The Evolving Vision of the World Expo: Comparing Osaka 1970, Osaka 2025, and Riyadh 2030
万博が描く未来像

"Expos are **global gatherings of nations** dedicated to **finding solutions to pressing challenges** of our time by offering a journey inside a universal theme through **engaging and immersive activities**."

1970 Osaka Expo

Expo 1970: "**Harmony**" vs. "**Confrontation**"

U.S.: Shifted focus away from the Vietnam War to prove capitalism's superiority.

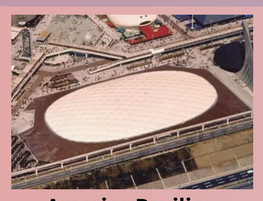
U.S.S.R.: Promoted "Socialist Modernity" as a superior alternative to the West.

Theme of Expo 1970: "Progress and Harmony for Mankind"

The U.S. used **science** to speak peace (white dome, Apollo 11 moon rock).

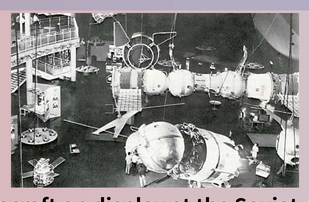
The U.S.S.R. used **progress** to show strength (red flag-shaped pavilion, Vostok & Soyuz spacecraft).

Together, they turned rivalry into a vision of **human advancement**.

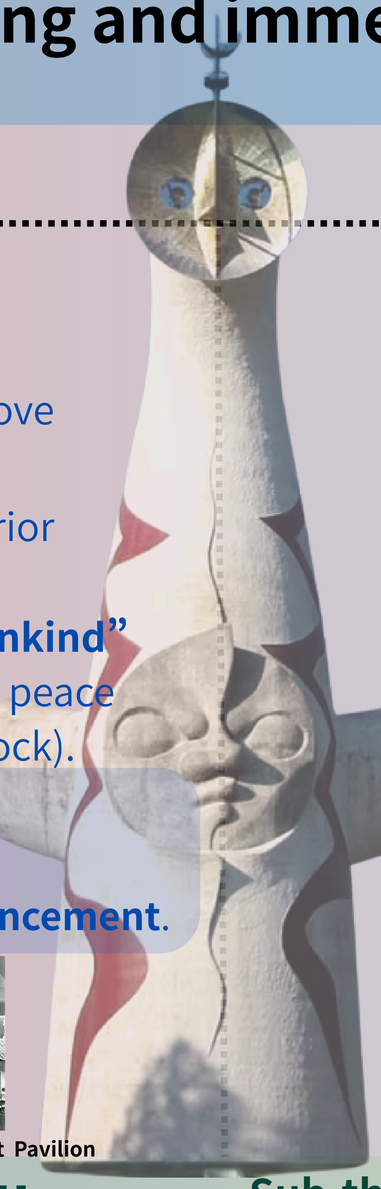


America Pavilion

Soviet Pavilion



Spacecraft on display at the Soviet Pavilion



Osaka Expo 2025

Theme: "Designing Future Society for Our Lives"

Sub Theme: "Saving Lives" "Empowering Lives" "Connecting Lives"

Concept: "People's Living Lab"

- Importance of life especially since we are in a world that has faced **different global issues**
- Aims to help the audience imagine what kind of lifestyle could be created in the **near future**
- Connection with achieving the goals — how human innovations can directly contribute to reaching the goals by 2030

Saudi Arabian Pavilion

America Pavilion

2030 EXPO in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Location : Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia

Dates : October 1, 2030 – March 31, 2031

Theme : "Foresight for Tomorrow"

Sub-themes: Transformational Technology

Sustainable Solutions

Prosperous People

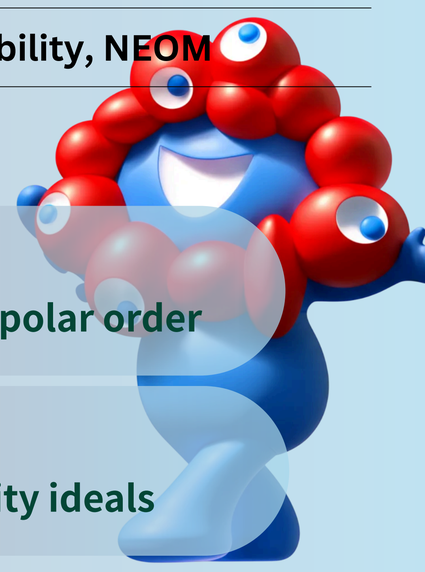
Design by: LAVA (German architectural firm)

Inspired by nature—restoring dry riverbeds (wadis)

Uses fractal geometry for natural airflow and light

Dimension	1970 Osaka	2025 Osaka	2030 Riyadh
Theme	Progress and Harmony for Mankind	Designing Future Society for Our Lives	Foresight for Tomorrow
Participants	77 nations + 4 orgs	158 nations + 7 orgs	195+ nations + 29 orgs
Political Context	Cold War (Détente)	Ukraine War	West vs Middle East/China
Focus	Space race, tech competition	SDGs, Healthcare	Sustainability, NEOM

What Expo is has been changing over the years!!



Thematic Evolution
Competition → Human-centered → Global cooperation

Geopolitical Shift
Bipolar rivalry → Western dominance → Multipolar order

Functional Change
National showcase → Problem-solving platform

Neutrality Challenge
Political influence persists despite neutrality ideals

References
Expo 2030 Riyadh. (n.d.). Innovation, Culture & Global Collaboration. Retrieved October 26, 2025, from https://www.expo2030riyadh.sa/en/
Bansal, N. (2023). Critical analysis of the detente period in the cold war. International and Public Affairs, *7*(1), 9–13. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ipa.20230701.12
Muir-Harmony, T. (2019). The limits of US science diplomacy in the Space Age: Project Apollo at the 1970 Osaka World Exposition. Pacific Historical Review, 88(4), 590-618.
Swift, A. (2016). The Soviet Union at the 20th-Century world's fairs. World History Connected, 13(3). Retrieved from https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/13.3/forum_01_swift.html
Tsipursky, G. (2017). Domestic Cultural Diplomacy and Soviet state-sponsored popular culture in the Cold War, 1953–1962. Diplomatic History, 41(5), 985–1009. https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhx043
Japan, A. N. (2023, November 19). Saudi Arabia Unveils Expo 2025 Osaka Pavilion Design and logo. Arab News PK. https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2409931/saudi-arabia?utm_source=chatgpt.com#
Saudi Arabia Pavilion. Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan Official Website. (2025, February 20). https://www.expo2025.or.jp/en/official-participant/saudi-arabia/
Saudi Arabia to showcase Kingdom's transformation at Osaka Expo 2025. Japan Wire by KYODO NEWS. (n.d.). https://english.kyodonews.net/articles/-/52530device=smartphone&phrase=kyodo&words=
Saudi pavilion at Expo 2025 osaka surpasses 2 million visitors | saudi gazette. (n.d.). https://www.saudigazette.com.sa/article/654519/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saudi-Pavilion-at-Expo-2025-Osaka-surpasses-2-million-visitors