

COLD WAR TERMS and DEFINITIONS

Focus Question: Compare and contrast the political and economic perspectives of the United States and Soviet Union. Define each term and record notes to better understand how the differing American and Soviet perspectives fueled Cold War tension and competition in the postwar era.

Capitalism Definition:		Socialism Definition:	
<i>American Perspective</i>	<i>Soviet Perspective</i>	<i>American Perspective</i>	<i>Soviet Perspective</i>
Democracy Definition:		Totalitarianism Definition:	
<i>American Perspective</i>	<i>Soviet Perspective</i>	<i>American Perspective</i>	<i>Soviet Perspective</i>
Freedom Definition:		Equality Definition:	
<i>American Perspective</i>	<i>Soviet Perspective</i>	<i>American Perspective</i>	<i>Soviet Perspective</i>
Individualism Definition:		Collectivism Definition:	
<i>American Perspective</i>	<i>Soviet Perspective</i>	<i>American Perspective</i>	<i>Soviet Perspective</i>

DEMOCRACY = is a form of government by the people in which citizens choose who will govern them through voting

- **Democracy from the American Perspective**

- From the American perspective, democracy is the best systems of government. In the United States, decisions on everything from who should be president to what a family will watch on TV are made by majority rule. However, during much of the Cold War, the United States frequently violated democratic principles. For example, African Americans could not vote in the South until the mid-1960s. In addition, the United States often supported governments in countries who economies favored U.S. business, even when those governments violated democratic principles.

- **Democracy from the Soviet Perspective**

- The Soviets argued that the United States was hypocritical to promote democracy and capitalism at the same time. True democracy, they argued, can only be secured in an economic system that rewards everyone equally. Otherwise, the few will take advantage of the many and misery and poverty will be the result. Persistent poverty in the United States during the Cold War provided ample evidence to support the Soviet perspective.

EQUALITY = is the condition of being equal; everyone in the society shares equally in society's assets; meeting basic needs – employment, housing, education, health care – is highly valued

- **Equality from the American Perspective**

- Equality can be defined three ways: equality of opportunity (everyone has the same chance to succeed), equality before the law (everyone is treated the same way by legal system), and equality of condition (everyone shares equally in the material wealth of the society). Americans argued that equality of opportunity and equality before the law are necessary for a healthy society, but equality of condition is not. Instead, many Americans believe that providing guarantees for basic necessities, such as health care and employment, regardless of a person's effort or work, undermines a citizen's work ethic and adversely affects society. However, throughout the Cold War, while the United States made progress toward the goals of equality of opportunity and equality before the law, these ideals were sometimes compromised by racism and sexism in American society.

- **Equality from the Soviet Perspective**

- The Soviets believed that equality of condition was essential for a healthy society. They argued that a society must share its material wealth to ensure that no one has an unfair advantage over another. During the Cold War, Soviet citizens were provided employment, health care, and other basic necessities. However, equality was never truly achieved. Top Communist Party officials were always the first to receive the best housing, health care, automobiles, and food.

CAPITALISM = is an economic system that stresses the private ownership of industry, freedom of competition, a laissez-faire governmental approach, and the acceptance of economic classes;

the capitalist system is based on supply and demand; if there is not consumer demand for particular goods or services, then the producer of the goods and services either produces something different or goes out of business

- **Capitalism from the American Perspective**

- From the American perspective, capitalism is an economic system that provided the opportunity for individuals to better themselves through hard work and individual initiative. The competitive nature of capitalism provides incentives for individuals to devise better products, to provide a higher quality service, and to offer goods at lower prices. Thus, from the American outlook, capitalism brings out the best in people and improves society. While Americans recognized that there are losers in the capitalist system, they argued that the loser should look to the winners for inspiration and learn to work harder.

- **Capitalism from the Soviet Perspective**

- From the Soviet perspective, capitalism is an evil economic system. They argued that the capitalist emphasis on competition breeds selfishness and undermines cooperation and community. During the Cold War, the Soviets argued that poverty and oppression in the world were the result of the acquisitive and aggressive tendencies inherent in capitalism. They hoped that the workers of the world would unite and overthrow the capitalists, bringing about an economic and social utopia where love, compassion, teamwork, cooperation, and equality were evidenced.

