

**THE
COLD WAR
A Brief Overview**

**by
Various**

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Cold War for Dummies

The following material is from www.dummies.com, and we express our grateful thanks to them for this excellent synopsis.

Running Hot and Cold Following World War II
(www.dummies.com)

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for this material

www.dummies.com/how-to/content/running-hot-and-cold-following-world-war-ii.html

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The years after World War II weren't peaceful. But they didn't erupt into World War III either (cross your fingers). For much of the time after World War II, the major world powers were preoccupied with a game of nuclear standoff.

The major powers, by the way, turned out to be the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States expected to enjoy its nuclear monopoly for 20 years or more, but the Soviets surprised everyone by developing their own atomic bomb in 1949. Allies on the winning side of World War II, the nations became bitter rivals very soon afterward.

Soviet foreign policy, reflecting Josef Stalin's viciously paranoid behavior toward any rival -- real or imagined, internal or abroad -- became increasingly exclusionary and closed off. Soviet goals included maintaining control over satellite communist states, several set up in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe in the wake of World War II, while keeping out foreign cultural and economic influences.

The United States emerged as leader of the West -- meaning western Europe, the Western Hemisphere, and developed nations anywhere that resisted communism and promoted (or at least permitted) the private pursuit of profit in their trade policies.

Daring each other to blink

With their nuclear arsenals, the Soviet Union and United States engaged in a Cold War. It amounted to a diplomatic, cultural, political, and military standoff.

In diplomatic and military terms, the Cold War took the form of each side daring the other to fire the first nuclear shot. Both nations built more and more, bigger and bigger missiles and warheads. Missiles became capable of delivering a nuclear bomb from a Nebraska wheat field into downtown Moscow. Both nations developed the ludicrously tragic ability to blow up the Earth several times over.

This madness was tempered a little with a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963, numerous arms talks, and even arms reduction agreements, but the two nations basically kept their guns pointed at each other's heads until one, the economically ruined Soviet Union, blinked -- or in this case, fell apart. Along the way, several other countries built nuclear arsenals -- China prominent among them.

Returning to arms

Meanwhile, many regional wars raged. Among them, the United States was embarrassed in a futile attempt to keep Vietnam, a former French colony (and before that, a sometime Chinese vassal state) in Southeast Asia, from going communist. The Soviets squandered a lot of resources and international good will fighting Muslim rebels in Afghanistan.

When Israel, a new Jewish state, was established in 1948 in what was British-ruled Palestine, surrounding Arab nations joined Palestinian Arabs in opposing it. The disagreement turned violent many times, with wars in 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982. Also in the region, Iraq fought Iran. Then Iraq invaded Kuwait and a U.S.-led international force turned it back.

Horrible intertribal violence broke out in Africa. Terrorist bombings threaten people on every continent. Clearly, humanity has not come close to achieving a world without war.

(www.dummies.com/how-to/content/running-hot-and-cold-following-world-war-ii.html)

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The Cold War

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Cold War

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www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/cold_war.htm

The Cold War was the most important political and diplomatic issue of the early postwar period. The main Cold War enemies were the United States and the Soviet Union. The Cold war got its name because both sides were afraid of fighting each other directly. In such a "hot war," nuclear weapons might destroy everything. So, instead, they fought each other indirectly. They played havoc with conflicts in different parts of the world. They also used words as weapons. They threatened and denounced each other. Or they tried to make each other look foolish.

The term "Cold War" was first used in 1947 by Bernard Baruch, senior advisor to Harry Truman, the 33rd president of the United States, in reference to the frequently occurring and exacerbating crises between the United States and the former Soviet Union, despite having fought side-by-side against Nazi Germany in the Second World War.

Dating the end of the Cold War requires dating its beginning, and defining what it was about. By one reckoning, the Cold War began in the 1945-1948 timeframe, and ended in 1989, having been a dispute over the division of Europe. By another account, the Cold War began in 1917 with the Bolshevik Revolution, and ended in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, having been a conflict between Bolshevism and Democracy.

The Cold War grew out of longstanding conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States that developed after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Soviet Communist Party under V.I. Lenin considered itself the spearhead of an international movement that would replace the existing political orders in the West, and indeed throughout the world.

