KS3 History: revision notes

# The Cold War

Contents

1. A cold war
2. Divided Europe and Berlin
3. Crises and the end
4. Key terms
5. Quick questions
6. What to do next

## A cold war

- From 1945 to 1991, the USA (capitalist and democratic) and the USSR (communist, with one party in charge) were rivals. They never fought each other directly, so it was a "cold" war.
- Both built nuclear weapons. **Mutually assured destruction** (MAD) meant that a nuclear war would destroy both sides.
- They competed through an **arms race**, a space race and **proxy wars**, such as those in Korea and Vietnam.

## Divided Europe and Berlin

- Churchill said an "**Iron Curtain**" divided Europe between the communist East and the democratic West (1946).
- The USA's Marshall Plan gave money to rebuild Western Europe. **NATO** was formed in 1949; the Warsaw Pact in 1955.
- In 1948 to 1949, the USSR blockaded West Berlin, and Western planes flew in supplies (the Berlin Airlift).
- In 1961, East Germany built the **Berlin Wall** to stop people escaping to the West. It fell on 9 November 1989.

## Crises and the end

- The space race: the USSR launched Sputnik (1957) and sent Yuri Gagarin into space (1961); the USA landed on the Moon (1969).
- The Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962): the USSR placed nuclear missiles in Cuba, close to the USA. For 13 days the world came close to nuclear war, until Khrushchev agreed to remove them.
- Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet leader in 1985 and introduced glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). **Communism** collapsed in Eastern Europe in 1989, and the USSR broke up in 1991.

Your notes

## Key terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cold War** | The rivalry between the USA and the USSR from 1945 to 1991, without direct war between them. |
| **Superpower** | A country with huge military and economic power. |
| **Communism** | A system in which the state owns property and one party rules. |
| **Capitalism** | A system in which businesses are privately owned and people make profits. |
| **Iron Curtain** | The division of Europe between the communist East and the democratic West. |
| **Arms race** | Competition to build more and better weapons. |
| **NATO** | A military alliance of Western countries formed in 1949. |
| **Berlin Wall** | The wall that divided Berlin from 1961 to 1989. |
| **Mutually assured destruction** | The idea that a nuclear war would destroy both sides (MAD). |
| **Proxy war** | A war in which superpowers support opposite sides without fighting each other directly. |

## Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Which two superpowers were rivals in the Cold War?
2. Why was it called a "cold" war?
3. What did Churchill mean by the "Iron Curtain"?
4. What was the Berlin Airlift?
5. What is NATO?
6. When was the Berlin Wall built?
7. What was the Cuban Missile Crisis?
8. Who was the first person in space?

### Answers

1. The USA and the USSR
2. The two superpowers never fought each other directly
3. The division of Europe between the communist East and the democratic West
4. Western planes flying supplies into West Berlin during a Soviet blockade
5. A military alliance of Western countries, formed in 1949
6. 1961
7. A standoff in 1962 over Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba
8. Yuri Gagarin

Your notes

## What to do next

**Practise 13 questions on this topic**

**Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes**

**Read the lesson, one step at a time**

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.

Your notes