

Effects of the Cold War

The only thing that kept the Cold War cold was the mutual deterrence afforded by nuclear weapons.

—Chung Mong-joon, South Korean politician and business leader, 2013

Essential Question: In what ways did both the Soviet Union and the United States seek to maintain influence during the Cold War?

With the start of the Cold War, new military alliances for mutual protection formed in different parts of the world. The threat of nuclear war, as noted above by Chung Mong-joon, kept the United States and the Soviet Union from starting a war that could end in unprecedented global destruction. But **proxy wars**, such as the ones in Korea and Vietnam, resulted in millions of deaths. In a proxy war, a major power helps bring about a conflict between other nations but does not always fight directly. These conflicts underlined the political and philosophical divide between the superpowers.

The superpowers faced off in Cuba and several other Central American countries as well as in the African country of Angola. The combination of military, economic, and nuclear influence across the globe made the world a tense place for decades after World War II—the war the two superpowers had worked together to end.

Allied Occupation of Germany

The conflict among the Allies after World War II was exemplified by the debate over how to occupy the defeated country of Germany. The Allies agreed to partition the country among France, Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The three Western Allies wanted to combine their zones into one state under democratic principles.

Berlin Blockade The Allies also decided to divide Germany's capital, Berlin, into four zones. The three Western zones would become a free city that was located within the Soviet zone of Germany. The Soviets wanted to stop these Western plans and control all of Berlin. They set up a blockade of the Western zones in Berlin to prevent the West from moving supplies into the area by land. The Western Allies did not want to risk a military confrontation with the Soviets and ultimately began the **Berlin Airlift**. Through this operation,

the Allies flew supplies into Western zones between February 1948 and May 1949, when the Soviets lifted the blockade.

Two Germanys After the blockade ended, Germany split into two states. West Germany became the Federal Republic of Germany. East Germany became the German Democratic Republic. The division of Europe into East and West was complete.

Berlin Wall As citizens of East Germany saw the prosperity and democratic lifestyle of West Germany, many wanted to move to the West. Between 1949 and 1961, about 2.5 million East Germans fled.

However, the East German and Soviet governments were determined to keep people in East Germany. They knew that the exodus to the West reflected poorly on the communist system, and it was hard on their economy. They first set up barbed-wire fences patrolled by guards along the perimeter of East Germany and between East and West Berlin. In August 1961, they began replacing the fences in Berlin with a wall, which became known as the **Berlin Wall**. Between 1961 and 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, soldiers killed about 150 people as they tried to escape over it.

NATO, the Warsaw Pact, and Other Alliances

Only a few years after World War II ended, the Soviet Union dominated the Eastern European countries they had occupied during the war. Communist governments in those countries—buoyed by support and the direct influence of Stalin—subjected their people to the same suppression and economic system as the Soviet Union. Many Western European countries feared such a dominant communist presence on their doorstep.

Out of a desire to coordinate their defenses in case of a conflict with the Soviets, several Western nations created the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** in April 1949. The treaty pledged mutual support and cooperation within the alliance against conflicts and wars. Its original members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United States. Membership in this Brussels-based organization expanded considerably in the decades after its founding.

The Soviet Union's response to NATO was the **Warsaw Pact**, created in 1955. Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union were the original members. Warsaw Pact nations combined their armed forces and based their army leaders in Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union. These nations were known as the **communist bloc**.

Two countries with communist political systems successfully resisted Soviet control. Albania, located next to Greece, joined the Warsaw Pact but withdrew in 1968. It became more closely tied to China. Yugoslavia, under the authoritarian leadership of Marshall Josip Broz Tito, never joined the Warsaw

Pact. In the 1990s, ethnic divisions caused Yugoslavia to break apart into several countries, including Slovenia, Serbia, and Croatia.

Other treaty organizations formed in an attempt to halt the spread of communism in other regions:

- In 1954, Australia, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States formed the **Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)**.
- The **Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)** was an anti-Soviet treaty organization formed by Great Britain, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Turkey to prevent the spread of Communism in the Middle East. The United States was not a full member, but it joined CENTO'S military committee.

During the Cold War, the United States formed alliances with more than 40 states. It was sometimes easier for the United States to influence and negotiate through these smaller alliances than through the United Nations.

