

The Cold War

The 20th Century since 1945: Promises and Paradoxes (1945–Present)



Origins

Early conflicts

A global battlefield

A changing world

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Religion and thought



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will have learned about Cold War conflicts around the world and be able to answer the following key questions:

- When did China become communist and what changes were made within it?
- What were the consequences of the Korean and Vietnam Wars?
- How did the Cuban Revolution and Cuban Missile Crisis affect the Cold War?



Surrogate conflicts



The Cold War was a truly global conflict that affected many countries all over the world. Many surrogate wars were fought as the U.S. and Soviet Union battled for supremacy. Drag each country to the correct location on the map. Press the information buttons to find out about Cold War conflicts in each area.

Press **start** to begin.

start





China becomes communist



During World War II, Japan had occupied and destroyed much of China. The civil war was suspended in 1937 to fight the Japanese, but fighting continued anyway. Afterwards, full-scale war resumed between the nationalist government of **Chiang Kai-shek** and the communists led by **Mao Zedong**.

Chiang's government was corrupt, incompetent and lacked widespread popular support. He was an American ally but the U.S. refused to do more than send money and weapons.



Mao and the communists won over most of the peasants and ultimately won the war in 1949. They established the **People's Republic of China (PRC)**.





After China became communist, Mao Zedong made many social and economic changes to the country, in order to create an equal society. Watch this animation to find out more about Mao's changes.

Press **start** to begin.

start





The **Korean War** was the first significant military conflict of the Cold War.

North Korea, backed by China and the Soviet Union, and South Korea, backed by the UN, fought from 1950 to 1953.

Watch this animation to find out about the causes and course of the war.

Press **start** to begin.

start



Was the partition of Korea similar to that of Germany?



The **Cuban Revolution** began in 1953 with a failed rebel attack against the corrupt Cuban President, **Fulgencio Batista**. Among the attackers was **Fidel Castro**, who was imprisoned, exiled and returned in 1956 to lead the revolution.



The rebels overthrew Batista in January 1959 and Castro became Prime Minister of Cuba a month later. By 1960, Castro had formed close ties with the Soviet Union and was accepting aid.

In 1961 he declared himself a Marxist and Cuba a communist state. The U.S immediately withdrew diplomatic recognition and imposed an **embargo** in 1962.

Why was Castro's victory a problem for the U.S.?
How did the U.S. react to the situation?



The Cuban Missile Crisis



On October 14, 1962, a U.S. spy plane photographed the construction of Russian medium-range missiles in Cuba.

The presence of these missiles only 90 miles from Florida seriously destabilized the relationship between the U.S. and Soviet Union. For what is known as the “13 days,” the world teetered on the brink of nuclear war.



The discovery of the missiles and the response of both sides is known as the **Cuban Missile Crisis**.

Why were the missiles considered such a threat?

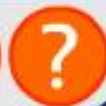


President Kennedy immediately formed **EXCOMM**, a body of government officials to advise him during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The U.S. had to respond to the situation and had several possible options.

Can you match each option to the correct description?

Press **start** to begin.

start



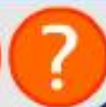
Do you know what Kennedy decided to do?



Following the U.S. quarantine of Cuba, the world was poised on the brink of nuclear war for a few days. The crisis was eventually resolved diplomatically, with the removal of the missiles in return for the U.S. guaranteeing not to invade Cuba, but it was an extremely tense situation. Can you drag the events into chronological order?

Press **start** to begin.

start



How well did the two leaders come out of the crisis?



Vietnam has a long history of fighting for independence from colonial powers. Understanding the country's history will help you to understand the context of the **Vietnam War**.

Watch this animation to find out more.

Press **start** to begin.

start



How did Vietnam's history affect the Vietnam War?



The Vietnam War



The Vietnam War was a major Cold War conflict. Although it did not directly oppose the Soviet Union, the U.S. became heavily involved in an effort to prevent the spread of communism. Press the buttons to find out what happened in Vietnam in each year. Press **start** to begin.

start





The Vietnam War featured a lot of key people and important terms that you need to know. Can you match each term to the correct definition?
Press **start** to begin.

start





U.S. involvement in Vietnam increased over time during the presidency of different leaders, before all American involvement was ended.

Can you match each event to the president it applies to?

Press **start** to begin.

start





The cost of Vietnam



The U.S. paid a heavy price for its involvement in Vietnam. As well as a huge death toll, the war divided the American public and damaged the standing of the U.S. abroad.

Over 3 million Americans served in Vietnam. At least 150,000 U.S. soldiers were wounded and 58,193 were killed.

Over 1.25 million Vietnamese soldiers were killed, along with estimates of between 800,000 and 2 million civilians. Vast areas of the country were devastated by the war.



To what extent was the Vietnam War a turning point in U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War?





Following World War II, many countries experienced development problems, political turmoil and poverty. Many of their problems stemmed from a history of imperial rule.



As these countries developed, the U.S. and Soviet Union maneuvered to showcase the benefits of their political economic system, often offering aid as an incentive. The two superpowers also backed wars of rebellion and revolution, fighting each other through **surrogate** or **proxy** powers, such as Korea, Cuba and Vietnam.

Did all countries align themselves in the Cold War?