



Ready For Boards
10th & 12th Exam Prep

CHAPTER 1

The Cold War Era

CBSE Class 12 · Political Science · Contemporary World Politics · Chapter 1

CBSE · Political Science · Class 12

WHAT THIS CHAPTER DOES

A Explain why the Cold War is called 'cold'.

B Walk through the 13-day Cuban Missile Crisis (1962).

Boards prep that builds confidence, not anxiety.

TODAY'S MISSION

Today's mission

1

Explain why the Cold War is called 'cold'.

2

Walk through the 13-day Cuban Missile Crisis (1962).

3

Define NAM + name founders + describe India's role.

4

Score 6/7 marks on this chapter's slice.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Why this chapter matters

1

5-7 marks every CBSE board paper — foundation chapter of the textbook.

2

Shaped 45 years of global politics. Every later chapter (rise of US power, India's foreign policy) builds on this.

3

Real-world relevance: today's US-China rivalry, NATO tensions with Russia are direct echoes of Cold War.

TOPIC

A

What was the Cold War?

THEOREM · LOAD-BEARING RESULT

The Cold War — Definition + Why 'Cold'



*The Cold War (1945-1991) was a period of intense **IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, and MILITARY** rivalry between the USA (capitalist bloc) and the USSR (communist bloc), conducted **WITHOUT** direct armed combat between the two superpowers.*

STATEMENT

Why 'cold': No direct US-USSR war ever occurred. Conflict was waged through (a) PROXY WARS in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Angola, etc. (b) ARMS RACE — nuclear stockpiling, conventional weapons buildup. (c)

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Direct war avoided due to **MUTUAL ASSURED DESTRUCTION (MAD)**
- Both superpowers had nuclear weapons by mid-1950s
- A direct war would mean civilisation's end

WATCH OUT FOR

NOTE Don't confuse 'cold' with 'cold places'. It's about **INTENSITY** of conflict (no hot/direct combat), not geography.

TOPIC

B

Origins — how the Cold War began

TOPIC

Three factors that produced the Cold War

POST-WW2 POWER VACUUM

By the end of World War II in 1945, the traditional European great powers — Britain, France, Germany, Japan — were militarily defeated, economically exhausted, or politically discredited; their combined infrastructure damage exceeded 1 trillion 1945-dollars. Only the United States (which had emerged from the war with half of

INCOMPATIBLE IDEOLOGIES

The two superpowers carried fundamentally **OPPOSED** visions of how human society should be organised. The USA championed **CAPITALISM** and **LIBERAL DEMOCRACY** — private property, free markets, multiparty competitive elections, individual civil rights protected by an independent judiciary. The

EUROPE DIVIDED

Europe became the first and most visible theatre of the Cold War split. The Yalta Conference (February 1945) carved occupied Europe into Western (US-led) and Eastern (Soviet-led) zones. Winston Churchill named the divide the 'Iron Curtain' in his March 1946 Fulton, Missouri speech. The Truman Doctrine (March 1947)

FIRST MAJOR CRISIS

The Berlin Blockade (June 1948 to May 1949) was the first major Cold War crisis. Stalin closed all land and water routes from West Germany to West Berlin (a Western-occupied enclave 100 miles inside Soviet zone), aiming to force the Western powers to abandon the city. The US and Britain responded with the Berlin Airlift — for 11 months

TOPIC

C

Military alliances

TOPIC

Two blocs formalised

NATO (1949)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was founded on 4 April 1949 by 12 founding members (USA, UK, France, Italy, Canada, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Portugal); West Germany joined in 1955 and Spain in 1982. The central commitment is Article 5: an armed attack against one member is

WARSAW PACT (1955)

The Warsaw Treaty Organisation was created on 14 May 1955 as the Soviet response to NATO's admission of West Germany. The original eight members were USSR, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania (Albania left in 1968). Unlike NATO's Article 5, the Pact's deeper

SEATO (1954)

The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation, signed in Manila on 8 September 1954, extended the US containment doctrine to Asia after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva accords ending French Indochina. Members were USA, UK, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, and Thailand — note that India

CENTO (1955)

The Central Treaty Organisation, initially called the Baghdad Pact when signed in February 1955, was the Middle East anchor of US containment policy — members were the UK, Iran (under the Shah), Iraq, Pakistan, and Turkey, with the USA participating but never formally joining. The 1958 Iraqi revolution that overthrew the British-

TOPIC

D

Arenas of the Cold War

TOPIC

Where the Cold War was actually fought

ARMS RACE

The nuclear arms race began in 1949 when the USSR detonated its first atomic device, ending the brief US nuclear monopoly. By the 1980s peak, the combined US and Soviet arsenals reached approximately 70,000 nuclear warheads — enough to destroy the planet many times over (overkill capacity ~500).

