Containing the Conflict

Weigh the results and costs of a Cold War policy.

SS24.US2.9a "Develop an argument regarding the effectiveness of the United States policy of containment that resulted from its growing ideological and political tensions with the Soviet Union."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show containment succeeding, and circle two details that show a cost or limit. Use your marks to weigh both sides of an argument about the policy.

Did Containment Work?

1. After World War II, leaders in Washington feared that Soviet influence would spread beyond the countries already under Moscow's control. The United States adopted containment, a policy aimed at preventing further communist expansion rather than overthrowing every communist government. In 1948, the Soviet Union blocked land access to West Berlin, a Western-held part of a city inside the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. American and British planes delivered food and fuel for almost a year. The blockade ended in 1949 without a direct battle between the superpowers. Berlin suggests that containment could defend a threatened position without starting a war.

2. On the Korean Peninsula, containment took a different form. In 1950, communist North Korea invaded South Korea. The United States fought under a United Nations command to defend the South; China later entered the war on the North's side. A 1953 armistice left Korea divided near its prewar boundary. South Korea remained independent, so the invasion failed to unite the peninsula under communist rule. Yet the war killed millions of people, including civilians, and ended without a peace treaty. If success means stopping a takeover, Korea supports containment. If success also requires a lasting peace at limited human cost, the verdict is less clear.

3. Vietnam exposed another limit. To keep South Vietnam from falling to communism, the United States sent combat troops in 1965 and bombed North Vietnam. American combat forces left in 1973; in 1975, North Vietnamese forces captured Saigon, and the South's government collapsed. Millions of Vietnamese people died over the course of the long conflict, as did more than 58,000 Americans. U.S. leaders also backed anticommunist governments that restricted political freedoms, showing how fear of Soviet influence could compete with stated democratic ideals. Vietnam raises a hard question: was preventing communist expansion worth the cost when the policy failed there?

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the outcome in Berlin support an argument that containment could work without a direct superpower war?

2. Why could someone use Korea as evidence both for and against the effectiveness of containment?

3. How does the outcome in Vietnam challenge a claim that military action made containment effective?

4. How could U.S. support for governments that restricted political freedoms weaken an argument that containment defended democratic ideals?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph arguing whether containment was effective overall. State what you mean by effective, use evidence from at least two conflicts in the passage, and answer one counterargument.

ANSWER KEY

Containing the Conflict

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.9a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show containment succeeding, and circle two details that show a cost or limit. Use your marks to weigh both sides of an argument about the policy. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the outcome in Berlin support an argument that containment could work without a direct superpower war?	**The airlift supplied West Berlin until the Soviet blockade ended, without a direct battle between the superpowers.**
2	Why could someone use Korea as evidence both for and against the effectiveness of containment?	**The invasion failed to bring South Korea under communist rule, but the war killed millions and ended without a peace treaty.**
3	How does the outcome in Vietnam challenge a claim that military action made containment effective?	**Despite U.S. combat troops and bombing, South Vietnam's government collapsed in 1975.**
4	How could U.S. support for governments that restricted political freedoms weaken an argument that containment defended democratic ideals?	**Supporting those governments conflicted with the democratic ideals the United States said it defended.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Containment was only partly effective if effectiveness means stopping communist expansion without severe human costs. In Berlin, the airlift kept West Berlin supplied until the Soviet blockade ended, without a direct superpower battle. In Korea, the invasion did not destroy South Korea, but millions died and the division continued. Supporters could argue that saving South Korea proves the policy worked. Yet that success cannot erase the war's costs or the failure in Vietnam, where South Vietnam's government collapsed in 1975. Judged by both results and costs, containment achieved important but uneven gains.

Accept different overall judgments when students define a reasonable measure of effectiveness, accurately use evidence from at least two conflicts, and answer a counterargument. For the marking job, accept any two passage details showing success and any two showing costs or limits.