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# Major Crises and Conflicts During the Cold War

KS4 HISTORY

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## What Was the Cold War?

The **Cold War** was a long period of tension between two superpowers: the **United States of America** and the **Soviet Union**. It lasted from around **1947 to 1991**. It was called 'cold' because the two nations never actually fought each other directly in battle, but they came dangerously close several times.

Think of it like two boxers circling each other in the ring, ready to fight, but never throwing a punch—though the crowd is terrified they might.

## The Korean War (1950-1953)

When **North Korea** invaded **South Korea**, the **United States** sent troops to help the south. But **China** and the **Soviet Union** supported the north. This was one of the first times Cold War tensions turned into actual fighting. Over **3 million** people died before an agreement was reached.

## The Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)

This was the most dangerous moment of the entire Cold War. The **Soviet Union** placed nuclear missiles in **Cuba**, just **90 miles** from the **United States**. American President **John F. Kennedy** ordered a naval blockade to stop Soviet ships. For **13 days**, the world held its breath. Nuclear war seemed possible. Thankfully, Soviet leader **Nikita Khrushchev** agreed to remove the missiles.

Think of it like two people holding matches near a pile of dynamite, both threatening to light it—except this time, they actually stepped back.

## The Vietnam War (1955-1975)

**North Vietnam**, supported by the **Soviet Union**, fought **South Vietnam**, supported by the **United States**. The **US** sent **500,000** troops to fight communism. However,

the war was unpopular at home, and the **US** withdrew in **1973**. Nearly **3 million** people died.

## **The Berlin Blockade (1948-1949)**

The **Soviet Union** tried to force the **United States, Britain, and France** out of **Berlin** by blocking supply routes. The **US** responded with the **Berlin Airlift**, flying food and supplies to the trapped city for **15 months**. This standoff showed how far each side would go to protect its interests.

## **Other Major Crises**

The **Space Race** was another area of competition, with both nations trying to reach **space** first. There were also dangerous incidents like the **Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989)** and the **Hungarian Uprising (1956)**, where Soviet tanks crushed a popular rebellion. Nuclear weapons tests and military buildups on both sides kept tension high for decades.

These crises taught the world that peaceful negotiation is better than war—even when nations deeply disagree.