

**World History**

**MA Semester –IV**

**Paper- I, International Relations since 1949**

# **Cold War**

**By**

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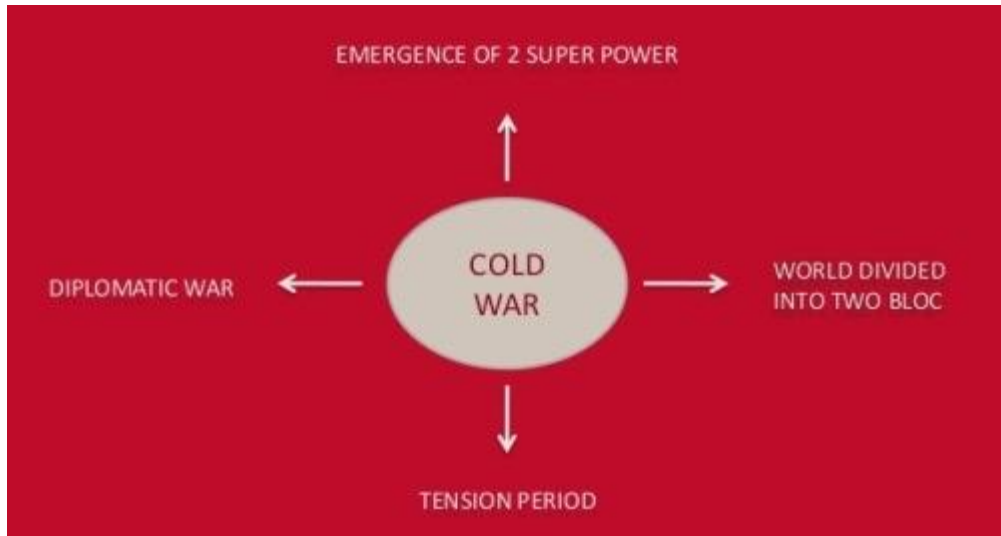
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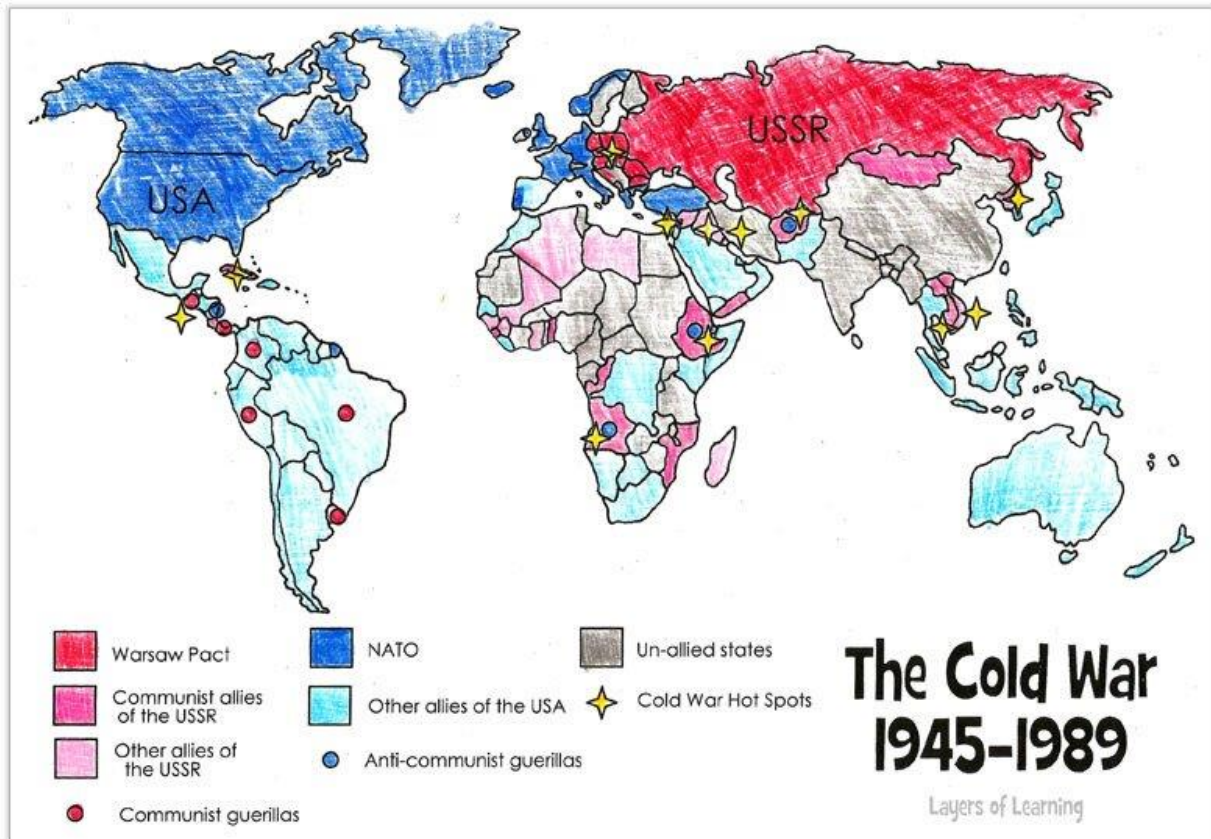
## **What is Cold War?**

