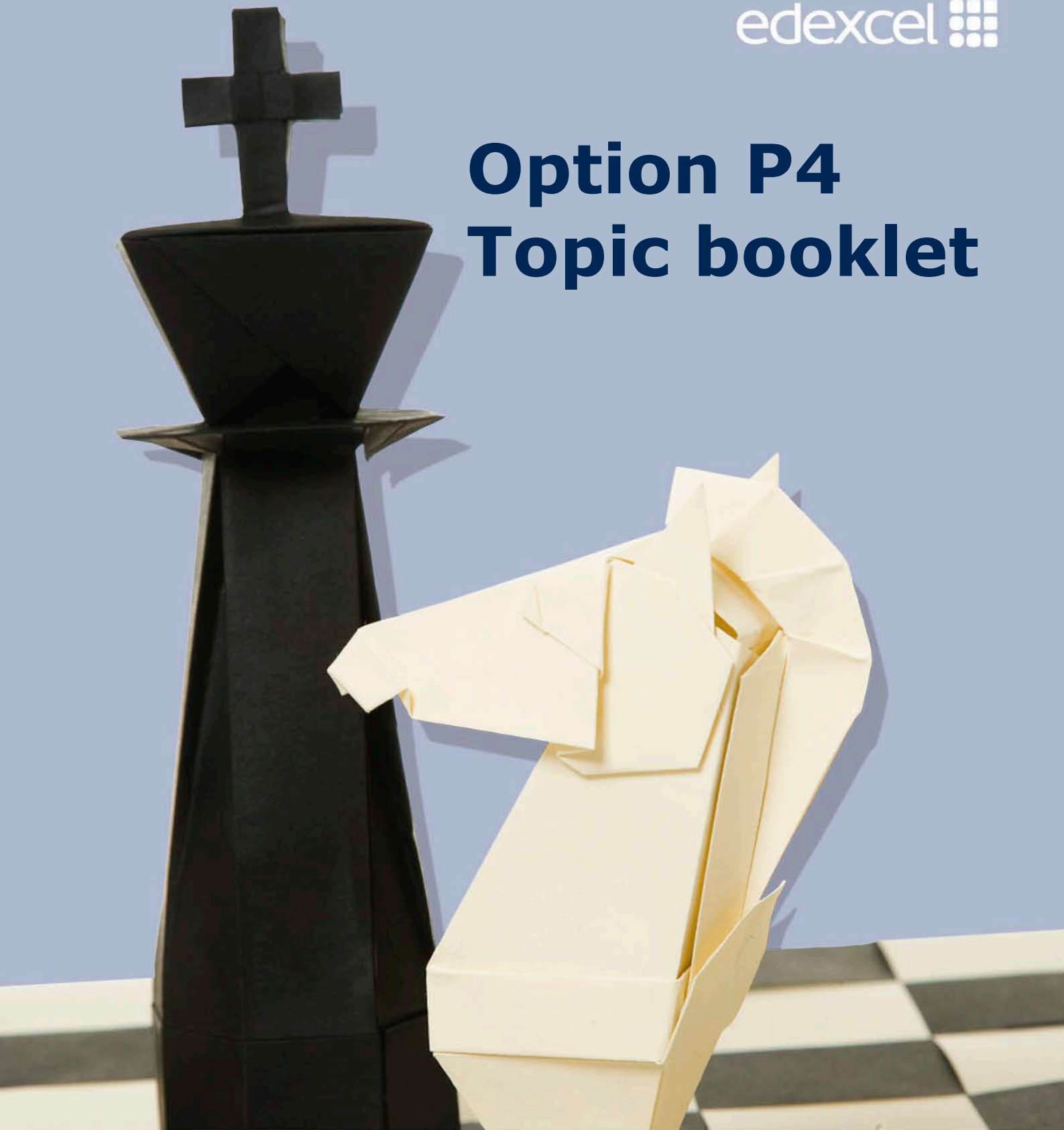


Option P4 Topic booklet



Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91

GCSE (9–1) History

Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9–1) in History (1HI0)

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Version 4 (March 2025)

This topic booklet has been updated to include changes made to new issues of the specification and sample assessment materials.

- Issue 5: language and assessment changes, for first assessment June 2025.
- Issue 6: content changes, for first teaching September 2024 and first assessment June 2026.

Information on new resources has also been added.

Summary guidance on the changes can be found [here](#).

The Period study

Period studies focus on a substantial and coherent medium time span of at least 50 years and require students to understand the 'unfolding narrative' of substantial developments and issues associated with the period.

A narrative framework forms the basis of the division of the content into three key topics. These key topics clearly run in chronological sequence, but should not be taken in isolation from each other. Students should be encouraged to see the period study as a whole and appreciate the narrative connections across the key topics.

