1921-1939: To what extent was Stalin's successful in his foreign policy?  
Post-1945: What was Stalin's role in starting the Cold War?

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*Key Considerations for Soviet Foreign Policy (1921-1939)*

* Ideology: USSR wants to spread revolution to the west → didn’t end diplomacy, but provided basis for mistrust.
* Security: USSR lacked natural boundaries → it was the only communist state, and in the last 800 years, had been invaded by virtually everybody
* Economic: USSR was technologically inferior → needed western help
* Key policy makers: different leaders + commissars for foreign affairs = different policies
* Other countries: Civil War had made the West suspicious // rise of Hitler + failure of Britain/France to contain him made USSR uneasy
* Internal situation: 5-Year Plans, Collectivization, Power Struggle → all influenced foreign policy

*Soviet Foreign Policy (1921-1933)*

* Early Foreign Policy under Lenin

Aims under Lenin
- Trotsky = Commissar for Foreign Affairs
- HOWEVER, in no sphere of policy was Lenin’s leadership more decisive than in foreign affairs
  - Treaty of Brest-Litovsk → understood its realities much more than Trotsky (“neither peace nor war”) or Bukharin (turn war into a revolutionary war!)
- hopes for world revolution were put on hold during the Civil War
- Lenin was confident revolution would spread
- 1920s: Poland attacked Russia, and Lenin saw Poland as the “red bridge into Europe”
  - nothing materialized = one of Lenin’s great disappointments
- peaceful coexistence = only solution?
  - Lenin discouraged that the Poles had fought against the Red Army, rather than embrace them
- pragmatic policies, knowing USSR was alone in the world

The Second Comintern (January 1920)
- 2nd meeting of the Comintern → highly stage-managed, designed to impress delegates from 41 countries
- one of its main aims: bring foreign Communist parties under Comintern control; 21 conditions, including:
  - communist parties had to be organized on Marxist-Leninist principles
  - parties had to prepare for civil war
  - party programs had to be approved by the Comintern
- impact:
  - reduced appeal of the Communist party in other countries → Moscow insisted upon centralized control + discipline; made national security of the USSR the top priority
  - threatened USSR relations with other countries

Relations with Great Britain
- Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement (1921) marked first positive contact
  - however, relations were never easy → Conservatives dominated British governments for most of the 1920s and 1930s
    - they were suspicious of Soviet activity in the empire
- Curzon Ultimatum (1923): British foreign secretary Curzon threatened to cancel the Anglo-Soviet trade pact if the Soviets didn’t stop their activities in Persia, Afghanistan and India
  - USSR agreed
- Zinoviev Letter (1924): forged letter supposedly from the Comintern to the British Communist Party instructing the latter to conduct propaganda activities
  - published just before the election
  - new Conservative government suspended all dealings with the USSR until 1925
- General Strike (1926): Soviets saw the strike as the beginning of a revolution
  - reality: dispute about wages → British Trade Union refused to accept a cheque from the Russians
  - Soviet policy = encouraged anti-Soviet diehards
- Acros Raid (1927): breaking of Britain-USSR relations when the Brits raided the Russian trade mission in London

Relations with Germany
- natural allies in the 1920s because they’re both outcasts
- Treaty of Rapallo (1922): ended isolation
  - reestablishment of diplomatic relations + promise of economic cooperation
  - later years: economic + military collaborations
  - mutually beneficial collaboration in the years that followed, despite tensions caused by Communist activity in Germany (by 1923, the possibility of a Communist rising in Germany had faded)
- Locarno Pact (1925): worried Soviets about German reintegration into Europe (with Britain and France)
  - → lots of treaties were signed to reassure the Soviets, e.g. Treaty of Berlin (1926 - same year Germany joined the League of Nations)
  - Treaty of Rapallo renewed → pledged neutrality if either was attacked & Germany agreed to abstain from sanctions placed on the USSR by the League
  - ties between countries grew stronger militarily, economically and politically <3
- advantages of Russo-German cooperation
  - diplomatic: both were outcasts + USSR avoided having capitalist countries combining against it
  - military: German officers trained the Red Army, whereas the German army was allowed to train and experiment with weapons forbidden by Versailles
  - economic: Germany provided loans to the USSR (financed NEP + First 5-Year Plan) // USSR supplied markets for heavy German industry, whereas German firms manufactured guns, shells, aircraft and tanks