hitler is the most fully documented this century, and more has been written about him than anyone else in history – with the possible exception of Jesus Christ. He provokes endless, sometimes barmy, internet questions and comments. Over 1000 biographies have been published. Yet, after 50 years of historical debate, the phenomenon of Hitler still amazes.

Alan Bullock points out that he began with no advantages (though not as humbly as he liked to claim), not even a citizen of the country he was to rule. Entirely reliant on his own resources, he came to wield in Germany an absolute power unequalled in a modern industrialised state. His domination of Europe, comparable to Napoleon's at his height, was broken only by the combined

efforts of the three most powerful nations in the world. How did he do it? Not through hard graft, as he was in some ways lazy, often bored by his administrative duties. Bullock draws attention to his mastery of the irrational in politics, gift for simplification, sense of timing, opportunism, strength of purpose in pursuing his aims, unshakable belief in himself as a man chosen by destiny. His main qualification for politics was arguably his staggering gifts as an orator – 'a mass psychologist of really diabolical genius' (Schacht).

Adolf Hitler poses unique problems for historians. 'The Nazi period in German history is an object of academic historical enquiry and detailed scholarly research. It is also a live and painful issue for thousands of Germans and other Europeans, the explanation of why they have no relatives or children. (Michael Burleigh). For many Germans, 1933-45 is a black hole in their history, which somehow has to be reinvented. Twinned with this problem is the puzzle of Hitler's personal responsibility for two of the greatest catastrophes in world history – World War Two and the Holocaust. He is the supreme example of the debate about the historical role of 'great' individuals – whether the Hitlers and Napoleons bend social, economic and demographic forces to their will or are their prisoner.

Both these dilemmas are addressed in AJP Taylors *Origins of the Second World War*, which is the start of modern revisionism. Little can be discovered so long as we go on attributing everything that happened to Hitler. He supplied a powerful dynamic element, but it was fuel to an existing engine. He was in part the creation of Versailles, in part the creation of ideas that were common contemporary Europe. Most of all, he was the creation of German history and of the German present. He would have counted for nothing without the support and cooperation of the German people. He gave orders, which Germans executed, of a wickedness without parallel in civilised history. His foreign policy was a different matter. He aimed to make Germany the dominant power in Europe and maybe, more remotely, in the world. Others have pursued similar aims, and still do. Other powers treat smaller countries as their satellites. Other powers defend their vital interests by force of arms. In international affairs there was nothing wrong with Hitler except that he was a German.

It is remarkable how much of the current historical agenda is here. Taylor encompasses the issues of whether he was product or creator of the times he lived in, whether he worked to a monstrous blueprint in foreign policy or instinctively followed more normal paths of self-interest, even the complicity of the

Germany people – the subject of Goldhagen’s recent and controversial Hitler’s Willing Executioners. (1996).

Task B: The Cold War — An Overview

The aftermath of World War Two shifted the global balance of power and created a bi-polar world led by two competing superpowers: The United States (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). We call this global competition the Cold War.

TASK: Read the following article about the Cold War. Then write answers to the four questions below. Give some thought to your answers and use evidence from the article in your answers to support what you are saying. Add this to your word document.

First read: preview and skimming for gist

Before you read the article, you should skim it first. The skim should be very quick and give you the gist (general idea) of what the article is about. You should be looking at the title, author, headings, pictures, and opening sentences of paragraphs for the gist.

Second read: key ideas and understanding content

Now that you’ve skimmed the article, you should preview the questions you will be answering. These questions will help you get a better understanding of the concepts and arguments that are presented in the article. Keep in mind that when you read the article, it is a good idea to write down any vocab you see in the article that is unfamiliar to you. You could start a glossary.

At the end of the second close read, answer the following questions:

- 1. According to the author, what was the basic difference at the heart of the Cold War conflict?**
- 2. What does this author identify as the three main features of the Cold War?**
- 3. Why did Stalin want to expand Soviet influence in Eastern Europe?**