1. Overview

In this option, students delve into a period of immense significance in the development of our modern world. It is a story of mistrust and nervous tension, spying and treachery, tragedy and new hope, destruction and rebuilding.

Here, too, is the story behind every spy thriller: why the USA and the Soviet Union became locked in a deadly battle of words; how close the world came to nuclear catastrophe; what was really going on in the minds of leaders from Stalin to Kennedy, Reagan to Gorbachev, how secret agents plotted and East German holidaymakers helped to tear down the Berlin Wall. It is a story of crisis talks and secret police, puppet leaders and power struggles – and of ordinary people changing the course of history. Its framework is the confrontation, military and ideological, between the two Superpowers that dominated the world during these years. It is a story of crises and conflict on a global scale (with a primary focus on events in Europe): from the Berlin Blockade and the Cuban Missile Crisis, to the tanks in the streets of Budapest and Prague, to spies, student riots and encounters in space.

The Cold War is over, but its legacy remains. This period study of twentieth-century international relations will help students to engage with new as well as familiar issues in the twenty-first century.

1.1 Assessment (from June 2025)

Students answer five questions for the period study.

- Questions 1(a) and (b): focus on consequence. These are compulsory; each question asks students to provide one consequence.
- Question 2: focuses on analytical narrative, in which students write an account that not only describes what happened, but also involves analysis to find connections and make sense of events and their impact to explain why events unfolded in the way that they did. This is likely to involve a mix of second-order concepts (i.e. causation, consequence, change).
- Question 3: students select two from a choice of the three events or developments given. Each focuses on the importance of an event/person/development in terms of what difference they made in relation to specified situations and unfolding developments (i.e. their consequence and significance).

Detailed information and guidance on assessment can be found in the separate [Getting Started Guide](#).

2. Content guidance

2.1 Summary of content

The origins of the Cold War, 1941–58

The story begins with a 'marriage of convenience' in late 1941, when the declaration of war against the United States by Nazi Germany brought together the three major powers with whom the Nazis were now at war – Britain, the USSR and the USA – in a so-called Grand Alliance to defeat Germany. The first Key topic charts the breakdown of this relationship, particularly in 1945, and students should understand the growing ideological differences seen in the Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam conferences. Students should appreciate the impact of the invention of nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union's establishment of a dominant position in Eastern Europe as a buffer against what they perceived as the repeated hostility of western powers. They should understand that both sides began to build spheres of influence through military and economic aid programmes before the first serious Cold War clash over Berlin in 1948 led to the development of two armed camps, NATO (1949) and ultimately the Warsaw Pact (1955), made all the more dangerous by a nuclear arms race that threatened to bring both to the brink of mutually assured destruction. The topic ends with the dramatic attempt by the people of Hungary to break away from their masters in the Soviet sphere in 1956, Khrushchev's response and the international reaction.

Cold War crises, 1958–70

Key topic 2 highlights crises in Cold War history in the years 1958–70. The first crisis is the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Students should be aware of the contrast between East and West Berlin and understand why the flow of refugees from East to West was problematic for Khrushchev – leading to his demand that the West withdraw, the summit meetings, and measures to stop refugees until the permanent wall was constructed. They should understand the impact of the wall for US–Soviet relations. Secondly, this key topic explores the Cuban Missile Crisis, the year after the construction of the Berlin Wall, when the two sides came closest to destroying each other in thirteen days of terror. Students should be aware of the background of the Cuban revolution and Castro's adoption of communism and relations with the Soviet Union, and should understand the significance of the failed Bay of Pigs operation. Students should cover the key events of the Cuban Missile Crisis and its consequences. Finally, this key topic looks at the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia to preserve the integrity of the Warsaw Pact. Students should appreciate Moscow's determination to hold the communist bloc together in the face of an attempt to build 'socialism with a human face' in the Prague Spring of 1968, and the international reaction to the measures taken by the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia.

The end of the Cold War, 1970–91

Key topic 3 chronicles the ebbs and flows of the clash of superpowers in the 1970s and 1980s. It starts with the false dawn of détente, marked by arms negotiations and attempts at cooperation and diplomacy, which gave way to the 'Second Cold War' triggered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979), President Reagan's attitude (talk of an 'evil empire') and 'Star Wars' nuclear technology. Students should appreciate that from 1985 a new-generation Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, changed the atmosphere by finding common ground with his US opposite number and offering the Eastern bloc a way out of domination by Moscow. They should understand the factors that combined to bring about the end of the Cold War, for example the personal chemistry between Reagan and Gorbachev that stunned the world, which together with the bravery of the people of Eastern

2. Content guidance

Europe, brought about a situation in which the Berlin Wall was allowed to fall in 1989, the Warsaw Pact was rendered irrelevant and the Soviet Union broke up (1991).