INDIVIDUALISM = is the belief that people working on their own to reach their highest level of achievement produces the best results for individuals and society

- **Individualism from the American Perspective**

- Americans believe that the outcome of people's lives are determined not by outward circumstances, which can be overcome, but by inner fortitude. They believe that all of society benefits if each individual reaches his or her highest possible level of achievement. They argued that basic human nature is individualistic, competitive, and acquisitive. Americans believed that an atmosphere of constant competitive striving among individuals benefits not only the individuals, but also the wider society, since each person has an incentive to improve his or her lot in life.

- **Individualism from the Soviet Perspective**

- Soviets believed that a society built upon individualism produces some winners and many losers. Because people are not endowed with the same talents and abilities, nor born into similar circumstances, the Soviets argued that individualism results in a society full of inequality and exploitation where the winners take advantage of the losers.

COLLECTIVISM = is the belief that people working together produce better results for individuals and society than people working on their own

- **Collectivism from the American Perspective**

- From the American perspective, collectivism violates basic human nature, which they believe is competitive rather than cooperative. They argue that by calling for attributes such as sharing and teamwork rather than competition, collectivism works against humankind's essential nature and thus is doomed to failure. In addition, they argued that collective ownership of industry or land violated the rights of individuals to own private property.

- **Collectivism from the Soviet Perspective**

- The Soviets believed that cooperation and caring are the finest parts of human nature, and a society based on cooperation among people is possible in spite of humans' competitive nature. They argued that the American emphasis on the individual resulted in the exploitation of a large part of society. Moreover, they believed that the only way to create fairness in a society was for everyone to share in the ownership of all property. Thus, in the Soviet Union, every factory and business enterprise – including farms – was owned collectively by all members of the society. From the Soviet perspective, collectivism allowed the fruits of society's labors to be fairly distributed.

SOCIALISM = is an economy system that stresses government ownership of industry, economy equality, and a classless society; the socialist system is based on government control of the means and profits of production; the government stipulates how people work together to produce goods and distributes the profits equally to the workers

- **Socialism from the American Perspective**

- From the American perspective, the emphasis on government control over the means of production under socialism threatens one of Americans' most basic rights – the right to own and control property. As expressed by Abraham Lincoln, Americans believe that "Property is the fruit of labor. Property is desirable. That some should be rich shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise." The U.S. Constitution provides explicit protection to private ownership of business enterprises. Furthermore, Americans argued that socialism inhibits individuals' desire and ability to achieve betterment for society.

- **Socialism from the Soviet Perspective**

- The Soviets adopted socialism as a response to the evils of the capitalist system. They believed that government ownership provided a means by which the wealth of a society could be evenly distributed to all the people. They argued that capitalism encouraged the development of a capitalist class, a small group of individuals who control the profits of society and take advantage of the working class. They felt that only shared ownership could prevent the abuses of capitalism and protect common people from the exploitation of the capitalist class.

TOTALITARIANISM = is a government in which one or a few people have complete control over the populace; freedom of press, speech, and religion are often denied

- **Totalitarianism from the American Perspective**

- Americans believe that totalitarianism is equivalent to dictatorship. From the American perspective, totalitarianism threatens basic human rights, such as freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of movement, and freedom of speech. They argued that a healthy and productive society could be achieved only when people could freely express their views.

- **Totalitarianism from the Soviet Perspective**

- The Soviets believed that totalitarianism was required to transform society from an unequal one to one in which wealth was evenly distributed, and could be shed only when a truly equal socialist state was established. From the Soviet perspective, protecting the interests of the populace against a few people's selfish desires required that the government exert its power to quiet and dissent. However, during the Cold War, many Soviet citizens' basic needs and rights were violated under such government control. Under nearly three decades of rule by Joseph Stalin (1924-1953), millions of dissenters were starved, killed, or sent to harsh labor camps.

FREEDOM = is the condition of being free to express or do what one pleases; freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom to do business are examples of forms of freedom

- **Freedom from the American Perspective**

- From the American perspective, freedom is at the core of a happy and productive society. As demonstrated by Patrick Henry's famous statement "Give me liberty or give me death," Americans hold freedom in the highest regard. The United States fought the American Revolution, the Civil War, World War I, and World War II in part to promote the value of freedom.

- **Freedom from the Soviet Perspective**

- From the Soviet perspective, people are not free unless they have a fair share of wealth that allows them to live beyond basic needs. The Soviets argued that a redistribution of wealth was essential, and that the government must control the press and industry to prohibit would-be capitalists from exploiting and denying the freedoms of the working class.