

## CHAPTER 4

# The Cold War and Its Aftermath

## Geopolitical Restructuring

The memory of the Cold War has faded rapidly with the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Somalia and the concerns with global terrorism. Nevertheless, it is the geopolitical restructuring that took place as a result of World War II and the Cold War that has shaped the outlines of the current world geopolitical map. The forces behind this restructuring remain important guides to future changes in this map. The Cold War is divisible into three phases: (1) the maritime realm's ring of containment along the near periphery of the continental Eurasian realm; (2) Communist penetration of the maritime realm; and (3) Communist retreat from the maritime realm and the waning of Soviet power. The geopolitical patterns and features that developed during these phases reflected the changing ideological postures, military capacities, and economic/technological advances among the major Cold War protagonists and other states that had been drawn into the competition.

## Phase I: 1945–56

### NUCLEAR STALEMATE AND DETERRENCE: DRAWING THE RING OF CONTAINMENT

It was widely assumed that the end of World War II would herald the onset of a peaceful era, free of the virulent nationalism that led up to the war, and would permit national energies to be dedicated to rebuilding lands and societies. However, the territorial exchanges and boundaries that were agreed to by the Western Alliance and the Soviet Union sowed the seeds of dissension. The USSR received eastern Poland in exchange for the award of East Prussia and Silesia to Poland. Very soon the United States' fear of the spread of Communism and the Soviet fear of containment led to the onset of what would be known as the Cold War (a term coined by Walter Lippmann in 1945).

The first decade of the Cold War confirmed the mutual fears and distrust that prevailed between the American and Soviet superpowers. For Washington, clear evidence of the Soviet threat to world peace was the Berlin blockade (1948), Soviet detonation of an atom bomb

(1949), North Korea's invasion of South Korea (1950), the Soviet hydrogen bomb (1953), and the Warsaw Pact (1955). Moscow perceived as major threats to its security the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan (1947), NATO (1949), American involvement in the Korean War, and the US hydrogen bomb (1952). The various events and perceptions that were formed by the two superpowers during this period resulted in a balance of nuclear terror and nuclear deterrence.

The global geopolitical map of phase I and most of phase II reflected the rigid, hierarchical, bipolar structure imposed on the rest of the world by the United States and Soviet superpowers (figure 4.1). Most of the world was included within two geostrategic realms—the Eurasian continental, dominated by the USSR, and the trade-dependent maritime, dominated by the United States. The status of South Asia was that of a geopolitical region independent of the two realms but subject to continuous pressure from them.

The Eurasian Continental Realm consisted of two geopolitical regions—the Soviet inner Eurasian heartland, with its Eastern European strategic attachment, and East Asia. The economic core of the Soviet heartland had been expanded from its Ukrainian-western Russian base to the Urals when Soviet industry had to be relocated there during World War II. The spread of Communism into Central and Eastern Europe immediately after the war provided the USSR with a new, advanced position from which to threaten Western Europe and to seek to undermine the North Atlantic Alliance.

Through its Communist Chinese and North Korean allies, Moscow also posed a major threat to Japan and to the strategic positions of the United States in the Western Pacific. Vulnerability to Soviet power of North and interior China emphasized China's dependent status. Moreover, Beijing also needed the alliance with Moscow because of its vulnerability to Western naval and air power and the exposure of its coastal reaches to the nationalists based on Taiwan and US forces based in South Korea.

The trade-dependent maritime realm included the Atlantic and Pacific basins and their Caribbean and Mediterranean extensions. From its intermediate location between the two oceans, the United States could reinforce its North Atlantic European partners, cast its strategic net over South America, and provide military and economic cover for Japan and other allies along the Pacific Rim.

The regional geopolitical divisions of the maritime realm included Anglo-America and the Caribbean, maritime Europe and the Maghreb, offshore Asia and Oceania, and South America. Sub-Saharan Africa also lay within the realm but lacked a distinct geopolitical framework since it remained divided among the various European colonial powers. The cores of the realm were the manufacturing belt of the northeastern and midwestern United States and the recovering industrial triangle of northern Europe. They were connected via the sea-lanes of the North Atlantic.