The unfolding narrative

Period studies focus on an analytical narrative of events and therefore students should appreciate the chronology of key events, while understanding that some developments overlap several events. For example, the crises in Berlin and Cuba examined in Key topic 2 are essentially developing in a simultaneous time frame.

Within that analytical narrative, students will need to see that events do not occur in isolation but unfold as a consequence of what has gone before. For example, the decisions by the Grand Alliances made at conferences at the end of the Second World War had consequences which lasted for the whole period under study.

When discussing the significance of an event, students should be able to explain its impact and the way it changed the situation or attitudes.

Key terms

It may be useful at the start of the course to provide students with a list of key terms and concepts that they will need to be familiar with for this option. Students should be familiar with the terminology found in the specification content.

The list of terms below is not intended to be a comprehensive checklist, rather simply a useful starting point for teachers to produce their own list of terms that their students may not fully understand or have difficulty spelling.

Students should be familiar with broad terms, such as economic, government, political and social.

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| • airlift | • Gorbachev |
| • alliance | • invasion |
| • ballistic missiles | • Khrushchev |
| • bloc | • Mutually Assured Destruction |
| • blockade | • NATO |
| • boycott | • Novikov |
| • Brezhnev | • nuclear |
| • brinkmanship | • one-party dictatorship |
| • capitalism | • pact |
| • Comecon | • refugee |
| • Cominform | • SALT |
| • communism | • satellite state |
| • conference | • SDI |
| • containment | • Soviet |
| • Czechoslovakia | • summit meeting |
| • democracy | • thaw |
| • détente | • ultimatum |
| • doctrine | • uprising |

2. Content guidance

2.2 Content exemplification

This section provides additional guidance on the specification content. It should be remembered that the official specification is the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance. Any examples provided here do not constitute additional specification content and other relevant material illustrating aspects of the specification can be used.

Key topic 1: The origins of the Cold War, 1941–58		Exemplification
1 Early tension between East and West	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Grand Alliance. The outcomes of the Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam conferences.• The ideological differences between the superpowers and the attitudes of Stalin, Truman and Churchill.• The impact on US-Soviet relations of the development of the atomic bomb, the Long and Novikov telegrams and the creation of Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The alliance between Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States during the Second World War. Tensions between them, for example US and British anti-communism. Stalin's suspicion that the West did not want the Soviet Union to emerge strongly from the war.• Tehran Conference, for example opening of a second front against Germany in Europe; spheres of influence in Europe; Soviet Union to join war against Japan. The Yalta Conference, for example arrangements for a defeated Germany; the question of Poland; Declaration on Liberated Europe and free elections across the continent; plans for a new United Nations Organisation; relations between the 'big three' leaders. The Potsdam Conference, for example strained relations over Soviet behaviour in Eastern Europe and US A-bomb; reparations payments by Germany; 'de-nazification'.• Differences between the superpowers, for example, desire on both sides to restrict size of other's sphere of influence, capitalism versus communism, free elections and multi-party democracy versus one-party dictatorship; private control of means of production versus state ownership.• US possession of the atomic bomb and worsening distrust. Long telegram and containment of communism; Novikov's condemnation of US economic power. Ideological lines defining the Cold War as a war of words. Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and growing tension.

2. Content guidance

Key topic 1: The origins of the Cold War, 1941–58		Exemplification
2 The development of the Cold War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact on US-Soviet relations of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, 1947. The significance of Cominform (1947), Comecon (1949) and the formation of NATO (1949). Berlin: its division into zones. The Berlin Crisis (blockade and airlift) of 1948-49 and its impact. The formation of the Federal Republic of Germany and German Democratic Republic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Truman Doctrine's division of world into communist and non-communist, and change in US foreign policy with commitment to containment of communism. Soviet rejection of Plan in the USSR and its bloc in response to Marshall Plan's post-war aid to Europe. Cominform as a network of alliances between the USSR and Eastern European states, enabling greater Soviet influence. Comecon as a response to Marshall Plan enabling more Soviet control of Eastern bloc economies. Formation of a Western military alliance in NATO, with Europe now divided in a state of permanent hostility between the two superpowers. Berlin's four zones and its location within the Soviet zone of occupation in eastern Germany. Key features of the Crisis, for example Soviet fears of West Berlin as a threat and a base for Western military, reactions to US introduction of Marshall Aid and a new currency into western zones of occupation in Berlin. Soviet cutting off of links between the western zones of occupation in Germany and West Berlin. US and British airlift of supplies into West Berlin. Re-opening of land routes to West Berlin. Impact, such as the formation of two Germanies; NATO and two militarised camps.
3 The Cold War intensifies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The significance of the arms race. The formation of the Warsaw Pact. Events in 1956 leading to the Hungarian Uprising, and Khrushchev's response. The international reaction to the Soviet invasion of Hungary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arms race rivalry, for example Soviet possession of A-bomb by 1949, development of H-bomb by both sides, launching of Sputnik by USSR and massive build-up of US missiles. Formation of Warsaw Pact in response to NATO, strengthening Soviet military control over Eastern Europe. Soviet control of Hungary, for example lack of freedom of expression, use of terror, food shortages; opposition in Hungary to continued military occupation, impact of De-Stalinisation. The Uprising, for example demonstrations to put pressure on government to reform, Nagy's reforms including multi-party democracy and leaving of Warsaw Pact. Khrushchev's response, for example sending in of USSR troops and tanks and crushing of uprising, demonstration of Soviet determination to maintain control over satellite states. International condemnation of invasion, but desire to avoid the implementation of a military response to Soviet action.

