The Cold War
1945–1991
The Cold War Unfolds

Content Standards
- I.2.HS.1 Explain events that shaped MI/U.S. since Reconstruction
- I.2.HS.3 Global impact of events/individuals on modern world
- I.4.HS.4 Evaluate democratic values, cost/benefits in U.S. decisions

Terms, People, and Places
- superpowers
- anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs)
- Ronald Reagan
détente
- Fidel Castro
- John F. Kennedy
- ideology
- Nikita Khrushchev
- Leonid Brezhnev
- containment

Focus Question What were the military and political consequences of the Cold War in the Soviet Union, Europe, and the United States?

After World War II devastated Europe and Japan, two great powers remained: the United States and the Soviet Union. These two nations were known as superpowers, or nations stronger than other powerful nations. The Cold War between these superpowers cast a shadow over the world for more than 40 years.

Two Sides Face Off in Europe
Cold War confrontation began in Europe, where the two superpowers' armies confronted each other after World War II. Each superpower formed a European military alliance made up of the nations that it occupied or protected. The United States led the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, in Western Europe. The Soviet Union led the Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe. The two alliances in Europe faced each other along the Iron Curtain, the tense line between the democratic West and the communist East.

A Wall Divides Berlin Berlin was a key focus of Cold War tensions. The city was split into democratic West Berlin and communist East Berlin. In the 1950s, West Berlin became a showcase for West German prosperity. A massive exodus of low-paid East Germans, unhappy with communism, fled into West Berlin. To stop the flight, East Germany built a wall in 1961 that sealed off West Berlin. When completed, the Berlin Wall was a massive concrete barrier, topped with barbed wire and patrolled by guards. The wall showed that workers, far from enjoying a communist paradise, had to be forcibly kept from fleeing.
Eastern Europe Resists Other explosions of Cold War tension included revolts against Soviet domination in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. One of the earliest revolts occurred in East Berlin. In 1953, some 50,000 workers confronted the Soviet army in the streets of the German capital. The uprising spread to other East German cities, but the demonstrators could not stand up to Russian tanks.

In 1956, Eastern Europeans challenged Soviet authority in the name of economic reform in both Poland and Hungary. Poles were responding in part to Soviet-backed mass arrests of noncommunist leaders and government seizures of private lands and industry. Hungarian leader Imre Nagy (nahjh) went furthest, ending one-party rule and seeking to pull his country out of the Warsaw Pact. In response, Soviet troops launched a massive assault that overwhelmed resistance. Nagy was later executed.

In early 1968, Czechoslovak leader Alexander Dubček introduced greater freedom of expression and limited democracy. This blossoming of freedom came to be known as the “Prague Spring.” Soviet leaders feared that democracy would threaten communist power and Soviet domination. Warsaw Pact troops launched a massive invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of that year to put an end to these freedoms.

Checkpoint How was Europe divided, and what were three consequences of its division?

Nuclear Weapons Threaten the World

One of the most terrifying aspects of the Cold War was the arms race that began right after World War II. At first, the United States was the only nuclear power. By 1949, however, the Soviet Union had also developed nuclear weapons. By 1953, both sides had developed hydrogen bombs, which are much more destructive than atomic bombs.

Critics argued that a nuclear war would destroy both sides. Yet each superpower wanted to be able to deter the other from launching its nuclear weapons. Both sides engaged in a race to match each other’s new weapons. The result was a “balance of terror.” Mutually-assured destruction—in which each side knew that the other side would itself be

Soviet Nuclear Missiles
Every year on May 1, the Soviet Union demonstrated its military strength, including nuclear weaponry, in a parade through Moscow’s Red Square. Why might the Soviet Union have wanted to show off its nuclear might?
Arms Control Agreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Nuclear Test Ban Treaty</td>
<td>Banned testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>SALT I Interim Agreement</td>
<td>Froze existing number of weapons held by each side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>SALT I Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty</td>
<td>Set strict limits on missiles that could shoot down missiles from the other side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>SALT II Treaty</td>
<td>Set absolute limit on number of weapons each side could hold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>START Treaty</td>
<td>Required both sides to reduce the number of weapons each held</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart Skills  Compare the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the SALT II Treaty, and the START Treaty. How did each of the later treaties advance beyond the treaty that came before it?

