A **cold war** is a state of conflict between nations that does not involve direct military action but is pursued primarily through economic and political actions, [propaganda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda), acts of [espionage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Espionage) or [proxy wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proxy_war) waged by surrogates. The surrogates are typically states that are "[satellites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satellite_state)" of the conflicting nations, i.e., nations allied to them or under their political influence. Opponents in a cold war will often provide economic or military aid, such as weapons, tactical support or military advisors, to lesser nations involved in conflicts with the opposing country.

There is disagreement among historians regarding the starting point of the Cold War. While most historians trace its origins to the period immediately following World War II, others argue that it began towards the end of [World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) I.

1917 to 1939

World War II

Warsaw Pact Nations

Nato Nations