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History: The Cold War

History

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1. What Was the Cold War?

The Cold War (1945-1991) was a period of political, ideological, and military tension between the USA (capitalist democracy) and the USSR (communist state). There was no direct military conflict between them - hence "cold".

2. Origins of the Cold War

- Ideological differences: capitalism vs communism
- Post-WWII power vacuum in Europe
- USSR's expansion into Eastern Europe
- USA's policy of containment of communism (Truman Doctrine, 1947)
- Marshall Plan (1948): USA gave \$13 billion to rebuild Western Europe

3. Key Events and Crises

- Berlin Blockade (1948-49): USSR blocked Western access to West Berlin
- Korean War (1950-53): USA and USSR-backed sides fought to a stalemate at the 38th parallel
- Cuban Missile Crisis (1962): USSR placed nuclear missiles in Cuba; brought world to brink of nuclear war
- Vietnam War (1955-1975): USA failed to prevent communist takeover of South Vietnam

4. The Arms Race and Space Race

Both superpowers built massive stockpiles of nuclear weapons (MAD: Mutually Assured Destruction). They also competed in space exploration.

- USSR launched Sputnik (first satellite) in 1957
- USA landed first humans on the Moon in 1969 (Apollo 11)

5. End of the Cold War

The USSR collapsed in 1991 due to internal economic problems and reform efforts under Gorbachev (glasnost and perestroika). The Berlin Wall fell in 1989.