The Cold War (1947–1980)

After the defeat of Germany, the Grand Alliance (Big Three) of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union failed to hold together. Once again, Europe became the battleground of a new war—the Cold War. The origins of the Cold War stemmed from the ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, and disputes over Eastern Europe. By 1950, the Iron Curtain was in place and Western and Eastern Europe were going their separate ways. Despite efforts to coexist with the West after the death of Stalin in 1953, the Soviet Union maintained a firm grip on Eastern Europe and crushed any efforts at freedom by these satellite countries, establishing an empire in Eastern Europe that served as a buffer against any attacks. The split between the Soviet and Western Blocs influenced policies in other parts of the world, and the tensions of the Cold War led to the creation of a nuclear weapons system that cost billions of dollars and raised the fear of nuclear disaster.

Battered Europe recovered quickly and successfully with the aid of the Marshall Plan and economic cooperation among Western European nations regulating the coal, iron, and steel industries. The European economic miracle was also made possible because European nations coordinated the distribution of American aid so that barriers to European trade were quickly dropped. By the 1970s, a revitalized West Germany sought to bring about reconciliation between Eastern and Western Europe. These efforts achieved some success.

The devastating effects of World War II also contributed to the decline of European empires. England and France were too weak to hold on to their colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The changes that affected Europe’s growth and the decline of her imperial empires foreshadowed the winds of change that swept across Europe in the 1980s and ultimately led to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communism in Europe.

The Cold War and Communism after World War II

The United States and the Soviet Union had cooperated to defeat the Axis powers in World War II. However, conflicting ideology and mutual distrust led to the Cold War, a continuing state of tension and hostility between the two superpowers.

The uneasy relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was based on philosophical differences: The United States was a democratic capitalist country and the Soviet Union was a totalitarian communist state. At first, the focus of the Cold War was on Eastern Europe, whose territories the Soviet Union occupied. Stalin had forced pro-Soviet communist governments onto the Eastern European countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The Red Army had overrun these countries on their march towards Berlin. Thus these countries became Soviet satellites and served as a defensive shield for the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia, however, did not fall under Soviet control. Although Josip Broz, known as Marshal Tito (1882–1980), was a communist ruler, he defied Stalin and pursued nationalist policies. Tito was able to act independently because Soviet troops did not occupy Yugoslavia and the country did not border on the Soviet Union.

The Western powers feared the spread of communism. In a 1946 speech at Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill proclaimed that an “Iron Curtain” had descended over Eastern Europe. Churchill’s Iron Curtain speech became a symbol for the growing fear of communism as well as the division of Europe into the Soviet-dominated countries of Eastern Europe and the Western Bloc of democratic countries led by the United States. The Cold War rivalry divided Europe and led to crises around the world. Although the two superpowers never fought each other outright, they were involved in small-scale fighting by supporting opposite sides.

Greece and Turkey

In 1947, the government of Greece was in serious danger of being overthrown by the Greek communists. If Greece fell, Turkey could also be in danger of becoming a Soviet puppet state. Britain informed the United States that it was unable to help Greece, and the United States accepted the challenge. In February of 1947, President
Truman asked Congress for $400 million in American military aid for Greece and Turkey. The **Truman Doctrine** was the opening shot in the Cold War, asserting that the United States would support “free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures”—in other words, any country that rejected or resisted communism. The United States declared that its goal was to contain communism or limit communism to the areas already under Soviet control. United States aid helped to keep Greece and Turkey from falling under communist control.

### Berlin Blockade (1948–1949) and the Two Germanys

At the end of World War II, Germany was divided into four zones of occupation. Berlin was also divided into four zones: American, British, French, and Soviet. In 1948, the Soviet Union announced that the Allies could no longer use the land routes to Berlin that passed through the Soviet zone of occupation. This was because Stalin was angry that the West did not agree with him on a German unification plan and that the three Western Allies (Britain, France, and the United States) had decided to unite their zones of occupation. He was also upset about currency reform (the introduction of new currency for the Western zones) that foreshadowed the creation of West Germany. To thwart the blockade, the Western powers resorted to an airlift. The **Berlin Airlift** lasted for almost a year (321 days) as the United States flew in supplies of food and other necessities on a daily basis. In 1949, the Soviet Union lifted the blockade. In May 1949 the three Western allies formed the Federal Republic of Germany with the city of Bonn as its capital and the Soviet zone became known as German Democratic Republic with East Berlin as its capital. They became informally known as West Germany and East Germany.