SOURCE: Encyclopaedia Britannica

destroyed if it launched its weapons—discouraged nuclear war. Still, the world’s people lived in constant fear of nuclear doom.

Limiting Nuclear Weapons To reduce the threat of nuclear war, the two sides met at disarmament talks. Although mutual distrust slowed progress, the rival powers did reach some agreements. In 1969, the United States and the Soviet Union began Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) to limit the number of nuclear weapons held by each side. In 1972 and 1979, both sides signed agreements setting these limits.

One of these agreements limited anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs), or missiles that could shoot down other missiles from hostile countries. ABMs were seen as a particular threat to the balance of terror because, by giving one side some protection against the other, they might encourage the protected side to attack. They were also seen as a technology that could provoke a renewed arms race. During the 1980s, U.S. President Ronald Reagan launched a program to build a “Star Wars” missile defense against nuclear attack. Critics objected that this program would violate the ABM treaty. Nonetheless, the two sides signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in 1991.

Building Détente American and Soviet arms control agreements led to an era of détente (day TAHNT), or relaxation of tensions, during the 1970s. The American strategy under détente was to restrain the Soviet Union through diplomatic agreements rather than by military means. The era of détente ended in 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.

Stopping the Spread of Nuclear Weapons By the late 1960s, Britain, France, and China had developed their own nuclear weapons. However, many world leaders worked to keep the arms race from spreading any further. In 1968, many nations signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). These nations agreed not to develop nuclear weapons or to stop the proliferation, or spread, of nuclear weapons.

✓ Checkpoint  What factors discouraged the use of nuclear weapons during the Cold War?

The Cold War Goes Global

Although the Cold War began in Central Europe, it quickly spread around the world. When World War II ended, the Soviets were assisting communist forces in China and Korea. American leaders saw that the United States faced a conflict as global as the two world wars that had preceded it. They therefore developed policies to respond to challenges anywhere in the world.

Building Alliances and Bases As part of its strategy to contain Soviet power, the United States reached out to the rest of the world both diplomatically and militarily. The NATO alliance with Europe’s democracies was only one of several regional alliances.
**Map Skills** During the Cold War, much of the world was divided into two powerful alliances, led by the United States and the communist Soviet Union. Communism reached its maximum extent around 1977, the date of this map. The inset shows details in Europe.

1. **Locate** (a) the Soviet Union (b) the United States (c) Poland
2. **Location** Where were most Cold War conflicts located in relation to the two alliances shown on the map?
3. **Draw Inferences** Why might Cold War conflicts be concentrated as they are?
In 1955, the United States and its allies formed another alliance, the Southeast-Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). SEATO included the United States, Britain, France, Australia, Pakistan, Thailand, New Zealand, and the Philippines. The Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) comprised Britain, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. The United States also formed military alliances with individual nations, such as Japan and South Korea.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union formed its own alliances. In addition to the Warsaw Pact in Europe, the Soviet Union formed alliances with governments in Africa and Asia. A Soviet alliance with the government of Communist China lasted from 1949 to 1960. The Soviet Union and its allies were often known as the Soviet bloc.

Unlike the Soviets, the Americans established army, navy, and air force bases around the globe. By the end of the Cold War, the Soviets faced the military nightmare of encirclement by an enemy. American army camps, naval stations, and air bases spread across Europe, Asia, North America, and the Pacific islands, while American fleets patrolled the world’s oceans.

**Where the Cold War Got Hot** Because both superpowers had a global reach, local conflicts in many places played into the Cold War. Often, the United States and its allies supported one side, and the Soviet bloc supported the other. Through such struggles, the superpowers could confront each other indirectly rather than head to head. Political shifts around the world added to Cold War tensions. When communist forces won control of mainland China in 1949, the United States feared that a tide of communism would sweep around the world. During this period, European colonies in Africa and Asia demanded independence. As colonies battled for independence, liberation leaders and guerrillas frequently sought help from one or the other Cold War power.

On occasion, the Cold War erupted into “shooting wars,” especially in Asia. Both Korea and Vietnam were torn by brutal conflicts in which the United States, the Soviet Union, and China played crucial roles. More commonly, however, the superpowers provided weapons, training, or other aid to opposing forces in Asia, Africa, or Latin America.

