

BBC Bitesize GCSE History – Cold War and Vietnam

Episode 2 – The development of the Cold War

Announcer: BBC Sounds, music, radio, podcasts.

Katie: I'm history podcaster Katie Charlwood.

Datshiane: And I'm a history enthusiast and TV and radio presenter Datshiane Navanayagam.

Katie: And this is Bitesize GCSE History.

Datshiane: This is the second episode in a seven-part series on the Cold War and the Vietnam War.

Katie: Throughout this series, we'll be looking at the key moments in the Cold War, how worsening tensions between ideologically opposed USSR and the USA led to a worsening of their relationship and resulted in the arms race and proxy wars.

Datshiane: In the first episode we looked at the background to the Cold War and in this episode we'll examine how tensions escalated further in the immediate post-war period.

Katie: We'll be sharing revision tips on how to remember those key facts and there'll be essay and exam tips, a quickfire test and we'll end with a summary of everything we're about to look at.

Datshiane: And we'll be sending our Bitesize History time-travelling reporter Kitty back in time to a key moment in Cold War history.

Katie: If it helps, have something to make notes on and do feel free to press stop and rewind whenever you need to.

Datshiane: Katie, let's do a quick recap of the Tehran Conference which we saw in the previous episode was one of the initial causes of the Cold War.

Katie: Of course. The three leaders of the Grand Alliance met in Tehran in **1943**: President Roosevelt of the USA, Britain's Prime Minister Churchill and USSR leader Stalin.

Datshiane: Now, as World War II was coming to an end and an Allied victory was looking likely, the three nations and the same three leaders met again, this time in Yalta in the USSR in February 1945. Let's look at what they wanted from this conference.

Katie: This is a good time to make some notes as to the outcomes of Yalta and how some of these fed into the Cold War. So, grab something that looks like a pen or a pencil to do just that. In this conference, they discussed how to manage the post-war world, particularly in Europe.

Datshiane: Firstly, Germany was to be divided into four occupation zones. They were to be controlled by Britain, the United States, the USSR and France. Berlin, the capital, would also be split into four zones. In the next episode we'll see how this became a continuing source of Cold War tension.

Katie: Secondly, Stalin promised to allow free elections in Eastern European countries that the Soviet army was liberating from Nazi control. However, Stalin's idea of free elections differed from Western views, which also led to tension.

Datshiane: Thirdly, the leaders agreed to establish the United Nations to promote peace and prevent future global conflicts.

Katie: And finally, the USSR agreed to join the war against Japan after Germany's surrender in exchange for territory in Asia.

Datshiane: In your revision notes, try to link each outcome to the consequence it had on relations between the Grand Alliance. Here's the starter for you, Katie. What consequences did Stalin's promise of free elections in Eastern European countries have?

Katie: All right, so outcome is the promise of those free elections, and the consequence was that the USSR control over Eastern Europe, and its refusal to allow democratic elections in Poland, caused deep distrust between them and the USA and Britain.

Datshiane: You can continue that list after the podcast with the other outcomes from Yalta.

Katie: OK, so we've had two conferences; one more to go. This one in Potsdam in Germany in July 1945 after the war in Europe had ended; still attended by the leaders of Britain, USA and the USSR. But two of those leaders were different from the previous conferences. Why so, Datshiane?

Datshiane: Well, Roosevelt had died earlier in 1945, so the American president was now Harry Truman and Clement Attlee was now the British Prime Minister. However, the USSR was still ruled by Joseph Stalin.

Katie: Grab those note-taking devices and again link those conference outcomes to their consequences on the Cold War.

Datshiane: The USSR had suffered devastating losses during the war, with millions of its citizens killed and much of the country destroyed by Nazi invasion. So, Stalin pushed for harsh treatment to Germany and its economy to prevent it from rearming.

Katie: Right, the Allies confirmed that Germany would have all its military forces removed, meaning it was to be demilitarised to prevent any future aggression. What else?

Datshiane: Here's what else. It was also agreed that the USSR would take reparations from its own German zone but would also receive some resources from the Western zones.

Katie: Germany's borders were redrawn, and large parts of Eastern Germany were given to Poland. Millions of Germans were forced to leave these areas, creating a major refugee crisis.

Datshiane: And the Allies also agreed to prosecute Nazi leaders for war crimes, and this led to the Nuremberg Trials.

Katie: So, some eventual agreements between the three leaders, but Truman's relationship with Stalin was very different to that of Franklin Roosevelt, and those personal relationships are always important, aren't they?