SPACE RACE

Space became a high-visibility Cold War theatre because rocketry (the boost technology for spacecraft) is identical to ICBM technology — and prestige plus intimidation could be projected through it. Key milestones: 4 October 1957, USSR launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite, triggering the US 'Sputnik moment' panic; 12 April

PROXY WARS

Because direct US-USSR conflict would have triggered nuclear annihilation under MAD, the Cold War was fought through proxy wars in the Third World — local actors backed by one or both superpowers. The Korean War (1950-53, ~3 million deaths) saw US-backed South Korea fight Soviet- and-Chinese-backed North

IDEOLOGY + INTELLIGENCE

The Cold War was fought as much in propaganda and intelligence as on battlefields. The US Voice of America (founded 1942) and Radio Free Europe (founded 1949) broadcast Western news and ideology into the Soviet bloc; the USSR ran Radio Moscow and TASS as counter-propaganda channels. The CIA (Central Intelligence

TOPIC

E

Cuban Missile Crisis — closest to nuclear war

WORKED EXAMPLE

Cuban Missile Crisis — 13 days (Oct 16-28, 1962)

- 1 **CONTEXT:** USA had nuclear missiles in TURKEY (close to USSR). USSR sought parity by installing nuclear missiles in CUBA — 90 miles from US coast, well within striking range of NYC, DC, Miami.
- 2 Oct 16: US U-2 spy planes photograph Soviet missile installations in Cuba. JFK assembles ExComm (Executive Committee).
- 3 Oct 22: JFK announces NAVAL QUARANTINE (blockade) of Cuba on national TV. Demands missile withdrawal. Strategic Air Command goes to DEFCON 2.
- 4 Oct 24-26: Soviet ships approach the blockade line. World holds breath. Ships eventually turn back. Diplomatic backchannel begins.
- 5 Oct 27: 'Black Saturday'. US U-2 shot down over Cuba. Brink of war.

TOPIC

F

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) — India's role

THEOREM · LOAD-BEARING RESULT

The Non-Aligned Movement



NAM is a coalition of newly-independent and developing nations that, during the Cold War, REFUSED to formally ally with either bloc. NAM championed national INDEPENDENCE, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and South-South cooperation.

STATEMENT

Origin: Bandung Conference (Indonesia, 1955) — 29 Asian-African nations met to reject bloc politics. Formal NAM founded at Belgrade Summit (Yugoslavia, 1961) — 25 countries. Founders: Jawaharlal NEHRU (India), Gamal

WHY THIS MATTERS

- NAM was a third-world response to bipolar pressure
- New nations did NOT want to be pawns of either superpower
- NAM provided collective voice in UN, advocated decolonisation + fair trade.

WATCH OUT FOR

NOTE NAM is NOT NEUTRALITY. Neutrality = doing nothing. NAM = active independence, taking positions on each issue based on national judgment. India criticised both USSR (Hungary 1956) and USA (Vietnam War). The line: 'We are AGAINST both blocs' and FOR specific principles.

WORKED EXAMPLE

India's role in NAM

- 1 Jawaharlal NEHRU was a CO-FOUNDER alongside Nasser + Tito.
- 2 Nehru's PANCHSHEEL (1954, with China) — 5 principles of peaceful coexistence: mutual respect for sovereignty + non-aggression + non-interference + equality + peaceful coexistence. Became NAM foundation.
- 3 India hosted NAM Summit at New Delhi in 1983 — Indira Gandhi as host.
- 4 India criticised BOTH BLOCS: USSR's Hungary invasion 1956; USA's Vietnam War 1965-onwards.
- 5 Post-Cold War: NAM's bloc-avoidance reason faded. Today NAM emphasises Global South solidarity + climate justice + trade equity.

