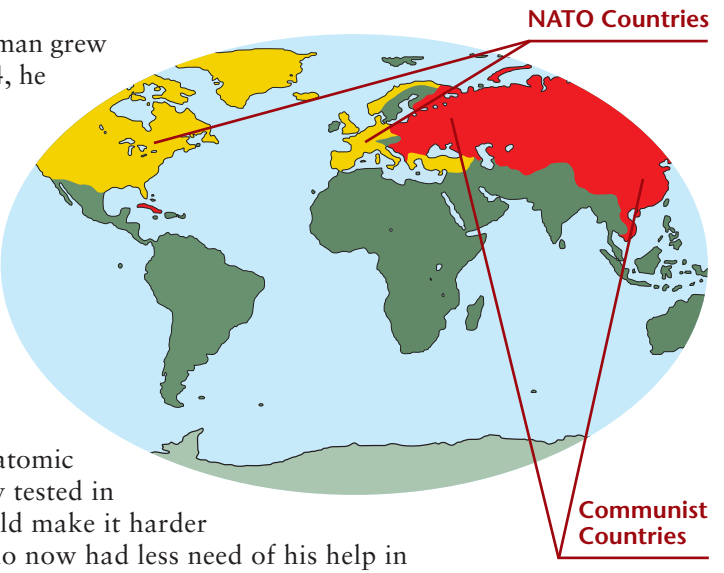
CHAPTER 34

East Versus West: Cold War and Its Global Impact, 1945–Present

Atomic Explosion
The mushroom cloud of a nuclear blast, such as this U.S. atomic bomb test in 1946, was a terrifying symbol of the Cold War, a 45-year struggle between capitalist West and communist East affecting the entire world.

July 24, 1945, was not a good day for Joseph Stalin.

Eight days earlier, arriving in Germany for a conference at Potsdam with British Prime Minister Churchill and U.S. President Truman, the Soviet leader had been in a dominant position. His country, after all, was the main contributor to the Allies' victory over Germany: Soviet troops had fought the most crucial battles, and Soviet peoples had borne the brunt of the bloodshed. Stalin's Red Army, occupying Eastern Europe and eastern Germany, was the world's mightiest military force. Even Truman, anxious to get Soviet help in the ongoing war against Japan, was initially very respectful toward the Soviet dictator.



As the conference proceeded, however, Truman grew increasingly assertive. At the meeting on July 24, he joined Churchill in sternly rebuking Stalin for Soviet repression in occupied Eastern Europe. Then, as the session ended, Truman quietly informed the Soviet leader that America had a new weapon of "unusual destructive force." Stalin's response, a vague assertion that it should be "put to good use against Japan," was so indifferent that Churchill wondered if the Soviet leader understood the weapon's significance.

Stalin indeed understood. His spies had kept him informed of U.S. efforts to build an atomic bomb, which on July 16 had been successfully tested in New Mexico. He knew this new weapon would make it harder to get concessions from his Western allies, who now had less need of his help in defeating Japan. He knew the American bomb would offset his Red Army's might in any postwar contest for global preeminence. And he knew he was no longer the world's most powerful man—henceforth that distinction belonged to Truman, an untested newcomer on the world stage. That night, in his private quarters, Stalin ordered his lieutenants to accelerate Soviet efforts to develop atomic weapons. Later, back in Russia, he gathered his top scientists, slammed his fist on a table, and demanded: "Comrades, build me a bomb. The Americans have destroyed the balance of power."

The ensuing nuclear arms race, the Red Army's continuing occupation of Eastern Europe, and American determination to stop the spread of Soviet communism fueled an intense 45-year East-West struggle that affected the whole world. The West, known to foes as the "imperialist camp" and friends as the "free world," included the capitalist democracies of Western Europe and North America, led by the United States. The East, also called the "communist bloc," included the communist countries of Eastern Europe and Asia, led by the USSR. Americans and Soviets confronted each other globally—through threats, propaganda, espionage, the arms race, and support for opposing sides in regional conflicts—but they did not engage in hot combat (armed warfare) directly against one another. The struggle between these two "superpowers" thus was called the Cold War.

Origins of the Cold War

The Cold War was rooted in ideological conflict between communism and capitalism and in distrust between East and West stemming from their struggle against Nazi Germany. In central and Eastern Europe, at the end of World War II, the Soviet Union pursued objectives that proved incompatible with those of its wartime Western allies.

Capitalism and communism have conflicting goals and ideals

Communism and capitalism had always been hostile. Communists openly aimed to destroy world capitalism, with its emphasis on individualism and competition, and replace it with a global community based on collectivism and cooperation. Stalin had postponed, but by no means abandoned, this goal, while building Soviet socialism and resisting the Nazis. Capitalists, for their part, were determined to stop the spread of communism, which they saw as a mortal threat to Western freedom and prosperity.

East-West tensions evolve during struggle against Nazis

Even their joint struggle against Nazism had been fraught with distrust. Capitalists resented the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939, which had enabled Germany, with Soviet agreement, to overrun Poland and much of Western Europe. Communists were upset that the Western allies delayed their main anti-German offensive until June 1944, three years after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, by which time the Soviets had driven out the Germans at an appalling price. Since the war cost the USSR 25–30 million lives, while Britain and America together suffered fewer than a million fatalities, the Soviets felt they had endured more than their share of suffering. And since the Red Army had freed Eastern Europe from Nazi control, the Soviets felt they had earned the right to decide that region's future.

Soviet and Western postwar goals prove incompatible

Furthermore, by 1945, the whole western part of the USSR was devastated. Faced with massive rebuilding projects, and anxious to prevent future invasion, Stalin had several key goals: Germany must be militarily incapacitated so it could not strike again; it must make huge reparations payments to rebuild the USSR; and the Soviets must be shielded against future attack by a buffer zone of friendly countries in Eastern Europe. While noting the Soviet need for security and reconstruction, however, the Western powers opposed massive reparations, and wanted free elections in Germany and Eastern Europe—which might well result in leaders unfriendly to the Soviet Union. Western goals were thus incompatible with Stalin's.

Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill at Yalta.

The Yalta and Potsdam Conferences

In February 1945, while Allied armies were still fighting Germans, Stalin met with U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill at the southern Soviet city of Yalta to plan the postwar peace. By then the Red Army, in driving out the Germans, had occupied much of Eastern Europe, including most of Poland. Furthermore, although in Europe the end of the war was in sight, in Asia it was not, so Roosevelt and Churchill were willing to bargain for Soviet help against Japan.

Western Allies make concessions to Soviets at Yalta

Consequently, at Yalta, Stalin got much of what he wanted. His allies agreed to let Poland be ruled by a Soviet-sponsored government, which the Soviets had already installed, and to let the USSR keep the eastern part of prewar Poland, annexed in 1939. In return, Poland was to be compensated with territory from Germany, moving Polish borders westward (Map 34.1). Stalin promised to let Poles elect their own leaders (a commitment he

FOUNDATION MAP 34.1 European Boundary Changes and Occupation Zones, 1945–1955

The end of World War II brought major territorial changes to Europe. Observe that the USSR kept lands it had earlier claimed in Eastern Europe, including the entire eastern part of prewar Poland, and that Poland was compensated with lands from prewar Germany, while the rest of Germany and Austria were divided into occupation zones. Note further that by 1949 the British, American, and French zones in Germany had merged to form capitalist West Germany; the Soviet zone had become communist East Germany; and Soviet-sponsored communist regimes ruled Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. Why did Germany's occupation and division continue throughout the Cold War, even though Austria's ended in 1955?

would not keep) and in a secret agreement pledged to declare war on Japan three months after the war in Europe ended (a commitment he would honor precisely). He also cleared the way for the **United Nations** (U.N.), an international peacekeeping body created to replace the defunct League of Nations, by dropping his earlier demand that, since the USSR consisted of 16 (later 15) Soviet republics, it should have 16 seats in the U.N. General Assembly

Allies divide Germany into occupation zones

The allies agreed to divide Germany temporarily into occupation zones: a Soviet sector in the East, and British, American, and French zones in the West. But Roosevelt and Churchill, judging that reparations imposed on Germany after World War I had aided Hitler's rise, resisted Stalin's demand for reparations, so action on that issue was postponed. Otherwise, the Soviet leader had reason to be pleased with the Yalta accords.

Much had changed, however, by the next Allied meeting, held in Germany at Potsdam in summer 1945. Roosevelt had died in April, and was replaced by Harry Truman, a blunt, combative man who disliked communists as much as Nazis and had once said he hoped that war between them would "kill as many as possible." Germany had surrendered in May, removing the main reason for Allied cooperation, which was further strained by Soviet repression in occupied Eastern Europe. And, in the midst of the Potsdam talks, Churchill was replaced as prime minister by Clement Attlee, a mild-mannered socialist whose Labour Party won a stunning electoral upset by pledging to improve British workers' lives and decrease Britain's global commitments.

Postwar America emerges as leader of the Western world

Attlee's pledge to reduce Britain's international role meant that the United States would henceforth be the Western world's main leader. Emerging from the war with immense wealth and power, Americans had boundless faith in capitalist democracy and contempt for Soviet socialism. And, as details arrived in Potsdam about the atomic bomb, successfully tested in New Mexico as the conference began, Truman and his aides saw little need for further concessions to the communists.

Americans, strengthened by A-bomb, resist Soviets at Potsdam

So the Americans stood up to Stalin at Potsdam. They agreed to let him take reparations from Germany, but only from the less-developed Soviet-occupied zone, whose factories would be disassembled and sent east by rail. Truman demanded free elections in Eastern Europe, which Stalin resisted, knowing that these would likely install anti-Soviet regimes. And, as noted at the start of this chapter, the president told the Soviet leader about the awesome new U.S. atomic weapons—then hastened to use them against Japan soon after the conference concluded.

Truman later said that he used the atomic bombs to end the war without an invasion of Japan, which would have cost thousands of American lives. Historians have since asserted, however, that he also had other goals: to demonstrate American strength to the Soviets and to end the war before the Soviets could occupy part of Japan, much as they had occupied eastern Germany and most of Eastern Europe.

