



## **Introduction to International Relations**

Chapter Notes: Chapter 5

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### **Chapter Five:**

#### **The Origins and End of the Cold War**

#### **Chapter Overview**

Chapter 5 introduces students to the origins and end of the Cold War under the light of the three perspectives. Realists trace the conflict's origins to power factors, frequently settling on the security dilemma as the best explanation for the occurrence of the Cold War. It also pays close attention to deterrence and the arms race, arguing that these factors allowed the United States to prevail. The identity perspective focuses on the two states' divergent ideologies, claiming that American democracy and Soviet Marxist-Leninism played substantial roles in the formation of the Cold War. Similarly, the conflict drew to a close once these ideational factors began to converge. Liberals, emphasizing diplomacy and institutions, examine the failure of the UN and the eventual increase in negotiations and détente when explaining the Cold War's origin and conclusion, respectively.

#### **Cold War Origins: Realism**

- The Soviet Union had aggressive nature that compelled it to expand.
- The United States, driven by capitalist concerns, became expansive and aggressive.
- The United States and the Soviet Union faced a power vacuum, causing security dilemma. Neither one was at fault.

#### **End of the Cold War: Realism**

- As balance of terror succeeded balance of power, the United States pursued a policy of deterrence.
- In the end, the West won the arms race— assisted by the information revolution— and created the most coherent alliances, allowing it victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War.

#### **Cold War Origins: Identity**

- The Soviet Union believed that Marxist-Leninist ideology would vanquish capitalism.
- The United States, meanwhile, sought to encourage democracy worldwide.

- Social constructivists claim that the United States and the Soviet Union viewed each other as enemies, not rivals, and that this caused the Cold War.

### **End of the Cold War: Identity**

- Four possible ways to end or “deconstruct” Cold War from identity perspective.
- First, if ideas change at domestic level of one states, enemies can become rivals.
- Second, both systems can converge at systemic process level of analysis.
- Third, old ideas might simply fade away and be replaced by new thinking. Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and *perestroika* may be examples of this.
- Fourth, perhaps the West won the Cold War through a systemic structural competition of ideas.

### **Cold War Origins: Liberal**

- United Nations was another failed attempt at collective security.
- To compound matters, Truman was a blundering and unconfident diplomat.
- As a result, Western states turned to NATO and EC as sources of order.

### **End of the Cold War: Liberal**

- Détente, which emerged in Europe in 1960s, peaked in 1975 with Helsinki Accords.
- The Information Revolution offered positive incentives for countries to cooperate with one another.

### **Thought Questions**

1. What policy recommendations did George Kennan make in his “long telegram?” If the United States had followed them, how might the Cold War have been different?
2. Consider the three systemic-level realist explanations for the beginning of the Cold War: Soviet aggression, expansionist U.S. capitalism, or the security dilemma. Which do you think makes the best argument? Why?
3. Liberal and realist arguments about the Cold War usually overlook the divergent ideologies of the United States and the Soviet Union. Can the Cold War be satisfactorily explained without reference to either American democracy or Marxist- Leninism? Why or why not?
4. One possible identity explanation for the Cold War is that the United States and the Soviet Union viewed each other as enemies and not just as rivals. Why did this matter? Are there any states or actors today that the United States views as its enemy, not its rival?