

Topic 8.9: Causation in the Age of the Cold War and Decolonization

Standards Table

Theme	Learning Objective	Key Concept(s)	Education standards met
Governance (GOV)	Unit 8: Learning Objective K — Explain the extent to which the effects of the Cold War were similar in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres.	KC-6.2, KC-6.2.II, KC-6.2.IV.C, KC-6.3, KC-6.3.I	AP World History: Modern DBQ argumentation, sourcing, contextualization, causation, and comparison.

Learning Objectives

- Compare Cold War effects in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres.
- Analyze how superpower rivalry shaped political conflict, decolonization, and economic policy.
- Use primary sources to build a defensible historical argument.
- Group documents and use sourcing to strengthen a DBQ essay.
- Evaluate both similarities and regional differences.

Lesson Overview

The Cold War reshaped societies across the globe, but it did not affect every region in exactly the same way. In both hemispheres, the rivalry between capitalist and communist blocs contributed to political conflict, ideological polarization, and increased state involvement in economic life. At the same time, the Eastern Hemisphere was more deeply shaped by decolonization and the creation of new states, while the Western Hemisphere more often experienced superpower intervention within already existing states. This lesson asks you to weigh both the similarities and the differences and then make an argument about the overall extent to which Cold War effects were alike across the two hemispheres. The lesson uses a new seven-document packet drawn strictly from Unit 8 content.

Essential Vocabulary

- **proxy conflict** — a struggle in which larger powers support opposing sides without fighting each other directly.
- **anticolonial nationalism** — a movement seeking independence from imperial rule.

- **state-led development** — government-directed efforts to shape the economy and promote growth.
- **ideological competition** — rivalry based on opposing political and economic beliefs.
- **superpower intervention** — direct or indirect involvement by a major power in another country's political affairs.

Background Reading

After World War II, Cold War rivalry spread far beyond Europe. In Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, local political struggles became tied to the global contest between capitalism and communism. In some cases, superpowers provided military aid, diplomatic support, or economic assistance to governments and movements they saw as favorable. In other cases, local leaders used Cold War language to defend their own nationalist or socialist programs.

A major similarity across both hemispheres was that the Cold War encouraged governments and movements to frame political conflict in ideological terms. Revolutionary leaders in Cuba, China, and Vietnam presented their struggles as part of a broader battle against imperialism. At the same time, the United States and its allies justified interventions by claiming they were defending order, democracy, or freedom from communist expansion. This meant that local disputes were often interpreted as parts of a much larger global conflict.

A major difference, however, was that much of the Eastern Hemisphere was undergoing decolonization during the Cold War. In places such as Vietnam and Tanzania, political leaders were not only responding to superpower rivalry but also trying to build new states after empire. In contrast, many Western Hemisphere countries were already independent states, so Cold War effects more often took the form of ideological polarization, revolution, reform efforts, or intervention from the United States rather than formal state creation.

Another important pattern was the strong role of the state in shaping economic life. Governments in newly independent states often promoted socialism, self-reliance, or redistribution in order to weaken dependence on former colonial powers. Elsewhere, leaders attempted peaceful or revolutionary change through state control of resources and development planning. These economic policies reflected both the legacy of empire and the ideological pressures of the Cold War.

Primary Sources

Document 1: Fidel Castro, Second Declaration of Havana (1962, Cuba)

<https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1962/02/04.htm>

What the imperialists cannot forgive is that we have made a socialist revolution right under their noses, that we have established a government of the humble, by the humble, and for the humble. They cannot forgive that Cuba has taken its destiny into its own hands, that it has demonstrated that a small country can free itself from the domination of foreign monopolies.

The peoples of Latin America are awakening. They are beginning to understand that they have been exploited for centuries, that their wealth has been taken, and that they have been kept in poverty. The Cuban Revolution is not an isolated event but part of a great historical movement unfolding across the continent.

The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution. The people of Latin America must unite against imperialism and exploitation. Only through struggle can they achieve true independence, justice, and dignity.