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Key topic 2: Cold War crises, 1958–70	Exemplification
<p>1 Increased tension between East and West</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The refugee problem in Berlin, Khrushchev's Berlin ultimatum (1958), and the summit meetings of 1959–61. • The impact of the Cuban Revolution on relations with the USA and the Soviet Union, including the refusal of the USA to recognise Castro's government, and the closer relations with the Soviet Union. The significance of the Bay of Pigs incident. • Opposition in Czechoslovakia to Soviet control: the Prague Spring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of prosperity in East Berlin. Use of West Berlin as an escape route for refugees. USSR desire to stem flow of refugees and Khrushchev's demand that the West withdraw. The impact of the various summit meetings held between 1959 and 1961 after Khrushchev's ultimatum. At Geneva (1959) discussions begin about Berlin, Khrushchev actually visits the USA for the Camp David summit (1959), the Paris summit (1960) undermined by the US spy incident and the disastrous meeting between Khrushchev and Kennedy in Vienna (1961) leading to the restating of the ultimatum. • Cuba as US sphere of influence prior to Castro's rebellion. Actions after revolution such as nationalisation of US-owned facilities, US reduction of sugar imports and Cuban deal with Soviet Union for sugar exports, and Castro's adoption of communism. US attitude towards Castro. Failure of Bay of Pigs operation in attempt to overthrow Castro regime, driving Castro closer to Soviet Union. • Dubcek's reforms as a reaction to Soviet influence, such as relaxation of censorship, legalisation of political opposition groups, the right to criticise the government, more power to regional governments and to the Czech parliament and the introduction of elements of capitalism in the economy; production of new literature supporting the changes.
<p>2 Cold War crises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The construction of the Berlin Wall, 1961. • The events of the Cuban Missile Crisis. • The Brezhnev Doctrine and the re-establishment of Soviet control in Czechoslovakia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erection of fence, followed by construction of more permanent structure around the whole of West Berlin, dividing the city and preventing refugees travelling from East to West Berlin. • Key events, for example photographs of Soviet missile bases in Cuba, Kennedy's decision to blockade Cuba, confrontation over Soviet ships, US plans for invasion of Cuba, messages from Khrushchev (agreement to remove the missiles if US promise not to invade Cuba; request that USA withdraws missiles from Turkey), public acceptance by Kennedy of first message, private agreement to second.

2. Content guidance

Key topic 2: Cold War crises, 1958–70		Exemplification
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brezhnev's fear of reforms in Czechoslovakia and reaction, for example invasion and re-establishment of control by Warsaw Pact troops and tanks, resistance from ordinary citizens but not Czech army, Brezhnev Doctrine statement that Eastern bloc countries would not be allowed to go their own way.
3 Reaction to crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of the construction of the Berlin Wall on US-Soviet relations. Kennedy's visit to West Berlin in 1963. The consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis, including the 'hotline'. Attempts at arms control: the Limited Test Ban Treaty (1963); the Outer Space Treaty (1967); and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968). International reaction to Soviet measures in Czechoslovakia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of refugee crisis. Condemnation of Berlin Wall by the West, though lack of direct intervention to prevent construction. Kennedy's visit to West Berlin and speech of solidarity ('Ich bin ein Berliner'). Cuban Missile Crisis as climax of US policy of brinksmanship. Realisation of need for improved communications including 'hot line' allowing immediate contact between the US and Soviet leaders and the Limited Test Ban Treaty ban on the testing of nuclear weapons above ground and under water. Outer Space Treaty ban on nuclear weapons in space. Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty aim of preventing spread of nuclear secrets beyond the existing 'nuclear club'. Some international opposition to the USSR's actions in Czechoslovakia. USA protest but lack of action. Mixed response from Eastern European countries.

