

# Cold War

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*For the generic term for a high-tension struggle between countries, see cold war (war).*

<b>This article is part of the series Cold War</b>
1947-1953
1953-1962
1962-1991

The **Cold War** was the open yet restricted struggle that developed after World War II between the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies. The struggle was named the *Cold War* because it did not actually lead to direct armed conflict between the superpowers (a "hot" war) on a wide scale. The Cold War was waged by means of economic pressure, selective aid, intimidation, diplomatic maneuvering, propaganda, assassination, low-intensity military operations and full-scale proxy war from 1947 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Cold War saw the largest conventional and the first nuclear arms race in history. The term was popularized by the U.S. political adviser and financier Bernard Baruch in April 1947 during a debate on the Truman Doctrine. It was coined by Eric A. Blair aka George Orwell in an essay titled "You and the Atomic Bomb" ([http://orwell.ru/library/articles/ABomb/english/e\\_abomb.html](http://orwell.ru/library/articles/ABomb/english/e_abomb.html)) on October 19, 1945 in the British magazine *Tribune*.

The Cold War is usually considered to have occurred approximately from the end of the strained alliance between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during World War II until the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Korean War; the Hungarian Revolution; the Bay of Pigs Invasion and Cuban Missile Crisis; the Vietnam War; the Afghan War; and U.S.-backed military coups against governments in Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), and civil wars in countries such as Angola, El Salvador, and Nicaragua were some of the occasions when the tension related to the Cold War took the form of an armed conflict. In those conflicts, the major powers operated in good part by arming or funding surrogates, a development that lessened direct impact on the populations of the major powers, but brought the conflict to millions of civilians around the world.

In the 1970s, the Cold War gave way to détente and a more complicated pattern of international relations in which the world was no longer split into two clearly opposed blocs. Less powerful countries had more room to assert their independence, and the two superpowers were partially able to recognize their common interest in trying to check the further spread and proliferation of nuclear weapons (*see* SALT I, SALT II, Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty). U.S.-Soviet relations would deteriorate once again in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but improved as the Soviet bloc started to unravel in the late 1980s. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia lost the superpower status that it had won in World War II. The period after the Cold War where Soviet leaders announced a policy of peaceful coexistence was called the Thaw.

In the strategic conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union a major arena was the strategy of technology (see also deterrence theory). It also involved covert conflict through acts of espionage. Beyond the actual killing of intelligence personnel, the Cold War was heavily manifest in the concerns about nuclear weapons. It was questioned as to if they were being mass produced and whether wars could really be deterred by the mere existence of nuclear weapons. Another manifestation was in the propaganda wars between the United States and the USSR. Indeed, it was far from certain that a global nuclear war would not result from smaller regional wars, which heightened the level of concern for each conflict. This tension shaped the lives of people around the world almost as much as the actual fighting did.

One major hotspot of conflict was Germany, particularly the city of Berlin. Arguably, the most vivid symbol of the Cold War was the Berlin Wall. The Wall isolated West Berlin (the portion of the city controlled by West Germany and the Allies) from East Berlin and the territory of East Germany, which completely surrounded it. In practical terms, the Fulda Gap as the main land attack route into Western Europe for the Warsaw Pact, was an area of constant tension.

The Korean peninsula remains a hotspot. The states of North Korea and South Korea (and her allies) also technically remain at war because although a truce is in effect, no formal peace treaty was ever signed. As a result, tension still remains high on the Korean peninsula, especially since North Korea announced its acquisition of nuclear weapons.

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## Arms race

A major feature of the Cold War was the arms race between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. This race took place in many technological and military fields, resulting in many scientific discoveries. Particularly revolutionary advances were made in the field of nuclear weapons and rocketry, which led to the space race (Most or all of the rockets used to launch humans and satellites into orbit were originally military designs).

Other fields in which arms races occurred include: jet fighters, bombers, chemical weapons, biological weapons, anti-aircraft warfare, surface-to-surface missiles (including SRBMs and cruise missiles), inter-continental ballistic missiles (as well as IRBMs), anti-ballistic missiles, anti-tank weapons, submarines and anti-submarine warfare, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, electronic intelligence, signals intelligence, reconnaissance aircraft and spy satellites.