### North Atlantic Treaty Organization (1949)

The threat of the Soviet Union and its bloc of Communist states to the security of Western Europe led to the formation of the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** in 1949. NATO was a military defensive alliance formed by the United States, Canada, and ten Western European countries to help each other if any one of the nations were attacked. In 1952, Greece and Turkey were admitted, and in 1955, West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany) became a member. The Soviet Union responded in 1955 by forming its own military alliance, the **Warsaw Pact**, consisting of the U.S.S.R. and seven satellites in Eastern Europe.

### Birth of the Nuclear Race

In 1949, the same year that NATO was formed, the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb. The United States no longer had a nuclear monopoly. In 1952, the United States announced that it had developed a hydrogen bomb, or H-bomb, a thousand times more destructive than the atomic bomb. In 1953, the Soviet Union announced that it, too, had tested an H-bomb. The nuclear race continued throughout the Cold War.

### Victory in China

In 1949, after decades of civil war, the Communists under **Mao Tse-tung** (1893–1976) defeated the Nationalist forces of **Chiang Kai-Shek** (1887–1975), despite the economic and military aid given to the Nationalists by the United States. The Communists were successful because of the support of the Soviet Union, Mao’s promise of land to the peasants, and corruption within the Nationalist forces. In 1949, Kai-Shek fled to Taiwan, an island off the Chinese coast. Throughout the 1950s and ‘60s, the United States recognized the Nationalist government as the legitimate government and refused to recognize Mao’s Communist government.

### Korean War (1950–1953)

At the end of World War II, Korea was divided at the **38th Parallel** into the South, which was controlled by the United States, and the Soviet zone in the North. The Cold War intensified as Stalin backed the North Korean invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950. The United Nations Security Council (which met in Lake Success, Long Island, but without Soviet representatives, who were voluntarily absent) sponsored a resolution calling on North Korea to withdraw. When the request was ignored, the United Nations asked member nations to provide
military aid and contribute troops. The majority of the military support came from the United States. In 1951, a cease-fire was discussed, but talks dragged on for the next two years. In 1953, an armistice was signed that still left Korea a divided country at the 38th Parallel.

Death of Stalin/De-Stalinization

In 1953, Stalin's death started a bitter struggle for power in the Soviet Union. Georgy Malenkov (1903–1988) served as Premier, but party leaders exercised control behind the scenes. This so-called Troika consisted of Lavrenti Beria (1899–1953), head of the Secret Police, and Vyacheslav Molotov (1889–1986), the Foreign Minister, who were determined that no one should dominate any regime in the way that Stalin had. However, Beria was soon arrested and executed. Malenkov was ousted after two years and replaced by Nikolai Bulganin (1895–1975), who was a mere figurehead. Molotov was demoted to a lower position and disappeared from public life. Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) emerged as the new party leader by 1958.

Khrushchev pursued a policy of de-Stalinization and, in 1956, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party, attacked the abuses of power that had taken place during Stalin's long years as the party leader. Assaulting Stalin's cult of personality, and claiming that Stalin had not followed the policies of Marxism and Leninism, Khrushchev initiated a “thaw in the Cold War” and called for peaceful coexistence. Under Khrushchev, Communist goals did not change, but a policy of liberalization began. Soviet economic life improved and greater intellectual freedom was allowed. (Soviet novelist Boris Pasternak was not allowed to accept the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1958, however). Peaceful coexistence led to a relaxation of tension with the West. In 1955 representatives from Britain, France, and the United States met with Soviet representatives at the Geneva Summit. They discussed East-West relations in a friendly atmosphere but were unable to resolve their differences.

