



[Cold War: Causes Origins](#)

In A Nutshell

The Cold War, a hostile rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, lasted from the late 1940s until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The war was "cold" only in that the United States and USSR never fought each other in a direct military confrontation, but both superpowers threatened each other with nuclear annihilation and participated frequently in "proxy wars" by supporting allied nations in numerous "hot" wars in places like Korea, Vietnam, and Angola. The Cold War defined both countries' foreign policies through the second half of the twentieth century, as Americans and Soviets competed for allies to maintain and widen their respective spheres of influence around the world. Each side viewed the Cold War as a battle between civilizations; in the worldwide clash between American capitalism and Soviet Communism, only one could prevail. For more than forty years, the Soviet-American conflict hung heavy over global affairs, shaping the world with massive military buildups, a never-ending nuclear arms race, intensive espionage, and fierce technological competition as each side tried to gain the upper hand in preparation for the thermonuclear "hot war" all humans feared would someday come.

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Brain Snacks - Trivia

Mao Zedong was a great swimmer. As Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, he was known to take a dip in the pool he ordered built at Party headquarters, in the stormy ocean, and even in China's badly polluted rivers. Mao even used swimming in his diplomacy. When Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev visited China in 1958, Mao—who was upset with Khrushchev's policies toward China at the time—invited him to come down to the swimming pool even though he knew Khrushchev could not swim. Khrushchev had to use an innertube while Mao literally swam circles around him. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev once described Berlin as "the testicles of the West. Every time I want to make the West scream, I squeeze on Berlin."

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