Cold War Worksheet

Grade 11 history · 1945 – 1991



Name: Date: Score: / 26

A war that could not be fought

The **Cold War** was a rivalry between two blocs that armed against each other for forty years and never fought each other directly. That is the fact a student has to explain, not just remember.

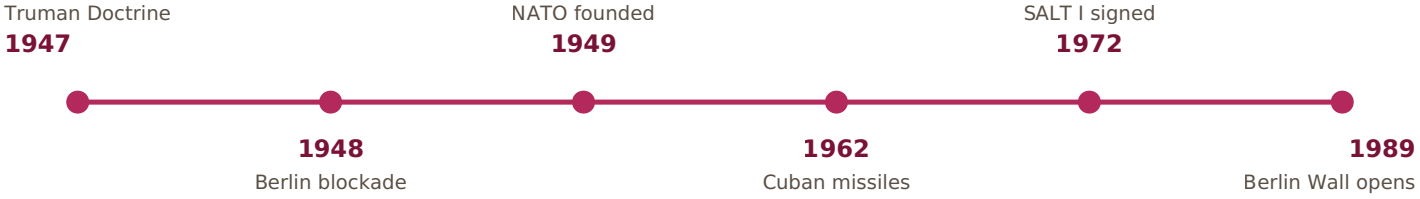
The usual answer is **deterrence**. Once both sides held enough nuclear weapons to destroy the other even after being hit first, a direct war stopped being a usable option. The threat still shaped every decision, but using it would have ended both states.

So the rivalry moved elsewhere: into **proxy wars** fought with superpower weapons and local soldiers, into aid and loans, into space programmes, sport and propaganda. Understanding the Cold War means following the competition into those places rather than looking for battles between the two main armies.

Part A — Vocabulary match each term to its meaning (8 marks)

1. Cold War	____	A. A conflict in which rival powers back opposing sides instead of fighting
2. Containment	____	B. Competitive build-up of weapons by rival states
3. Iron Curtain	____	C. The closed border dividing Europe into two blocs
4. Proxy war	____	D. A deliberate easing of tension between rivals
5. Arms race	____	E. Describing a state that joined neither bloc
6. Deterrence	____	F. A policy of preventing the spread of a rival system rather than rolling it back
7. Détente	____	G. Decades of hostility between two blocs that never fought each other directly
8. Non-aligned	____	H. Preventing an attack by making the cost of it unacceptable

Part B — Timeline (3 marks)



1. How many years separate the founding of NATO from the opening of the Berlin Wall?

2. Which event on the timeline came closest to a direct war, and why did it not become one?

Part C — Fill in the blanks (6 marks)

1. Preventing the spread of a rival system is a policy of _____.

2. A conflict in which rivals back opposing sides is a _____ war.

3. Preventing attack by making its cost unacceptable is _____.

4. A deliberate easing of tension between the blocs was called _____.

5. A state that joined neither bloc was _____.

6. The closed border dividing Europe was called the iron _____.

Part D — Significance say why each mattered (5 marks)

Episode	Why it mattered
Berlin airlift, 1948–49	
Cuban missile crisis, 1962	
Korean and Vietnam wars	
SALT and détente, 1970s	
1989–91	

Part E — Source (4 marks)

SOURCE A

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.

— Winston Churchill, address at Fulton, Missouri, March 1946

1. Churchill was out of office when he said this. Explain why that makes the speech both less authoritative and more useful to a historian.

Cold War Worksheet — Answer Key

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Part A — Vocabulary

1. **Cold War** → G
2. **Containment** → F
3. **Iron Curtain** → C
4. **Proxy war** → A
5. **Arms race** → B
6. **Deterrence** → H
7. **Détente** → D
8. **Non-aligned** → E

Part B — Timeline

1. **40 years**
   1949 to 1989.
2. **The Cuban missile crisis, 1962, and it stopped because both leaders preferred a deal to a first strike.**
   Accept any answer naming Cuba and giving a reason grounded in deterrence: neither side could strike without being destroyed in return, so a negotiated withdrawal was cheaper than winning.

Part C — Fill in the blanks

1. **containment**
2. **proxy**
3. **deterrence**
4. **detente**
5. **non-aligned**
6. **curtain**

Part D — Significance

1. Berlin airlift, 1948–49 → **Supplied a blockaded city by air rather than forcing the road, avoiding a shooting war**
2. Cuban missile crisis, 1962 → **Brought both sides closest to nuclear war and led directly to a hotline and arms talks**
3. Korean and Vietnam wars → **Showed the pattern of proxy conflict: superpower weapons, local soldiers**
4. SALT and détente, 1970s → **Capped arsenals without resolving the rivalry, buying predictability**
5. 1989–91 → **The Eastern bloc dissolved without the direct war both sides had planned for**

Part E — Source

1. **He spoke as a private citizen, so it is not policy — which is exactly why he could say it.**
   Less authoritative: he held no office, bound no government and could be disowned. More useful: a man with his experience and no official constraints says plainly what serving ministers were still saying only in private, and the speech names the division years before either government did. Full marks need both halves.