



GLOBAL HISTORY, A.Y. 2026-2027

Group Presentations

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ASSESSED GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Topic

The role of science, technology, and propaganda in the Cold War

Abstract of the topic

The Cold War was not merely a political, ideological, and economic standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union, but a conflict profoundly defined by the intersection of science, technology, and propaganda. Under the constant shadow of nuclear Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), the competition between the two Superpowers shifted from direct military engagement to the arenas of scientific innovation and ideological influence.

The nuclear arms race, missile development, the rise of computing, and the space race were driven not only by strategic defence imperatives, but also by the desire to demonstrate the inherent superiority of each bloc's socio-economic model. Landmark events – such as the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 and the US Moon landing in 1969 – transformed scientific milestones into powerful political statements. Concurrently, propaganda played a crucial role in shaping global public perception and framing technical success as moral and ideological victory. Through international exhibitions, broadcasting, cinema, and the press, both Washington and Moscow weaponised scientific progress to project an image of modernity and global leadership. In turn, state funding heavily militarised and politicised scientific research, altering the relationship between state authority, academia, and the public role of the scientist.

In a nutshell, science, technology, and propaganda operated as synergistic forces during the Cold War, fundamentally reshaping the nature of global power dynamics and establishing a legacy that continues to influence contemporary technopolitics and international relations.

Tasks

Each group shall:

- select one case study among **science, technology, and propaganda** occurred in the period explored in the course (1945-2001) – explain the case.
- Assess how it was reported to the public and/or analysed by experts and/or discussed by political parties/politicians/civil servants/NGOs **at that time** (please, no reference to sources concerning the current times!).

How to proceed

1) Group formation and topic communication

- The class is divided into **9 groups** of three students. The list of groups, initially provided on Aurora, will be uploaded to the DIDA platform by the lecturer.
- The list presents the groups in their **order of presentation** – that is, Group 1 will present first, followed sequentially by the remaining groups.
- **4 groups** present on Thursday October 8, **4 groups** on Monday October 12, and **1 group** on Tuesday October 13.
- As class representative, Aurora will ensure that classmates adhere to the above instructions, compile the selected topics into the list provided, and submit the file to the lecturer.
- Deadline for communicating the topics of each group: by **Friday, October 2**.

2) Choosing the case study

During the Cold War, science, technology, and propaganda operated as interconnected instruments of Superpower rivalry. The Space Race provided a compelling arena: the USSR leveraged *Sputnik 1* (1957) and Yuri Gagarin's orbital flight (1961) to demonstrate missile capabilities and showcase ideological triumph, which impelled the US to counter with the *Apollo 11* Moon landing in 1969.

Following the 1960 Sino-Soviet split, Beijing faced isolation from both superpowers, prompting Chairman Mao Zedong to initiate the "Two Bombs, One Satellite" (*Liangdan Yixing*) project. In Japan, the triad of science, technology, and propaganda took on a unique form during the Cold War. Bound by its post-WWII pacifist constitution and reliance on the US security umbrella, Japan could not project power through military tech like nuclear arms or space weapons. Instead, it weaponised peaceful technology, high-speed infrastructure, and consumer electronics as state propaganda to rebuild its global status and demonstrate the superiority of the Western alignment.

In the Third World South, Superpowers deployed scientific expertise and technological aid as ideological propaganda to secure post-colonial alliances. Through the "Green Revolution," the US exported agricultural science, high-yield crops, and irrigation infrastructure to nations like India and Mexico, framing US technological innovation as the ultimate solution to hunger and a preventative shield against communist revolution. Conversely, the USSR financed massive engineering projects, such as Egypt's Aswan High Dam, promoting "scientific socialism" and state-led industrialisation as the fastest path to modern nation-building free from Western imperialism. Both Superpowers routinely broadcast these development projects through local media, mobile cinema units, and international trade fairs, transforming civil infrastructure, medical assistance, and agricultural technology into living advertisements for their respective socio-economic models.



These are merely a few examples concerning this topic. You are welcome to pick your case study from the above-mentioned cases or explore international history (textbooks, for example) and find other ones.

Please, **make sure your chosen topic does not overlap with one another** – you must avoid dealing with the same topic or subject that is related to the same country.

Each group is asked to choose a representative, who will be the only person allowed to email the lecturer with **requests for help and/or guidance** while preparing the presentation (i.e., on sources of your presentations).

3) Preparing the group presentation

Each group will work as a unit. Group members shall arrange their group autonomously in order to fulfil the following tasks:

- First of all, find three academic articles/book chapters/contemporary newspapers articles that explain the case study. You must inform the lecturer about your choice and check if sources will be greenlighted. Bear in mind that **Wikipedia, Encyclopedia Britannica or alike are not considered as secondary sources.**
- Find written/audio/video material that presented/discussed the topic at that time (e.g. newspapers, documentaries, leaflets, IOs or NGOs reports).
- Explore the material (read/listen/watch).
- Contextualise the material:
 - What is the specific topic of the material you have found?
 - When has the material been produced/published/aired?
 - Who has authored/produced the material?
 - Why has the material been produced – what is the declared intent of it?
 - To whom is the material addressed/what is the targeted audience of readers/listeners/viewers?
 - Where has it been distributed (nationally, regionally, worldwide)?
- Assess their contents critically:
 - What is the message/interpretation/argument that is presented in the material?
 - Do you think there are any additional intents behind what the author/producer has explicitly stated?
 - Can you detect any bias?
(Please make sure: These can be ideological, political, social, racial, gender.; they can be evident and acknowledged, or hidden and perhaps even not known to the authors themselves).
 - Is the material acknowledging different points of view? How?
(Please make sure: This does not mean they are respected/accepted/shared by the authors).



- Is there any place for a historical analysis of the roots of the event/process/decision under scrutiny in the material?
- Is there something missing from the “story” presented in the material?
- Had you been in the author’s place and produced the material, what would you have done differently?

4) Sharing your group work with the audience

You are free to select the medium you want to use for your presentation, e.g. use a *MS PowerPoint, Visme, Canva*, or similar tools, assemble a short video. The lecturer will not impose any limits to your creativity.

Your group presentation must stay **within 25 minutes**. You will then address questions from the audience (**five-minute Q&A session**).

How the groups are assessed

The lecturer assesses:

- the performance for research
- Coherence and relevance of content
- Ability to address all points in the instructions
- presentation skills (clarity of voice, speaking notes, time keeping)
- Q&A session

For full details regarding the evaluation criteria, please refer to the sample rubric sent to Aurora and subsequently uploaded to the DIDA platform.

The grade is given to the group as a whole, which means that **each member of the group will have the same grade**.

The lecturer does not judge who has taken responsibility for which task; all steps lead to the final performance, and all of the group members will have contributed to that.

This requires each of you to behave as an honest team member: participate, contribute, respect, accept the other group members’ ideas and initiatives, be **co-operative**, work together to achieve the best result (and have fun!).