2. Content guidance

Key topic 3: The end of the Cold War, 1970–91	Exemplification
1 Attempts to reduce superpower tensions in the 1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Détente and attempts to reduce tensions in the 1970s. • The significance of SALT 1, the Helsinki Accords, and SALT 2.
2 The end of détente and the 'Second Cold War'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), May 1972, limiting anti-ballistic missile sites, number of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (IBM) and Submarine-launched Ballistic Missiles. Helsinki agreements on security, cooperation and human rights. SALT 2 discussions limit missile launchers and strategic bombers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by Carter, withdrawal from SALT 2; Carter Doctrine committing the USA to take all necessary steps to safeguard oil supplies in the Persian Gulf. Boycott of 1980 Moscow Olympics by USA and many other Western powers. Boycott of 1984 Los Angeles Olympics by the USSR and Eastern bloc countries. • The 'Second Cold War', for example Reagan's description of Soviet Union as an 'evil empire', US Congress increase in military spending and development of new nuclear weapons. Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI): so-called 'Star Wars' programme to shoot down incoming missiles using laser technology. • Gorbachev's new thinking, for example <i>glasnost</i> (openness) and <i>perestroika</i> (restructuring), significance of Soviet economic weakness for his approach to international relations. Gorbachev and Reagan's attitudes, for example as shown in the outcome of summits – abolition of all intermediate-range ballistic missiles – first agreement on arms reduction as opposed to arms control.

2. Content guidance

Key topic 3: The end of the Cold War, 1970–91		Exemplification
3 The collapse of Soviet control of Eastern Europe, 1985–91	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The impact of Gorbachev's 'new thinking' on Eastern Europe: the loosening Soviet grip on Eastern Europe.• The significance of the fall of the Berlin Wall.• The collapse of the Soviet Union and its significance in bringing about the end of the Warsaw Pact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gorbachev's indication that communist regimes in Eastern Europe would no longer be propped up by Soviet forces and could go their own way (the 'Sinatra doctrine'). Collapse of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, for example adoption in Hungary of multi-party system, non-communist government returned in Polish elections, opening of Hungary's borders to East Germans and the West, popular anti-communist revolts, such as the most violent in Romania and 'Velvet Revolution' in Czechoslovakia.• Mass demonstrations in East Berlin and agreement to open Berlin Wall. Impact of the fall of the Wall on Soviet and US Cold War policy and attitudes, symbolised for example by the rapid reunification of Germany.• Significance of the collapse of Soviet bloc and the beginning of the fragmentation of USSR, for example meeting of Gorbachev and Bush at Malta Summit to declare end to Cold War. Dissolution of Warsaw Pact in July 1991. Dissolution of Soviet Union.

3. Student timeline

The timeline below could be given to students, and could be further edited and added to by them. Inclusion of dates and events in this timeline should not be taken as an indication that these are prescribed: the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

1941	June: Nazi Germany invades the Soviet Union Dec: Nazi Germany declares war on the USA – the origin of the Grand Alliance (US, USSR, Britain)
1943	Tehran Conference
1945	Feb: Yalta Conference July-Aug: Potsdam Conference, US A-bombs used in Japan Germany divided into four zones of occupation
1946	Feb: Long telegram March: Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech Sept: Novikov telegram It became clear over the year that a Soviet-dominated Eastern bloc had emerged
1947	March: Truman Doctrine announced June: Marshall Plan announced Sept: Cominform set up
1948	Feb: Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia April: 'Trizonia' in Germany agreed and Berlin Blockade begins
1949	Jan: Comecon set up April: NATO set up May: Berlin Blockade ends and Federal Republic of (West) Germany founded Aug: Soviet Union tests A-bomb Oct: (East) German Democratic Republic founded
1952–53	H-bombs developed by USSR and USA
1955	May: West Germany joins NATO Warsaw Pact set up
1956	Feb: Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' Oct-Nov: Hungarian Uprising
1958	Nov: Khrushchev's ultimatum to the West over Berlin
1959	Jan: Castro takes over Cuba Sept: Khrushchev visits Washington – Camp David summit
1960	May: U2 spy plane shot down and Khrushchev walks out of Paris Summit
1961	April: Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba June: Vienna Summit Aug: Berlin Wall constructed
1962	Oct: Cuban Missile Crisis (The 'Thirteen Days')

3. Student timeline

1963	June: Kennedy visits West Berlin July: Limited Test Ban Treaty Aug: hot line established between Washington and Moscow
1967	Oct: Outer Space Treaty ratified
1968	April: Prague Spring announced by Dubcek July: Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty signed Aug: Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia Nov: Brezhnev Doctrine
1969	SALT talks begin – Détente
1971	July: SALT I signed
1975	July – Apollo-Soyuz space project – ‘handshake in space’ Aug: Helsinki Accords signed
1979	June: SALT II signed (not ratified by US Congress) Dec: Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
1980	Jan: Carter Doctrine; US boycott of Moscow Olympics announced
1983	March: Reagan’s ‘Evil Empire’ speech; Reagan proposes Strategic Defence Initiative (‘Star Wars’)
1984	May: Soviet boycott of Los Angeles Olympics announced
1985	March: Gorbachev becomes Soviet leader Nov: Geneva (“Fireside”) Summit
1986	Oct: Reykjavik Summit
1987	June: ‘Tear down this Wall’ speech by Reagan Dec: Washington Summit
1988	Dec: Gorbachev announces the end of the Brezhnev Doctrine
1989	June: Solidarity wins elections in Poland Aug: Hungary opens its borders to East Germans Oct: Soviets announce Eastern bloc states can go their own way (‘Sinatra doctrine’) Nov: Berlin Wall falls Dec: communist governments fall in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria; Malta Summit
1990	Oct: Germany reunified
1991	July: Warsaw Pact dissolved; START Treaty ratified by US and USSR Aug: formal end of Cold War announced; Gorbachev resigns as General Secretary Dec: Soviet Union breaks up