Divided Europe: The "Iron Curtain"

Soviet authority in Eastern Europe by then was becoming entrenched. From 1945 to 1948, determined to secure his buffer zone of countries friendly to the USSR, Stalin used coercion and rigged elections to establish Soviet-dominated "satellite" regimes in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, forming a coalition called the **Soviet bloc**.

Document 34.1 Churchill's Iron Curtain Speech

In 1946, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill traveled to the United States, anxious to enlist American support in what he foresaw as a growing struggle against the spread of communism. On March 5, at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, with President Harry Truman behind him, Churchill dramatically sounded the alarm, using the image of an "iron curtain" to highlight the division of Europe into communist East and capitalist West.

The United States stands at this time at the pinnacle of world power. It is a solemn moment for the American democracy. For with this primacy of power is also joined an awe-inspiring accountability to the future . . .

A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Russia and its Communist international organization intends to do in the immediate future, or what are the limits, if any, to their expansive and proselytizing tendencies . . . It is my duty, however, . . . to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of central and eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I might call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence, but also to a very high and increasing measure of control from Moscow . . . The Communist parties, which were very small in all these eastern states of Europe, have been raised to preeminence and power far beyond their numbers and are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control. Police governments are prevailing in nearly every case . . .

Whatever conclusions may be drawn from these facts—and facts they are—this is certainly not the liberated Europe we fought to build up. Nor is it one which contains the essentials of a permanent peace . . .

SOURCE: *The New York Times*, March 6, 1945, page 4.

He failed, however, to establish control over Yugoslavia, where communists gained and exercised power independent of the Soviet Union.

Postwar Soviet expansion worries Western leaders

The West, meanwhile, having largely demobilized its forces following the war, increasingly felt threatened by Soviet power. The massive Red Army, renamed the Soviet Army in 1946, remained in occupation of Manchuria, northern Korea, northern Iran, Eastern Europe, and above all eastern Germany, where it continued to station hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Judging that only America could block further Soviet expansion, former Prime Minister Churchill, speaking in Missouri in March 1946, evoked the image of a Europe divided by a line running from its northern to southern coasts (see "Churchill's Iron Curtain Speech"). "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic," he declared, with President Truman behind him, "an iron curtain has descended across the Continent." East of that line, Churchill went on, lay countries imprisoned by communism.

Churchill's speech helps persuade Americans to counter Soviet expansion

The iron curtain imagery, combined with Soviet belligerence, helped to arouse the Americans. They demanded that Stalin withdraw his troops, as he had previously promised, from occupied northern Iran; faced with forceful U.S. pressure, he eventually complied. Later that year, the Americans declared their intent to keep forces in western Germany indefinitely and to unite most of western Germany by merging their occupation zone with Britain's.

The Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan

In the following year, 1947, major U.S. initiatives sought to counter communism's spread. In March, reacting to a communist insurgency in Greece and to Soviet pressures against Turkey, President Truman proclaimed a new policy, soon called the **Truman Doctrine**. Henceforth, he avowed, the United States must "support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures"—leaving no doubt that he meant communist minorities and pressures from Soviet Russia. And it soon became clear that American aid would go far beyond Greece and Turkey: in June Secretary of State George Marshall announced a massive program of U.S. economic aid to all of war-torn Europe. Although billed a "European Recovery Program," the **Marshall Plan** was designed to preclude communist expansion by strengthening Europe economically, thus advancing America's Cold War strategy.

Americans adopt global strategy based on containment of communism

In July George F. Kennan, a policy planner in the U.S. State Department, gave the new American strategy a name. In the journal *Foreign Affairs*, in an article signed "Mr. X" (since he lacked official permission to use his real name), Kennan promoted "a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies," claiming that communism, if so contained, would eventually collapse. **Containment of communism** hence became the central aim of U.S. Cold War policy. Over the next four decades, America provided political, economic, and often military support to almost any regime anywhere resisting Soviet influence, while the Soviets similarly aided forces resisting Western domination.

The Berlin Blockade and NATO

Stalin reacted angrily to the U.S. initiatives. Realizing that Marshall Plan aid would boost American influence in Europe, he ordered his Eastern European satellites to reject it and later formed a Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) to advance their economic development. He also ordered them to rid their regimes of all remaining noncommunists. Accordingly, in February 1948, communists took full control of Czechoslovakia, completing consolidation of the Soviet bloc. Stalin also feared that the West would use the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan to rebuild and reunify Germany, threatening Soviet security. This perception was enhanced in June 1948, when France merged its German occupation zone with the British-American sector, uniting all western Germany, which was also given a unified currency. On June 24, Stalin retaliated by blocking all road and rail routes from western Germany to Berlin.

Stalin's blockade of Berlin triggers major Cold War crisis

Thus began the Berlin blockade, the Cold War's first great crisis. The German capital, like the whole country, had been divided into occupation zones by the four wartime allies (Map 34.1, inset). But since Berlin lay inside Soviet-occupied eastern Germany, ninety miles behind the "iron curtain," the city's British, French, and American sectors, collectively called West Berlin, depended upon food and supplies delivered from western Germany. Without such supplies, 2.5 million West Berliners could not long survive. The Western allies, Stalin figured, would have to either abandon Berlin or make concessions elsewhere to get him to reopen the routes.

American-British airlift overcomes Berlin blockade

Truman, however, rejected both these options, along with a proposal for a U.S. armored force to fight its way to Berlin through Soviet-occupied eastern Germany. Instead he opted, with British support, to supply West Berlin by air. For the next 11 months, American and

British cargo planes flew food and supplies around the clock into West Berlin. Anxious to avoid an all-out war with the world's only nuclear power, the Soviets chose not to forcibly interrupt the airlift. They quietly ended the blockade in May 1949.

By then it was obvious that Stalin's blockade had backfired. Rather than abandoning Berlin, the Americans instead abandoned their historic avoidance of peacetime military alliances. In April 1949, the United States, along with Canada, Iceland, and nine European nations, formed an alliance called **NATO** (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), designed to protect Western Europe against Soviet expansion. Warning that an "attack against one" member would be considered "an attack against them all," the alliance thereby served notice to the Soviets that any attempt to expand in Europe would mean war with the United States. Implicit in this warning was a nuclear threat: since popular resistance in Western democracies to a peacetime draft made it hard for NATO nations to match Soviet Army troop strength, the alliance would rely on U.S. nuclear weapons to deter a Soviet attack.

The Berlin airlift.

NATO Alliance commits United States to defend Western Europe

The Global Confrontation

By 1949, then, deadlock had developed in Europe: communists controlled the east, relying on the Soviet Army's might, and NATO defended the west, backed by the U.S. nuclear arsenal. At the center of the standoff was Germany, where two separate states were created that year: a capitalist West Germany in the zones occupied by Britain, America, and France, and a communist East Germany in the Soviet sector.

Soon, however, communist advances elsewhere expanded the East-West stalemate into a global confrontation. The rise of communist regimes in China and North Korea, and later in North Vietnam and Cuba, was met by forceful U.S. efforts to stop further communist expansion. New leaders emerging in both East and West failed to solve the standoff, while both sides developed horrific new weapons that put the whole world at risk.

Cold War standoff in Europe grows into global confrontation

New Realities and New Leaders

On August 29, 1949, far ahead of Western expectations, the USSR tested an atomic bomb over the northern Pacific, abruptly ending America's nuclear monopoly. Scarcely a month later, on October 1, 1949, a communist government took control in China, the world's most populous nation, sending shock waves throughout the Western world. In June 1950, a communist regime established by the Soviets in North Korea abruptly invaded non-communist South Korea. Suddenly the Soviets had the bomb, and a relentless Red tide seemed to be engulfing the globe (Map 34.2).

Communist triumph in China stuns and alarms the West

The unnerved Americans, resolving to stem the communist tide, chose to defend South Korea. The ensuing Korean War (1950–1953), described in Chapter 35, pitted an American-led United Nations coalition against Soviet-supplied communist forces, threatening to spark a new global conflict. But the United States, anxious not to weaken its defenses in Europe by pursuing an all-out Asian war, confined its campaign to Korea, even when Communist China sent hundreds of thousands of volunteer troops to help the North Koreans. And the USSR, although it gave arms to its communist allies, avoided

Communists stalemate American–led coalition in Korean War

Map 34.2 Communist Expansion in Eurasia, 1945–1950

In the wake of World War II, communism spread quickly across Eurasia. Notice that, between 1945 and 1950, the Soviets consolidated Communist control in occupied Eastern Europe and North Korea, while communist regimes also came to power in Yugoslavia, Albania, and China, adding to the impression of a "Red tide" sweeping the globe. How did this impression influence the formation of NATO in 1949 and the Korean War in 1950?

direct involvement. In July 1953, unwilling to risk another world war, both sides settled for a truce in Korea that simply sustained the stalemate.

By this time both the Americans and the Soviets had new leaders. In January 1953, General Dwight Eisenhower, the Allied commander in Western Europe during World War II, replaced Harry Truman as U.S. president. In March came the death of Joseph Stalin, followed by a succession struggle that resulted eventually in the rise of a new Soviet Communist Party leader named Nikita Khrushchev (*kroosh-CHOFF*).

To cut defense costs, United States relies on global nuclear threat

Eisenhower, a popular war hero who had led the 1944 Normandy invasion, was committed both to combating communism and to cutting U.S. defense costs, which had become immense. Seeking simultaneously to save money and strengthen U.S. defenses, his administration decided to reduce its armed forces and deter the Soviets mainly with nuclear weapons—a policy called "massive retaliation." By arming its new B-52 long-range jet bombers with hydrogen bombs (newly developed nuclear weapons that were many times more powerful than the original atomic bombs), the United States could respond to a Soviet Army attack in Europe by dropping these "H-bombs" on

the USSR. Faced with this threat, presumably, the Soviets would dare not attack, and America could avoid the huge expense of stationing numerous U.S. troops in Europe and Asia. The policy provided, in the words of one American official, a "bigger bang for the buck."

Soviets develop and expand nuclear forces to counter U.S. threat

Rather than making the world safer, however, the new U.S. policy merely accelerated the arms race. Determined to neutralize the American atomic threat, the Soviets produced their own H-bombs and long-range bombers that were capable of hitting the United States. Soon Britain and France, doubting that America would really risk its own annihilation to defend Western Europe, were developing and enlarging their own atomic forces. By 1960 there were four nuclear powers and thousands of nuclear weapons, posing a threat to humanity's survival should there be an all-out global war.