All of these fields required massive technological and manufacturing investment. In many fields, the West created weapons with superior effectiveness, mainly due to their lead in digital computers and reluctance to spend enough money to develop systems with brute force superiority. However, the Eastern bloc fielded a larger number of designs in each field and built a larger number of many types of weapons.

One prominent feature of the nuclear arms race, supported in particular by the deployment of nuclear ICBMs, was the concept of deterrence via mutually assured destruction or "MAD". The idea was that the Western bloc would not attack the Eastern bloc or vice versa, because both sides had more than enough nuclear weapons to reduce each other to nothing, and to make the entire planet uninhabitable. Therefore, launching an attack on either party would be suicidal, and so neither would attempt it. With increasing numbers and accuracy of delivery systems, particularly in the closing stages of the Cold War, the possibility of a first strike doctrine weakened the deterrence theory. A first strike would aim to degrade the enemy's nuclear forces to such an extent that the retaliatory response would involve "acceptable" losses.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, many extremely advanced technologies became available on the open market. Fighter jets, anti-aircraft missiles, small arms, and even nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons were rumoured to have changed hands. In some cases, former Soviet-bloc states seized assets such as naval vessels moored in what were now their own ports. In many of these cases, the governments were unable to staff or maintain these assets, and some even auctioned them off to the highest bidder.



This missile, called the LG-118A Peacekeeper, was one of the ICBMs deployed by the United States during the Cold War.

Military forces from the countries involved rarely had much direct participation in the Cold War; the war was primarily fought by intelligence agencies like the CIA (United States), MI6 (United Kingdom), BND (West Germany), Stasi (East Germany) and the KGB (Soviet Union).

The abilities of Echelon, a U.S.-UK intelligence sharing organization that was created during World War II, were used against the USSR, China and their allies. Echelon's heavy U.S.-UK bias led to Canadian (CSIS), New Zealand (NZSIS) and Australian (ASIO) security intelligence agencies participating in the Cold War either as signals intelligence gathering units or as initial processors of raw intelligence.

Also see History of Soviet espionage in the United States

## Historiography

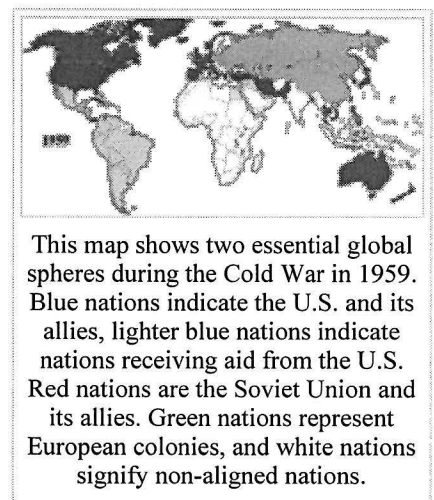
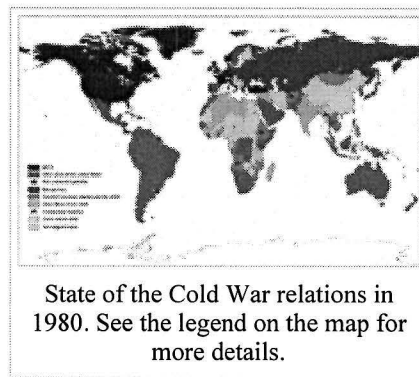
There have been three distinct periods in the western study of the Cold War. For more than a decade after the end of World War II, few American historians saw any reason to challenge the conventional interpretation of the beginning of the Cold War: that the breakdown of relations was a direct result of Stalin's violation of the accords of the Yalta conference, the imposition of Soviet-dominated governments on an unwilling Eastern Europe, Soviet intransigence, and aggressive Soviet expansionism.