4. Resources

The sections below list a range of resources that could be used by students and teachers for this topic.

The first section lists information on free support materials available on the Edexcel website. On the [GCSE History \(9–1\) from 2016](#) page:

- select the [Teaching support](#) tab, where resources are separated out by Plan, Teach, and Track and Assess;
- or select the [Course materials](#) tab, and then select the appropriate tab for [Specification and sample assessments](#), [Exam materials](#), or [Teaching and learning materials](#).

The table below provides a selection of the free support materials available on the Edexcel website. Details and links for all the free support available can be found in [this document](#). It is updated regularly, so worth bookmarking.

The second section lists publishers who have been endorsed for GCSE (9–1) History. Endorsement means that a resource has been through our quality assurance process to confirm that it meets the teaching and learning requirements a specification is aimed at. Endorsement of a resource doesn't mean it's the only suitable material available, or that it is required to achieve the qualification.

The remaining sections list both endorsed resources and those that have not been endorsed. While these resources – and others – may be used to support teaching and learning, the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

There has been a rapid growth in podcasts in recent years, and we have added below links to a few well-known ones. Some may not be suitable for younger listeners, so please check carefully before sharing with students. Similarly, there are plenty of useful videos for History students on online sharing platforms, and any links below have been checked, but please exercise care before sharing social media links with students.

4.1 Free support materials

Resource	Details
Specification and sample assessment materials	The starting point for information on content and assessment in GCSE (9–1) History.
Past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports	An Edexcel Online login is required to access files with a silver padlock – check with your exams officer if you can't open them.
Getting Started Guide	An overview of the specification, to help you get to grips with the content and assessment requirements of the specification. Updated for Issues 5 and 6.
Summary guidance on changes for 2025 and 2026	Summary guidance with links on the changes being made for Issue 5 (first assessment 2025) and Issue 6 (2026).
Content changes for 2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic guidance • FAQs 	Guidance for each option on the changes being made to the content for Issue 6 of the specification (first assessment June 2026), and FAQs.

Resource	Details
Assessment changes for 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide FAQs 	Guidance on the changes being made to the assessment model for Issue 5 of the specification (first assessment June 2025), and FAQs.
Specification language changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track changes on Rationale FAQs 	Guidance on the language changes made for Issue 4 of the specification (first teaching September 2023, first assessment June 2025).
Paper 2 Guide	Teaching approaches and ideas for the period study and British depth study, with case studies from practising teachers.
Schemes of work	Sample outline schemes of work for each topic in the specification, in editable Word files. A digital interactive scheme of work is also available for both KS3 and GCSE.
Mapping documents	Mapping documents to help support teachers in moving to Edexcel GCSE History.
Exemplar student answers	Exemplar student answers, including from the summer 2018, 2019 and 2022 series, with examiner commentaries and mark schemes.
Superpower relations and the Cold War knowledge booster	A set of quizzes to support students with AO1 knowledge and understanding.
Student walkthroughs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper 2P playlist 	A series of pre-recorded student walkthroughs, created in collaboration with Harris Federation. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
Revision tips	Some useful revision tips for students. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
Command words	A series of student-friendly files exploring each command word in turn, plus a summary document paper-by-paper. <i>Updated for 2025.</i>

4.2 Endorsed resources*

[Pearson](#) – Designed to help develop confident, articulate and successful historians.

[Hodder Education](#) – The Hodder GCSE History for Edexcel students' book helps students achieve their full potential while ensuring pace, enjoyment and motivation.

[Oxford University Press](#) – Oxford's Edexcel GCSE History student books help to develop young historians who have the confidence to succeed, with the most up-to-date exam practice and a tried-and-trusted, accessible approach.

[Zigzag Education](#) – Photocopiable resources for learning, revision and exam practice.

[Anglia Tours](#) – A range of fully-guided History tours which enhance both teaching and learning for the related Pearson qualification.

[NST Tours](#) – Guided History tours to support teachers and students with GCSE History.

* You don't have to purchase any resources, including those from Pearson, to deliver our qualifications.

