



Exploring the 1960s: The Cold War

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What does it mean when one says, “That war was a Cold War...”? They would most likely be referring to a war without the common perception of war zones or battlegrounds. A cold war is an interesting concept whereby the military powers that are involved are not actually fighting each other with bullets, planes, ships, or bombs. *Cold War*, as defined from thefreedictionary.com, and to be expanded upon in this short essay, is “a state of political tension and military rivalry between nations that stops short of full-scale war...” (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/cold+war>). The Cold War brought many hidden agendas, enormous amounts of propaganda, as well as widespread fear amongst Americans; and the fear that came from the Cold War era will be our topic. What was some of the history that lead up to the Cold War? What were some of the threats from the Cold War? And, how did Americans deal with these threats?

The Cold War timeline takes us through World War II, where America and Russia fought as allies against Germany. After the war however, whatever alliance they held was gone, and thus began a long, drawn out ideological war. It was a war filled with propaganda and a battle over whose government’s philosophy was right, and whose was wrong; it was democracy against communism. Once the *Cold War* began, the citizens of America became indoctrinated to fight against communism. There were no shortage of television, newspaper and radio programs that basically painted communism and anyone associated with it as evil.

With such a negative outlook of the other side (Russia), speculation began about the horrible things that Russia could do to America. The thought of nuclear fallout became such a household topic that the general public’s fear grew exponentially. So much so, that for the people who could afford it, they began building something called bomb shelters. Bomb shelters were underground vaults that had supplies. These were meant to reduce casualties in the case of nuclear fallout. The Federal Civil Defense Administration instructed the public to build shelters

underground, preferably in a basement or in the backyard. These containers would have 12 inch thick concrete walls, they should be ventilated, and include supplies like lanterns, guns, and sleeping bags (<http://www.u-s-history.com>). Even the people that could not afford to build a private shelter would save up supplies like food and water, and learn where their nearest public shelters were at (if they were lucky enough to have one). The Cold War just did not affect people at their homes either, the fear also spread to public schools.

It was not too long before public schools implemented drills that were known as duck and cover. These were air raid drills that were usually led by loud sirens. The children would be instructed to get under their desks, or perhaps another safe location in the building, and duck down putting their faces towards the ground close to their legs. This was supposed to reduce possible casualties in case a nuclear attack was on the way. The Civil Defense went as far as to release a cartoon, “Duck and Cover”, where a turtle named Bert instructed children on getting into the proper position (military.com).

By the end of the Cold War, both sides had grown quite weary over the philosophical war of democracy against communism. There are many unanswered questions about the Cold War. However, the one question that rises to the top is, “Who won the Cold War?” Both sides will tell you that they won, or that it was a draw. Some even say that there *was* a clear winner, and it was America. This is based on the fact that the USSR and the government thereof, collapsed at the end of the Cold War; and it was supposedly America who initiated that fall.

The one question I would like to ask, “How do we prevent another cold war?” Well there are several things we can do to perhaps stop another cold war before it begins. One is to learn tolerance for another country’s culture, even if involves communism – not everyone is required to be like America. Secondly, is to force our government to provide transparency of their actions.

They should not be engaging in acts of war without the knowledge of its citizens. And thirdly, our public schools should provide education of other country's customs and cultures. We have a tendency to stick our head in the sand when it comes to foreign affairs, especially about things we do not understand. In the end, it will be acceptance, tolerance, and education that will prevent another cold war. Of course any further research on the topic would only be advantageous to our country. The question I will leave you with, "Will college classes on the topic of Cold War perhaps circumvent another cold war?"

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