The Caribbean was tied to the eastern United States by proximity, capital investment, trade, and US naval bases in Puerto Rico and Guantánamo Bay. South America was under the political and economic shadow of the United States, and the cultural and economic ties between Europe and such countries as Brazil and Argentina reinforced the influence of the maritime realm.

The Maghreb was still ruled by France, although independence movements had gathered momentum in Tunisia and Morocco (soon to gain their independence) and rebellion had broken out in Algeria. The presence of large numbers of French settlers, especially in Algeria, plus economic ties helped to keep the Maghreb within France's geopolitical orbit and thus within maritime Europe's sphere of influence.

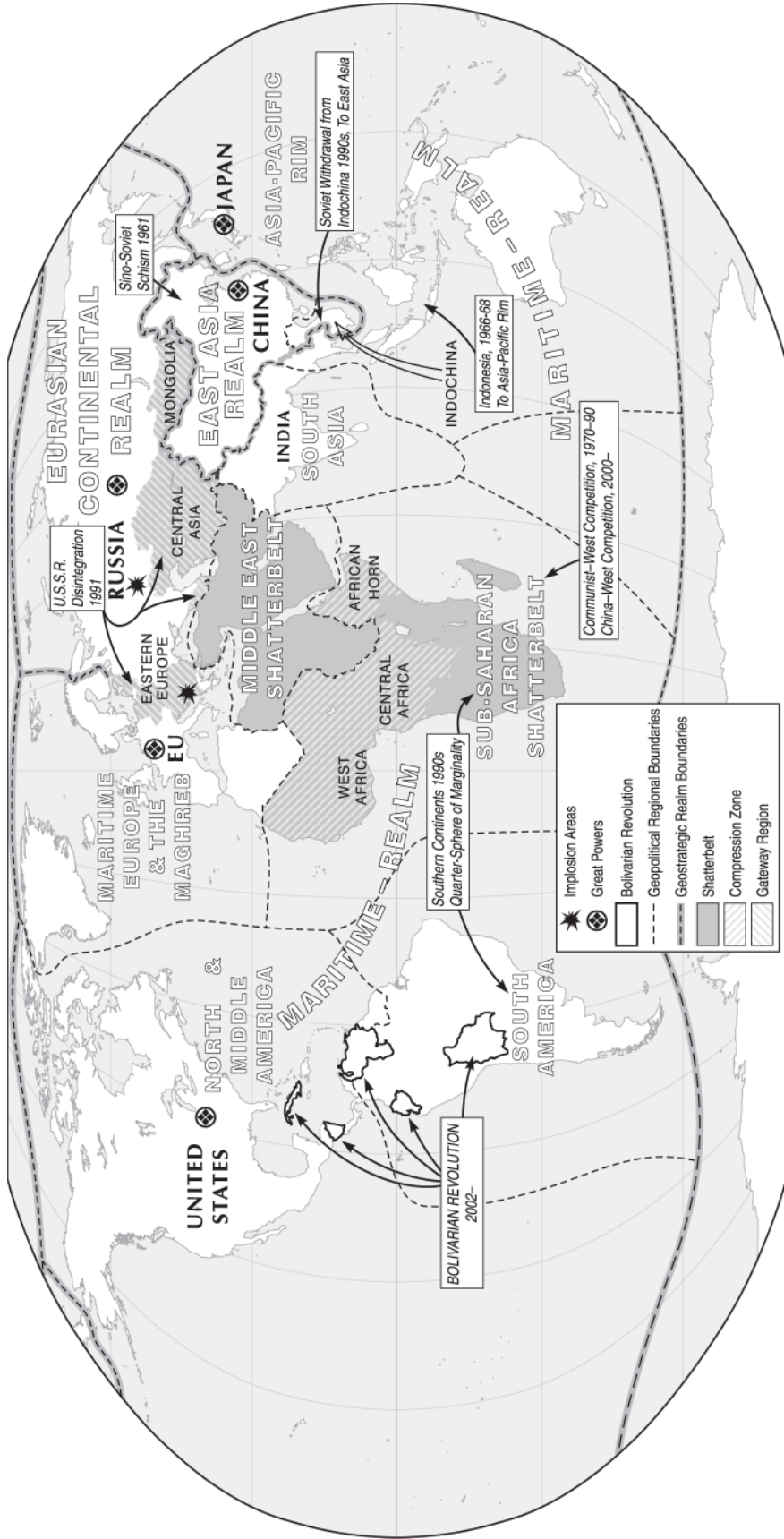


Figure 4.1. Realm and Regional Changes from the End of World War II to the Present