Uprisings in Poland and Hungary (1956)

Khrushchev's anti-Stalin campaign led to Nationalist revolts in Poland and Hungary. Workers in Poland went on strike for better working conditions and greater independence. Władysław Gomułka (1905–1982), who had recently been released as a political prisoner, managed to win greater concessions for Poland while calming anti-Soviet feelings.

In Hungary, people revolted and demanded that the Soviet troops leave. Imre Nagy (1896–1958), a liberal Communist reformer, became president and declared Hungary's neutrality and withdrew from the Warsaw Pact. Khrushchev sent in a large army with tanks and crushed the rebellion. The Soviets deposed Nagy and installed a puppet regime under János Kádár (1912–1989).

U-2 Incident/Summit Meeting

In 1959, when Khrushchev came to the United States, visited Disneyland, and appeared on American television, the Cold War tensions seemed to be diminishing. However, this hope ended quickly. In June 1960, prior to the Paris Summit Conference, the Soviet Union shot down an unarmed American U-2 reconnaissance, or spy plane, piloted by Francis Gary Powers, deep inside Soviet territory. In Paris, Khrushchev demanded an apology from the United States for the plane's presence; when President Eisenhower refused to apologize, the summit ended. Subsequently, the crisis in Berlin and Cuba added to Cold War tensions. However, Eisenhower did admit that the plane was spying and agreed to suspend flights over the Soviet Union.

Berlin Wall

In August of 1961, shortly after John F. Kennedy was elected president, Khrushchev ordered the construction of the Berlin Wall, which was built by the East Germans. The wall was made of concrete blocks and barbed wire and extended along the border between East and West Berlin, sealing off East Berlin in violation of existing agreements. It is estimated that about 171 people were killed or died trying to escape the Berlin Wall and that around 5,000 were successful in escaping. The Berlin Wall became an ugly symbol of the Cold War and the failure of the communist system.
Cuban Missile Crisis

In 1959, Fidel Castro (b. 1926) had overthrown the corrupt Cuban government of Fulgencio Batista (1901–1973), while promising to restore democracy. In 1961, he proclaimed Cuba to be a communist state and began receiving support from the Soviet Union. In 1962, Khrushchev ordered missiles with nuclear warheads installed in Cuba, and President Kennedy announced a naval blockade of Cuba. During 13 tense days in October, the Cuban Missile Crisis was defused. The Soviets agreed to remove the missiles, and in return the United States promised not to invade Cuba. Party conservatives blamed Khrushchev for his de-Stalinization program, the split between China and the Soviet Union, the Cuban fiasco, and the failure to improve agricultural and industrial production. In October of 1964, Khrushchev was forced into retirement and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev (1906–1982).

The Brezhnev Era (1964–1982)

Next to Stalin, Leonid Brezhnev ruled the Soviet Union longer than any other leader. Brezhnev and his supporters stressed the ties with the Stalinist era by focusing on his good points and ignoring his crimes. Brezhnev strengthened the Soviet bureaucracy as well as the KGB (Committee of State Security)—formed in 1954; its mission was to defend the Soviet government from its enemies at home and abroad. The KGB suppressed dissidents who spoke out against the government at home and in the satellite countries. The Soviets also invested in a large military buildup and were determined to never again suffer a humiliating defeat, as happened in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Yet Brezhnev proceeded cautiously in the mid-1960s and sought to avoid confrontation with the West. He was determined, however, to protect Soviet interests.

Brezhnev Doctrine (1968)

In 1968, Alexander Dubček (1921–1992) became head of the Czechoslovakia Communist Party and began a series of reforms known as the Prague Spring reforms, which sought to make communism more humanistic. He lifted censorship, permitted non-communists to form political groups, and wanted to trade with the West, but still remain true to communist ideals. Brezhnev viewed these reforms as a capitalistic threat to the socialist ideologies of communism and, in August of 1968, sent over 500,000 Soviet and Eastern European troops to occupy Czechoslovakia. In the Brezhnev Doctrine, he defended the Soviet military invasion of Czechoslovakia, saying in effect, that antisocialist elements in a single socialist country can compromise the entire socialist system, and thus other socialist countries have the right to intervene militarily if they see the need to do so.

