

COLD WAR (1945 – 1979)

The **Cold War** (Russian: Холодная война) (1945–1991) was the continuing state of political conflict, military tension, and economic competition existing after World War II (1939–1945), primarily between the USSR and its satellite states, with the powers of the [Western world](#), particularly the [United States](#). Although the primary participants' military forces never officially clashed directly, they expressed the conflict through military coalitions, strategic conventional force deployments, a [nuclear arms race](#), espionage, [proxy wars](#), propaganda, and technological competition, such as the [Space Race](#).

Despite being [allies](#) against the [Axis powers](#), and having the most powerful military forces among peer nations, the U.S. and the USSR disagreed about the configuration of the post-war world, while still occupying most of [Europe](#). The Soviet Union created the [Eastern Bloc](#), with the eastern European countries it occupied, annexing some as [Soviet Socialist Republics](#), and maintaining others as satellite states, some of which were later consolidated as the [Warsaw Pact](#) (1955–1991). The U.S. and some western European countries established the “[containment of communism](#)” as a defensive policy, establishing alliances, such as [NATO](#), to that end.

Several such countries also coordinated the [Marshall Plan](#), especially in [West Germany](#), which the USSR opposed. Elsewhere, in [Latin America](#) and [Southeast Asia](#), the USSR assisted and helped foster [communist revolutions](#), opposed by several western countries and their regional allies; some they attempted to [roll back](#), with mixed results. Some countries aligned with either NATO or the Warsaw Pact, while others formed the [Non-Aligned Movement](#).

The Cold War featured periods of international high tension and crises: the [Berlin Blockade](#) (1948–1949); the [Korean War](#) (1950–1953); the Vietnam Conflict (1959–1975); the Berlin Crisis (1961); the [Cuban Missile Crisis](#) (1962); and the [Soviet war in Afghanistan](#)

(1979–1989). Both sides sought [détente](#) to relieve political tensions and to deter direct military attack, which would certainly have assured their [mutual destruction](#) with [nuclear weapons](#).

Cold War (1947–1953)

The **Cold War (1947–1953)** covers the period from the Truman Doctrine in 1947 to the [Korean War](#) in 1953.

Korean War

President Truman signed a proclamation declaring a national emergency, which initiated the U.S. involvement in the Korean War.

In early 1950 the United States made its first commitment to form a peace treaty with Japan that would guarantee long-term U.S. military bases. Some observers believed that the U.S. treaty with Japan led the USSR (Stalin) to approve a plan to invade U.S.-supported [South Korea](#), which occurred on June 25, 1950. [Korea](#) had been divided at the end of World War II, along the 38th parallel, into Soviet and U.S. occupation zones. A communist government was installed in the [North](#) by the Soviets, and an elected government came to power in the South after UN-supervised elections in 1948.

In June 1950, [Kim Il-Sung's North Korean People's Army](#) invaded South Korea. Fearing that a communist Korea under a Kim Il-Sung dictatorship could threaten Japan, and foster other communist movements in Asia, Truman committed U.S. forces and obtained help from the [United Nations](#) to counter the North Korean invasion. The Soviets boycotted [UN Security Council](#) meetings, while protesting the Council's failure to seat the [People's Republic of China](#) and, thus, could not veto the Council's approval of UN action to oppose the North Korean invasion. A joint UN force of personnel from [South Korea](#), the [United States](#), [Britain](#), [Turkey](#), [Canada](#), [Australia](#), [France](#), the [Philippines](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Belgium](#), [New Zealand](#) and other countries joined to stop the invasion. After the Chinese invasion to

assist the North Koreans, fighting stabilized along the 38th parallel, which had separated the Koreas. Truman faced a hostile China, a Sino-Soviet partnership, and a defense budget that had quadrupled in eighteen months.

A cease-fire was approved in July 1953, after the death of Stalin, who had been insisting that the North Koreans continue fighting. In North Korea, Kim Il-Sung created a highly centralized and brutal [dictatorship](#), according himself unlimited power, and generating a formidable [cult of personality](#).

Hydrogen Bomb

A [hydrogen bomb](#) - which produced [nuclear fusion](#) instead of [nuclear fission](#) - was first tested by the United States in November 1952 and by the Soviet Union in August 1953. Such bombs were first deployed in the 1960s.

Cold War (1953–1962)

The **Cold War (1953–1962)** covers the period from the death of [Soviet](#) leader [Joseph Stalin](#) in 1953 to the [Cuban Missile Crisis](#) in 1962.

Cold War (1962–1979)

The **Cold War (1962–1979)** refers to the period that spanned the time between the end of the [Cuban Missile Crisis](#), in late October 1962, through the [détente](#) period beginning in 1969, and then ending in the late 1970s.

The U.S. maintained its Cold War engagement with the [Soviet Union](#) during this period, despite internal U.S. preoccupations with the [assassination of John F. Kennedy](#), the [Civil Rights Movement](#), and the Vietnam Conflict [antiwar movement](#).

Vietnam Conflict

U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson landed 42,000 troops in the Dominican Republic in 1965 to prevent the emergence of "another [Fidel Castro](#)." More notable in 1965, however, was the U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia. In 1965 Johnson stationed 22,000 troops in [South Vietnam](#) to prop up the faltering anticommunist regime. The South Vietnamese government had long been allied with the United States. The [North Vietnamese](#), under [Ho Chi Minh](#), were backed by the Soviet Union and China. North Vietnam, in turn, supported the [National Liberation Front](#) (NLF), which drew its ranks from the South Vietnamese working class and peasantry. Seeking to contain Communist expansion, Johnson increased the number of troops to 575,000 in 1968.

Although neither the Soviet Union nor China intervened directly in the conflict, they did supply large amounts of aid and material to the North Vietnamese, and supported them diplomatically.

While the early years of the conflict saw significant U.S. casualties, the administration assured the U.S. public that the conflict was winnable, and would, in the near future, result in a U.S. victory. The U.S. public's faith in "[the light at the end of the tunnel](#)" was shattered on January 30, 1968, when the NLF mounted their "[Tet Offensive](#)" in South Vietnam. Although neither of these offensives accomplished any military objectives, the surprising capacity of an enemy even to launch such an offensive convinced many in the U.S. that victory was impossible.