4. What was the policy of containment and what conflicts does the author use as an example of this policy?

Cold War: An Overview



By Burleigh Hendrickson

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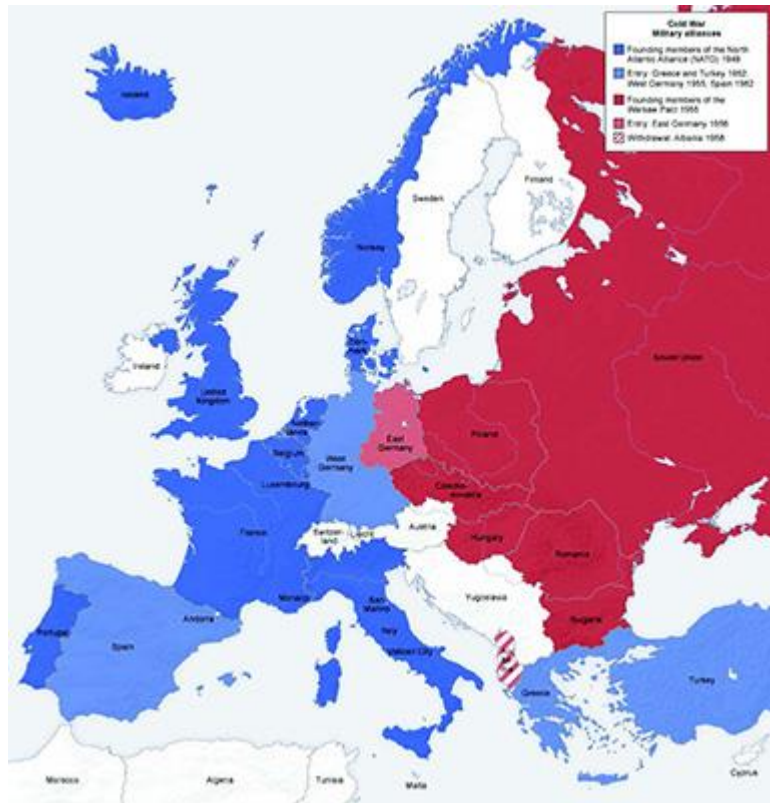
What was the Cold War?

The destruction of World War II reduced many European cities to rubble. It also led world leaders to seek new ways to protect against future attacks. While the United States and the Soviet Union had worked together to defeat the Axis powers, their partnership quickly turned to a 50-year-long confrontation. They disagreed about how to rebuild Europe, and their efforts to increase their own security often conflicted. This fierce conflict is called the "Cold War" since the two superpowers never directly

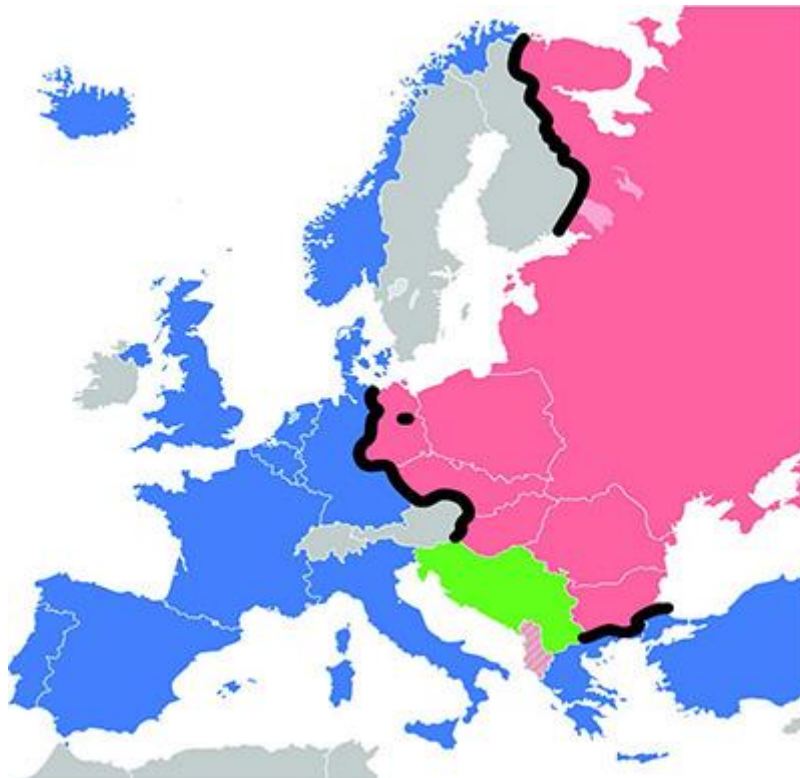
engaged in combat ("hot war"). Instead, they increased their military capabilities, tried to expand their global influence, and undermined the other's way of life in the eyes of the world. While the United States believed in a capitalist system of free markets and multiple political parties, the Soviet Union was founded on a communist system controlled by a centralized state and a single political party.