The Brezhnev Doctrine was seriously tested in Poland. Throughout the 1970s, Poland had suffered economic hardship and Polish workers had rioted in 1970 and 1976 against increased food prices. In 1980, scattered strikes spread across Poland to protest the rise in meat prices. Lech Walesa (b. 1943), an electrician at the Gdansk shipyards, organized Solidarity, an independent trade union that called for political, industrial, and economic changes. Solidarity had the support of millions of workers, intellectuals, and the Catholic Church. In 1978, Karol Wojtyła, (1920–2005) the former archbishop of Krakow, Poland, was elected Pope John Paul II, the first Polish pope. He supported the struggle for the rights of people across the world, especially in his native country. Solidarity created concern in the Soviet Union, as well as in other Soviet Bloc nations. However, still facing criticism from its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the Soviets played a waiting game. When Solidarity began to lose its cohesiveness, the Polish Communist leadership declared martial law and arrested Walesa and other leaders. Solidarity went underground and fought with great popular support, paving the way for greater changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the latter half of the 1980s.

Détente

During the 1970s, a spirit of détente developed in the Cold War. Détente means a progressive relaxation of tension, and involved the following events:
■ 1972: President Richard Nixon visited Moscow. The United States and the Soviet Union signed significant accords on space flights, health, and trading agreements. These accords included an agreement on joint space flight, cooperation in medical, science, and public health, and the end of the prohibition of shipping of American goods to the Soviet Union. They also signed the SALT I Accord (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks), which was designed to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. Limits were set on both long-range missiles (intercontinental ballistics missiles) and defensive missiles.

■ 1973: Brezhnev visited the United States and spoke to the American people via television.

■ 1975: The United States, Canada, and 33 European nations met at Helsinki, Finland to sign the Helsinki Pact. The European countries formally agreed to recognize Soviet territorial gains in Europe, the division of Germany into two nations, and Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union, the United States, and the other European nations also agreed to further the cause of human rights.

The spirit of détente came to an end with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in order to keep Afghanistan's Communist government in power, again using the Brezhnev Doctrine to justify the invasion. Many in the West were convinced that the Soviets were violating the spirit of détente. The Afghanistan invasion drained the Soviet economy and morale at home.

By the time of Brezhnev's death in 1982, the Soviet Union faced many serious problems. The centralized economy was still inefficient and unable to produce enough food to feed the people, so the Soviet Union had to import grain from the capitalist nations. The Soviet bureaucracy had little understanding of how the centralized economy had failed the people. Within the next few years, sweeping changes dramatically altered the future of Communism in the Soviet Union.

Political and Economic Recovery in Europe

World War II left Europe with a devastated infrastructure and in a weakened economic condition. In 1947, United States Secretary of State George Marshall (1880–1959) offered economic aid to all European countries. The Marshall Plan, officially known as the European Recovery Program, provided over $13 billion in aid for foodstuff, machinery, and raw materials. The goal of the program was to achieve recovery, not relief, and to lessen the dangers of communism. Stalin forbade Eastern European countries to accept this aid and promised that the Soviet Union would help them instead.

As the Marshall Plan aid poured in, the battered economies of Western Europe began to improve. They rebuilt factories, farms, and transportation systems destroyed in the war. The close cooperation among European nations as required by the Marshall Plan also promoted economic growth. In 1950, French statesman Jean Monnet (1888–1979) and Foreign Minister Robert Schuman (1886–1963) proposed an economic union of Western European nations to integrate all European coal and steel production. In 1951, France, West Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg accepted this idea. They set up the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). By 1958, coal and steel moved freely among these six nations.

