

Overview

Was a prolonged period of geopolitical tension between US (& allies) & the USSR (& allies) from 1947 to 1991

Was characterised by ideological conflict, political & economic competition & threat of nuclear warfare

Emerged from the power vacuum left by World War II, where the US & USSR emerged as the dominant superpowers

The ideological differences between the capitalist, democratic West and the communist, authoritarian East fueled mutual distrust and competition

Origins of the Cold War

Yalta & Potsdam Conferences (1945) The Yalta Conference in February 1945 and the Potsdam Conference in July-August 1945 involved negotiations between the Allied leaders (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin) about the post-war reorganization of Europe

Disagreements over the fate of Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, and the future of Germany sowed seeds of distrust between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies

Origins of the Cold War (cont)

The Iron Curtain Speech (1946) Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech in March 1946 highlighted the division of Europe into two spheres of influence: the Soviet-controlled East and the Western democracies

The speech signaled the beginning of public acknowledgment of the Cold War divisions

The Long Telegram and Containment Policy In 1946, U.S. diplomat George F. Kennan sent the "Long Telegram" from Moscow, arguing that the Soviet Union was inherently expansionist and advocating for a policy of "containment" to prevent the spread of communism

This telegram laid the groundwork for the Truman Doctrine and the U.S. strategy throughout the Cold War

Early Cold War Conflicts & Policies

The Truman Doctrine (1947) President Harry S. Truman articulated the Truman Doctrine, committing the United States to support free peoples resisting subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures, specifically targeting communist expansion.

Early Cold War Conflicts & Policies (cont)

Initially applied to Greece and Turkey, it became a global policy of containing communism.

The Marshall Plan (1948) The Marshall Plan was a U.S. initiative to provide economic aid to rebuild Western European economies after WWII, aiming to prevent the spread of communism by stabilizing the region.

The Soviet Union saw the plan as a threat and responded by tightening control over Eastern Europe.

The Berlin Blockade and Airlift (1948–1949) In response to the Western Allies' introduction of a new currency in West Berlin, the Soviet Union blockaded all land access to the city, aiming to force the Allies out.

The U.S. and Britain responded with the Berlin Airlift, supplying West Berlin by air for nearly a year, leading to the Soviet Union lifting the blockade.



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The Formation of Alliances

NATO (1949) The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established in 1949 as a military alliance of Western nations committed to collective security against Soviet aggression.

NATO represented a formal military alignment of Western powers against the Soviet bloc.

The Warsaw Pact (1955) In response to NATO, the Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact in 1955, a collective defense treaty with its Eastern European satellite states.

The Warsaw Pact solidified the division of Europe into two opposing military alliances.

Non-Aligned Movement The Non-Aligned Movement, established in the 1950s and 1960s, consisted of countries that sought to remain independent from both U.S. and Soviet influence.

Leaders like Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, India's Jawaharlal Nehru, and Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser played key roles in promoting non-alignment.

The Nuclear Arms Race & Space Race

Development of Nuclear Weapons The U.S. and the Soviet Union engaged in an intense arms race, developing and stockpiling nuclear weapons.

The Nuclear Arms Race & Space Race (cont)

The Soviets tested their first atomic bomb in 1949, leading to the development of more advanced weapons like the hydrogen bomb by both sides.

Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) By the 1950s, both superpowers possessed enough nuclear weapons to ensure total destruction in the event of a nuclear war, leading to the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

MAD became a central tenet of Cold War strategy, deterring direct military conflict between the U.S. and the USSR.

The Space Race The Cold War competition extended to space, with the Soviet Union launching Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, in 1957.

The U.S. responded by intensifying its space efforts, leading to the Apollo moon landings in 1969, symbolizing American technological and ideological superiority.

Major Cold War Crises

The Korean War (1950–1953) The Korean War was the first major military conflict of the Cold War, with the U.S. and its allies supporting South Korea against the communist North, backed by China and the Soviet Union.

The war ended in an armistice, solidifying the division of Korea and reinforcing U.S. commitment to containing communism in Asia.

The Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) The Cuban Missile Crisis was a 13-day confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union over the placement of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba.

The crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear war but ended with a negotiated settlement, including the removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba and U.S. missiles from Turkey.

The Vietnam War (1955–1975) The Vietnam War saw U.S. efforts to prevent a communist takeover of South Vietnam by North Vietnam and the Viet Cong.

Major Cold War Crises (cont)

The war was a significant Cold War conflict that ended in failure for the U.S., leading to a re-evaluation of American foreign policy and the limits of containment.

Détente and the Easing of Tensions

Détente (1969–1979) Détente was a period of reduced Cold War tensions, marked by increased diplomatic and economic engagements between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Key agreements included the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) and the Helsinki Accords, which aimed to improve East-West relations and reduce the risk of nuclear conflict.

Nixon's Visit to China (1972) President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972 marked a significant shift in Cold War dynamics, as the U.S. sought to exploit the Sino-Soviet split and improve relations with China.

The rapprochement with China further isolated the Soviet Union and contributed to the broader strategy of détente.

Détente and the Easing of Tensions (cont)

End of Détente Détente began to unravel in the late 1970s due to Soviet actions in Africa and the Middle East, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, with his more confrontational approach towards the Soviet Union, marked the end of détente.

Later Years & End of the Cold War

Reagan's Cold War Strategy President Ronald Reagan took a more aggressive stance against the Soviet Union, calling it an "evil empire" and increasing military spending.

The Reagan Doctrine supported anti-communist movements around the world, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua, aiming to roll back Soviet influence.

Gorbachev's Reforms: Glasnost and Perestroika Mikhail Gorbachev, who became Soviet leader in 1985, introduced policies of Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring) to reform the Soviet system.

Later Years & End of the Cold War (cont)

These reforms aimed to address economic stagnation and political repression but also led to unintended consequences, including the weakening of Soviet control over Eastern Europe.

The Fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 symbolized the collapse of communist control in Eastern Europe and the failure of the Soviet Union's attempts to maintain its influence.

The event was a key moment in the broader collapse of communist regimes across Eastern Europe.

The Dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991) Internal economic problems, nationalist movements within the Soviet republics, and the cumulative effects of Cold War pressures led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

The end of the Soviet Union marked the official end of the Cold War, leaving the United States as the world's sole superpower.



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The Global Impact of the Cold War

Decolonization and the Third World The Cold War influenced the process of decolonization, as newly independent nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America often became battlegrounds for U.S.-Soviet competition.

Both superpowers sought to extend their influence in the Third World, sometimes supporting authoritarian regimes or insurgencies to achieve their goals.

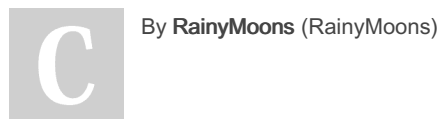
The Non-Aligned Movement Many newly independent nations sought to avoid aligning with either the U.S. or the Soviet Union, leading to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement.

This movement aimed to maintain independence from the Cold War blocs and promote peaceful coexistence.

The Legacy of the Cold War The Cold War left a lasting impact on global politics, economics, and culture, influencing international relations, military strategies, and ideological conflicts even after its end.

The Global Impact of the Cold War (cont)

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War also led to the emergence of new conflicts and challenges in the post-Cold War world.



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