Khrushchev, meanwhile, proved a formidable foe. The self-educated son of impoverished peasants, he was a firm believer in the virtues of Soviet socialism, which had enabled him to rise from obscurity to enormous power. He was convinced that communists could win a prolonged global contest against capitalism, partly by strengthening Soviet power and partly by supporting the global movement against Western colonialism.

Decolonization and Global Cold War

Soviets aid Asians and Africans emerging from Western colonialism

The Cold War coincided with an era of **decolonization**, a process (described in Chapters 35 and 37) whereby colonized peoples in Asia and Africa gained independence from Western imperial domination (Map 34.3), often through nationalistic "liberation movements." Communists since V. I. Lenin, depicting Western imperialism as an outgrowth of industrial capitalism and colonized peoples as allies of socialists in a global struggle against capitalist imperialists, had encouraged such movements. Now Khrushchev and his successors actively supported them, and aided former colonies emerging from Western domination, hoping thereby to undermine the West and win friends for the USSR. To counter Soviet advances, the West in turn aided anticommunist elements in regions emerging from colonialism. Nationalists in Asia and Africa, and even in Latin America, exploited the East-West rivalry to obtain weapons and resources from one side or the other, further globalizing the Cold War.

Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans exploit global Cold War rivalry

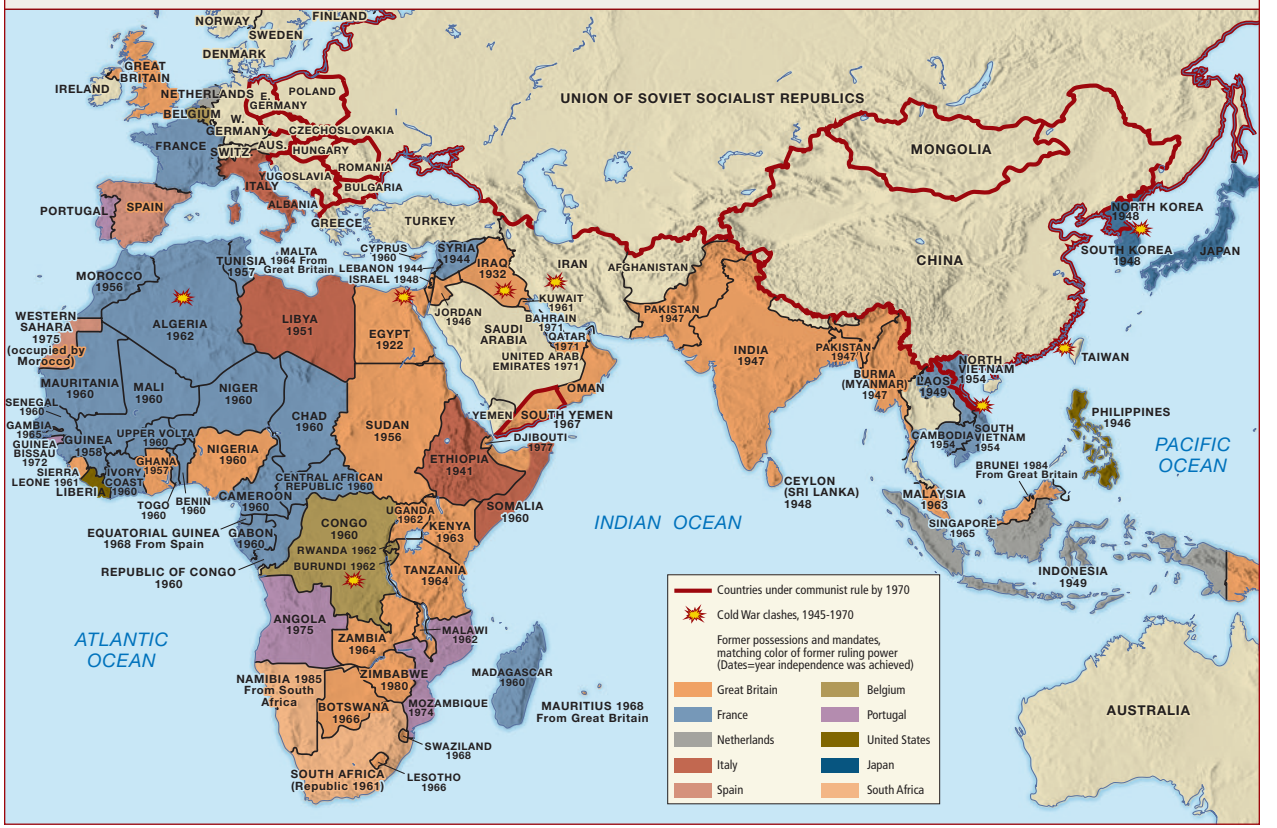
The superpowers sought allies wherever they could find them, often ignoring ideology to do so. One example was India, freed from British rule in 1947 but split into two hostile states. The Republic of India, a Hindu-led Western-style democracy, took economic aid from the USSR, which hoped to expand its influence in South Asia. Pakistan, a Muslim military dictatorship, got both military and economic assistance from the United States, which wanted a strong ally in the region to help resist Soviet inroads. Another example was the former Dutch East Indies, which became independent Indonesia in 1949. The Soviets supported Sukarno, a nationalist who led the new nation until the mid-1960s, ignoring the fact that he was more mystical and Muslim than Marxist. The Americans supported his successor Suharto, a military dictator who seized power in 1967, overlooking his regime's antidemocratic oppression and rampant corruption.

Soviets and West aid opposing sides in Asian and African conflicts

Similar situations emerged in the Middle East and Africa. The USSR, anxious to gain influence and undermine the West, aided Arab nationalists in Egypt, Algeria, and elsewhere—despite the fact that they were monotheistic Muslims who had no use for atheistic communism. The United States, anxious to encourage pro-Western Arab forces and

Map 34.3 Decolonization and Cold War Clashes, 1945–1970s

The Cold War became closely interconnected with anticolonial struggles in Africa and Asia. Observe that, between 1945 and the 1970s, almost all colonial and mandate regions in Africa and Asia gained independence from their former Western rulers. How did this decolonization, combined with Soviet efforts to win allies in these regions, help to foster Cold War clashes and conflicts throughout Africa and Asia?



secure oil supplies, supported oil-rich Persian Gulf regimes—despite the fact that they were undemocratic and openly oppressive. In central Africa, when Belgium abruptly freed its Congo colony in 1960, the Soviets supported its new president, pan-African nationalist Patrice Lumumba—prompting the Americans to consider him a communist and oppose him.

Asia, Africa, and Latin America become Cold War battlegrounds

In general, then, while aiding the cause of decolonization and frustrating the West, Soviet support for anticolonial nationalists did little to advance the communist cause. Although happy to take Soviet aid, these nationalists, anxious not to trade freedom from Western rule for Soviet domination, rarely joined the communist camp. Two major exceptions were Vietnam, where a communist-led insurgency ended French colonial rule in 1954, and Cuba, where a regime came to power in 1959 that soon proved anti-American and pro-Marxist. In the 1960s these two nations became major Cold War battlegrounds.

Peaceful Coexistence and Its Problems

Soviets consolidate control over Eastern Europe

By then Khrushchev's efforts to strengthen his own empire had tarnished his anti-imperial image. In 1955, when NATO admitted West Germany, he responded by forming the **Warsaw Pact**, a Soviet-led alliance of East European communist states (Map 34.4). It counterbalanced NATO and also rationalized continued Soviet Army presence in Eastern Europe. In 1956, when the Hungarians sought to leave the Soviet bloc, Khrushchev

Map 34.4 Divided Europe: NATO vs. Warsaw Pact, 1955–1991

From 1955 to 1991, Europe was divided into hostile alliance systems. Note that NATO consisted mainly of Western nations, led by the United States, and the Warsaw Pact embraced the Soviet Union and its Communist satellites in Eastern Europe. What were the similarities and differences between these two alliances?

brutally repressed their rebellion with troops and tanks. This episode, which showed the world how the Soviets enforced their own imperial rule, undermined their reputation as supporters of national liberation.

Soviets develop nuclear-armed rockets capable of striking America

Even more alarming to the West were Soviet advances in weapons and rockets. In 1957, the Soviets successfully tested an **ICBM** (intercontinental ballistics missile), an unmanned rocket that could hit America with nuclear warheads from the USSR. The Soviets also beat the Americans into outer space, launching *Sputnik* (*SPOOT-nēk*), the world's first artificial earth satellite, in 1957, and sending cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin (*gah-GAH-rēn*) into orbit in 1961.

Soviet feats spark rocket and space race with America

These spectacular Soviet accomplishments stunned the Americans. Shocked that Soviet technology suddenly seemed superior to their own, they soon built their own fleet of ICBMs and embarked on an expensive space race that in 1969 would land U.S. astronauts on the moon.

Early Soviet rocket.

Although such achievements restored American pride, they could not overcome America's new vulnerability. Protected from invasions by wide oceans, Americans had historically assumed that wars were mostly fought elsewhere. Now Soviet possession of ICBMs, and periodic passes of Soviet earth satellites over the United States, made it painfully clear that Soviet rockets could reach the American homeland. Never again could Americans feel fully secure.

Khrushchev, nonetheless, had no desire to wage war against the United States. Acutely aware that a nuclear conflict could destroy the USSR, he rejected the communist premise that capitalism made war inevitable. Instead he pressed for "peaceful coexistence" between East and West, confident that, if war could be avoided, communism would eventually prevail as the superior system.

Khrushchev calls for "peaceful coexistence" between East and West

Eager to make the Soviet model more attractive to the rest of the world, Khrushchev worked to remove the worst abuses of the Stalinist system and to provide a better life for Soviet peoples. In 1956, in an emotional "secret speech" in the middle of the night to a Communist Party Congress behind locked doors, he detailed and denounced the crimes of his paranoid predecessor (see "Khrushchev on Peaceful Coexistence and on Stalin's Crimes"). Stunned delegates wept openly as Khrushchev blamed Stalin for imprisoning, torturing, exiling, and murdering countless innocent people, including many loyal communists.

