

World history topic 12: The Cold War: Superpower tensions and rivalries (20th century)

The Cold War dominated global affairs from the end of the Second World War to the early 1990s. This topic focuses on how superpower rivalries did not remain static but changed according to styles of leadership, strength of ideological beliefs, economic factors and crises involving client states. The topic aims to promote an international perspective on the Cold War by requiring the study of Cold War leaders, countries and crises from more than one region of the world. Examination questions may require students to make reference to examples from two different regions of the world.

Topic	Prescribed content
Rivalry, mistrust and accord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The breakdown of the Grand Alliance and the emergence of superpower rivalry in Europe and Asia (1943–1949): role of ideology; fear and aggression; economic interests; a comparison of the roles of the US and the USSR The US, USSR and China—superpower relations (1947–1979): containment; peaceful co-existence; Sino-Soviet and Sino-US relations; detente Confrontation and reconciliation; reasons for the end of the Cold War (1980–1991): ideological challenges and dissent; economic problems; arms race
Leaders and nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of two leaders, each chosen from a different region, on the course and development of the Cold War The economic, social and cultural impact of the Cold War on two countries, each chosen from a different region
Cold War crises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold War crises case studies: detailed study of any two Cold War crises from different regions: examination and comparison of the causes, impact and significance of the two crises

Suggested examples

Please note that the examples provided here are **suggestions only**. Teachers are free to use examples from this list or any other appropriate examples, depending on the particular needs and interests of the teacher and students.

<p>Examples of leaders</p> <p>Truman, Stalin, Khrushchev, Nixon, Mao, Castro, Brezhnev, Reagan, Gorbachev, Nasser, Brandt</p> <p>Examples of Cold War crises</p> <p>Africa and the Middle East: Suez Crisis (1956); Congo (1960–1961); outbreak of Angolan Civil War (1975)</p> <p>The Americas: Cuban Missile Crisis (1962); US intervention in Chile (1973); Contra War (1981–1990)</p> <p>Asia and Oceania: Chinese Offshore Island Crises (1954/1958); North Korean invasion of South Korea (1950); Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979)</p> <p>Europe: Berlin blockade (1948–1949), Berlin Wall (1958–1961); Hungary (1956); the Prague spring (1968); the USSR and eastern Europe (1981–1989)</p>
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