

Overview of Unit 15: Coexistence and Confrontation
The Evolution of the Cold War
Chapter 25

Like many events in European history, the Cold War evolved over time and eventually came to be comprised of different phases. Regardless of the specific phase, certain “constants” remained in place:

- 1. The reality of nuclear weapons and Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD)**
- 2. Sovereign national security interests specific to each nation**
- 3. The realities of a bi-polar world and competing philosophies**
- 4. Certain difficult questions:**
 - a. Did coexistence = peace? Friendship?**
 - b. Did confrontation = war?**
- 5. Specific dilemmas for each nation**
 - a. Internal political agendas relative to their own populations**
 - b. Relations with allies**
 - c. Their own national security agendas**
 - d. Their mutual desire to avoid WWII and escalation from a minor conflict to nuclear exchanges**
 - e. Changing economic, political, social, and technological realities**

Overall phases of the Cold War:

- **1945 – 1955:** **significant confrontation**

Unpleasant and dangerous, yet relatively simple
- **1955 – 1970:** **still confrontation yet, some recognition of the need to coexist: Cold War kind of settling in**

unpleasant and dangerous, yet some improvement; however, getting more complex
- **1970 – 1991:** **still confrontation and coexistence, but heading towards the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European block of nations**

unpleasant and dangerous, yet more improvement; however, getting increasingly more complex and confusing