Khrushchev denounces Stalin's crimes and eases internal oppression

The speech, a poorly kept secret that soon leaked out and was published in the West, was reinforced by other efforts Khrushchev made to break with the Stalinist past. He relaxed Stalin's censorship, reduced internal oppression, freed many political prisoners, and launched ambitious efforts to improve food and housing, with the stated goal of matching Western living standards by the 1970s. Although these reforms fell short of providing either freedom or prosperity, they did demonstrate that the Soviet system was becoming less harsh.

Khrushchev's trip to America paves way for Paris summit meeting

In 1959, to bolster his peacemaker image, Khrushchev made a 12-day trip to America. He toured U.S. cities, met with politicians and entertainers, explored an Iowa cornfield, and even sought to visit California's new Disneyland theme park—but was prevented from doing so by security concerns. His buoyant personality did much to ease American anxieties: this ebullient man, who so obviously enjoyed life, hardly seemed the sort who would start a nuclear war. He and Eisenhower discussed ways to reduce world tensions, and planned to meet again at a **summit conference**, a face-to-face meeting of the world's

Document 34.2 Khrushchev on Peaceful Coexistence and on Stalin's Crimes

In February 1956, at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev delivered two momentous speeches. In a public address at the beginning of the Congress, he called for peaceful coexistence with the West, revising the Marxist-Leninist doctrine that capitalistic imperialism made war inevitable. In a secret speech in the middle of the night at the end of the conference, he denounced Joseph Stalin and the crimes of the Stalin era. The secret eventually leaked out, and the speech was published in the West. While proving less paranoid than his predecessor, however, Khrushchev ended neither the Cold War nor Soviet repression.

EXCERPTS FROM KHRUSHCHEV'S REPORT TO THE 20TH PARTY CONGRESS . . . For the strengthening of world peace, it would be of tremendous importance to establish firm, friendly relations between the two biggest powers of the world, the Soviet Union and the United States . . . We want to be friends with and to cooperate with the United States in the effort for peace and security of the peoples as well as in the economic and cultural fields. We pursue this with good intentions, without holding a stone behind our back . . . If good relations are not established between the Soviet Union and the United States, and mutual distrust exists, this will lead to an arms race on a still greater scale and to a still more dangerous growth of the forces on both sides . . .

The principle of peaceful coexistence is gaining increasingly wider international recognition. And this is logical, since there is no other way out of the present situation. Indeed, there are only two ways: either peaceful coexistence or the most devastating war in history. There is no third alternative . . .

As will be recalled, there is a Marxist-Leninist premise which says that while imperialism exists wars are inevitable. While capitalism remains on earth the reactionary forces representing the interests of the capitalist monopolies will continue to strive for war gambles and aggression, and may try to let loose war. But there is no fatal inevitability of war. Now there are powerful social and political forces, commanding serious means capable of preventing unleashing of war by the imperialists and—should they try to start it—of delivering a smashing rebuff to the aggressors and thwarting their adventuristic plans . . .

EXCERPTS FROM KHRUSHCHEV'S SECRET SPEECH . . . After Stalin's death the Central Committee of the Party began explaining concisely and consistently that it is impermissible and foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism to elevate one person, and to transform him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics akin to those of a god . . . Such a belief about a man, and specifically about Stalin, was cultivated among us for many years . . .

Stalin originated the concept of enemy of the people. This term . . . made possible the usage of the most cruel repression . . . against anyone who disagreed with Stalin . . . This led to glaring violations of revolutionary legality, and to the fact that many entirely innocent people . . . became victims.

. . . It became apparent that many party, Soviet and economic activists, who were branded . . . as enemies, were actually never enemies, spies, wreckers, etc . . . ; they were only so stigmatized, and often no longer able to bear barbaric tortures they charged themselves (at the order of the investigative judges-falsifiers) with all sorts of grave and unlikely crimes . . . Many thousands of honest and innocent Communists have died as a result of this monstrous falsification of cases . . .

. . . Stalin was a very distrustful man, sickly suspicious . . . This sickly suspicion created in him a general distrust even toward eminent party workers who had known him for many years. Everywhere and in everything he saw enemies, "two-facers," and "spies." Possessing unlimited power, he indulged in great willfulness and choked a person morally and physically . . .

SOURCES: *The New York Times*, February 15, 1956, page 10; United States Congress, *The Congressional Record*, 84th Congress, 2nd Session, vol. 102 (1956), pages 9389, 9391, 9392, 9394, 9395.

most powerful leaders, the following year in Paris. By early 1960, as Soviet and Western officials prepared for the Paris summit, the Cold War's end seemed in sight.

Such hopes, however, were dashed in May 1960, when an American U-2 spy plane, sent to take reconnaissance photos on the eve of the summit, crashed in the USSR. Assuming the pilot was dead, America issued a false claim that the craft was a weather plane accidentally flown off course. Khrushchev, who for four years had been angered by such spy flights over his country, now revealed that the U-2 pilot had been captured alive, and demanded an American apology. But Eisenhower, who admitted publicly that he had authorized the mission, refused to repent.

Khrushchev's anger at U-2 Affair ruins Paris summit

This **U-2 Affair** doomed the Paris summit. Blaming Eisenhower for endangering the peace, Khrushchev in Paris again demanded an apology. When none was forthcoming, he vehemently denounced the Americans and refused to negotiate. The summit ended in shambles, as did several years of work toward peaceful coexistence. Giving up on Eisenhower, whose presidency was nearing its end, Khrushchev waited to encounter the next American president.

Berlin, Cuba, Vietnam, and MAD

Khrushchev and Kennedy clash about Berlin at Vienna

John F. Kennedy, who took office in January 1961, was handsome, rich, and eloquent but inexperienced in foreign affairs and eager to show his strength as a Cold Warrior. When he met Khrushchev at a summit conference in Vienna, Austria, that June, the Soviet dictator bullied the new president about Berlin. Since 1949 more than two million people had escaped communist East Germany by crossing from East Berlin to West Berlin. To stop this outflow, Khrushchev demanded that the Western powers abandon the city. Failure to do so, he threatened, would result in war. Kennedy was shaken but refused to back down, and went home expecting the worst.

Summer 1961 was filled with foreboding, as Kennedy announced a military buildup, bracing for another Berlin blockade and perhaps even war. In August, however, the communists stunned the world by building a barbwire barrier to seal off the border between East and West Berlin. Then, in the next few months, they replaced the barbwire with a wall.

Berlin Wall, built by communists, symbolizes global East-West divide

Much to Berliners' dismay, Kennedy did not try to stop construction of the wall, since it posed no real threat to the West. Indeed, by stopping the human outflow, the wall enabled the Soviets to accept continued Western presence in Berlin, eventually easing the crisis. But the Berlin Wall, which stood 28 years as an unsightly symbol of communist oppression, further undermined the Soviet image. As Kennedy later claimed in a stirring speech to a huge crowd in West Berlin: "Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect. But we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in."

Khrushchev, meanwhile, faced an even deadlier dilemma. As Kennedy accelerated the arms race by ordering production of a thousand new ICBMs, the Soviets, with fewer than a dozen, lagged far behind. The USSR did not have the wealth to build huge numbers of expensive missiles and at the same time fund Khrushchev's plans to improve the domestic economy.

Khrushchev responds to U.S. missile buildup by placing Soviet missiles in Cuba

The Soviet leader's attention turned to Cuba, ninety miles from American shores, where Fidel Castro, an anti-American revolutionary, had taken power in 1959. After the United States tried unsuccessfully to unseat him by landing armed anti-Castro Cubans in Cuba at the "Bay of Pigs" in April 1961 (Chapter 36), Castro began pressing for Soviet

protection against another U.S. attack. In response, in spring 1962, Khrushchev came up with a perilous plan. He would secretly place Soviet mid-range nuclear missiles in Cuba, where they could target the United States. He could thus protect Castro, counter the U.S. missile buildup, and save the Soviet Union the huge cost of building numerous new ICBMs. Once the missiles were in place in Cuba, he planned to reveal their presence, and perhaps use them as leverage to secure withdrawal of Western forces from Berlin.

United States blockades Cuba and Soviets agree to remove missiles

But in October 1962, before the Soviets had completely installed their missiles, American spy planes discovered their presence in Cuba. Kennedy demanded their removal and had the U.S. Navy blockade Cuba to halt further weapons shipments, provoking a superpower confrontation called the **Cuban Missile Crisis**. For several days the world watched in terror as the Soviets and Americans teetered on the brink of war. But Khrushchev chose not to challenge the blockade and Kennedy resisted pressure to bomb or invade Cuba. Finally, in return for a public U.S. promise not to invade the island, Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles. Privately, Kennedy also pledged to remove from Turkey American mid-range missiles that were aimed at the USSR.

Cartoon of Khrushchev and Kennedy fighting on "Cuban cliff."

Stepping back from the brink of catastrophe, Kennedy and Khrushchev sought to reduce tensions, and in 1963 they agreed to a treaty banning all nuclear tests except those held underground. The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty helped curb atmospheric pollution from nuclear tests but did little to stop the arms race, since the agreement did not ban production of new weapons.

In November of that year, while in Dallas, Texas, President Kennedy was shot and killed by an assassin. His successor, Lyndon Johnson, sent increasing numbers of U.S. troops to Vietnam, divided after French defeat in 1954 into communist North Vietnam and anticommunist South Vietnam. For the next decade the Vietnam War (Chapter 35) was a central Cold War battleground, with Americans fighting in South Vietnam against a communist insurgency backed by the North, which was aided with supplies and weapons by the Soviets and Chinese communists.

U.S. troops sent to South Vietnam to fight communists

Meanwhile the arms race accelerated. In 1964, plagued by domestic and foreign failures, Khrushchev was displaced by a group of his former subordinates, led by a new party boss named Leonid Brezhnev. Blaming the Cuban Missile Crisis on Soviet weakness, the new regime pursued a relentless naval and nuclear buildup. By the 1970s, both superpowers had built thousands of nuclear bombs and missiles—so many that the world lived in terror of a superpower conflict that would incinerate hundreds of millions in an atomic inferno. But the horror of such a war may have helped to prevent it: knowing that an all-out conflict could annihilate both sides along with much of the world, each side sought to avoid one. This "balance of terror" was also known as Mutual Assured Destruction, aptly abbreviated as **MAD**.