As the World War II drew to its end, the harmony that had existed between the USSR and the USA and the British empire began to evaporate and the old suspicions came to fore again. Relations between Soviet Russia and the west soon became so difficult that although no actual armed conflict took place directly between the two opposing camps, the decade after 1945 saw the first phase of Cold War which continued, inspite of several 'Thaws' into the 1980s. Cold war meant that instead of allowing their mutual hostility to manifest in armed conflict, the two sides attacked each other with propaganda and economic measures and with a general policy of non-cooperation.

A state of military and political tension between the Western Bloc comprising of the USA, its NATO allies and some others and the powers in the Eastern Bloc comprising of the Soviet Union along with its allies from the Warsaw Pact post World War II is known as the Cold War. The term "cold" signifies absence of fighting on a large-scale directly between the two opponents despite major regional wars, termed proxy wars, supported by both the sides. The USSR and the USA were left as two superpowers with political and economic differences as a result of the Cold War that split the temporary wartime alliance against the Nazi Germany.



The Cold War that took place between the Soviet Union and the United States lasted for decades. The Cold War was at its peak in the period of 1948–53. The Cold War tensions relaxed somewhat between 1953 to 1957. The Warsaw Pact, which was a unified military organisation, was formed in the year 1955. Then in the period of 1958-1962, again cold war became intense. Intercontinental ballistic missiles were being made by the Soviet Union as well as the United States. The Soviets began installing their missiles in Cuba secretly and these could be used to launch nuclear attacks on the cities of U.S. Throughout the entire cold war duration, the Soviet Union and the United States avoided direct Military confrontation in Europe.



## Causes of Cold War

- The most important reason for the ‘outbreak’ of the Cold War was the Western countries’ fear of communism.
- Increase in the might of the Soviet Union, emergence of governments ruled by communist parties in Eastern and Central Europe and the growing strength of communist parties in many parts of the world, alarmed the governments of the United States, Britain and other West European countries.
- In 1949, the victory of the Communist Party of China in the civil war which had been raging there for about two decades added to the alarm.
- United States openly declared that her policy was to prevent the spread of communism.
- One of the objectives of the massive economic aid that the United States gave to West European countries was also to ‘contain’ communism

- United States began to look upon every development in the world from this standpoint, whether it promoted or helped in checking communism.
- Britain and West European countries became aligned with the United States and began to follow a policy mainly aimed at curbing the growth of communism.

### **Potsdam conference**

- The Potsdam conference was held at Berlin in 1945 among US, UK and Soviet Union to discuss :
  - Immediate administration of defeated Germany.
  - Demarcation of boundary of Poland.
  - Occupation of Austria.
  - Role of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe.
- Soviet Union wanted some portion of Poland (bordering Soviet Union) to be maintained as a buffer zone. However, the USA and UK didn't agree to this demand.
- Also, the USA did not inform the Soviet Union about the exact nature of the atomic bomb, dropped on Japan. This created suspicion in Soviet Union about the intentions of western countries, embittering of the alliance.
- This created suspicion in the Soviet leadership.

### **Truman's Doctrine**

- Truman Doctrine was announced on March 12, 1947, by US President Harry S. Truman.
- The Truman Doctrine was a US policy to stop the Soviet Union's communist and imperialist endeavors, through various ways like providing economic aid to other countries.
  - For example, US appropriated financial aid to support the economies and militaries of Greece and Turkey.
- Historians believe that the announcement of this doctrine marked the official declaration of the Cold War.