In the Pacific, American military power was firmly anchored in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand. It was backed by European colonial positions in Malaya, North Borneo, New Guinea, and East Timor. Another important base was Thailand, which had emerged from its World War II occupation (an occupation that it had invited) by Japan. Thailand shook off its historic isolationism and forged a military alliance with the United States. In 1954, Bangkok became the headquarters for the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which had been established under the leadership of the United States, Britain, and France immediately after the withdrawal of the latter from Indochina. SEATO also included Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines. The stated purpose of the new alliance was to contain the further spread of Communism into Southeast Asia. It ultimately proved helpful to the United States in sanctioning its military presence in Vietnam.

The fundamental weakness of the treaty organization was the fact that only two Southeast Asian states had joined it. Instead, the regional defense role was assumed by Asia-Pacific Rim, consisting of South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, peninsular Thailand and Malaya, Australia, and New Zealand. These countries were linked bilaterally to the United States and Britain through economic and military alliances. (In 1977, toward the end of phase II and in the aftermath of the US withdrawal from Vietnam, SEATO was disbanded.)

The countries of Southeast Asia—Indonesia plus the three Indochinese states of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos—that were not part of the new offshore Asian region were soon to become the contested arena between the Eurasian continental and maritime realms and would take the form of a shatterbelt.

Most of the Middle East had gained independence by the early 1950s, but the region still lay within the orbit of the maritime realm. In 1955, under the sponsorship of Great Britain and the United States, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan forged the Baghdad Pact in an effort to create a northern regional screen against the expansion of Soviet influence. This pact was short-lived, collapsing in 1959 when its only Arab member, Iraq, withdrew to pursue a policy of nonalignment. The remaining members were organized within the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).

Elsewhere within the Middle East, Britain still maintained its rule over the Persian Gulf states, Aden, and the Sudan; its military alliance with Jordan; and its troops in the Suez Canal (although they were in the process of being withdrawn). Saudi Arabia was a firm client state of the United States, and both Israel and Lebanon looked to America as their main supporter. Sub-Saharan Africa, still subject to European colonial rule, was also very much part of the maritime realm and especially important for the realm's strategic minerals and other natural resources.

South Asia, the only independent geopolitical region in the world, stood apart from the two geostrategic realms. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the force of India's commitment to neutrality in the global struggle gave the region unique status. Burma (Myanmar) also took a neutralist course, refusing to join SEATO. Ceylon (Sri Lanka) sought to carve out a role as a leader in the economic development of South and Southeast Asia when it served as host for the Colombo Plan program. However, beset by rebellions, economic crises, and governmental instability, the country had little energy to take on regional initiatives. Nepal, which had for the previous century deliberately isolated itself from foreign influence, continued to pursue nonalignment upon gaining independence. Bhutan, fearing China's claims upon its territory, became even more dependent on India in matters of defense and foreign relations but remained fairly closed and inaccessible.

Among the states of South Asia, only Pakistan became embroiled in Cold War alliances. This was due, in part, to its geographic split personality as both a Middle Eastern and South Asian state. The seminomadic Pashtuns (Pathans) of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, the Tribal Areas, and the northern borderlands of Balochistan, as well as the Balochi tribesmen in the southwest were culturally and linguistically oriented to the Middle East lands. In contrast, the farmers of Pakistan's Punjab, while Muslims, were culturally and geographically linked to the Indian portion of the Punjab. Similarly, the Muslim Bengali were culturally and linguistically linked to the Hindu Bengali of India. This internal tension eventually erupted in the civil war that brought independence to East Pakistan, which then became firmly tied to India.

