

The Cold War

The Cold War was a rivalry that developed between the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies. No battle ever broke out as a direct effect of the Cold War, but threats were always existent.

The Cold War began in 1947 as a result of the Soviet Union installing communist governments in Eastern Europe countries. This caused America to fear that Russia was attempting a takeover of Europe, and Russia was determined to do so in order to prevent any further threats from Germany, and secondarily to spread communism globally.

The war solidified in 1948 as the Soviet Union started succeeding, installing communist governments in many Eastern Europe countries, and unsuccessfully blockading Berlin in late 1948-49 (this led to the Berlin Airlift, in the next paragraph).

After World War II, the German capitol of Berlin was divided between the Soviet Union, America, England, and France. When the Allies decided to unite their portions, the Soviets protested and had a blockade placed on West Berlin, isolating it in hopes of starving the people to death or getting the Allies to surrender. However, there was one outlet that communication could be made: by air! The Allies then organized an airlift for delivering supplies to West Berlin, and another in the opposite direction for delivering exports. The airlift continued for several years, delivering over a quarter billion tons of supplies to West Berlin in 11 months, at which time, the Soviets dropped the blockade.

In the Post-Berlin period of 1949, America and several European nations founded the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as a counterweight to the Soviet Union. Soon thereafter, the Soviets exploded their first atomic warhead, and Communist China invaded North Korea, sparking a war that would last for 4 years and end in a stalemate.

In 1950, President Truman and his advisors asked in a seven-minute meeting, "Can we build a bomb the equivalent of 500 atomic bombs. They figured that the Russians could, and if they did it first, it would mean war. So they decided, in that 7-minute meeting, to go ahead with the bomb.

In 1952, the United States detonated the first hydrogen bomb the world had ever seen: Ivy Mike had yielded the equivalent of 10,400,000 tons of TNT. Only a small number of atomic weapons exceeded this yield, for example, Castle Bravo exploded at 15 megatons, and Castle Romeo exploded with 11.

Due to the death of the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in 1953, Cold War tensions relaxed somewhat. In 1955, West Germany was admitted into NATO, and the Soviets formed a counter to NATO called the Warsaw Pact, which included such nations as Albania, East Germany, Poland, and Romania.

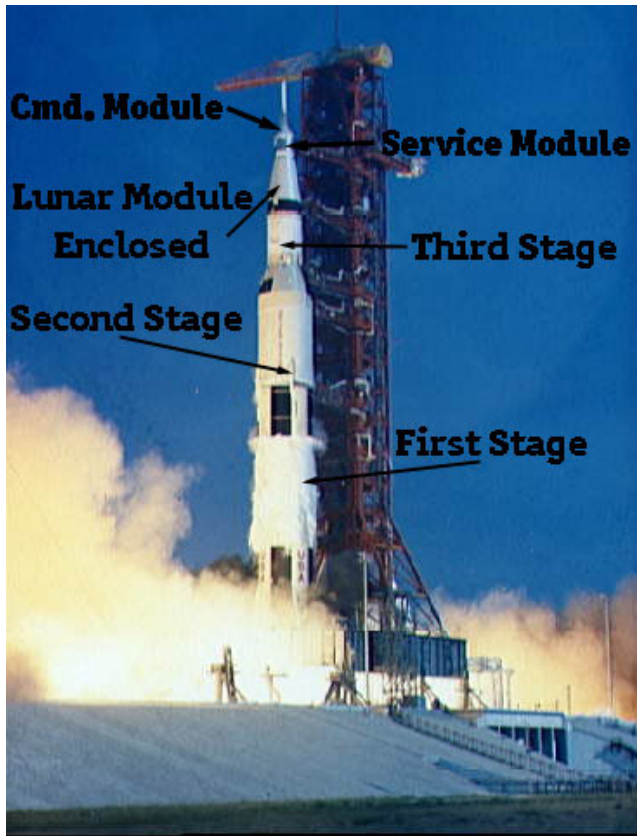
In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Soviet Union began planting nuclear weapons in Cuba. When the United States discovered this, they inquired as to the reason. The Soviets assured the U.S. that they were defensive missiles only and they would not be used for offensive purposes. However, as time went by, the Soviets DID plant offensive weapons

in Cuba, which were caught by a U-2 spy plane cruising overhead at 80,000 feet. This sparked a standoff, and president John F. Kennedy had to do something—and fast. A nuclear attack of his own might lead to disaster for the entire world, while not doing anything would surely spell the end of the United States. On October 16, 1962, President Kennedy held two meetings to decide the course of action to be taken. The



president and his advisors deliberated between an invasion of Cuba and a blockade of Cuba. Eventually the latter was decided upon. This shows that neither side was ready to use nuclear force on each other because of the disastrous effects it would have if the enemy retaliated. This hesitance nearly got the United States into a nuclear war.

Meanwhile, the United States and the Soviet Union were in a constant display of superiority over one another on another medium. The space race was started in the mid-50s after Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, was successfully launched into space on October 4, 1957. This event was a shock to the United States, and they set off to work developing their own satellite to launch. After they had built one, they assembled a rocket to carry it up into space. The rocket was ignited, rose a few feet above the launch pad, and then exploded. It would be several more years before they were able to finally get one into orbit. The Russians continued their dominance on the space race until Apollo 8. Apollo 8 was intended to be the first spacecraft to land on the moon, but the United States got a tip: The Soviets were planning to circle the back side of the moon! The mission was quickly changed and Apollo 8 did indeed circle the back side of the moon. After this event, the Soviets did not even make an attempt at a lunar orbit.



Both sides, however had equal plans for a lunar landing. The United States had the Saturn V, and the Soviets had the N-1, both of which were designed to put a man on the moon. However, just after Apollo 10 did a low-altitude descent over the moon (launched by a Saturn V), the Soviet N-1 crashed. Several more attempts yielded the same result. In the end, the N-1 rocket was abandoned, as well as any hopes for putting a Soviet on the moon. Finally, America did succeed in putting a man on the moon. (see picture)

The 1970s were a time of cooling off for both the Soviet Union and the United States. The SALT I agreement was signed in 1972, and the SALT II was signed in 1979, limiting the use of atomic and inter-continental weapons. However, tensions rose in the late '70s, as both countries continued their arms race, as both countries competed for influence in the third-world countries. However, Mikhail Gorbachev took the Soviet leadership, and reformed the nation drastically. Within 5 years he had nearly democratized the nation, dismantling the totalitarian aspects of the government. Soon, these reforms were also working in other countries, and the communist governments were collapsing like flies! East and West Germany were united, the Berlin Wall came down, almost as rapidly as the walls of Jericho came down several thousand years earlier. Gorbachev's efforts also weakened the Soviet Union communist party, and it collapsed in 1991, forming 15 new nations along the lines where the Soviet states used to be. Much of the world breathed a sigh of relief as the end of communism finally arrived.

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