The Cold War can be said to have begun in 1917, with the emergence in Russia of a revolutionary Bolshevik regime devoted to spreading communism throughout the industrialized world. For Vladimir Lenin, the leader of that revolution, such gains were imperative. As he wrote in his August 1918 Open Letter to the American Workers, "We are now, as it were, in a besieged fortress, waiting for the other detachments of the world socialist revolution to come to our relief."

Western governments generally understood communism to be an international movement whose adherents foreswore all national allegiance in favor of transnational communism, but in practice received their orders from and were loyal to Moscow. In 1918, the United States joined briefly and unenthusiastically in an unsuccessful Allied attempt to topple the revolutionary Soviet regime. Suspicion and hostility thus characterized relations between the Soviets and the West long before the Second World War made them reluctant allies in the struggle against Nazi Germany.

The United States and Great Britain fought against the Bolsheviks, unsuccessfully, between 1918 and 1920. In 1918 American troops participated in the Allied intervention in Russia on behalf of anti-Bolshevik forces. In the two decades thereafter, Soviet attitudes towards the West oscillated wildly. American diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union did not come until 1933. Even then, suspicions persisted. During World War II, however, the two countries found themselves allied and downplayed their differences to counter the Nazi threat.

The Cold War was a decades-long struggle for global supremacy that pitted the capitalist United States against the communist Soviet Union. Although there are some disagreements as to when the Cold War began, it is generally conceded that mid- to late-1945 marks the time when relations between Moscow and Washington began deteriorating. This deterioration ignited the early Cold War and set the stage for a dynamic struggle that often assumed mythological overtones of good versus evil.

At the close of World War II, the Soviet Union stood firmly entrenched in Eastern Europe, intent upon installing governments there that would pay allegiance to the Kremlin. It also sought to expand its security zone even further into North Korea, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Similarly, the United States established a security zone of its own that comprised Western Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. From the long view of history, it is clear that both sides were jockeying for a way to secure their futures from the threat of another world war, but it was the threat that each side perceived from the other that allowed for the development of mutual suspicion. It was this mutual suspicion, augmented by profound distrust and misunderstanding that would ultimately fuel the entire conflict.

Over the years, leaders on both sides changed. Yet the Cold War continued. It was the major force in world politics for most of the second half of the twentieth century. Historians disagree about how long the Cold War lasted. A few believe it ended when the United States and the Soviet Union improved relations during the nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies.

Others believe it ended when the Berlin Wall was torn down in 1989, or when the Soviet Union collapsed in late 1991.

For the first few years of the early Cold War (between 1945 and 1948), the conflict was more political than military. Both sides squabbled with each other at the UN, sought closer relations with nations that were not committed to either side, and articulated their differing visions of a postwar world. By 1950, however, certain factors had made the Cold War an increasingly militarized struggle. The communist takeover in China, the pronouncement of the Truman Doctrine, the advent of a Soviet nuclear weapon, tensions over occupied Germany, the outbreak of the Korean War, and the formulation of the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as rival alliances had all enhanced the Cold War's military dimension. U.S. foreign policy reflected this transition when it adopted a position that sought to "contain" the Soviet Union from further expansion. By and large, through a variety of incarnations, the containment policy would remain the central strategic vision of U.S. foreign policy from 1952 until the ultimate demise of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Successive American presidents and successive Soviet premiers tried to manage the Cold War in different ways, and the history of their interactions reveals the delicate balance-of-power that needed to be maintained between both superpowers. Dwight Eisenhower campaigned as a hard-line Cold Warrior and spoke of "rolling back" the Soviet empire, but when given a chance to dislodge Hungary from the Soviet sphere-of-influence in 1956, he declined. The death of Stalin in 1953 prefaced a brief thaw in East-West relations, but Nikita Khrushchev also found it more politically expedient to take a hard line with the United States than to speak of cooperation.

The United States and the Soviet Union were the only two superpowers following the Second World War. The fact that, by the 1950s, each possessed nuclear weapons and the means of delivering such weapons on their enemies, added a dangerous aspect to the Cold War. The Cold War world was separated into three groups. The United States led the West. This group included countries with democratic political systems. The Soviet Union led the East. This group included countries with communist political systems. The non-aligned group included countries that did not want to be tied to either the West or the East.

By 1960, both sides had invested huge amounts of money in nuclear weapons, both as an attempt to maintain parity with each other's stockpiles, but also because the idea of deterring conflict through "mutually assured destruction" had come to be regarded as vital to the national interest of both. As nuclear weapons became more prolific, both nations sought to position missile systems in ever closer proximity to each other's borders. One such attempt by the Soviet government in 1962 precipitated the Cuban Missile Crisis, arguably the closest that the world has ever come to a large-scale nuclear exchange between two countries.