Brezhnev regime replaces Khrushchev and accelerates arms race

The West in the Cold War Era

Despite extreme international tensions, the nations of the West achieved unparalleled prosperity during the Cold War. Western Europeans emerged from the ashes of World War II, rebuilt their economies with substantial U.S. help and, as they lost their colonial empires, sought to strengthen their commerce and status through European unity.

Americans used their abundant wealth and resources to cover costly Cold War endeavors, while dealing with troublesome domestic divisions and serious societal changes.

The Revival of Western Europe

Western Europeans lose colonies but regain prosperity

The Cold War era was not easy for Western Europeans. Having long dominated the globe, they now found themselves dependent on America for military and economic support. Europe's Asian and African colonies, guided by growing nationalism, armed with modern weapons, and sometimes backed by Soviet support, increasingly claimed independence (Chapters 35 and 37). Faced with such claims, Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands reluctantly released their colonies, while France and Portugal sought for years to hold on to theirs. Eventually, however, such efforts proved futile: by 1975, almost all of Asia and Africa were independent, and Europe's once-great global empires were gone (Map 34.3). The era of European domination was over.

Western Europe nonetheless survived and thrived. Aided by the U.S. Marshall Plan and protected by NATO, Europe's capitalist democracies enjoyed enormous economic expansion in the 1950s and 1960s. To foster growth, governments intervened in the economy, using planning commissions to set goals, supplying funds and tax incentives to businesses, and even controlling key industries. To improve the status of the working classes, and thus counter the appeal of communism, the governments expanded social programs, providing health insurance, unemployment compensation, old-age pensions, public housing, and family allowances to help parents care for children. They thus combined elements of socialism with capitalist economies.

Western Europeans unite to increase economic strength

To strengthen themselves economically, and decrease their dependence on America, European nations also began to unite in their own self-interest. Led by France and West Germany, in 1957 six of them formed the European Economic Community (EEC), also called the **Common Market**, reducing tariffs on one another's goods to foster commercial growth. EEC expansion was slowed in the 1960s by French president Charles de Gaulle, a fervent nationalist who blocked Britain from joining, concerned that British participation would dilute French influence. De Gaulle also withdrew French forces from NATO's joint command, asserting France's military independence but keeping France in the alliance.

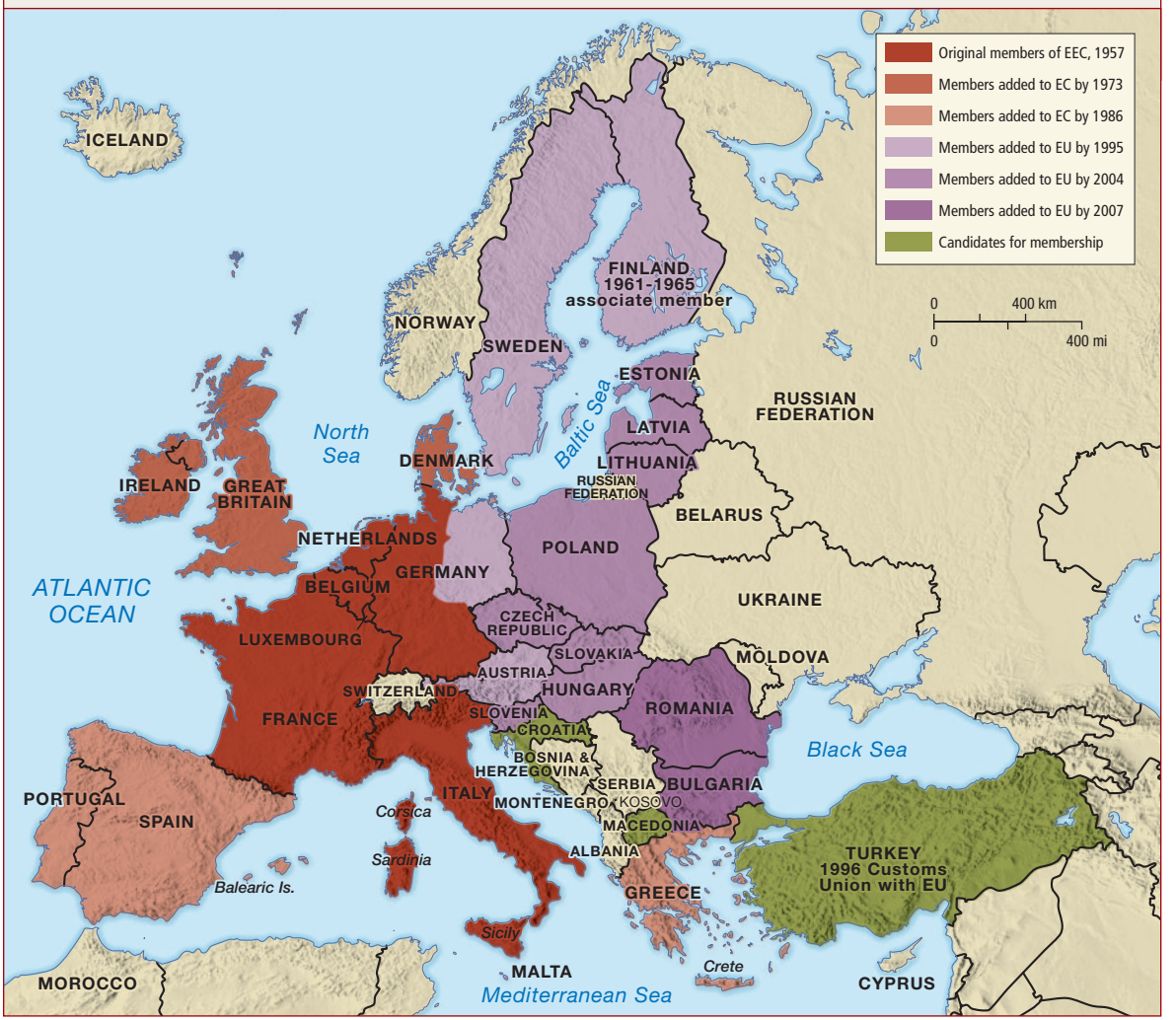
In the 1970s, however, the European Community (EC), created in 1967 by merging the EEC with several other agencies, again began to expand. By 1973 de Gaulle was gone, as were most of Europe's colonies, and an economic downturn had brought high unemployment and working class unrest. Anxious, therefore, to increase its markets and resources, the EC welcomed Britain, Ireland, and Denmark as members. By the 1980s, when three more nations were added, the EC encompassed more than 300 million people and over a quarter of the world's trade.

European Economic Community grows into European Union

Further integration and expansion followed. In 1993 the EC was incorporated into a new European Union (EU), which launched a common currency called the euro, replacing numerous old national currencies with a single monetary system. By 2007, the EU had grown to 27 nations (Map 34.5) with half a billion people, embracing even former Soviet satellites that had by then gained independence. In 2005, however, voters in France and the Netherlands, fearful that their countries could lose their political autonomy, refused to ratify a negotiated European Constitution, sidetracking efforts to augment Europe's economic integration with greater political unity.

Map 34.5 Growth of the Common Market and European Union, 1957–2007

Founded in 1957, the European Economic Community (EEC), also called the Common Market, connected six Western European nations into a powerful and prosperous economic free-trade zone. Notice that, having merged with other agencies in 1967 to form the European Community (EC), it added six new members in the 1970s and 1980s. Note also that in 1993, a few years after the USSR disintegrated, the EC became part of a new European Union (EU), which added nations from the former Soviet bloc and grew to 27 members by 2007. What were the main advantages of Common Market membership? Why did some members resist efforts at political integration?



Affluence and Anxieties in America

As Western Europeans dealt with their diminished status after World War II, America enjoyed unprecedented influence and affluence. But pressing Cold War concerns, along with deep divisions in American society, also produced intense anxieties in the "land of plenty."

Global commerce and Cold War spending enhance American affluence

America in the Cold War years experienced unparalleled abundance. A huge global and domestic demand for U.S. consumer goods, following years of shortage during World War II, combined with massive Cold War defense spending to generate an economic boom. As purchasing power more than doubled between 1945 and 1970, Americans rushed to buy houses, cars, and televisions, which soon replaced radios as the main form of home entertainment. Improved roads and incomes helped millions move from crowded cities, with closely packed dwellings and street-front stores, to sprawling suburbs, with neat neighborhoods of look-alike homes, shopping malls, and supermarkets. A vast interstate highway system, designed in part to aid military transport in the Cold War era, promoted commerce and mobility, while a changing economy and affordable air conditioning fostered mass migration to the sunny South and West.

Rows of look-alike houses in suburban America.

But anxieties persisted in America. The rise of Communist China and the Korean War helped set off a "Red Scare" in the early 1950s. U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy, using a tactic later called "McCarthyism," made sweeping and unsubstantiated charges that communists had infiltrated government, industry, and entertainment. Even after McCarthy was discredited in 1954, fear of communism persisted, as Soviet triumphs in weaponry and space seemed more threatening with each Cold War crisis.

Urban problems and fear of communism foster American anxieties

Urban problems added to the sense of insecurity. As millions moved to suburbs, decaying inner cities became breeding grounds of drug abuse and crime, while traffic congestion and industrial pollution fouled the air and water.

THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. Furthermore, African Americans, long subject to racial discrimination, began to press more forcefully for equal civil rights. In the South, black people had for years been segregated by law from white people, systematically denied the right to vote, placed in separate and poorly funded schools, denied service at restaurants, and restricted to designated restrooms and drinking fountains.

Civil rights movement combats American racism

By the 1950s, however, widespread reaction against racism, fueled by global revulsion against Nazi racist atrocities and by Asian and African struggles against Western imperialism, compelled America to confront its own racial divide. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court, faced with overwhelming evidence that schools for white children provided better education than schools for black children, ruled in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate education was inherently unequal, and soon ordered schools to desegregate "with all deliberate speed."

