

2. Ideologies: Capitalism and Communism

An ideology is a system of ideas. An ideology tries to explain the world and to change it.

At the end of the World War Two, after the dropping of the atom bombs, the Cold War began. The Cold War refers to the rivalry between the United States, a capitalist country, and the Soviet Union, a communist country. It was called a Cold War because it was not a war fought between the two powers on a battlefield. It was a war based on very different ideologies.

Fascism and apartheid are ideologies that you learnt about in previous chapters. Communism and capitalism are ideologies you will learn about in this chapter.

What is communism?

The photo on the left shows the flag of the USSR or Soviet Union. It has a hammer and a sickle on a red background. It is sometimes called the Red Flag. This flag is a very



powerful political symbol representing communism. Even though communism is no longer a powerful force in the world, the Red Flag still stirs up strong feelings. USSR stands for Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. From 1917 – 1991 the Russian Empire stretched from the Baltic and Black seas to the Pacific Ocean and consisted of 15 Soviet Socialist Republics. The Red Flag represents the blood of the workers, and the hammer and sickle represent the work done by workers and peasants. The capital city was Moscow, then and now, the capital of Russia.

A great change took place in Russia during the First World War. In the Russian Revolution of 1917 the king, Tsar Nicholas II, was overthrown and a communist government took over the government. Russia was renamed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The Russian Revolution was a turning point in world history.

Lenin, the leader of a communist political party called the Bolsheviks took over Russia in 1917 in the world's first communist revolution. Lenin and the Bolsheviks offered what ordinary, poverty-stricken Russians wanted: peace, land and bread! Russia withdrew from the First World War in 1917. Stalin took over the leadership of the Soviet Union when Lenin died in 1924.

Communists do not like a few rich people controlling all the wealth in the country. They believe that the government should rule in the interests of all, not just the rich. The wealth should be shared equally between people. A communist economy is centrally planned to make sure that there is economic equality. No one can own private property or make a profit. The state takes ownership of all large industries and other sources of wealth.

Unlike fascism, the ideas and theories in communism are highly sophisticated. These ideas were developed by some of the world's greatest thinkers – men like Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

Communism is a revolutionary movement that promotes the violent overthrow of capitalism. Communist governments are not usually democratic.

Communism became a popular ideology among poor people all over the world. The governments of America and Western Europe thought that communism was a threat to them, and wherever they could, they tried to stamp it out.

Joseph Stalin was the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1924 to 1953. He was a ruthless dictator who transformed the Soviet Union into a major world power. It has been said that Joseph Stalin probably exercised greater political power than any other figure in history. With the use of extreme police terror and ruthlessness, he created a mighty military-industrial world power, and led the Soviet Union into the Nuclear Age. After his wartime alliance with the United States and Great Britain, Stalin now regarded these countries – and especially the United States – as arch-enemies during what became known as the Cold War.

You read about apartheid in the previous chapter. The apartheid government in South Africa hated communism. They saw communism as a threat to their beliefs.



Joseph Stalin was the leader of the USSR from 1924–1953.

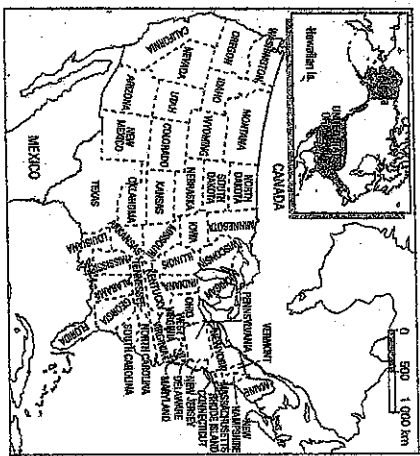
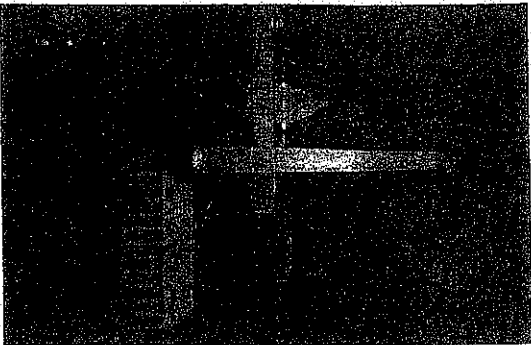


What is capitalism?

The main ideology behind capitalism is the belief that there is nothing wrong with some people being very rich, and other people being poor. The possibility of making a profit is thought to be an incentive or motive to work harder.

“Capital” is money, and means the making of money. In capitalist countries, the government does not run the economy. In most cases, this also means protecting the rights of individuals who own huge industries and gather great wealth while other people remain very poor.

The USA is the most powerful capitalist country in the world today. Capitalist governments may be democratic, but are often fascist.



The United States of America is a capitalist country. It became an extremely powerful nation during the World War One. It is very big country that crosses a whole continent. It is made up of 50 states. The American flag is called the Stars and Stripes or the Star-Spangled Banner. Each of the stars on the flag represents one of its states. The capital city is Washington.

Harry Truman was the 35th president of the United States (1945-53). He led America through the final stages of World War Two and through the early years of the Cold War. He was strongly opposed to the Soviet Union expanding its control in Europe and other parts of the world. He wanted the United States to resist communism and to limit Soviet expansion. This policy is known as “containment”. It has been criticised as the United States supported any capitalist country even if it had a dictatorial government.



Many people forget that atomic weapons were never used by anyone except the USA.

Interpreting Ideologies (Individual)

1. Rewrite the following table into your workbook.

The ideology of capitalism	The ideology of communism

2. Now write each of these characteristics of an ideology under the correct column in the table.
- Governments should not interfere with the rights of individuals to make their own living
 - People need freedom
 - When people work together as equals, they achieve greater things
 - Governments should make sure that everyone's needs are being met
 - People need one another
 - When people compete against one another, they achieve greater things
 - Some people have more than others because they make better use of their abilities
 - No one should have more than anyone else
 - – everybody's needs are equally important