It was also in the early 1960s that American containment policy shifted from heavy reliance on nuclear weapons to more conventional notions of warfare in pursuit of a more "flexible response" to the spread of communism. Although originally articulated by President Kennedy, it was in 1965 that President Johnson showcased the idea of flexible response when he made the initial decision to commit American combat troops to South Vietnam. American thinking had come to regard Southeast Asia as vital to its national security, and President Johnson made clear his intention to insure South Vietnam's territorial and political integrity "whatever the cost or whatever the challenge."

The United States ultimately fought a bloody and costly war in Vietnam that poisoned U.S. politics and wreaked havoc with its economy. The Nixon administration inherited the conflict in 1969, and although it tried to improve relations with the Soviets through detente – and even took the unprecedented step of establishing diplomatic relations with Communist China – neither development was able to bring about decisive change on the Vietnamese battlefield. The United States abandoned the fight in 1973 under the guise of a peace agreement that left South Vietnam emasculated and vulnerable.

Although Nixon continued to negotiate with the Soviets and to court Maoist China, the Soviet Union and the United States continued to subvert one another's interests around the globe in

spite of detente's high-minded rhetoric. Leonid Brezhnev had been installed as Soviet premier in 1964 as Krushchev's replacement, and while he too desired friendlier relations with the United States on certain issues (particularly agriculture), genuinely meaningful cooperation remained elusive.

By the end of the 1970s, however, the chance for an extended thaw had utterly vanished. Jimmy Carter had been elected president in 1976, and although he was able to hammer out a second arms limitation agreement with Brezhnev, the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan significantly soured U.S.-Soviet relations. Seeking to place a greater emphasis on human rights in his foreign policy, Carter angrily denounced the incursion and began to adopt an increasingly hard line with the Soviets. The following year, Americans overwhelmingly elected a president who spoke of waging the Cold War with even greater intensity than had any of his predecessors, and Ronald Reagan made good on his promises by dramatically increasing military budgets in the early 1980s.

Nonetheless, by 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev had replaced Brezhnev in Moscow, and he quickly perceived that drastic changes to the Soviet system were necessary if the USSR was to survive as a state. He instituted a series of liberal reforms known as perestroika, and he seemed genuinely interested in more relations with the West, known as glasnost. Although President Reagan continued to use bellicose language with respect to the Soviet Union (as when he labeled it an "evil empire"), the Gorbachev-Reagan relationship was personally warm and the two leaders were able to decrease tensions substantially by the time Reagan left the White House in 1989.

Despite improved East-West relations, however, Gorbachev's reforms were unable to prevent the collapse of a system that had grown rigid and unworkable. By most measures, the Soviet economy had failed to grow at all since the late 1970s and much of the country's populace had grown weary of the aged Communist hierarchy. In 1989 the spontaneous destruction of the Berlin Wall signaled the end of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, and two years later the Soviet government itself fell from power.

The DoD Cold War Recognition Certificate was approved for service during the "Cold War era" from 02 September 1945 to 26 December 1991. By this account, after 45 years of protracted conflict and constant tension, the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is, upon reflection, a rather tendentious reading of history, since it takes the central conflict of the Cold War to have been the struggle between the two competing social systems, which could only end with one or the other being consigned to the ash heap of history.

President Bush presented the Medal of Freedom award to former President Ronald Reagan at a ceremony in the East Room on January 13, 1993. President Bush said that Reagan " ... helped make ours not only a safer but far better world in which to live. And you yourself said it best. In fact, you saw it coming. We recall your stirring words to the British Parliament. Here were the words: ``the march of freedom and democracy . . . will leave Marxist-Leninism on the ashheap of history." Few people believe more in liberty's inevitable triumph than Ronald Reagan. None, none was more a prophet in his time. Ronald Reagan rebuilt our military; not only that, he restored its morale."

During the Cold War 325 Americans died as a result of hostile action; More than 200 airmen were killed by Communist air defenses, and more than 40 American intelligence aircraft were shot down, killing 64 Cryptologists and 40 crew members. Countless other Americans had their lives disrupted through military service in support of the Cold War.
(www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/cold_war.htm)

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