4.3 Resources for students

Resource	Details
<i>Edexcel GCSE History (9–1) Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91</i> (Pearson, 2016)	Student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>Edexcel GCSE History (9–1) Foundation Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91</i> (Pearson, 2018)	Foundation version of student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Superpower relations and the Cold War Revision Guide and Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2017)	A combined revision guide and workbook written for this option in the specification.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Superpower relations and the Cold War Revision Cards</i> (Pearson, 2019)	Pocket-sized revision cards covering the key facts.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Superpower relations and the Cold War Practice Papers Plus</i> (Pearson, 2020)	A skills-focused companion to the revision guide.
<i>Target Grade 5 Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91 Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2018)	Workbook focused on key skills and barriers for students targeting grade 5.
<i>Target Grade 9 Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91 Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2018)	Workbook focused on key skills and barriers for students targeting grade 9.
<i>Hodder GCSE History for Edexcel: Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91</i> (Hodder, 2016)	New resources for this option in the GCSE specification.
<i>Hodder GCSE (9–1) History for Pearson Edexcel Foundation Edition: Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91</i> (Hodder, 2019)	Foundation version of student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>My Revision Notes: Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91</i> (Hodder, 2017)	A revision guide featuring key content coverage, exam-style questions, revision tasks, activities and practical tips.
<i>Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History Workbook: Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91</i> (Hodder, 2018)	Workbook designed for students to practise and perfect the knowledge and skills needed for the course.
<i>Ben Walsh History: Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1): Superpower relations and the Cold War, The American West and Weimar and Nazi Germany</i> (Hodder, 2021)	Student book written for three of the options in the specification.
<i>Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91</i> (Oxford University Press, 2022)	Student book and Kerboodle digital resources written for this Edexcel GCSE option.

Resource	Details
PG Online, <i>Clear Revise: Edexcel GCSE History 1HI0 Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91</i> (PG Online, 2023)	Illustrated revision guide matched to the specification with exam-style practice questions and practical tips.
Robin Bunce and Laura Gallagher, <i>Edexcel GCSE History A the Making of the Modern World: Unit 1 International Relations: the Era of the Cold War 1943–91</i> (Pearson, 2013)	Written for the Edexcel 2013 History A specification.
Steve Waugh and John Wright, <i>GCSE Modern World History for Edexcel: The era of the Cold War 1943–1991</i> (Hodder, 2013)	Written for the Edexcel 2013 History A specification.
Ben Walsh and Steve Waugh, <i>Edexcel GCSE Modern World History Revision Guide</i> (Hodder, 2014)	Revision guide written for the 2013 specification. Chapters 4 to 6 are relevant.
BBC Bitesize: The Cold War www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/z6t6fg8/resources/1	Website written for students. Excellent overview.
www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ColdWar.htm	Website written for students. Excellent content coverage.
https://schoolhistory.co.uk/edexcel-gcse/superpower-relations-and-the-cold-war-1941-91/	Website written for students. Great site for suggested activities for revision as well as general content. Subscription required.
www.mrallsophistory.com/revision/	Podcasts for students. Great revision tools.
www.andallthat.co.uk/modern-world-history-b/free-revision-podcasts-for-gcse	Podcasts for students. Great revision tools.
www.slideshare.net/Amyyyydavidson/the-cold-war-flash-cards	Web pages written for students. Flashcard summaries.
https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/cold-war-revision-guide-11754131	Website written for students. Useful free resource to download from TES Connect, including an excellent timeline.
www.johndclare.net/cold_warA1.htm and other Cold War topics	For students and teachers. Useful on its own, but also good links to other useful sites.
https://gcsehistory.wordpress.com/revision-notes/	Website written for students. Also useful for teachers. Some excellent sets of notes.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtDAQB1sA9k	Cuban Missile Crisis in 5 minutes. Short animation on the Cuban Missile Crisis.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVqziNV7dGY	Cold War in 9 minutes. Nine-minute animation overview of the Cold War.