During phase I, the USSR and its Communist China ally sought to forge a *cordon sanitaire* around the Sino-Soviet realm by pushing outward from the heart of continental Eurasia to its surrounding inner seas and passageways to the oceans. With the USSR still reeling from the devastation wrought by the invading armies of Nazi Germany during World War II, Joseph Stalin's goal was to erect a strong defensive screen between the Soviet Union and Western Europe. This was to guard against a recurrence of the *blitzkrieg*, with which the Germans had so recently swept across the Baltic, laid siege to Leningrad (St. Petersburg), penetrated Moscow's suburbs to within twenty miles of the city, reached the Volga at Stalingrad (Volgograd), and seized most of the northern Black Sea coast.<sup>1</sup>

Poland was the key to the Soviet defensive screen. The Allied attempts at Yalta to secure a postwar representative government came to naught, as the controlled elections for the provisional government in 1947 assured a Communist victory.

There were a number of catalysts for the decision of the West to try to block further Soviet expansion by creating a "ring of containment" around the near-periphery of the heartland. They included the establishment of the Soviet Zone in Germany in 1945, the outbreak of the civil war in Greece the following year, and the blockade of West Berlin in 1948–49.

The major territorial objective of the Soviet Union during phase I was Eastern and Central Europe—the region that Mackinder had described as the "middle tier of states" between Germany and Russia, populated by Slavs and South Slavs, Bohemians, and Magyars and constituting a strategic addition to the heartland (figure 4.1).

At the end of World War II, East Prussia was taken from Germany, its northern half, including Memelland, being annexed by the USSR and its southern half being annexed by Poland. The defeat of Germany also enabled the Soviets to retain the Finnish territories that they had seized during the Finnish-Russian War of 1940 and the Baltic republics that they had added during that same year. These annexations provided the USSR with a firm grip on the Baltic and gave greater defensive depth to Leningrad. Not only were the Karelian Isthmus and Finnish Karelia acquired, but Finland was forced to lease the Porkkala Peninsula for a Soviet naval base. In the far north, the Finns lost Pechenga and the Ribachy Peninsula, adding to the security of Murmansk, which had been so important as the lifeline terminus for supplies from the United States during World War II.

Elsewhere in Europe, the Soviets annexed a wide strip of land from eastern Poland, adding it to Belarus and Ukraine. Prior to Poland's regaining its independence in 1919, these territories had belonged to czarist Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In addition, eastern Transcarpathia was seized from Poland and parts of Bessarabia and Bucovina from Romania to complete the zone of annexation. With the acquisition of these lands, the USSR gained considerable defensive depth along the invasion routes to Moscow, Stalingrad (Volgograd), and Odessa, as well as the Crimea, which had been taken by the invading Nazi armies during the war.

To compensate Poland for its losses in the east, the Soviets added to western Poland thirty-nine thousand square kilometers (twenty-five thousand square miles) of the Third Reich's 1939 territory. The new lands lay east of the Oder and Neisse Rivers and, at their northern end, included Gdansk (Danzig) and southern East Prussia. All of these border changes were approved by the West at the 1945 Potsdam Conference.

Soviet security objectives were further satisfied between 1945 and 1948 by Moscow's imposition of Communist regimes upon the belt of Eastern and Central European countries extending from the Gulf of Lübeck and the Elbe River to Thuringia, the Ore Mountains and the Bohemian Forest, the Middle Danube, the Julian Alps, and the Adriatic. Most of the Black Sea now lay within the Soviet orbit save its southern Turkish shores. Included were the single-party, vassal Communist states of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania. This represented fulfillment of the Soviet strategy of establishing a *cordon sanitaire* along its highly vulnerable western border. Toward the end of phase I, in 1955, the Warsaw Pact formally linked the Eastern European Communist bloc countries militarily with the USSR as a direct response to remilitarization of West Germany.