TOPIC

G

End of the Cold War (1989-91)

TOPIC

How the Cold War ended

GORBACHEV REFORMS (1985-91)

Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the CPSU in March 1985 and inherited a stagnating Soviet economy crippled by the cost of Afghanistan, the arms race, and chronic agricultural failure. His twin reform doctrines — GLASNOST (openness — relaxation of censorship, multiparty politics, freedom

EASTERN EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONS (1989)

1989 saw a cascade of mostly-peaceful revolutions topple Soviet-aligned communist governments across Eastern Europe. The Berlin Wall, which had separated East and West Berlin since 1961, fell on 9 November 1989 after weeks of mass demonstrations and a confused East German policy reversal. The

GERMAN REUNIFICATION (1990)

After the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, East and West Germany rapidly negotiated reunification under the Two-Plus-Four Treaty signed on 12 September 1990 (the 'two' Germanys plus the four WW2 victors: USA, UK, France, USSR). Reunification took formal effect on 3 October 1990,

USSR DISSOLVES (DECEMBER 1991)

The Soviet Union formally dissolved on 25-26 December 1991 after Gorbachev's televised resignation and the Belovezha Accords (8 December) by which Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus declared the USSR's end. The fifteen former Soviet republics became independent states

TOPIC

Why 'cold'

TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** The Cold War was 'cold' because it happened in cold places like Russia.
- ✓ **CORRECT** It's called the Cold War because the two superpowers (USA + USSR) NEVER FOUGHT DIRECTLY in a hot (military) war. Their conflict was through proxy wars (Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan), arms race, ideological propaganda, and diplomatic pressure — but NEVER direct combat. Hence 'cold' = no direct fighting.

TOPIC

Cold War start

TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** Cold War started when USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979.

✓ **CORRECT** Cold War began RIGHT AFTER WW2 (1945-1947), as USA + USSR (former allies against Nazi Germany) emerged as rival superpowers with INCOMPATIBLE ideologies (capitalism vs communism). Truman Doctrine (1947) is often cited as the formal start. Afghanistan (1979) was a LATE Cold War conflict.

TOPIC

Cuban Missile Crisis duration

TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** The Cuban Missile Crisis lasted for several months.

✓ **CORRECT** The CRISIS itself was just 13 DAYS (October 16-28, 1962). USSR installed nuclear missiles in Cuba (90 miles from US coast); JFK announced naval quarantine; Khrushchev backed down. Closest the world came to nuclear war. Resolved diplomatically — both sides withdrew missiles.

TOPIC

NAM = neutral

TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** Non-Aligned Movement meant being NEUTRAL or NEUTRALITY between the two blocs.
- ✓ **CORRECT** NAM was NOT NEUTRALITY (which means doing nothing in international affairs). NAM countries chose to be INDEPENDENT — taking positions on each issue based on their own JUDGMENT, not based on bloc loyalty. India often criticised BOTH USSR + USA at different times. Active engagement, not passive neutrality.

TOPIC

End of Cold War

TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** The Cold War ended in 1985 when Gorbachev came to power.

✓ **CORRECT** The Cold War ended in 1989-91. Key events: 1989 — fall of Berlin Wall (symbolic end of European divide); 1990 — German reunification; December 1991 — formal dissolution of USSR. Gorbachev's perestroika + glasnost (1985 onwards) PRECIPITATED the end but did not constitute it.

TOPIC

Three founders of NAM

TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** NAM was founded by India alone.

✓ **CORRECT** NAM was co-founded by JAWAHARLAL NEHRU (India), GAMAL ABDEL NASSER (Egypt), and JOSIP BROZ TITO (Yugoslavia). Sometimes Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) and Sukarno (Indonesia) are added as key founders. First NAM Summit: Belgrade, 1961, 25 countries. 1955 Bandung Conference is the IDEOLOGICAL ORIGIN.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

5-mark: 'What was the Cold War? Why is it called "cold"?' Discuss origins.'

