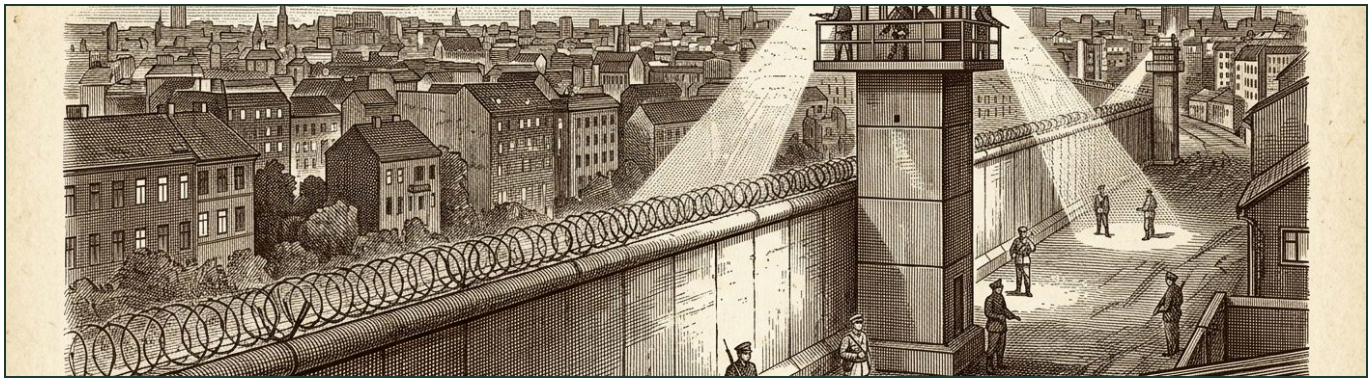


1947 – 1991

Cold War Timeline

The Cold War was a decades-long rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, fought through arms races, proxy wars, and the constant threat of nuclear destruction.

1947 — The Cold War Begins

The United States and Soviet Union, wartime allies against Hitler, become rivals in a global struggle between democracy and communism.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Cold War would shape world politics for more than four decades — a constant standoff between two superpowers, each with enough nuclear weapons to destroy civilization.*

1949 — Soviet Union Tests the Atom Bomb

The Soviet Union successfully tests its first nuclear weapon, ending America's monopoly on the atomic bomb.

> **Why it mattered:** *Now both superpowers could destroy each other — the era of nuclear deterrence, and the constant threat of annihilation, had begun.*

1950–53 — Korean War

The United States and its allies fight to defend South Korea from a communist North Korean invasion backed by China.

> **Why it mattered:** *Korea became the first hot war of the Cold War, showing that superpower rivalry could explode into real fighting at any time — and ending in a divided Korea that still exists today.*

1957 — Sputnik Shocks America

The Soviet Union launches the world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik, shocking Americans who feared the Soviets had pulled ahead in technology.

> **Why it mattered:** *Sputnik set off a space race and a massive US investment in science education — and ultimately led to the American moon landing.*

Cold War Timeline *continued*

1961 — **Berlin Wall Built**

East Germany builds a concrete wall dividing Berlin overnight, trapping its citizens in the communist east.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Berlin Wall became the defining symbol of the Iron Curtain — the physical divide between free Western Europe and communist Eastern Europe.*

1962 — **Cuban Missile Crisis**

The US discovers Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba; for thirteen days the world stands on the brink of nuclear war.

> **Why it mattered:** *The crisis was the most dangerous moment of the Cold War — it ended when the Soviets agreed to remove the missiles, and both sides pulled back from the edge.*

1965–73 — **Vietnam War**

The US commits hundreds of thousands of troops to Vietnam to prevent a communist takeover of South Vietnam.

> **Why it mattered:** *The deeply divisive war ended in US withdrawal and communist victory, shaking American confidence and reshaping public attitudes toward military intervention.*

1969 — **Moon Landing**

American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin land on the Moon on July 20.

> **Why it mattered:** *The moon landing was the defining triumph of the Space Race — the United States had clearly outpaced the Soviet Union in the contest for technological prestige.*

1979–89 — **Soviet War in Afghanistan**

The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan and gets stuck in a brutal guerrilla war that drains its military and economy for a decade.

> **Why it mattered:** *The failed war — sometimes called the Soviet Union's Vietnam — accelerated the economic and political collapse of the USSR.*

1991 — **Soviet Union Collapses**

The Soviet Union officially dissolves on December 25, 1991, ending the Cold War.

> **Why it mattered:** *The peaceful collapse of the USSR ended 45 years of Cold War tension; the United States emerged as the world's sole superpower.*