Datshiane: Absolutely. Initially, their relationship was friendly and respectful, and Truman even described Stalin as honest, but smart as hell. But it soon deteriorated. Truman eventually saw Stalin as a tyrant who was all about spreading communism and gaining control over Eastern Europe. It was at Potsdam, where Truman informed Stalin about the United States' development of a nuclear weapon, the atom bomb, and he hinted that the USA would use it against Japan if they refused to surrender. This announcement further heightened tensions between the USA and the USSR.

Katie: And why was that?

Datshiane: Well, think about it. The USSR had been trying to develop its own bomb but were years behind the USA, and they saw this as not just a threat to its own security but also a shifting of world power towards the West.

Katie: Here Datshiane, take a look at this picture from the American National Archives of Truman's handwriting on the back of a photo from the Potsdam Conference.

Datshiane: Oh, yes. So here Truman has written about the photo: 'In which I tell Stalin we expect to drop the most powerful explosives ever made on the Japanese. He smiled and said he appreciated me telling him.' Hmm. Katie, that reaction from Stalin, it doesn't sound like he was too surprised.

Katie: Yeah, exactly. There's lots of evidence that the USSR had spies that were keeping Stalin up to date about USA's progress on the bomb.

Datshiane: Well, days after the Potsdam Conference in August 1945, the USA dropped two atomic bombs on Japanese cities, resulting in the deaths and injury to hundreds of thousands of people, as well as the eventual end of World War II.

So, three important conferences: Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam.

Katie: A good way to remember them is by remembering Thank You Potsdam, T for thank and Tehran, Y for You and Yalta and P for, well, Potsdam. In 1946 in the aftermath of Potsdam, the now former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill made a speech in which he described the increasing divisions in Europe between capitalist and communist countries as if an 'iron curtain' had descended across Europe.

Datshiane: We mentioned that the USA had a new president at Potsdam, Harry Truman. Well, he had contrasting views compared to Roosevelt. Let's hear it from our time-travelling reporter, Kitty. She's in Washington DC in the USA in 1947.

Kitty: We've just heard President Truman's momentous announcement to the US government. He stepped up to the podium and delivered a speech that will no doubt change the course of the Cold War. He said, 'I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.' It's obvious that those outside pressures Truman refers to is the USSR and communism. His doctrine is clear: the USA is stepping in to contain communism and Truman's words feel like the next stage of this ideological

battle between East and West. A shift in USA foreign policy taking on a role of actively supporting countries threatened by communism. The Cold War is heating up. This is Kitty reporting from 1947. Back to the studio.

Datshiane: Thanks, Kitty. Let's summarise Truman's beliefs about the threat posed by the USSR or as it is known, the Truman Doctrine.

Katie: All right, well, he believed that if one country fell to communism others might follow in a kind of domino effect. So, in order to stop this, the USA would provide military and economic support to countries threatened by Soviet influence, and some of the key consequences of this were played out in the immediate years. You might want to grab that pen again and note these down.

Datshiane: In March 1947 the USA provided \$400 million in military and economic assistance to Greece and Turkey to help both countries resist communist influence.

Katie: And in 1948 the USA began to provide over \$12 billion to Western European nations to rebuild industries and infrastructure and to prevent them from turning to communism. This was through the Marshall Plan.

Datshiane: And in 1949 the United States and Western European countries formed NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, to counter the spread of communism and the perceived threat of Soviet expansion.

Katie: And the response from the USSR was... positive to all this, I suppose?

Datshiane: Uh no, definitely not. They saw the Truman Doctrine as a direct challenge to its sphere of influence and they thought that the USA was trying to expand its own influence in Europe.

Katie: Thought so! So, overall, the Truman Doctrine marked the beginning of active USA opposition to Soviet expansion, it divided Europe into East and West by Churchill's Iron Curtain and it set the foundation for decades of Cold War rivalry.

Datshiane: It also set the stage for the USA's involvement in global conflicts as part of their policy of containment. We'll look at two proxy wars in Korea and in Vietnam in later episodes.

Katie: OK, so a quick test to help those key facts stick. Three questions, five seconds each to write the answers down or press pause and have a little longer. Here goes. What was the main purpose of the Yalta conference in 1945?

Datshiane: The main purpose was to discuss the reorganisation of post-war Europe and the fate of Germany.

[correct bell sounds]

Katie: And what was the Truman Doctrine?

Datshiane: It was a policy in 1948, declaring that the USA would provide economic and military support to countries resisting communism.

[correct bell sounds]

Katie: And the Marshall Plan?

Datshiane: That was financial support to Western European nations to help them rebuild their industry and infrastructure after the war.

[correct bell sounds]

Katie: Well done. Even though we can't see you, I just know you aced that.

Datshiane: Head over to the Bitesize website for more information on this episode and others in this series.

Katie: Thanks for listening.