Proxy Wars

The ideological Cold War was accompanied by hot wars in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. They were called proxy wars because the armies of smaller countries were proxies, or stand-ins, for the two superpowers. These wars often combined specific local issues, such as a battle against colonialism or for land reform (see Topic 8.4), with the international conflict over the spread of communism. Though proxy wars occurred in small countries, some resulted in millions of deaths.

Two of the biggest confrontations were the Korean War and Vietnam War in Asia. In both instances, the countries were split into northern and southern sections. In both countries, a communist government ruled the northern section.

Korean War Just as the victorious powers divided Germany after World War II, they also divided the Korean Peninsula. The Soviets occupied the north while the United States and its allies occupied the south. The **Korean War** (1950–1953) began when North Korea invaded South Korea in an attempt to reunite the country under its leadership. In response, the UN voted to defend South Korea militarily. The Soviet Union could have vetoed the resolution, but its representative was absent during the vote because the Soviet Union was boycotting all Security Council meetings in protest over a disagreement about China's seat on the Security Council.

UN military forces supporting the South Koreans came from 16 member countries, but the United States provided the largest number and the overall commander, General **Douglas MacArthur**. The Soviet Union did not send troops, but it sent money and weapons to North Korea. The UN forces pushed back the North Koreans across the inter-Korean border and drove toward North Korea's border with China. The Chinese, allies of North Korea and concerned that the UN forces would try to invade China as well, sent Chinese

troops across the border and entered the war against the United States and its allies. After three years of fighting and some four million civilian and military casualties, the war ended in a stalemate. The two parts of Korea remained divided, with a demilitarized zone in between.

Vietnam War U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, following the Truman policy of containment, sent military advisers to South Vietnam to train the South Vietnamese army and to prevent a communist takeover by North Vietnam. Eisenhower's successor, President John F. Kennedy, increased the number of advisers from 1,000 to 16,000. Some U.S. citizens believed America could not afford to lose a confrontation in Vietnam. They thought a communist victory would weaken U.S. prestige around the world.

However, the United States was supporting an undemocratic and unpopular South Vietnamese ruler, Ngo Dinh Diem. In 1963, Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc publicly set himself on fire in Saigon to protest the South Vietnamese government's favoring of Catholics over Buddhists. His protests inspired others. A military coup, with U.S. support, soon overthrew Diem.

In 1964, President **Lyndon Johnson** sent more U.S. troops to South Vietnam. Johnson believed in the **domino theory**—the idea that if one country in the region became communist, other countries would soon follow. Johnson feared that China and the Soviet Union would bring all of Southeast Asia under communist rule. (Connect: Trace foreign intervention in Southeast Asian affairs through the Vietnam War. See Topic 6.2.)

The Bay of Pigs Crisis Fidel Castro and other communist revolutionaries overthrew the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959. Castro soon set up a dictatorship in Cuba. On August 6, 1960, the new government started to nationalize foreign-owned industries, which was a common communist strategy. Cuba nationalized businesses and properties of the national telephone and electricity companies; Texaco, Esso, and Sinclair oil companies; and 36 sugar mills owned by U.S. firms. As a result of these economic losses for its citizens, the United States broke off trade with Cuba and cut diplomatic ties. Castro in turn accepted Soviet aid and aligned Cuba's foreign policy with that of the Soviet Union.

In 1961, newly elected U.S. President **John F. Kennedy** had grave concerns about the presence of a communist country located only 90 miles from the coast of Florida. Before Kennedy took office, a group of Cuban exiles who opposed Castro had asked for U.S. government backing to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro. Kennedy gave his support. The resulting **Bay of Pigs** invasion was a total failure. Even worse for the United States, it cemented the Cuba-Soviet alliance.

The Cuban Missile Crisis In response to the Bay of Pigs, the Soviets began to support Cuba with arms and military advisors. Soviet Premier **Nikita Khrushchev**, who came to power after Stalin, saw an opportunity in Cuba. In 1962 he shipped nuclear missiles to Cuba. Khrushchev felt justified in his actions because in the summer of 1961 the United States had placed nuclear missiles in Turkey, a U.S. ally that shared a border with the Soviet Union.



