THE COLD WAR – PROXY WARS

POSSIBLE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did proxy wars, rooted in Cold War global politics, inadvertently impact nations and individuals around the globe during the Cold War era and in present day?

BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of World War II, and the use of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan, rising superpowers such as the Union of Society Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States of America (USA) sought to lay claim and develop alliances with nations across the globe in order to promote their political ideologies and avoid atomic warfare.

Through the implementation of the Marshall Plan, the USA sought to aid in rebuilding Western Europe, to establish democracy and to prevent the spread of communism from 1948 to 1952. The USSR opposed the Marshall Plan as they feared it would create an anti-Soviet bloc.

The USSR, in turn, took advantage of their international political power to subversively influence the spread of communism by encouraging and backing uprisings and civil wars.

With both super powers vying for power and working to promote opposing political agendas, a series of armed conflicts erupted across the globe. These conflicts acted as Proxy Wars in which the USA and the USSR could actively utilize resources to back allies without officially engaging in armed conflict. With nuclear capabilities such as intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), whose range made it possible to fire and strike across the Atlantic, the USA and USSR feared mutually assured destruction (MAD), or the idea that each power might annihilate one another nearly simultaneously. Fear of MAD stabilized the relationship between the USA and USSR, allowing for détente, or reconciliation, from the mid-1960s to 1980.

These proxy wars had a tremendous impact on the development of numerous nations, the political landscape of the world, and daily lives of individuals in impacted regions.

RESOURCES

Personal Stories

Korean War
- [Veterans' Memoirs (Korean War Educator)](#)
- [Recollections from the Front (Korean War Project)](#)

Vietnam War
- [Cacti War Stories Index (35th Infantry (Cacti) Regiment Association)](#)
- [Reflections on a War (PBS American Experience)](#)

Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan
- [Witnesses to Moscow's Afghan war (BBC News)](#)
- [Veterans Remember Soviet Invasion Of Afghanistan 30 Years On (Radio Free Europe Radio Library)](#)
- [Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War (The National Security Archive)](#)

Data

The Cold War
- [Timeline: Race for the Superbomb (PBS American Experience)](#)

The Korean War
- [Key Events in the Korean War (Polytechnic School)](#)

Vietnam War
- [Timeline: Vietnam profile (BBC News)](#)

Afghanistan
- [Timeline: Soviet war in Afghanistan (BBC News)](#)

Video

The Korean War
- [1950: The Korean War begins (CNN)](#)
- [Korean War Overview (Khan Academy)](#)

Vietnam

- [Vietnam War (Khan Academy)](#)

Afghanistan
- [Afghanistan's Soviet remnants (BBC News)](#)

Websites

USA-USSR Cold War Relationships
- [The Cold War (JFK Presidential Library and Museum)](#)

Cold War Proxy Wars
- [Proxy Wars (Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum)](#)

The Korean War
- [The Korean War - An Overview (BBC History)](#)
- [People & Events: The Korean War (PBS American Experience)](#)

Vietnam
- [Sino-Soviet Relations and the February 1979 Sino-Vietnamese Conflict (The Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive)](#)

Afghanistan
- [The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan (PBS Newshour)](#)
- [Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Encyclopedia Britannica)](#)

Images

Korean War
- [Korean War: Classic Photos by David Douglas Duncan (Life)](#)
- [Korean War Image (National Archives)](#)

Vietnam War
- [Iconic photos of the Vietnam War (CNN)](#)
- [Photos From the Vietnam War: Lost and Found (Atlantic)](#)

Afghanistan
- [Afghanistan through Soviet eyes (BBC)](#)
- [The Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979 - 1989 (Atlantic)](#)