- 1 DEFINE COLD WAR**
1 m
The Cold War (1945-1991) was a period of intense IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, and MILITARY RIVALRY between the United States (capitalist bloc) and the Soviet Union (communist bloc), without ever erupting into a direct armed conflict between them.
- 2 WHY 'COLD'**
1 m
Called 'cold' because the two superpowers NEVER FOUGHT EACH OTHER DIRECTLY in a 'hot' military war. The conflict was waged through (a) PROXY WARS in third countries (Korea 1950, Vietnam 1955, Afghanistan 1979), (b) ARMS RACE (nuclear stockpiling), (c) IDEOLOGICAL propaganda, (d) DIPLOMATIC pressure. Direct US-USSR combat was avoided largely due to MUTUAL ASSURED DESTRUCTION (MAD) — both had nuclear weapons; war would mean civilisation's end.
- 3 ORIGINS (3 FACTORS)**
2 m
(1) POST-WW2 POWER VACUUM — Britain and other European powers were exhausted; USA + USSR emerged as the two remaining superpowers. (2) INCOMPATIBLE IDEOLOGIES — USA championed CAPITALISM + LIBERAL DEMOCRACY; USSR championed COMMUNISM + state-controlled economy. (3) EUROPE DIVIDED — at Yalta (1945), the Allies agreed to occupied zones in Germany; this hardened into Western Europe (US-aligned) + Eastern Europe (Soviet-occupied). Truman Doctrine (1947) — US pledge to contain communism. Marshall Plan (1948) — US economic aid to Western Europe. Berlin Blockade (1948-49) — first major Cold War crisis.
- 4 CONCLUSION + SIGNIFICANCE**
1 m
The Cold War shaped global politics for 45 years — alliances (NATO 1949 vs Warsaw Pact 1955), proxy wars killing millions, arms race threatening nuclear holocaust, and ideological competition pervading every developing country. Ended in 1989-91 with the dissolution of the USSR.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

5-mark: 'Discuss the Cuban Missile Crisis as a turning point in the Cold War.'

- 1 SET CONTEXT**
1 m
By 1962, the Cold War was at an aggressive peak. USA had nuclear missiles in Turkey (close to USSR). USSR sought parity by installing nuclear missiles in CUBA — 90 miles from US coast, well within striking range of major US cities.
- 2 THE 13-DAY CRISIS (OCT 16-28, 1962)**
2 m
October 16: US U-2 spy planes photographed Soviet missile installations in Cuba. President JFK convened ExComm advisors. Options: invasion vs naval blockade vs diplomatic. October 22: JFK announced NAVAL QUARANTINE (blockade) of Cuba on national TV; demanded missile withdrawal. October 24-26: Soviet ships approached the line; world held breath; ships eventually turned back. October 27: 'Black Saturday' — US U-2 shot down over Cuba; tensions peaked. October 28: Khrushchev agreed to withdraw Cuban missiles in exchange for secret US withdrawal of missiles from Turkey + non-invasion pledge. Crisis resolved.
- 3 WHY A TURNING POINT**
1 m
(a) CLOSEST world came to NUCLEAR WAR — sobered both leaderships. (b) HOTLINE between Washington-Moscow established (Aug 1963) to prevent miscommunication. (c) PARTIAL TEST BAN TREATY signed 1963 (banning above-ground nuclear tests). (d) Beginning of DETENTE — period of reduced US-USSR tension.
- 4 LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANCE**
1 m
The crisis demonstrated that both superpowers, despite ideological rivalry, would step back from nuclear holocaust. It signalled the beginning of arms control negotiations (SALT I 1972, SALT II 1979) and set the framework for managing the Cold War without direct confrontation. Cuba remained a Cold War flashpoint, but never again was the world this close to nuclear war.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

5-mark: 'What is the Non-Aligned Movement? Discuss India's role.'