In October 1962, U.S. intelligence learned that more missiles were on their way to Cuba. Kennedy ordered the U.S. Navy to prevent the missiles from reaching Cuba. He called his action a “quarantine” because a blockade was technically an act of war. Regardless of the term, the two superpowers were on a collision course that threatened nuclear war.

Ultimately, the two leaders pulled back from the brink. Khrushchev called back the Soviet ships and removed the missiles that had been delivered to Cuba. In return, the United States pledged to quietly remove its missiles from Turkey. After this incident, leaders of both countries realized that better communication between their countries was needed. In 1963, the two countries set up a **Hot Line**, a direct telegraph/teleprinter link between the U.S. and Soviet leaders’ offices.



Source: CIA (1962)
During the Cuban Missile Crisis, U.S. planes photographed evidence of Soviet missiles and sites in San Cristobal, Cuba. The image on the right is a U-2 reconnaissance photograph, showing Soviet nuclear missiles, their transports and tents for fueling and maintenance.

Test-Ban Treaty People worldwide worried about deaths and environmental harm from nuclear war or nuclear testing. In 1963, the Soviet Union, the United States, and more than 100 other states signed the **Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty**. France and China did not sign it. This agreement outlawed testing nuclear weapons above ground, underwater, and in space. The goal was to cut down the amount of radiation that people would be exposed to as a result of weapons testing. Underground testing remained legal. In 1968, the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty** called on nuclear powers to prevent the spread of military nuclear technology and materials to non-nuclear countries.

Angola The Portuguese colony of Angola in southwest Africa won its independence in 1975, after 14 years of armed struggle. Like the Vietnamese, the Angolans had to fight a war to end their colonial status.

However, Angola faced greater ethnic conflict than did Vietnam. The borders of Angola, like those of many newly independent African countries, had been set by European colonial powers with little regard for traditional



regions. Rival ethnic groups were thrown together under one government. Angola was more a multiethnic empire consisting of three distinct cultural groups than a nation-state in which everyone shared a common culture. Each group had fought for independence. Each wanted to control the country's lucrative diamond mines. And each was supported by other countries:

- The USSR and Cuba backed the Mbundu tribe.
- South Africa backed the Ovimbundu tribe.
- The United States backed the Bankongo tribe.

Upon independence, civil war broke out. In 2002, after 27 years of fighting, the rivals agreed on a cease-fire. However, threats of violence from militant separatist groups remained.

Contra War In Nicaragua in 1979, the 43-year dictatorship by the Somoza family was ended by the rebel Sandinistas, who called themselves socialists. Two years later, conservative opponents of the Sandinistas, known as Contras, tried to overthrow them. From 1981 to 1988, the Contra War gripped the country. Wanting to isolate the Sandinistas, the United States heavily backed the Contras with covert support. The Contra War took the lives of tens of thousands of Nicaraguans. The war ended after the signing of the Tela Accord in 1989 and the demobilization of the Contra and Sandinista armies.

Antinuclear Weapon Movement

The nuclear arms race spawned a reaction known as the **antinuclear weapons movement**. One of the first such movements developed in Japan in 1954 in opposition to U.S. testing of nuclear weapons in the Pacific Ocean. In 1955, more than one-third of Japan's population signed a petition against nuclear weapons. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the antinuclear weapons movement expanded to other countries, particularly to the United States and Western Europe. On June 6, 1982, some one million people demonstrated in New York City against the creation, buildup, and possible use of nuclear weapons.

KEY TERMS BY THEME		
<p>GOVERNMENT: International Conflicts</p> <p>proxy war Berlin Airlift Berlin Wall Korean War Vietnam War domino theory Bay of Pigs Cuban Missile Crisis Angola Contra War</p>	<p>GOVERNMENT: Treaties</p> <p>North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Warsaw Pact communist bloc Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty</p>	<p>TECHNOLOGY: Military</p> <p>Hot Line</p> <p>SOCIETY: Activism</p> <p>antinuclear weapons movement</p> <p>GOVERNMENT: Leaders</p> <p>Douglas MacArthur Lyndon Johnson John F. Kennedy Nikita Khrushchev</p>