In 1955 a black boycott of segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama, brought to the fore Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a magnetic and eloquent African American minister who emerged as leader of the **civil rights movement**, a nationwide campaign for racial equality. Combining appeals to Christian morality and American democratic ideals with tactics used by India's Mahatma Gandhi (Chapter 32)—including protest marches, civil disobedience, and nonviolent resistance—King gained a mass following and broad support among white people as well as black people. With the backing of President Lyndon Johnson, a former Southern segregationist who now committed his administration (1963–1969) to fighting racism and poverty, the U.S. Congress passed a 1964 Civil Rights Act banning discrimination in jobs and public services, a 1965 Voting Rights Act ensuring black citizens the right to vote, and an array of antipoverty programs.

Black American Rosa Parks on a Montgomery bus.

Ongoing racial and ethnic tensions deepen U.S. social unrest

Racism and racial tension nonetheless endured. Legal segregation had been banned, but across the country white people still resisted sharing neighborhoods and schools

with African Americans. In the mid- to late 1960s, a series of violent upheavals in many U.S. cities made it clear that racial divisions and inequalities persisted. As America grew increasingly diverse, people of Asian, Latin American, and Amerind backgrounds, who also experienced discrimination, similarly sought to gain equality by using the methods and ideals of the civil rights movement.

Segregated facilities in America.

Divisions in American Society. Racial and ethnic tensions were not the only anxieties afflicting Cold War America. Protests against an unpopular war, along with changing attitudes toward sex, gender, and family, also reflected deep divisions in American society.

From 1965 to 1973, U.S. combat forces fought in the debilitating Vietnam War (Chapter 35). At first the conflict, perceived as part of the global struggle against communism, enjoyed broad public support. Within a few years, however, increasing troop call-ups and mounting casualties convinced many Americans that the war was going badly and that claims to the contrary by U.S. leaders were lies. By 1967 an antiwar movement was staging public protests demanding U.S. withdrawal.

Antiwar movement heightens unrest among American youths

The antiwar movement attracted many members of the **baby boom** generation, Americans born during a huge surge in births following World War II. Raised in affluence and influenced by a youth culture that combined opposition to racism and violence with relaxed attitudes toward sex and drugs, many baby boomers joined both civil rights protests and antiwar protests. Many young men also resisted the draft, which made them liable to military service, and some even left the country. In 1968, as civil rights leader Martin Luther King and antiwar candidate Robert Kennedy (the late president's brother) were assassinated, and riots disrupted the presidential nominating conventions, U.S. society seemed to be dissolving into chaos.

That same year, after promising to end the Vietnam War and to restore "law and order," Richard Nixon, a crafty politician and Cold Warrior, was elected president. By gradually reducing the U.S. role in Vietnam, he restored some stability, but riots resumed in 1970 when he expanded the war to Cambodia. In 1973 he suspended the draft and secured a U.S. withdrawal from the war, easing domestic tensions. But the Watergate scandal, exposing Nixon's efforts to hide his awareness of a break-in by some of his staff at the offices of his political foes in Washington's Watergate hotel complex, created further turmoil, leading to his disgrace and resignation in 1974.


Antiwar protesters with flowers confront U.S. soldiers.

By then America was undergoing a social revolution. In the 1960s, a new women's rights movement, building on the efforts of the earlier crusade that helped women obtain voting rights, inspired millions of women to pursue careers—such as law, public service, medicine, and management—hitherto open mainly to men. Divorce rates doubled between 1960 and 1980, as women who could earn a living felt less constrained to remain in unhappy marriages and as divorce and remarriage became more socially acceptable. Sexual relations outside of marriage likewise became more acceptable, as more and more couples cohabited without marriage or as a prelude to marriage. Abortions increased in the 1970s and 1980s, especially after a 1973 Supreme Court decision, in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, supported abortion rights for women. Alarmed by such developments, religious conservatives sought to outlaw abortion and restore "traditional family values," a set of moral standards condemning sex outside of marriage, denouncing homosexual relationships, and asserting that a wife's main career should be that of homemaker and mother.

Changing women's roles and sexual standards challenge U.S. society

Khrushchev visiting factory in communist Albania.

The Soviet Bloc

Life in the Soviet bloc contrasted sharply with life in the West. Stalin, desperate to rebuild his war-torn country following World War II, re-imposed a harsh police state to control Soviet society while ruthlessly exploiting his new Eastern European satellites. Khrushchev, hoping to set a more attractive example, eased repression and tried to improve people's lives, ending Stalin's worst abuses and investing heavily in housing, agriculture, and consumer goods. But a series of poor harvests undercut his agricultural advances and the Cuban crisis settlement ruined his bid to overtake America without a costly arms race. The Brezhnev regime (1964–1982), while taking modest measures to improve living standards, cracked down on dissent and spent huge sums on a massive arms buildup. By the 1970s the USSR had surpassed America in numbers of long-range missiles, but its domestic economy still lagged far behind.

Life Under Communist Rule

Communism did many things for its people. It supplied a wide range of social services, including free health care, day care for children, subsidized housing, low-cost food and consumer goods, cheap public transport, quality education, guaranteed employment, and extensive pensions. Soviet society was among the world's most literate, while Soviet scientists and athletes ranked with the world's best. As the USSR and its satellites grew increasingly urban and industrial, more and more people enjoyed concerts, ballets, movies, sports, television, and even Western imports such as rock music and jazz.

Communism supplies social services but not freedom or abundance

But communism provided neither freedom nor Western-style prosperity. Stalin's successors softened his system but continued to control both society and economy. Although censorship was relaxed in the Khrushchev era, artists, writers, and the state-run media were still expected to emphasize the country's successes in science, sports, and space, while ignoring such failures as its shortage of quality goods and housing. A centralized economy, with a succession of five-year plans that set specific quotas for every industry and enterprise, helped the regime focus resources on the arms race, but it also regimented the rest of society. From central Europe to the Pacific, people in the Soviet bloc lived in cramped, dingy apartments and waited in long lines to buy drab produce grown on dismal collective farms and shoddy goods made in industries plagued by alcoholism and absenteeism.

Market in Soviet Central Asia, early 1960s.

Nor did Soviet communism create the classless society Marxists had envisioned. While the masses endured a dreary existence, a privileged elite of high officials and their families enjoyed superior housing and medical care, fancy vacations and country homes, and access to special stores selling luxury items such as caviar and imported liqueurs. Soviet women often held jobs in areas dominated by men in the West, such as medicine and engineering, but Soviet wives were still expected to shop, cook, and clean for their husbands and families. By the 1970s, communist idealism had given way to cynicism and careerism, while aging Soviet rulers focused mainly on maintaining control.

"Classless" communist societies produce new privileged elites

Similar conditions prevailed in other communist countries, which typically had their own planned economies, privileged elites, and drab living conditions. The contrast was especially striking in the divided nations of Korea and Germany, where people in the communist part endured poverty and oppression, while those in the capitalist part grew

increasingly prosperous. But even in Communist China, where mass experiments meant to improve life instead provoked mass suffering, prosperity proved elusive until the 1980s and 1990s, when new leaders added capitalist incentives to communist controls (Chapter 35).

Challenges to Soviet Authority

Soviets vainly struggle to suppress internal dissent

In the USSR, communist control meant suppressing dissenters who dared to criticize or defy the regime. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (*sōl-zhih-NĒT-sin*), a brilliant Russian author who had spent years in a Stalinist prison camp, was accused of treason for writing *The Gulag Archipelago*, an account of the prison camp system, and exiled abroad in 1974. Andrei Sakharov (*SAH-kha-roff*), an eminent nuclear physicist who helped develop the Soviet H-bomb in the 1950s but in the 1960s became an outspoken critic of Soviet human rights abuses, was confined in 1980 to a city in central Russia to keep his message from the outside world. Other prominent dissidents were harassed by Soviet secret police, imprisoned on false charges, or confined in psychiatric wards. Nonetheless, despite such repression, a network of dissident writers and human rights activists operated throughout the Brezhnev years, secretly typing and circulating works exposing Soviet failings.

Soviets control their satellites with force and fear

The Soviets also struggled to keep their satellites in line. In Czechoslovakia in 1968, for example, a communist reformer named Alexander Dubček (*DOOB-chek*) introduced "socialism with a human face," lifting most restrictions on speech, press, and foreign travel. After watching warily for months, the USSR sent in troops and tanks to crush the reform movement, eventually removing Dubček and installing a repressive regime. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was justified by an assertion, later called the **Brezhnev Doctrine**, that the USSR had the right to intervene in other communist countries to protect the global interests of socialism, as defined by Soviet leaders. In 1981, after an independent trade union called Solidarity staged strikes and protests in Poland, the Soviets again threatened to intervene in a satellite country. But Poland's communist regime imposed martial law (emergency military rule) to restore order and outlawed the dissident union, thereby making a Soviet invasion unnecessary.

Clearly, then, the Soviet bloc was sustained by the threat of force. To millions of Eastern Europeans, and to non-Russians who made up half the USSR's population, the Soviet bloc was merely a replica of the old tsarist Russian empire, with Marxism serving as a new pretext for Russian imperial ways. Envious of Western affluence and aware that Europe's empires in Asia and Africa had crumbled, many Soviet subjects dreamed of the day that the Soviet empire would likewise fall apart. Somewhat to their surprise, that day was not long in coming.

The End of the Cold War Era

By the late 1960s the Cold War was taking its toll on both superpowers. Through enormous efforts, the Soviets had managed to surpass the United States in numbers of ICBMs and to hold their vast empire together. But their economy was stagnant, and their comradely ties with Red China had given way to bitter rivalry, sparking deadly border clashes

in 1969. The Soviet leaders thus agreed to hold talks with the Americans, mired in the Vietnam War and facing their own stalled economy, in an effort to ease anxieties and control the nuclear arms race.

Détente and Its Demise

Cold War costs and nuclear fears prompt efforts at détente

The result of these negotiations was an era of **détente** (*dā-TAHNT*), a relaxation of international tensions, during the 1970s. Early in the decade, when Soviet-American talks to end the arms race bogged down, President Nixon reached out to Communist China, paying it a historic visit in February 1972. This trip not only opened dialogue between China and America, bitter foes for over two decades; it also raised Soviet fears of Chinese-American cooperation, thus prompting Soviet leaders to work out agreements with the United States. As a result, in May 1972 in Moscow, Brezhnev and Nixon signed treaties limiting the numbers of offensive and defensive missiles each side could have and endorsed several scientific and cultural agreements. The next year U.S. involvement in Vietnam ended and Brezhnev visited the United States. In 1975, after a dramatic orbital docking of American and Soviet space vehicles raised hopes for joint scientific endeavors, the two superpowers joined 33 other countries in signing the Helsinki Accords, a comprehensive set of agreements to stabilize Europe's security. Once again, the Cold War seemed to be ending.