Along the southwestern reaches of Soviet power, however, the attempts to draw Greece into the Communist orbit through a civil war launched by Communist rebels and to pressure Turkey failed. Instead, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which had been created in 1949 in response to the Soviet blockade of Berlin and to defend Western Europe from Soviet expansionism, was enlarged in 1952 to include Greece and Turkey. In addition, Yugoslavia, which had been expelled from the Comintern in 1948, signed a separate military pact with Greece and Turkey in 1954, strengthening the Western containment effort.

During phase I, the Western ring of containment was extended eastward to include Iran. In 1946, the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from the northern part of the country, where they had been stationed during World War II, at the time when British and American troops secured the southern part of the country. The Soviet withdrawal came only after intense pressure from the United States and Britain, acting through the United Nations, and with the promise by Iran (which was never fulfilled) to grant Moscow oil concessions. This then enabled the Iranian military to depose Soviet puppet Communist regimes in the Kurdish and Azerbaijani sectors of Iran that had been set up in 1945. In 1952, the anti-US government of Mohammad Mosaddegh took power, nationalizing the oil industry and seeking to overthrow the Shah. Two years later, Mosaddegh was overthrown, largely by covert activities of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with British help, and the Shah was returned to power. The next year (1955), Iran joined with Turkey, Britain, Iraq, and Pakistan in the Baghdad Pact, with the United States as an associate member, strengthening the ring of containment along the northern borders of the Middle East.

In South Asia and peninsular Southeast Asia, Indian and Burmese neutrality and Communist revolutionaries in North Vietnam prevented the West from extending containment to the borders of China. The pervasive influence of Mohandas K. Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence was not the only source of the Indian policy of neutrality. It related also to New Delhi's ideological differences with the Soviet Union, fears of the Chinese threat to India's territorial integrity, and suspicions that the United States was intent on achieving strategic dominance and imposing American-style capitalism upon the world.

Indian fears of world Communism were also fanned by China's annexation of Tibet in 1950 on the basis that the 1914 McMahon Line had deprived China of lands that were rightfully its own. Not only was China now perched on India's Himalayan border, but also it laid claim to Indian, Nepalese, and Burmese territories, as well as Bhutan in its entirety. In phase II, this dispute would erupt into conflict between India and China. At the same

time, New Delhi's distrust of the United States and its former British colonial ruler was fanned by the inclusion of Pakistan within SEATO and the Baghdad Pact. The military support provided by the United States to Pakistan in connection with these pacts was, from the Indian perspective, a direct threat.

Burma maintained its neutrality, refusing to join SEATO and identifying with the other nonaligned Third World states. While recognizing the People's Republic of China diplomatically, it kept its distance, being itself plagued by internal Communist and tribal rebellions. A particular problem for the Burmese was the presence of Nationalist Chinese troops who had fled across the border after their defeat in 1950. The troops remained there for three years until forced to leave by the United Nations.

In Southeast Asia, the boundary between the Communist and Western worlds remained in flux as the French-Indochina War raged from 1946 to 1954. With the fall of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, France agreed to an armistice, the terms of which divided Vietnam along the seventeenth north-latitude parallel. The north, with its core in the Red River Delta and Hanoi, went to the Communists under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, while the south, whose core was Cochinchina, centering on the Mekong Delta and Saigon, became a French puppet regime led by Bao Dai.

The armistice boundary did not long hold as a line of containment. The very next year the Saigon regime, now led by Ngo Dinh Diem, was recognized by the West as the legal government of all of Vietnam, while North Vietnam began to receive considerable economic as well as military support from the USSR and China. What followed during much of phase II was conversion of all of southern peninsular Southeast Asia into a shatterbelt region as the Vietnam War engulfed the great powers as well as the Vietnamese rivals.

In insular Southeast Asia, the former Dutch East Indies were also part of this shatterbelt. Indonesia had achieved its independence from the Dutch in 1949, but during the first part of the Cold War it was preoccupied with uniting its diverse peoples in the face of sporadic uprisings and the threat of a highly influential local Communist Party. Moreover, President Sukarno, who had led the fight for Indonesian independence, adopted a socialist and neutralist platform, which fanned Western suspicions.