The Cold War came down to some basic differences between the world-views of the United States and the Soviet Union. Communist societies believed in redistributing wealth (taking from the rich and giving to the poor) and promoted workers and state-run economies. These resulted in low unemployment rates but sometimes led to the unequal distribution of consumer goods. They also viewed organized religion as dangerous. The US capitalist system let free markets determine the production and distribution of goods, and promoted freedom of religion. This led to more productivity but often created massive economic inequalities. Both sides also used propaganda to paint a negative picture of their enemies. From 1945 until the collapse of the USSR in the 1990s, these two nations competed for global influence in the areas of military, economics, politics, and even culture.

Three key features defined the Cold War: 1) the threat of nuclear war, 2) competition over the allegiance (loyalty) of newly independent nations, and 3) the military and economic support of each other's enemies around the world. The United States showed its global military dominance when it dropped two atomic bombs on Japan to end the war. This act prompted the USSR to seek nuclear technology to discourage American aggression. The United States held other advantages as well. Having entered World War II late in the conflict, it lost far fewer soldiers and civilians. The USSR lost 8-10 million soldiers (25 million including civilians) yet the United States lost 300,000 in the war. While the Soviet Union faced a devastating invasion, most of the United States emerged unscathed from the war. Finally, the US economy expanded during the war as it made profits selling weapons and supplies to the Allied forces.



Map of Cold War military alliances. The Eastern Soviet "Warsaw Pact" areas are in red, and the Western NATO areas are in blue. CC BY-SA 3.0



Map of Iron Curtain dividing the Eastern Bloc and USSR from Western Europe. The black dot in Germany represents the division between East and West Berlin. By Semhur, CC BY-SA 4.0.

A divided Europe

After a long history of enemy invasions, Soviet leader Josef Stalin wanted to expand its territory and build a buffer between the Soviet Union and Europe. He also wanted control in Central and Eastern European countries that the Soviets had helped liberate. As a result, Stalin quickly established strong communist parties that took power in Central and Eastern Europe (the Eastern Bloc). They took orders from the USSR. Meanwhile, the United States provided over \$12 billion in aid for rebuilding Western European nations who agreed to open trade.

This divided Europe, breaking trade networks and splitting communities between East and West. These economic divisions spread to separate military alliances in each zone. This further divided Europe along an imaginary line called the Iron Curtain. Travel and cultural exchange across the Iron Curtain became increasingly difficult. It separated previously connected communities and created new ones living either under a communist or capitalist system.

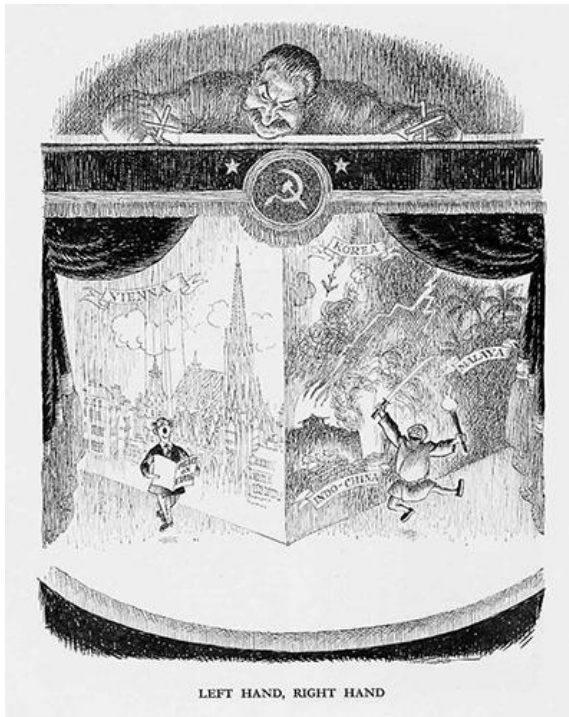
Germany became a Cold War battleground. East and West Germany had separate governments and capital cities. Families were separated based solely on where the lines were drawn. The city of Berlin became a microcosm (small-scale representation) of the Cold War, with British, French, and Americans controlling West Berlin while the Soviets controlled East Berlin. To prevent defections (people leaving one state for another), the communists built the Berlin Wall in 1961. It divided the city. They set up checkpoints to control border crossings. At some points, guards even had orders to kill unarmed East Germans seeking to cross illegally. The wall became the most important symbol of the Cold War.

West Berliners lift up babies to meet family members living across the wall in East Berlin. By the CIA, public domain



The Cold War heats up around the world

The Cold War started in Europe. From 1945 to 1953, the USSR expanded its influence by creating the Eastern Bloc across states like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. Stalin set up puppet communist governments that he could control. He repressed anyone who resisted. The United States likewise began to meddle in the affairs of foreign nations where it feared communist regimes would gain control. This became known as a policy of containment.