Clashes in Africa and Islamic world undermine efforts at détente

Détente, however, had its limits. Hampered by the huge costs of their armed forces and atomic arsenals, the Soviets were eager to end the arms race, but not their global efforts to spread communism. The USSR thus kept aiding Vietnamese communists, even after U.S. withdrawal, while also sending military aid to African Marxists in Ethiopia and Angola, and to Arab Muslims fighting Israel in the Middle East (Map 34.6). U.S. attempts to promote human rights provisions of the Helsinki Accords, especially those allowing Soviet bloc citizens access to Western publications and broadcasts, angered the Soviets, who saw such efforts as schemes to destabilize their bloc with anti-Soviet propaganda. A new arms control pact, signed in 1979, went unratified by the U.S. Senate after the USSR, to support a client regime endangered by revolt, invaded neighboring Afghanistan at the end of that year. This Soviet assault, beginning a lengthy Soviet-Afghan War (1979–1989), dealt a death blow to détente.

"Stop the arms race" poster, 1978.

Seeing the Soviets' Afghan incursion as a threat to vital U.S. oil shipments from the Persian Gulf, President Jimmy Carter, whose administration (1977–1981) had previously worked to end the arms race, now initiated anti-Soviet sanctions and a new American arms buildup. But U.S. voters, upset by a flagging economy and by Carter's inability to secure the release of American hostages seized in Iran in 1979, voted him out of office in 1980, electing instead an ardent anticommunist who opposed reconciliation with the Russians.

Alarmed by Soviet aggressiveness, America intensifies the arms race

Ronald Reagan came to the presidency in 1981 with an optimistic faith in America and deep distrust of the USSR, which he famously labeled an "evil empire." Asserting that the Soviets would cheat on any arms agreement, he and his advisors denounced détente and intensified the arms race, hoping thereby to bankrupt the USSR. Imitating Soviet support for anti-Western liberation movements, the Reagan administration aided anticommunist insurgents in Angola, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and Afghanistan, and even supplied modern anti-aircraft missiles to Afghan rebels fighting Soviet forces. The Cold War and arms race thus resumed with full force.

Map 34.6 Cold War Clashes of the 1970s and 1980s

Despite efforts to achieve détente between the superpowers in the 1970s, the Cold War continued and grew more intense in the 1980s. Note that East and West remained locked into hostile alliances, and that Cold War clashes persisted in Africa and Asia during these decades. How did Soviet support for anti-Western movements and U.S. aid to anticommunists fuel conflicts and confrontations in various parts of these continents?

The Gorbachev Revolution

In Moscow, however, Leonid Brezhnev's death in 1982 opened the way for a major policy shift. His last years had been marred by economic stagnation, the rise of the anti-Soviet Solidarity union in Poland, and failures in the Afghan War, in which ragged rebel guerrillas were humbling the mighty Soviet Army and draining Soviet resources. Like Brezhnev himself, his immediate successors were aging and ailing bureaucrats, both of whom died before they could have much impact. But in 1985 power passed to a young, energetic new Soviet leader named Mikhail Gorbachev (*GOR-buh-CHOFF*), who was eager to make changes.

Gorbachev seeks "restructuring" and improvement of Soviet economy

Keenly aware of the Soviet system's shortcomings, Gorbachev promoted *perestroika* (*p'YEH-reh-STRAW-ē-kah*), "restructuring" of Soviet society. To boost economic output, he experimented with Western-style profit and market incentives, granted greater autonomy for farmers and factory managers, and launched a drive against drunkenness

by restricting alcohol sales. To improve government performance he combated corruption, encouraged *glasnost* (*GLAHSS-nōst*), or open discussion of the USSR's problems, and eventually allowed limited democratic elections.

Gorbachev seeks reduced global tensions to ease strain on Soviet economy

To free up resources for his reforms and reduce the strain of military expenses and support for Cold War clients, Gorbachev also sought to ease international tensions. He held a series of summit meetings with Ronald Reagan who, despite his anticommunism, decided he could deal with the new Soviet leader, and the two signed a 1987 treaty eliminating mid-range missiles.

Their efforts to reduce long-range weapons, however, were thwarted by Reagan's ambition to build an elaborate space-based missile defense system, officially called **SDI** (Strategic Defense Initiative) but widely known as "Star Wars" (after a popular film series in which futuristic space weapons were used to fight an evil empire). Reagan depicted SDI as a "peace shield" that would render nuclear missiles obsolete by making it possible to intercept them in space before they neared their targets. But the Soviets saw it instead as a weapon that would free the United States to attack the USSR without fear of retaliation. Gorbachev therefore denounced SDI, postponing his pursuit of further arms accords until after Reagan was replaced in 1989 by George H. W. Bush, a cautious president less wedded to SDI.

Collapse of the Communist Bloc

Gorbachev withdraws from Afghan War and renounces use of force

Meanwhile Gorbachev took other striking steps. In 1988 he began withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan, acting to end the war that he called a "bleeding wound." Later that year, in a stunning speech at the United Nations, he called on all countries to renounce the use of force and announced massive Soviet military cuts. And in 1989 he disowned the Brezhnev Doctrine, inviting Eastern European nations to pursue their own paths to socialism.

Poland and Hungary ease repression and proclaim free elections

Since the threat of force was what held the Soviet empire together, Gorbachev's words and deeds had huge consequences for the Soviet bloc. Eastern European communist regimes, no longer sure they could count on the Soviets to help them crush dissent, started taking steps to gain public support. The Polish government, for example, legalized the Solidarity union, suppressed since 1981, and created a new senate based on free elections, soon won by Solidarity. The Hungarian communists scheduled free elections and, hoping to impress voters, tore down barbwire borders barring escape to the West, thereby opening a hole in the iron curtain.

East Germany opens its borders; Berliners tear down Berlin Wall

East Germans then proved especially creative. Thousands of them, hearing the news from Hungary, hastily decided to "vacation" there, then escaped to the West through the open borders with their families and portable possessions. When East Germany's communist rulers reacted by banning trips to Hungary, East Germans went to Czechoslovakia instead, and pressured the Czechs into providing them with trains to West Germany. Embarrassed by this spectacle, with no support from the Soviets and with anticommunist rallies arising throughout East Germany, the communist East German regime took a daring gamble. On November 9, 1989, it officially opened East Germany's borders with the West, hoping that East Germans would be less likely to relocate if they could freely go back and forth. But the gamble quickly failed, as exultant Berliners soon began tearing down the wall that divided their city.

Berlin Wall's fall sparks democratic revolts throughout Eastern Europe

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet failure to stop it inspired uprisings in the other Soviet satellites. By the end of 1989 most of Eastern Europe had moved toward

independence, often with little bloodshed. The violent exception was Romania, where communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu (*chow-SHESS-koo*) used his police to massacre protesters, until his forces finally rebelled and killed him on Christmas day.

In free elections held in East Germany in March 1990, voters overwhelmingly chose candidates who favored German unification. That summer, in return for a huge West German loan to support the struggling Soviet economy, Gorbachev agreed not to resist German reunification. In October 1990 Germany was reunited, with West Germany's government taking over eastern Germany, where the former communist regime simply ceased to exist. The next month, an agreement by the superpowers and 22 other nations to reduce their military forces in Europe added another indication that the Cold War was over.

Reunified Germany and force reduction pact mark end of Cold War

Disintegration of the USSR

Cartoon of Gorbachev and Soviet breakup.

Then came the collapse of the USSR itself. As the nation's economy, hampered by bad harvests and bureaucratic stagnation, continued to decline, Gorbachev's popularity with his people plummeted. Using the new openness he allowed, they spoke out against him and his system. Furthermore, inspired by events in Eastern Europe, the country's fifteen 15 Soviet Socialist Republics, each dominated by a different nationality, began demanding national independence. By late 1990 all 15 had proclaimed some form of autonomy—including even Russia, the largest Soviet republic, encompassing three quarters of the USSR's territory and over half its people (Map 34.7).

Gorbachev tries to sustain USSR as republics assert independence

Hoping to halt the USSR's disintegration, in January 1991 the Soviets sent forces into Latvia and Lithuania, two small Soviet republics that had declared outright independence. Scrambling to save the situation, Gorbachev then promoted a new "union treaty" designed to give the republics internal autonomy while preserving the overall union in foreign and military affairs. The treaty, however, enraged communist hard-liners, who wanted to preserve strong centralized control and thus saw the treaty as a betrayal of Soviet interests and principles.

Hard-line coup attempt foiled by Yeltsin, head of Russian republic

On August 19, 1991, the day before the treaty was scheduled to be signed, eight hard-liners, including the defense minister and head of security police, attempted an ill-conceived coup. Visibly fortified with vodka, they publicly declared a state of emergency and ordered troops to occupy major cities. Having earlier detained Gorbachev, however, they failed to arrest Boris Yeltsin, outspoken head of the Russian republic. Climbing atop a tank in front of the Russian parliament building in Moscow, Yeltsin boldly urged mass resistance to the coup. Soon thousands gathered in support, defying police and military forces assembled on the scene. When commanders, unsure of their troops' loyalty and anxious to avoid a bloodbath, decided the next day not to order an assault, the coup leaders had no way to assert control. Within a few days they gave in, ending the abortive "vodka putsch" and letting Gorbachev resume his duties.

Soviet Union crumbles as Russians and others withdraw

But momentum had by this time passed to Yeltsin and the heads of the other republics, who each asserted more independence following the coup. Gorbachev strove to devise a new union treaty, hoping to preserve some Soviet authority, but few paid any attention. After several months, Russia and many other republics formed a Commonwealth of Independent States, a loose coalition with no central control, and agreed to dissolve the USSR. On December 25, 1991, when Gorbachev reluctantly resigned his post, the once-mighty Soviet Union ceased to exist.

