

Key Issue

- What effects did the Cold War have?

As the Iron Curtain tumbled, so the secrets came spilling out. For instance, in 1991, Gorbachev and Bush agreed to take nuclear bombers off alert and put nuclear warheads in storage.

It sounded very impressive. It seemed to reduce the risk of nuclear war. In fact, there was nothing new in this agreement. The arrangement had secretly existed for decades.

Accidents in the USA in 1966 and 1968 had led to all American bombers being grounded until the end of the Cold War. Soviet planes had never carried nuclear weapons for safety reasons. For years, they had been loading up dummy ones!

START II SIGNED (1993)

In 1993, Yeltsin and Bush signed the START II Treaty which brought further cuts in the stocks of US and Russian missiles. However, it still left both countries with about one-third of their long-range warheads – over 6000 of them.



- Key**
- Countries which have nuclear weapons / USA, Russia, Ukraine, Britain, France, China, Belarus, Kazakhstan
 - Countries which probably have them / India, Pakistan, Israel
 - Countries possibly developing them / Algeria, Iran, North Korea
 - Countries which had them / South Africa

The nuclear threat: who had nuclear weapons or could make them?

Yet the risk of nuclear war remained because nuclear missiles still existed – not just in the USSR and the USA but in many smaller countries, too.

NATIONALISM

The decline of **communism** led to the return of an old danger, nationalism. Throughout the communist bloc, many people were not satisfied with **democracy**: they wanted their own independent nation too.

Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania all became independent in 1991 and joined the United Nations. In January 1993, Czechoslovakia peacefully split to become two separate states of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

In the former USSR, fighting broke out as a number of areas tried to win independence.

CIVIL WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA

However, the worst violence occurred in what had been Yugoslavia. Tito had held together an explosive mixture of Serbs, Croats and Muslims, but communist control collapsed in 1990. The following year, the Serbs refused to accept a Croat as leader and both Slovenia and Croatia declared independence.



- Key**
- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| • Serbs | • Macedonians |
| • Croats | • Albanians |
| • Muslims | • Hungarians |
| • Slovenes | • Bulgarians |
| • Montenegrins | • Romanians / Slovaks |

Who controlled what in the former Yugoslavia?

During the civil war which followed, the Serbian government used a policy which they called 'ethnic cleansing'. This meant removing non-Serbs from mainly Serb areas – or killing them. Apart from the deaths, up to 20,000 Muslim and Croat women and girls were raped.

The United Nations brokered a ceasefire in Croatia in 1992. It was the first of many in the region but 40,000 UN troops failed to keep the peace. One Serb soldier gave this chilling warning: 'The time of living together is over'. NATO forces then launched air-strikes against Serbia in 1995 after the Serbs refused to surrender any Bosnian territory, eventually leading to a peace agreement which created separate states for Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia. The Serbs got 49% of Bosnia, the Croats and Muslims 51%.

KOREA

Korea was one of the Cold War's first trouble spots. It is also one of the last. North Korea remains communist whilst South Korea is capitalist. Anti-aircraft guns in Seoul, the South Korean capital, are still permanently guarded, ready for a North Korean attack. A narrow **demilitarised** zone separates the two sides. Every day at noon, both sides meet to settle disputes, such as shooting incidents.

VIETNAM

In 1993, the French President said that the French had made a 'mistake' in fighting in Vietnam. In the USA, the arguments about American involvement in Vietnam go on. Robert McNamara was US Defence Secretary under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. In 1995, he admitted that his handling of the war had been 'terribly wrong'.

It led to a new round of arguments about the war. The USA has not forgotten Vietnam because it has not yet recovered from the experience. Vietnam was the war the Americans lost. What many still wonder is whether they should have been fighting in the first place. On the other hand, many Americans argue that the USA lost the war in Vietnam – but won the battle against communism.

EASTERN EUROPE

What about the people of eastern Europe? Are they satisfied with their new lives? A poll early in 1993 showed that over half the people in the former USSR thought they had been better off under communism. About 70 per cent in eastern Europe were not satisfied with democracy. And 10 per cent wanted to emigrate to the West. Today many could

have this wish, as most of the old Soviet bloc countries, such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, joined the European Union in May 2004 and now their citizens have the right to work in western Europe.



A beggar in Moscow.

THE COLD WAR'S COST

It is impossible to say what the Cold War cost. Billions of dollars and roubles were spent on building nuclear weapons. Defence budgets in the USA and USSR soaked up money which might have been used to improve living standards. Now that the Cold War is over, many more billions are being spent on getting rid of these weapons.

Nor have all the debts been paid yet. The cost of sorting out the ex-USSR's economy has been estimated at nearly \$2 trillion a year. However much help the West gives, the Russians and others will have to pay for most of it on their own.

However, the first half of the twentieth century saw two world wars. In the second half, there were none. Some people believe that this was partly because both superpowers had nuclear weapons – but were afraid to use them. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Europe and the United States have new issues to concern them – most notably, the threat of global terrorism. The Cold War has become a dim memory.

Explain how the Cold War came to an end. Write a few sentences under each of the following headings:

- Gorbachev's rejection of the Brezhnev Doctrine
- The pulling down of the Berlin Wall
- Collapse of communism in the USSR
- Tensions in the 1990s.