**Cuba Goes Communist** The most serious Cold War conflict in the Western Hemisphere involved the Latin American island nation of Cuba, just 90 miles off the coast of Florida. In the 1950s, Fidel Castro organized an armed rebellion against the corrupt dictator who then ruled Cuba. By 1959, Castro had led his guerrilla army to victory and set about transforming the country. This transformation is known as the Cuban Revolution. Castro sought the support of the Soviet Union. He nationalized businesses and put most land under government control. In addition, Castro severely restricted Cubans’ political freedom. Critics of the new regime were jailed or silenced, and hundreds of thousands fled to Florida.

The United States attempted to bring down the communist regime next door. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy supported an invasion attempt by U.S.-trained Cuban exiles. The Bay of Pigs Invasion, known for the bay where the invaders came ashore in Cuba, quickly ended in failure when Castro’s forces captured the invaders. The United States imposed a trade embargo on Cuba that remains in effect today.
Cuban Missiles Spark a Crisis In 1962, the Soviet Union sent nuclear missiles to Cuba. President Kennedy responded by imposing a naval blockade that prevented further Soviet shipments. Kennedy demanded that the Soviet Union remove its nuclear missiles from Cuba, and for a few tense days, the world faced a risk of nuclear war over the issue. Finally, however, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev agreed to remove the Soviet missiles, and war was averted.

Checkpoint How did the U.S. and the Soviet Union confront each other around the world during the Cold War?

INFOGRAPHIC

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

In the summer of 1962, the United States learned that the Soviet Union was shipping nuclear missiles to Cuba, less than 100 miles off the coast of Florida. President John F. Kennedy demanded that the Soviet Union remove the missiles from Cuba. In October 1962, the United States imposed a naval blockade on Cuba. For one week, a tense confrontation brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. Finally, on October 28, Khrushchev agreed to remove the Soviet missiles.

U.S. President John F. Kennedy

During the U.S. naval blockade, the U.S. Navy surrounded Cuba with ships. (See the map below.) In this photo, the USS Barry inspects the cargo of a Soviet freighter returning from Cuba.

This aerial photo shows Soviet missiles being unloaded at a Cuban port.

Thinking Critically

1. Map Skills Considering Cuba's location on the map, why did Soviet nuclear missiles on the island pose a threat to the United States?
2. Draw Conclusions Why might Khrushchev have agreed to withdraw the missiles from Cuba?
Contrasting Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communist Countries</th>
<th>Democratic Capitalist Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Communist Party makes all political decisions.</td>
<td>The people and their elected representatives make decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command economy (The government makes most economic decisions and owns most property.)</td>
<td>Market economy (Private consumers and producers make most economic decisions and own most property.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The political leadership values obedience, discipline, and economic security.</td>
<td>The political leadership values freedom and prosperity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart Skills The communist system often offered few choices for consumers, such as for the Russian woman above. By contrast, capitalist societies provided a wealth of choices for consumers, such as for the American girl at the right. What facts in the chart above help to explain the different experiences of consumers under these contrasting systems?

The Soviet Union in the Cold War

Victory in World War II brought few rewards to the Soviet people. Stalin continued his ruthless policies. He filled labor camps with “enemies of the state” and seemed ready to launch new purges when he died in 1953.

Soviet Communism In the Soviet Union, the government controlled most aspects of public life. Communists valued obedience, discipline, and economic security. They sought to spread their communist ideology, or value system and beliefs, around the globe. The Soviet Union also aimed to spread its communist command economy to other countries. In command economies, government bureaus make most economic decisions. They often make decisions for political reasons that do not make much economic sense. The government owns most property.

Stalin’s Successors Hold the Line After Stalin’s death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev (KROOSH chawf) emerged as the new Soviet leader. In 1956, he shocked top Communist Party members when he publicly denounced Stalin’s abuse of power. Khrushchev maintained the Communist Party’s political control, but he closed prison camps and eased censorship. He called for a “peaceful coexistence” with the West.
Khrushchev’s successor, Leonid Brezhnev (BREZH nef) held power from the mid-1960s until he died in 1982. Under Brezhnev, critics faced arrest and imprisonment.