4.4 Resources for teachers

Resource	Details
David Williamson, <i>Access to History: The Cold War 1941–1995, Fourth Edition</i> (Hodder, 2019)	A Level textbook – ideal starting point for teaching the Cold War. More able GCSE students can access this.
Mike Sewell, <i>The Cold War</i> (Cambridge Perspectives in History, 2002)	A Level textbook – ideal starting point for teaching the Cold War. More able GCSE students can access this.
Steve Phillips, <i>Heinemann Advanced History: Cold War in Europe and Asia</i> (Heinemann, 2001)	A Level textbook – ideal starting point for teaching the Cold War. More able GCSE students can access this.
John Lewis Gaddis, <i>The Cold War</i> (Penguin, 2007)	For the specialist. A very good general academic introduction to the history of the Cold War. Gaddis is one of the most accomplished historians of the Cold War – see also other publications by him.
Odd Arne Westad, <i>The Cold War: A World History</i> (Penguin, 2018)	For the specialist, offering an engaging and academic introduction to the Cold War, wide-ranging in scope and placing the conflict in the broad sweep of twentieth-century global history.
Martin Walker, <i>The Cold War and the Making of the Modern World</i> (Vintage, 1994)	For the specialist. Very readable narrative account. Walker was the Guardian's foreign correspondent and worked in both Moscow and Washington, which gives the book a contextual authority.
John Lamberton Harper, <i>The Cold War</i> (Oxford Histories, 2011)	A concise, briskly-written assessment of the Cold War.
Robert J. McMahon, <i>The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction</i> (OUP, 2003)	Oxford University Press, A Very Short Introduction Series An interesting and well-written series covering a wide variety of topics that serve as an excellent overview.
The National Archives www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/coldwar https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/cold-war-on-file/	The National Archives' excellent Cold War site. The second link is to a large collection of Cold War sources listed by themes.
https://schoolhistory.co.uk/edexcel-gcse/superpower-relations-and-the-cold-war-1941-91/	Another great hub for further links and activities.
https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/hub/secondary	A comprehensive bank of resources for teachers, some free some pay for.
Teachit History website https://www.teachithistory.co.uk/modern-world-studies/cold-war-in-europe/tags/3754	Teachit History website. A collection of resources for Cold War in Europe.

Resource	Details
www.history.org.uk/resources/secondary_resource_5646_243.html	Excellent Historical Association podcasts on the Cold War.
www.activehistory.co.uk/Miscellaneous/menu/GCSE/Cold_War.htm	Subscription website with useful teaching activities.
www.britishpathe.com/video/	Useful clips available
<i>Cold War</i> (CNN/BBC, produced by Jeremy Isaacs and Taylor Downing)	Great documentary series, available on DVD. Accessible also to more able GCSE students.
Jeremy Isaacs, <i>Cold War: For 45 Years the World Held Its Breath</i> (Bantam, 1998)	The highly accessible companion volume for the DVD series mentioned above. Still easy to find.
Podcast series Historical Association , free to members The Rest Is History Dan Snow's History Hit History Extra You're Dead to Me	There are lots of History podcast series available these days through various platforms. We have listed here a few well-known ones, and you can search for relevant episodes. There are also revision podcasts available. Please check they are suitable before sharing with students.

Educational Recording Agency

Transform History Teaching with Multimedia Resources from the Educational Recording Agency (ERA)

[The ERA Licence](#) provides seamless access to television and radio recordings, offering a single point of clearance for the rights needed to create and use authentic media resources in your classroom. With [ERA's free video streaming platform](#), licensed institutions can explore a rich library of curriculum-mapped TV and radio clips tailored to GCSE, AS, and A-level teaching.

Engage your learners with curated clips, full-length documentaries, and programmes that bring historical contexts to life. The platform also includes exclusive access to the **BBC Shakespeare** and **Literary Archives**, offering unique cross-curricular opportunities to enrich your lessons with impactful media—perfect for both homework and classroom activities.

To access this free resource [registration is required](#) - but is quick and simple. State schools in England are licensed under a central agreement with the DfE and the vast majority of independent schools also hold a current ERA Licence.

Some of the recordings available for Superpower relations and the Cold War include:

The origins of the Cold War, 1941–58

[Comrades: 1917–1945 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)

[Iron Curtain: 1945–1947 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)

[Marshall Plan: 1947–1952 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)

[Berlin: 1948–1949 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)

[Korea: 1949–1953 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)

[Reds: 1948–1953 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)

[After Stalin: 1953–1956 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)
[Red Dawn | Strange Days: Cold War Britain, BBC Two](#)
[Berlin, 1945–48: The Cold War Part 1 | History File, BBC Two](#)

Cold War crises, 1958–70

[The Wall, 1958–1963 | The Cold War, BBC Two](#)
[Cuba, 1959–1962 | The Cold War, BBC Two](#)
[MAD, 1960–1972 | The Cold War, BBC Two](#)
[Red Spring, 1960s | The Cold War, BBC Two](#)
[Cold War Spies: 1960 U-2 incident | Days That Shook the World, BBC Two](#)
[U2 and the Arms Race, 1956–60: The Cold War Part 1 | History File, BBC Two](#)
[Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962 | The Cold War Part 2 | History File, BBC Two](#)

The end of the Cold War, 1970–91

[Freeze, 1977–1981 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)
[Star Wars, 1981–1988 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)
[The Wall Comes Down, 1989 | Cold War, BBC Two](#)
[Two Tribes | Strange Days: Cold War Britain, BBC Two](#)
[The Lives of Others, BBC Four](#)
[Evil Empire, 1980s: The Cold War Part 2 | History File, BBC Two](#)