- 1 DEFINE NAM**
1 m
The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a coalition of newly-independent and developing nations that, during the Cold War, REFUSED to formally ally with either the US-led capitalist bloc or the USSR-led communist bloc. NAM emphasised national INDEPENDENCE, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and South-South cooperation.
- 2 FOUNDERS + KEY DATES**
2 m
NAM emerged at the BANDUNG CONFERENCE (Indonesia, 1955) — 29 Asian-African nations met to assert independence from superpower control. Formal NAM founded at BELGRADE SUMMIT (Yugoslavia, 1961) — 25 countries. FOUNDERS: JAWAHARLAL NEHRU (India), GAMAL ABDEL NASSER (Egypt), JOSIP BROZ TITO (Yugoslavia), with KWAME NKRUMAH (Ghana) and SUKARNO (Indonesia) often listed as co-founders. By 2020s, NAM has 120+ member countries.
- 3 INDIA'S ROLE**
1 m
India was a CO-FOUNDER + a leading voice. Nehru's foreign policy was built on Panchsheel — 5 principles of peaceful coexistence (mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, peaceful coexistence). India hosted NAM Summit 1983. India CRITICISED both blocs at various times — USSR for Hungary 1956 invasion + USA for Vietnam War. Showed NAM was INDEPENDENCE, not neutrality.
- 4 SIGNIFICANCE + NAM TODAY**
1 m
NAM gave developing nations a COLLECTIVE VOICE in superpower-dominated UN. Helped force decolonisation discussions. NAM advocated for New International Economic Order (NIEO) calling for fairer terms of trade. POST-COLD WAR: NAM's original raison d'être (avoid bipolar alignment) faded; NAM today focuses on Global South solidarity, trade equity, climate justice.

PYQ PATTERNS

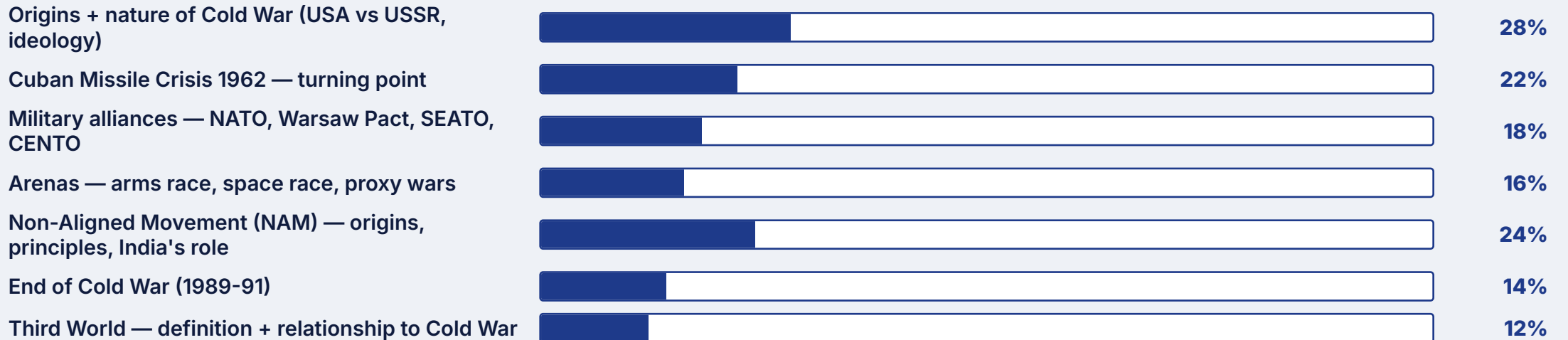
Top PYQ patterns to drill

| | | |
|----|--|------------------------|
| #1 | What was the Cold War? Why is it called 'cold'? Discuss its origins. (5 marks) | Annual |
| #2 | Discuss the Cuban Missile Crisis as a turning point in the Cold War. (5 marks) | 2018, 2020, 2022, 2024 |
| #3 | What is the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)? Discuss India's role + principles. (5 marks) | Annual |
| #4 | List the military alliances of the Cold War era. (3 marks) | Most years |
| #5 | What were the arenas of the Cold War? (3 marks) | 2018, 2020, 2023 |

MARKS DISTRIBUTION

10-year marks distribution

10-YEAR PYQ MARKS DISTRIBUTION



RECAP · MEMORISE THESE

Recap

1 What — Cold War (1945-1991): USA vs USSR. NEVER direct war (hence 'cold'). MAD kept it cold.

2 Key event — Cuban Missile Crisis (Oct 16-28, 1962): closest to nuclear war. JFK + Khrushchev backed down. Hotline + Test Ban Treaty followed.

3 NAM — Founded 1961 at Belgrade. Nehru + Nasser + Tito. INDEPENDENCE (not neutrality). India criticised both blocs.

WHAT'S NEXT

What's next



- Chapter 2 — The End of Bipolarity (rise of US as sole superpower; emergence of new conflicts).
- Sit the 15-MCQ Quick Drill.
- Then the full Board-Pattern Paper — 25 marks.



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