A 1962 comic showing Stalin controlling puppets in Europe and Asia. By Manh Hai, CC BY 2.0

In the 1950s, competition had spread to the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America, with each side trying to establish control. By the 1960s, the Cold War reached Africa. Many former colonies achieved independence from European empires (decolonization). These new nations sided with the Americans or Soviets to receive economic and military aid. Both superpowers supported dictatorships that came to power through violence and repressed their societies—all to gain an edge in the global Cold War.

Some of the most important Cold War conflicts took place in Asia. Communists took power in China in 1949, and the Americans feared other countries would soon follow. In 1953, Korea had been divided into two zones, with a communist government in the North and an American-leaning government in the South. To contain the spread of communism to South Korea, the US sent troops. The Chinese responded by sending their own troops to the border. The war killed nearly 5 million people but ended in a stalemate, leaving a divided Korea that remains today.

Two Americans protest the Vietnam War in Kansas, 1967.

Perhaps no conflict illustrates the policy of containment better than Vietnam. Like Korea, Vietnam was divided into a communist north and pro-West south. To contain the communist north, the United States invaded in the 1960s. The Soviet Union sent money and weapons to the communist forces. By 1975, with the help of the Soviets and China, a small, poor nation defeated the strongest military superpower in the world. Over 58,000 Americans died in the conflict. The war divided Americans who were for or against the war. The US intervention in Vietnam exposed the hypocrisy of US policies that claimed to promote self-determination, and it inspired other small nations to determine their own futures. After the Vietnam War, Cold War tension briefly decreased. The Americans' defeat in Vietnam, the threat of nuclear war, and new Soviet leadership led to open discussions between the sides. But much like the Americans had in Vietnam, the USSR intervened in Afghanistan in the 1980s. It wanted to ensure the victory of a communist-leaning group and sent troops to assist them. Just as North Vietnam received aid and military assistance from the USSR, the United States backed Soviet enemies in Afghanistan with money and weapons. Ultimately, the USSR was equally unsuccessful, and US-backed forces emerged victorious. After much infighting, Islamic extremists called the Taliban claimed power in the region, thanks to American aid.



The end of the Cold War

The Cold War finally ended in the 1990s. The USSR could no longer keep up with US military spending. Meanwhile, economic problems in the Eastern Bloc meant that goods were in short supply. To keep citizens from revolting, the new Soviet leader, Mikhael Gorbachev, proposed reforms to stimulate communist economies. The economic

reforms were known as *perestroika*, or "restructuring." He also relaxed restrictions on freedom of expression, a policy called *glasnost*, or "openness." These reforms were too little too late.

In 1989, the most iconic symbol of the Iron Curtain, the Berlin Wall, which divided the German city, was torn down by Germans on both sides seeking to unify Germany. Similar waves of anti-communism spread throughout the Eastern Bloc. The end of the Cold War was marked by the disintegration of the USSR into over a dozen independent nations.



East and West Germans call for unification of the country and the removal of the Berlin Wall in the fall of 1989. By Sue Ream, CC BY 3.0.

Fear of a nuclear war likely prevented direct combat between the Americans and the Soviets. Though they did not engage in all-out warfare, the two superpowers supported many of each other's enemies in combat. They created a bi-polar system of global power that forced other nations to choose sides and ripped communities apart. The economic troubles created by the Soviet war in Afghanistan left the USSR unable to

maintain control of the Eastern Bloc. Once self-determination was possible in the 1990s, many Eastern European countries chose a different path. They elected non-communist parties and joined the European Union. Outside of Europe, communists in places like Cuba and China have remained in power while other

nations removed pro-US dictators. Whichever path nations have chosen since the collapse of the USSR, the Cold War has left a major imprint.

Task 3: Stretch & Challenge Ideas.

These tasks are optional, but if you would like to extend your knowledge of this period and prepare for the start of your course you could:

1. Watch the film '**Goodbye Lenin**'. This film is set in 1990 and gives a great insight into life in East Germany before the Wall came down.

'In October 1989, right before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Alex Kerner (Daniel Brühl) is living with his mom, Christiane (Kathrin Sass), and sister, Ariane (Maria Simon). But when the mother, a loyal party member, sees Alex participating in an anti-communist rally, she falls into a coma and misses the revolution. After she wakes, doctors say any jarring event could make her have a heart attack, meaning the family must go to great lengths to pretend communism still reigns in Berlin'.

2. *Research life in East Germany. You may find the following websites helpful.*

<https://www.forces.net/news/what-was-it-like-living-cold-war-east-germany>

<https://historycollection.com/this-is-what-life-was-like-in-communist-east-germany/4/>