## **Iron Curtain**

- Iron Curtain is the political, military, and ideological barrier erected by the Soviet Union after World War II to seal off itself and its dependent eastern and central European allies from open contact with the West and other noncommunist areas.
- On the east side of the Iron Curtain were the countries that were connected to or influenced by the Soviet Union, while on the west side were the countries that were allies of the US, UK or nominally neutral.

## **Important Events of the Cold War**

### **Berlin Blockade 1948**

- As the tension between **Soviet Union** and **Allied countries** grew, **Soviet Union** applied Berlin Blockade in 1948.
- The Berlin Blockade was an attempt by the Soviet Union to limit the ability of Allied countries to travel to their sectors of Berlin.
- Further, on August 13, 1961, the Communist government of the German Democratic Republic began to build a barbed wire and concrete wall (**Berlin Wall**) between East and West Berlin.
- **It primarily served the objective of stemming mass emigration from East Berlin to West Berlin.**
- Except under special circumstances, travelers from East and West Berlin were rarely allowed across the border.
- This Berlin Wall served as a symbol of the Cold War (US and Soviet Union), until its fall in 1989.

### **The Marshall Plan vs The Cominform**

- **The Marshall Plan**
  - In 1947, American Secretary of State George Marshall, unveiled European Recovery Programme (ERP), which offered economic and financial help wherever it was needed.

- One of the aims of the ERP was to promote the economic recovery of Europe. However, this was an economic extension of the Truman Doctrine.
- **The Cominform**
  - The Soviet Union denounced the whole idea of Marshall Plan as 'dollar imperialism.
  - Therefore, the Cominform (the Communist Information Bureau) - was launched in 1947, as the Soviet response to the Marshall Plan.
  - It was an organization to draw together mainly Eastern Europe countries.

### NATO vs Warsaw Pact

- **NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)**
  - The Berlin blockade showed the West's military unreadiness and frightened them into making definite preparations.
  - Therefore, in 1948, mainly the countries of western Europe signed the Brussels Defence Treaty, promising military collaboration in case of war.
  - Later on Brussels Defence Treaty was joined by the USA, Canada, Portugal, Denmark, Iceland, Italy and Norway. This led to the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 1949.
  - NATO countries agreed to regard an attack on any one of them as an attack on all of them, and placing their defence forces under a joint command.
- **Warsaw Pact**
  - The Warsaw Pact ( 1955) was signed between Russia and her satellite states shortly after West Germany was admitted to NATO.
  - The Pact was a mutual defense agreement, which the Western countries perceived as a reaction against West Germany's membership of NATO.

### Space Race

- Space exploration served as another dramatic arena for Cold War competition.
- In 1957, Soviet Union launched Sputnik I, the world's first artificial satellite and the first man-made object to be placed into the Earth's orbit.
- In 1958, the U.S. launched its own satellite called Explorer I.

- However, this space race was won by the US, when it successfully landed, the first man (Neil Armstrong) on the surface of the moon in 1969.

### **Cuban Missile Crisis**

The USSR deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba which were ready to be launched onto the cities of the USA. The USA responded with a naval blockade of Cuba and both superpowers are on the verge of war. The standoff ended after 13 days when the USSR withdrew the missiles.

### **Vietnam War (1960s – 1975)**

- In 1965, US sent troops to aid south Vietnam in its war against communist north Vietnam, which was supported by Soviets & Chinese.
- By the time US troops left in 1973, 58k Americans had died. War ended in 1975 with communist forces overrunning the south.

### **Prague spring 1968**

- Leaders of Czechoslovakia's communist party attempted to institute reforms including loosening control over media & introducing multiparty democracy.
- Soviet troops invaded & the reforms were halted.

### **Afghan invasion 1979**

- Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in support of marxist government, which war battling insurgents known as mujaheddin (aided by US & Pakistan).
- After 10 years of wars soviet troops retreated in 1989.

### **End of the Cold War**

The afghan invasion resulted in the drain of economic and military resources of USSR and added with the open policy of Mikhail Gorbachev marked by two characteristics i.e. Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring), the USSR tottered to its disintegration. Finally, in 1991, Soviet Union collapsed due to multiple factors which marked the end of the Cold War, as one of the superpowers was weakened. The end of the Cold War marked the victory of the US and the bipolar world order turned into a unipolar.

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