Map 34.7 Disintegration of the Communist Bloc, 1989–1992

In 1989 revolts in Eastern Europe brought independence to former Soviet satellites, and in 1990 the republics making up the USSR also began to assert autonomy. Notice that, despite Soviet leader Gorbachev's efforts to preserve the Soviet Union, by the end of 1991 it had disintegrated into 15 separate countries, most of which formed a Commonwealth of Independent States. Note also that Yugoslavia split apart in 1991–1992, and that Mongolia abandoned communism in 1992, leaving China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba as the only remaining communist countries. How did the Eastern European revolts of 1989 help to trigger the USSR's disintegration two years later?

The World Transformed

In a few years, then, the global situation had completely changed. The Soviet bloc was gone, Germany was reunited, and the USSR had split into 15 separate states. Communism survived in China and Cuba, as well as Vietnam and North Korea, but none of these regimes could approach the might of the former Soviet Union. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, anti-Western regimes and rebels could no longer look for Soviet support, leaving them thus vulnerable to the impositions of America, the sole surviving superpower. The communists had lost the Cold War.

Post-Soviet Russia tries democracy but soon becomes repressive

Russia still had formidable forces, but it lacked political and economic stability throughout the 1990s. Yeltsin, who served as president from 1991 to 1999, was plagued by ill health and by challenges to his authority from the Russian parliament and from Chechnya, a small southern region that sought to break from Russia and form a separate republic. His successor, Vladimir Putin, a former officer in the Soviet security police, sought to crush the Chechnya revolt and suppress internal dissent, silencing critics and taking control of the media and provincial governors. In the early twenty-first century, while

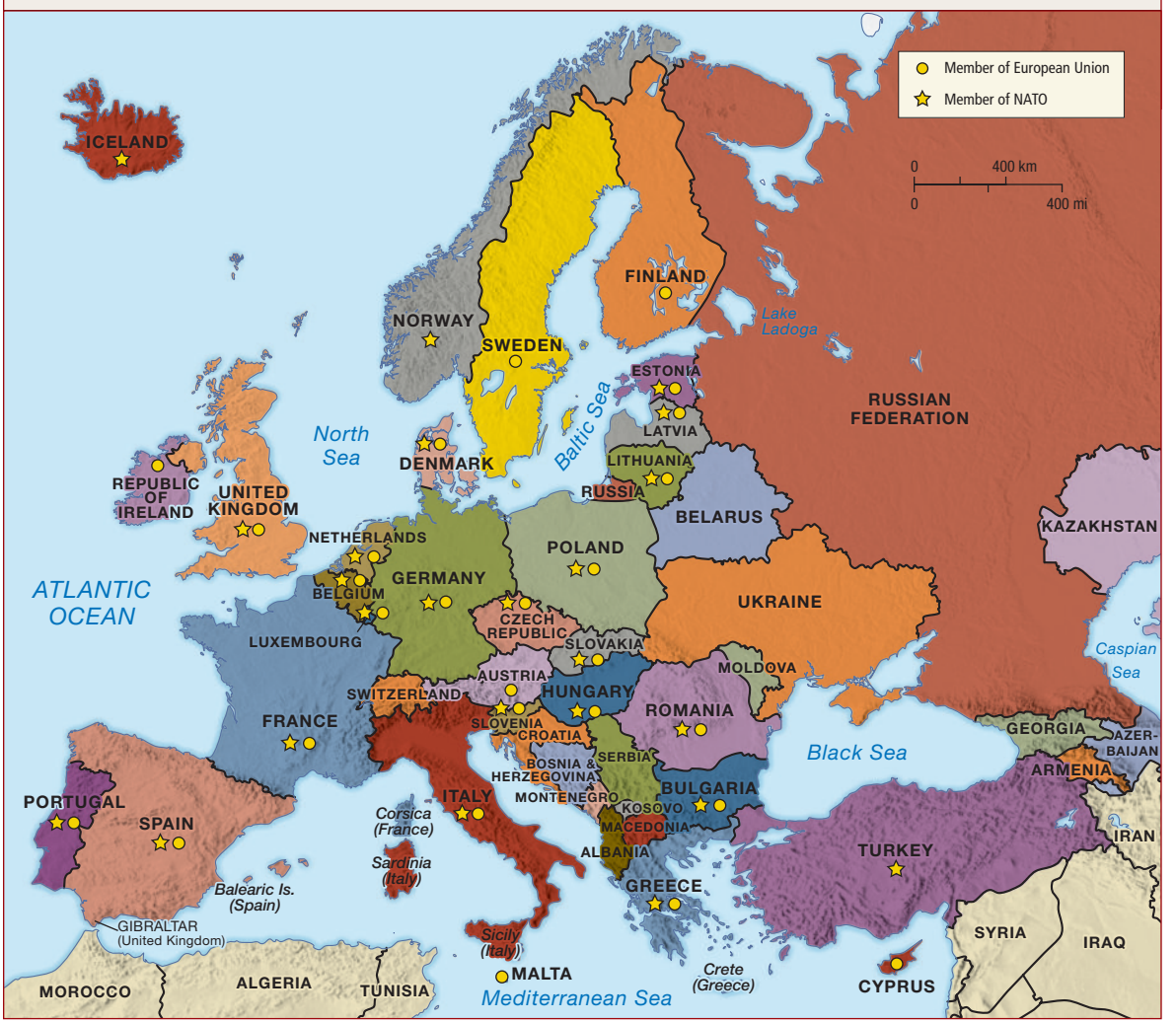
Russia's democratic freedoms waned, its economic clout increased, owing to global demand for its vast oil and natural gas resources.

Europe, no longer divided between communism and capitalism, moved toward even greater unity, as former Soviet satellites joined NATO and the European Union (Map 34.8). The breakup of Yugoslavia into smaller republics in 1991 led to bloody ethnic wars in

European Union and NATO admit former Soviet satellites

Map 34.8 Twenty-First Century Europe: Fragmentation and Integration

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Europe experienced both increased fragmentation and increasing integration. Observe that the breakups of the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia created many new independent European nations, while the expansion of NATO and the European Union connected many European nations militarily and economically. Why did French and Dutch voters refuse to ratify a new European Constitution in 2005, thereby slowing efforts to increase Europe's political integration?



Bosnia (1992–1995) and Kosovo (1998), but NATO involvement eventually brought a fragile peace to the region.

United States faces severe global challenges despite unrivaled power and wealth

The United States, emerging from the Cold War as the world's only superpower, enjoyed unrivaled influence and prosperity throughout the 1990s. But an economic downturn in 2000, and the subsequent failures of several large U.S. corporations, showed that American capitalism faced serious problems. So did American security. After Islamic terrorists, angered at U.S. policies in the Middle East, used hijacked airliners to kill thousands of Americans in September 2001 (Chapter 37), the nation felt newly vulnerable to terrorist attacks. A U.S. invasion of Iraq two years later divided America and damaged its global standing, since Iraq had not been directly involved in the September attacks, and since American-led occupying forces failed for years to stabilize Iraq.

The end of the Cold War thus brought neither peace nor global stability. The terrifying and traumatic superpower struggle was over, but conflicts over beliefs and resources, intensified by clashes between cultures, continued to challenge the world.

Chapter Review

Putting It in Perspective

The Cold War divided the world into two immense armed camps, led by competing superpowers, driven by conflicting ideals, and characterized by contrasting political and economic systems. The capitalist West and communist East struggled for supremacy through a series of crises, any of which could have led to all-out war, all the while striving to avoid such war since it would destroy them both and much of the world. Stalemated in Europe, they battled for influence in Asia and Africa, where conflicts in such places as Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Angola, and Afghanistan took millions of lives. For four decades humanity endured both the ongoing dread of unlimited war and the ongoing reality of limited wars occurring somewhere in the world.

Humanity nonetheless survived the Cold War. America achieved great prosperity while leading the West against Soviet communism, but also was torn by internal divisions regarding race, gender, morality, and the U.S. role in the world. Western Europeans, while losing their colonies and looking to America for defense against the Soviet Union, overcame age-old divisions to unite militarily and economically. The Soviets relied mainly on armed force, sacrificing prosperity in order to sustain their vast military might, while using the constant threat of force to keep subject peoples in line. When Gorbachev, hoping to refocus Soviet resources on economic growth, acted to reduce the armed forces and remove the threat of force, the Soviet empire crumbled and the Cold War came to an end.

The Cold War had extensive global impact. It compounded anticolonial conflicts, aggravated regional upheavals, and complicated efforts to achieve stability in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. The next three chapters discuss these efforts and upheavals.

Reviewing Key Material

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ASK YOURSELF

1. Why did the Cold War begin? How did the differing ideals, actions, and perspectives of Soviet and Western leaders contribute to the onset of the Cold War?
2. Why did the Cold War expand into a global confrontation? Why did the USSR aid anticolonial movements and former European colonies? Why did such aid often fail to advance the spread of communism?
3. What were the main Cold War crises? Why did each occur, and how was it resolved? Why did efforts at peaceful coexistence in the 1950s and détente in the 1970s fail to end the Cold War?
4. How did life in the Soviet bloc differ from life in the West during the Cold War? What problems and divisions beset Soviet and Western societies?
5. What major strategies did each side adopt in the Cold War? What were the major strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet bloc and of the West? Why did the West prevail in the Cold War?
6. What actions and decisions by Soviet and Western leaders led to the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet empire?

GOING FURTHER

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Key Dates and Developments

1945	Yalta and Potsdam conferences
1947	Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan
1948–1949	Berlin blockade and airlift
1949	NATO Treaty, communist victory in China
1950–1953	Korean War
1955	Warsaw Pact
1957	Soviet ICBM and Sputnik, European Common Market
1960	U-2 Affair
1961	Berlin Wall erected
1962	Cuban Missile Crisis
1965–1973	Direct U.S. involvement in Vietnam
1968	Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia
1972	Nixon's China visit; Soviet-American arms control pact
1979–1989	Soviet involvement in Afghan War
1989	Fall of Berlin Wall, revolutions in Eastern Europe
1990	Reunification of Germany
1991	Disintegration of USSR
1993	Formation of European Union