Guided Questions

1. Identify ONE claim Castro makes about imperialism and explain how he supports it.
2. How does Castro connect Cuba to broader Latin American developments?
3. Analyze Castro's point of view as a revolutionary leader.
4. How does this document reflect Cold War effects in the Western Hemisphere?
5. Compare Castro's argument to one Eastern Hemisphere movement.

Document 2: Lyndon B. Johnson, Dominican Republic Statement (1965, USA)

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v32/d33>

The American nations cannot, must not, and will not permit the establishment of another Communist government in the Western Hemisphere. This is not only a matter of ideology but of the security of the entire region.

The situation in the Dominican Republic posed a threat to democratic institutions and stability. We acted to prevent chaos and to ensure that forces of democracy would prevail.

Our objective is not domination, but stability. We seek to create conditions in which free governments can exist without the threat of subversion.

Guided Questions

1. Identify ONE reason Johnson gives for U.S. intervention.
2. How does Johnson justify U.S. actions in the region?
3. Analyze the purpose of this statement.
4. How does this reflect containment policy?
5. Compare this document to Soviet or revolutionary perspectives.

Document 3: Mao Zedong, On the People's Democratic Dictatorship (1949, China)

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1949mao.asp>

The Chinese people have stood up. This means that imperialism can no longer enslave us. The revolution has triumphed because the people united under the leadership of the Communist Party.

The people's democratic dictatorship is necessary to suppress reactionary elements and protect the revolution. Without this, the gains of the revolution could be lost. We must unite with oppressed peoples around the world. Only through collective struggle can imperialism be defeated and justice achieved.

Guided Questions

1. What type of government does Mao advocate?
2. How does Mao justify political control?
3. Analyze Mao's ideological argument.
4. How does this reflect Cold War effects in Asia?
5. Compare Mao's argument with Castro's.

Document 4: Ho Chi Minh, Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945)

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1945vietnam.asp>

All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of the French Revolution in 1791 also states: All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights. These are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice. In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty. They have enforced inhuman laws, set up three different political regimes in the North, the Center, and the South of Vietnam in order to wreck our national unity.

They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots. They have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood. They have fettered public opinion. They have practiced obscurantism. They have weakened our race. They have forced us to use opium and alcohol in order to make us weak and submissive. From the end of last year to the beginning of this year, from Quang Tri to the North, more than two million of our fellow-citizens died from starvation.

Guided Questions

1. What argument does Ho Chi Minh make about independence?
2. How does he use Western political ideas?
3. Analyze his intended audience.
4. How does this reflect decolonization?
5. Compare with Castro or Mao.

Document 5: Nikita Khrushchev, UN General Assembly Speech (1960)

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1960khrushchev-un1.asp>

The peoples of the Soviet Union, like all peoples, want peace and friendship among nations. We believe that peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems is not only possible but necessary. War is not inevitable. The future belongs to those who build, not those who destroy.

The struggle between socialism and capitalism must not be settled by war. It should be decided by peaceful competition in the economic and cultural fields. The socialist system will demonstrate its superiority through its achievements in raising the standard of living, expanding education, and promoting equality among peoples.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the existence of dangerous foci of tension in the world, created by colonialism and imperialism. These tensions threaten peace and stability. It is therefore necessary for all nations to work toward disarmament and the elimination of colonial domination so that all peoples may live in freedom and dignity.

Guided Questions

1. What is Khrushchev's main claim about global conflict?
2. How does he describe competition between systems?
3. Analyze the purpose of this speech.
4. What contradictions exist in his argument?
5. Compare with U.S. Cold War rhetoric.

Document 6: Julius Nyerere, Arusha Declaration (1967, Tanzania)

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nyerere/1967/arusha-declaration.htm>

The policy of TANU is to build a socialist state. The government must ensure that all major means of production and exchange are under the control of the peasants and workers. Only in this way can we prevent exploitation and ensure that the wealth of the nation benefits all citizens rather than a small privileged group.