However, later historians, especially William Appleman Williams in his 1959 *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* and Walter LaFeber in his 1967 *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1968*, articulated an overriding concern: U.S. commitment to maintaining an "open door" for American trade in world markets. Some revisionist historians have argued that U.S. policy of containment as expressed in the Truman Doctrine were at least equally to blame, if not more so. Some date the onset of the Cold War to the Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, regarding the U.S. use of nuclear weapons as a warning to the Soviet Union, which was about to join the war against the nearly defeated Japan. In short, historians have disagreed as to who was responsible for the breakdown of U.S.-Soviet relations and whether the conflict between the two superpowers was inevitable. This revisionist approach reached its height during the Vietnam War when many began to view the U.S. and U.S.S.R. as morally comparable empires.

In the later years of the Cold War, there were attempts to forge a post-revisionist synthesis by historians, and since the end of the Cold War, the post-revisionist school has come to dominate. Prominent post-revisionist historians include John Lewis Gaddis and Robert Grogin. Rather than attributing the beginning of the Cold War to either superpower, post-revisionist historians focused on mutual misperception, mutual reactivity, and shared responsibility between the superpowers. Borrowing from the realist school of international relations, the post-revisionists essentially accepted U.S. European policy in Europe, such as aid to Greece in 1947 and the Marshall Plan.

According to this synthesis, "Communist activity" was not the root of the difficulties of Europe, but rather it was a consequence of the disruptive effects of the war on the economic, political, and social structure of Europe. In addition, the Marshall Plan rebuilt a functioning Western economic system, thwarting the political appeal of the radical left.

For Western Europe, economic aid ended the dollar shortage and stimulated private investment for postwar reconstruction. For the United States, the plan spared it from a crisis of over-production and maintained demand for American exports. The NATO alliance would serve to integrate Western Europe into the system of mutual defense pacts, thus providing safeguards against



subversion or neutrality in the bloc. Rejecting the assumption that communism was an international troika with aggressive designs on the western world, the post-revisionist school nevertheless accepts U.S. policy in Europe as a necessary reaction to cope with instability in Europe, which threatened to drastically alter the balance of power in a manner favorable to the U.S.S.R. and devastate the Western economic and political system.

For the Eastern European satellites of the Soviet Union, little money was invested in civilian infrastructure, but they did receive substantial military assistance in the form of funds, matériel, and advisors. As a result of the military oriented economy of the Soviet Union, most Eastern European states are still trying to recover from the destruction of their economic, political, and social structures during WWII.

## Significant documents

- Franck Report: June 11, 1945. Recommended that the United States either a) keep its atomic discoveries secret for an indefinite time, or b) develop nucleonic armaments at such a pace that no other nation would think of attacking first from fear of overwhelming retaliation. Also proposed that a demonstration of the "new weapon" be made before the eyes of representatives of all of the United Nations, on a barren island or desert.
- Potsdam Declaration: July 26, 1945. A formal statement issued by Harry S. Truman (US), Winston Churchill (United Kingdom), and Chiang Kai-Shek (China) which outlined the terms for a Japanese surrender.
- Baruch Plan: 1946. A proposal by the U.S. to the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) to a) extend between all nations the exchange of basic scientific information for peaceful ends; b) implement control of atomic energy to the extent necessary to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes; c) eliminate from national armaments atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction; and d) establish effective safeguards by way of inspection and other means to protect complying States against the hazards of violations and evasions. When the Soviet Union was the only member State who refused to sign, the US embarked on a massive nuclear weapons testing, development, and deployment program.
- George F. Kennan: 1946/1947. The Long Telegram and The **X Article**, formally titled "**The Sources of Soviet Conduct**. The article describes the concepts that would become the bedrock of American Cold War policy and was published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947. The article was an expansion of a well-circulated top secret State Department cable called the X Article and became famous for setting forth the doctrine of containment. Though the article was signed pseudonymously by "X," it was well known at the time that the true author was Kennan, the deputy chief of mission of the United States to the Soviet Union from 1944 to 1946, under ambassador W. Averell Harriman.
- Paul Nitze April 14, 1950: NSC-68 was a classified report written by and issued by the United States National Security Council. The report outlined the National Security Strategy of the United States for that time and provided a comprehensive analysis of the capabilities of the Soviet Union and of the United States of America from military, economic, political, and psychological standpoints. NSC-68's principal thesis was that the Soviet Union intended to become the single dominant world power. The report argued that the Soviet Union had a systematic strategy aimed at the spread of Communism across the entire world, and it recommended that the United States government adopt a policy of containment to stop the further spread of Communism. NSC-68 outlined a drastic foreign policy shift from defensive to active containment and advocated aggressive military preparedness. NSC-68 would shape government actions in the **Cold War** for the next 20 years and has subsequently been labeled the "blueprint" for the Cold War.
- McCloy-Zorin Accords: 1961. Conceived by Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy, the agreement established a foundation or "roadmap" for all future negotiations between the superpowers with regard to general disarmament.
- Partial or Limited Test Ban Treaty (PTBT/LTBT): 1963. Also put forth by Kennedy; banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere, underwater and in space. However, neither France nor China (both Nuclear Weapon States) signed.
- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): 1968. Established the U.S., USSR, U.K., France, and China as five "Nuclear-Weapon States". Non-Nuclear Weapon states were prohibited from (among other things) possessing, manufacturing, or acquiring nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. All 187 signatories were committed to the goal of (eventual) nuclear disarmament.
- Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM): 1972. Entered into between the U.S. and USSR to limit the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems used in defending areas against missile-delivered nuclear weapons; ended by the US in 2002.
- Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties I & II (SALT I & II): 1972 / 1979. Limited the growth of US and Soviet missile arsenals.
- Prevention of Nuclear War Agreement: 1973. Committed the U.S. and USSR to consult with one another during conditions of nuclear confrontation.



- Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF): 1987. Eliminated tactical ("battlefield") nuclear devices and GLCMs from Europe.
- Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty I (START I): 1991. This was signed by George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev; reduced the numbers of U.S. and Soviet long-range missiles and nuclear warheads from 10,000 per side to 6,000 per side.
- Mutual Detargeting Treaty (MDT): 1994. U.S. and Russian missiles no longer automatically target the other country; nuclear forces are no longer operated in a manner that presumes that the two nations are adversaries.
- Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) 1996. Prohibits all nuclear test explosions in all environments; was signed by 71 States (US is not signatory).
- Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty II (START II): 2000. Will reduce the numbers of U.S. and Russian long-range missiles and nuclear warheads from 6,000 per side to 3,500-3,000 per side. (START III proposed for 2007).
- Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (Moscow Treaty): 2002. Established bilateral strategic nuclear arms reductions and a new "strategic nuclear framework"; also invited all countries to adopt non-proliferation principles aimed at preventing terrorists, or those that harbored them, from acquiring or developing all types of WMD's and related materials, equipment, and tech.

## References

Flory, Harriette and Jenike, Samuel. The Modern World 16th century to present. New York: Pitman Publishing, 1992.

## See also

- The Great Game

## External links

- CNN Cold War Knowledge Bank (<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/kbank/1stdraft.html>) comparison of articles on Cold War topics in the Western and the Soviet press between 1945 and 1991
- The Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) (<http://www.cwihp.org/>)
- People, states and agencies figuring in the Cold War (<http://www.cold-war.info/>)
- The Reagan/Gorbachev Summits (<http://history.ocde.us/historyday/2005/2702/>)
- Cold War Veterans Association (<http://www.coldwarveterans.com/>)
- How the Cold War Worked - Chomsky (<http://libcom.org/history/articles/cold-war-1940-1989/index.php>) Noam Chomsky's views on the purpose of the Cold War
- History of the Western allies in Berlin during the Cold War (<http://www.western-allies-berlin.com/>)
- Russian Threat Perceptions and Plans for Sabotage Against the United States ([http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/congress/1999\\_h/has299010\\_0.htm](http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/congress/1999_h/has299010_0.htm)): Hearing before the Military Research and Development Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services held at the House of Representatives of the US Congress on October 26, 1999
- The Cold War Museum (<http://www.coldwar.org/>)
- People's history: The cultural cold war (<http://www.libcom.org/history/articles/cultural-cold-war>) Information on the cultural element of the conflict

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