Some Soviets Bravely Resist Despite the risk of punishment, some courageous people dared to criticize the government. Andrey Sakharov (SAH kuh rawf), a distinguished Soviet scientist, spoke out for civil liberties. Brezhnev’s government silenced him. As a Soviet soldier during World War II, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (sohl zhuh NEET sin) wrote a letter to a friend criticizing Stalin. He was sent to a prison camp. Under Khrushchev, he was released and wrote fiction that drew on his experience as a prisoner. His writing was banned in the Soviet Union, and in 1974 he was exiled. Despite the government’s actions, Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn inspired others to resist communist policies.

☑ Checkpoint How did the Soviet government handle critics of its policies?

The United States in the Cold War

The Cold War was not just a military rivalry. It was also a competition between two contrasting economic and political value systems. Unlike the communist countries, the democratic, capitalist countries, led by the United States, gave citizens the freedom to make economic and political choices. These nations valued freedom and prosperity.

Free Markets While communist countries had command economies, capitalist countries had market economies. In market economies, producers and consumers make economic decisions. Prices are based on supply and demand in a free market. Property is privately owned. Producers compete to offer the best products for the lowest prices. By deciding what to buy, consumers ultimately decide which products are produced. Producers who win consumers’ business make profits and grow.

The United States economy is basically a market economy. However, the United States and Western Europe have what can be called mixed economies, because their governments have an economic role.

Containing the Soviet Union America’s basic policy toward communist countries was known as containment. This was a strategy of containing communism, or keeping it within its existing boundaries and preventing further expansion. This strategy meant supporting any government facing invasion or internal rebellion by communists.

Living With Nuclear Dangers The nuclear threat led many people in the United States and other countries to build fallout shelters. Fallout shelters

Preparing for a Nuclear Attack

“Duck and cover” air-raid drills were common during the Cold War, even though it is doubtful that ducking and covering would offer much protection in an actual nuclear attack. What does this photo suggest about Americans’ fears during the Cold War?
were structures, often underground, designed to protect people from fallout, or radioactive particles from a nuclear explosion. In 1961, the U.S. government launched a community fallout shelter program to create fallout shelters in public and commercial buildings, stocked with a two-week supply of food for the surrounding population. The fear of nuclear attack reached a peak in the United States during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Thousands of Americans built private fallout shelters underneath their backyards.

From the 1950s into the 1970s, American schools conducted air-raid drills in anticipation of a nuclear attack. These drills were nearly as common as fire drills. Children were trained to duck underneath desks and crouch with their hands over their heads. Although this would not have protected them from an actual nuclear explosion, the drills reflected the widespread fear of nuclear war.

Seeking Enemies Within Cold War fears led to a “red scare” within the United States. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, many Americans feared that communists inside the United States might try to undermine the U.S. government. Around 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy led a hunt for suspected American communists. McCarthy became notorious for unproven charges. Accusing innocent people of communism, and the fear that this created, became known as McCarthyism. McCarthy’s influence, however, faded after he attacked the patriotism of the United States Army.

During the same period, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) led a similar campaign to identify supposed communist sympathizers. HUAC was made up of members of the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1947, the Committee sought to expose communist sympathizers in Hollywood’s movie industry. People who had flirted with communist ideas in their youth and later rejected them were labeled as communists. Many who were labeled in this way were no longer able to get decent jobs.

**Checkpoint** How did America respond to the threat of communism at home and overseas?

---

**Terms, People, and Places**
1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

**Note Taking**
2. Reading Skill: Summarize. Use your completed chart to answer the Focus Question: What were the military and political consequences of the Cold War in the Soviet Union, Europe, and the United States?

**Comprehension and Critical Thinking**
3. Make Generalizations. What kinds of conflicts resulted from the global confrontation between the two superpowers?
4. Draw Inferences. How did the buildup of nuclear weapons discourage their use?
5. Make Comparisons. Identify similarities and differences between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War.

---

**Progress Monitoring Online**
For Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-3011

**Writing About History**
Quick Write: Understand the Purpose
To write a problem-solution essay, you first need to understand the purpose of this type of essay. In this section, you learned that the superpowers’ possession of nuclear weapons posed a risk of nuclear war. Write sentences answering each of the following questions: What makes this issue a problem? What benefit comes from solving this problem?