It is necessary for Tanzania to rely on its own resources. We cannot depend on foreign governments or private investment to bring about our development. The people must work together and depend on their own efforts if they are to achieve real independence and progress.

The objective of this policy is not only economic development but also social equality and national unity. The state must guide development in order to eliminate poverty, ignorance, and disease, and to build a society based on cooperation rather than competition.

Guided Questions

1. What economic system does Nyerere promote?
2. How does he connect economics and independence?
3. Analyze his point of view as a postcolonial leader.
4. How does this reflect Cold War influence?
5. Compare with Allende.

Document 7: Salvador Allende, First Speech to the Chilean Congress (1970)

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/allende/1970/september/20.htm>

Appearing before you today, I assume the responsibility entrusted to me by the people of Chile. This is a historic moment, as we begin a new stage in our national life. We are committed to transforming our society in a peaceful and democratic manner.

Our objective is to construct a new economic system in which the wealth of the nation is distributed more equitably. This requires structural changes in ownership and control of resources, so that the benefits of development reach all citizens rather than a privileged minority.

We seek a path that respects democratic institutions while achieving social justice. This process will not be easy, but it represents a new model of transformation, one that avoids violence and demonstrates that profound change can occur within a democratic framework.

Guided Questions

1. What type of change does Allende advocate?
2. How does he differ from revolutionary leaders like Castro?
3. Analyze the purpose of his speech.
4. How does this reflect Cold War politics in Latin America?
5. Compare with Nyerere or Mao.

Key Tables / Charts / Diagrams

Similar Cold War Effects Across Hemispheres

Effect	Eastern Hemisphere	Western Hemisphere
Ideological polarization	China, Vietnam, Tanzania	Cuba, Chile, Dominican Republic
Stronger state role	Socialist development and state-building	Reform, redistribution, intervention, nationalization
Superpower pressure	Linked to decolonization and wars	Linked to intervention and anti-communism
Political conflict	Liberation struggles, postcolonial conflict	Revolutions, coups, U.S. involvement

Key Differences

Eastern Hemisphere	Western Hemisphere
Decolonization often central	Formal decolonization less central
New states and borders mattered more	Existing states were more often reshaped internally
Cold War overlapped with national liberation	Cold War often overlapped with intervention and reform struggles

Change / Continuity / Comparison Section

Change over time:

After 1945, Cold War rivalry spread into regions that had previously been dominated by imperial systems. In the Eastern Hemisphere especially, decolonization transformed political geography by creating new states and new development programs. In the Western Hemisphere, the Cold War often changed the internal politics of already independent countries by intensifying ideological conflict, intervention, and debates over reform.

Continuity over time:

Despite these changes, powerful states continued to influence weaker regions, and many leaders still used universal language about freedom, justice, or order to justify

their policies. Economic inequality and outside pressure also remained significant even after formal independence.

Comparison:

Both hemispheres experienced ideological conflict, stronger state involvement, and struggles over outside influence. However, the Eastern Hemisphere was more directly shaped by decolonization and state formation, while the Western Hemisphere was more often shaped by intervention, revolution, and restructuring within existing states.

Key Takeaways

- The Cold War affected both hemispheres in political, economic, and ideological ways.
- Similarities included ideological conflict, state activism, and superpower pressure.
- Differences were shaped largely by the importance of decolonization in the Eastern Hemisphere.
- Western Hemisphere cases often centered more on intervention and internal restructuring.
- Strong DBQ essays must evaluate both similarity and difference.

DBQ Essay Assignment

Prompt:

Evaluate the extent to which the effects of the Cold War were similar in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres in the period 1945–1991.

Write an AP-style DBQ that:

- presents a historically defensible thesis
- uses at least 6 documents
- includes outside evidence
- analyzes sourcing for at least 3 documents
- groups documents meaningfully
- demonstrates complexity by addressing both similarities and differences