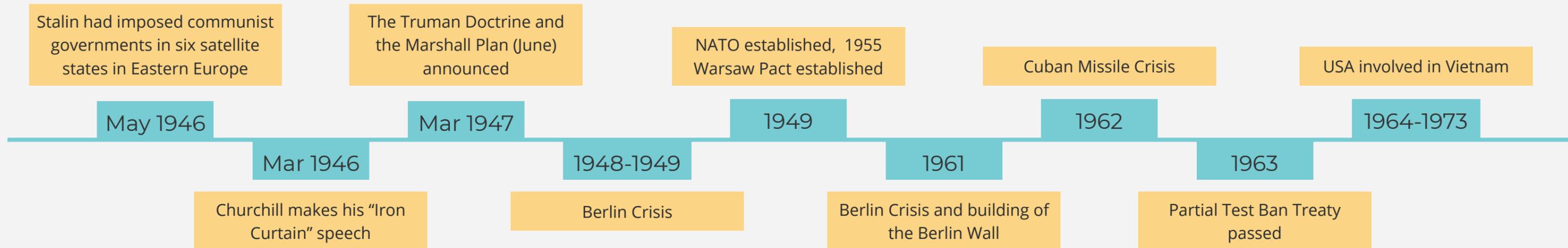


Key Question 6 : Why did relation between the USA and the USSR deteriorate between 1945 and 1973?

Timeline of events



Key words

Cold War	conflict between the USA and USSR without direct action
Superpower	term to describe the most powerful countries
Iron Curtain	Churchill's reference to the split in Europe in 1946
Containment	actions of the US to prevent the spread of communism
Truman Doctrine	Truman's pledge to help any country threatened by communism
Marshall Aid	programme of economic aid given to countries
Domino Theory	belief in the knock-on effect of communism
NATO	a defensive alliance of countries headed by the USA
Vietcong	communist guerrilla force fighting in Vietnam

Important concept

Relations between the post-war superpowers deteriorated as a result of ideological differences. Both resorted to a Cold War with no direct action and to fighting proxy wars.

There is some risk involved in action. But there is more risk in failure to act. - Truman

The Truman Doctrine and containment of communism

The USA and USSR had put their political differences aside and become allies during the Second World War. With Germany defeated in May 1945 the two emerged as **superpowers** and entered a **Cold War** which was to last between 1945 and 1991.

Reasons for worsening relations

- The USSR had established communist in their **satellite states** in Eastern Europe.
- The USA failed to inform Stalin of the development of the atom bomb.
- When the Allies decided to divide post-war Germany, Stalin was clear that he opposed holding free elections in his zones of occupation.
- March 1946 – **Churchill's "iron curtain"** speech emphasised the division of Europe.
- March 1947- the **Truman Doctrine** was announced which committed the USA to contain and prevent communism as part of the **Domino Theory**.
- Truman's announcement was backed up by economic aid to countries threatened by communism as part of **Marshall Aid**.

The Berlin Crisis 1948-49

After the Second World War was split into four allied zones of occupation. Berlin, deep inside the Soviet zone, was divided in the same way.

- By June 1947 the US, British and French zones had merged and began to cooperate economically.
- 24 June 1948 – Stalin ordered that all communication links between West Berlin and West Germany should be **blocked**.
- In response the West organised an **airlift** to fly in supplies.
- May 1949 – Stalin stepped down and all routes into West Berlin were re-opened.
- Truman recognised the need for **collective security** and in 1949 the USA and 11 other western powers formed the **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)**.
- 1955 – the USSR set up its rival organisation – the **Warsaw Pact**.

The creation of two powerful military powers heightened the tensions of the Cold War.

The Cuban Missile Crisis

- January 1959 – The US backed leader of Cuba was overthrown by forces led by left-wing rebel, **Fidel Castro**.
- Castro strengthened trading links with the USSR at the expense of USA trade.
- It was feared that Castro would establish a communist state which, 90 miles off the mainland of the USA, would be an embarrassment and a danger.
- April 1945 – Kennedy supported an invasion of Cuba by exiles at the **Bay of Pigs** which failed.
- 14 October – A US spy plane spotted Soviet missile sites on Cuba.
- In order to prevent Soviet ships arriving at Cuba **Kennedy** imposed a naval blockade around the island.
- A stand-off ensued and **Khrushchev** agreed to turn his ships back and remove missiles from Cuba in return for the USA`s removal of missiles from Turkey.
- Kennedy appeared to be the victor but both leaders were accused of **brinkmanship**.
- In order to improve future communication a **telephone hotline** was created between the White House and the Kremlin.
- 1963 – **A Test Ban Treaty** was signed banning nuclear testing.

US involvement in Vietnam

1954 – Vietnam was split into the communist north and the non-communist south.

1963 – In the south the government of **Ngo Dinh Dien** was overthrown triggering the fear of a communist takeover.

August 1964 – A US destroyer was fired on by a N. Vietnamese patrol boat providing the USA with an excuse to send troops.

1965 – 1968 - The US fought a hi-tech war against the **Vietcong**
US troops found it difficult to fight a **guerrilla war** and heavy losses and reports of brutality turned many Americans against the war

The Vietcong were well supplied by China and the USSR and the **Tet Offensive** of 1968 showed that the US was struggling

1969 – **Nixon** began **Vietnamisation** and in 1973 a ceasefire was called.