The northeastern boundary between the Sino-Soviet realm and the United States and its allies was forged by war. Japan's northern limits were drawn after World War II. Then, at Yalta, the Allies agreed to the Soviet annexation of the southern half of the island of Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands as part of the price for the Soviets having entered the war against Japan. In 1951, the US-Japan Security Treaty committed Washington to the defense of Japan from external attack.

The victory of the Chinese Communists over the Nationalists in 1949 extended the Eurasian continental Communist power to the limits of the East Asian mainland and was quickly followed by Beijing's occupation of Tibet in 1950. Offshore, however, the ring of containment was sharply drawn during the same year, when the Chinese Communist plans to invade Nationalist-held Taiwan were frustrated by the patrols of the US Seventh Fleet. Thus was the boundary established in the Western Pacific between the two geostrategic realms—down the centers of the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea through the Taiwan Strait. The line was hardened in 1955–56, when the US response to Communist shelling of the Nationalist-held islands of Quemoy (Jinmen) and Matsu (Mazu) was to enter into a mutual security pact with the Nationalists and a promise to defend Taiwan against outside attack.

In the Korean Peninsula, the boundary was stabilized only after a bitter conflict that directly involved American and Chinese forces in the fighting on the ground and in air combat, in which Soviet pilots also joined. While most of the northern boundary divided China from

Korea, Soviet concerns over the entry of American troops into the fighting were heightened by the fact that a ten-mile stretch at the eastern end of the boundary that followed the mouth of the Hunchun River served as North Korea's boundary with the USSR, only ninety miles from Vladivostok. After the seesaw battle that raged up and down the peninsula ended, the 1953 armistice line along the thirty-eighth parallel became the basis for the boundary between the two Koreas that persists to this day.

There were unanticipated consequences for the USSR as a result of helping build up the Chinese air force and army. That air force became the third largest in the world, and the large Chinese army became battle hardened. This new strength was instrumental in changing China's view of itself from that of a Soviet satellite to that of a partner. It was an important factor in Mao Zedong's break with Moscow after the death of Joseph Stalin.

The southern end of the ring of containment in offshore Asia included the Philippines, which had received independence in 1947 but continued to house US military, naval, and air bases. These positions overlooked the South China Sea and the shorelands of southern China and Indonesia. The threatened spread of Communism to the Philippines was halted in 1954, when indigenous Communist guerrillas (the Hukbalahap, who operated in Central Luzon) were defeated by the government's forces. However, they regrouped and conducted a campaign of terrorism for the next decade and a half until crushed by the Philippine military in 1969. They ceased to function the following year.

Rounding off the heartland's near-periphery was the Arctic. There, the Cold War balance was maintained through mutual deterrence, as nuclear weapons capable of being delivered by long-range bombers and submarines prowling under the Arctic ice cap became available to both sides. The US-Canadian Distant Early Warning (DEW) line air defense system, begun in 1955, was an important element of the American transpolar security system. Similarly, Soviet meteorological, radio, and scientific posts based on ice floes backed up the country's air, nuclear icebreaker, and submarine defenses.

Expansion of the Communist realm into its near-periphery during phase I was greatly facilitated by Moscow's buildup of its nuclear capacity as well as by the rapid rebuilding of its war-shattered heavy industrial economy. Reconstruction of the economy, including reindustrialization of much of the western Soviet Union, was marked by rapid advances in military technology.

Phase I came to an end in 1956, when Soviet nuclear weapons development led to the establishment of a balance of terror between the two superpowers. Also marking the period's conclusion was the beginning of the Sino-Soviet schism.

## Phase II: 1957–79

### COMMUNIST DEEP PENETRATION OF THE MARITIME REALM

During this phase, substantial change in the geopolitical map of the world took place, as the Cold War leapfrogged continental Eurasia's near-periphery and spread to the inner and outer reaches of the maritime world. The bitter rivalry between the superpowers was fanned by a number of events. The 1957 launching of Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, a year before the US launching of Explorer I, was considered a wake-up call to American science and education. In the same year, Moscow announced the development of the first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). In addition, it broke a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing, which it