In 1957, these same six nations that formed the ECSC established the European Economic Community (EC) or the Common Market. The goal of the organization was the reduction of all tariffs among the six countries and the inclusion of free movement of capital and economic policies and institutions. By 1973, Britain, Denmark, and Ireland joined. The Common Market was a great success. In the 1980s, the Common Market expanded to include Greece (1981) and Spain and Portugal (1986); it became known as the European Union in 1993. This union benefited Western Europe in several ways. By promoting economic cooperation among individual European nations, it reduced the threat of conflict. It also enabled Western Europe to compete for world markets with North America and East Asia.
West Germany

West Germany led the economic miracle. A free market economy with a social welfare network brought economic growth to West Germany. Politically, Germany evolved into a stable democracy. The United States worked closely with the Christian Democratic Union (heirs to the old Catholic Centre Party, which had been organized in the 1870s to defend Catholic interests) to ensure that West Germany became an integral part of the Western alliance. From 1949 to 1963, Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967) provided strong leadership that helped to revive West Germany. At the age of 73, Adenauer (“Der Alte”—the old one) worked to rebuild the German economy by using the influx of refugees from Eastern Europe as a valuable labor resource in building up the country. Under his leadership, West Germany rebuilt their factories, cities, and trade. By the mid-1950s, industrial production surpassed prewar German levels, and by the 1960s, West Germany had become one of the leading economies in Western Europe. In April 1963, Ludwig Erhard (1897–1977), who had been Adenauer’s economic minister, succeeded him. Under Erhard’s leadership, the economy suffered a temporary recession. In 1969, Willy Brandt (1913–1992), leader of the Social Democratic Party and former Mayor of West Berlin, became chancellor. Brandt was the first Socialist chancellor in 40 years and began his policy of “Ostpolitik,” or Eastern Policy, seeking reconciliation between East and West Germany. He signed treaties with the Soviet Union, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, and also signed a treaty of mutual recognition with East Germany. Although Brandt’s long-term goal of German unification would take another twenty years, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1971 for his efforts to improve relations with Eastern Europe and East Germany. However, in 1974, Brandt resigned because a close personal aide on his staff confessed that he was an East German spy. In that same year, the Socialist Democrats chose Helmut Schmidt (b. 1918) as successor. Poor economic conditions in addition to an attack by the Greens, a loose coalition of environmentalists, pulled strength away from the Socialists and ended Schmidt’s rule in 1982. Helmut Kohl (b. 1930), a conservative Christian Democrat, became chancellor of West Germany until 1990 and of the reunited Germany from 1990 to 1998. His sixteen-year tenure was the longest of any chancellor since Otto von Bismarck.

Great Britain

World War II battered Great Britain’s economy. In 1945, the Labour Party under Clement Attlee (1883–1967) assumed power and began to transform Great Britain into a welfare state, nationalizing industries and expanding social programs to include social security and national health insurance. The National Health Service granted every citizen the right to free medical, dental, hospital, and nursing care. The Labour government was succeeded by three conservative governments: Churchill from 1951 to 1955, Anthony Eden (1897–1977) from 1955 to 1957, and Harold Macmillan (1894–1986) from 1957 to 1963. These conservative leaders restored some private enterprise to the iron and steel industries, introduced some fees for national health, and accepted the basic outline of the welfare state. Labour returned to power under Harold Wilson (1916–1995) from 1964 to 1970, restoring free medical service from cradle to grave, as well as state-funded universities and public housing programs.

Throughout the 1970s, power shifted between the Conservative and Labour Parties. Inflation, created by the Arab oil embargoes of 1973 and 1979, caused problems for England. Labor productivity was low. The pound was devalued in 1976 and frequent strikes hurt the economy. In 1979, Margaret Thatcher (b. 1925), a Conservative, became Britain’s first female prime minister and served three consecutive terms in office. As prime minister, she advocated privatization of state-owned industries, curbing the power of the trade unions, cutting the size of the government bureaucracy, trimming welfare services, and lowering taxes, especially for the rich. Thatcher’s policies succeeded in reducing inflation but unemployment dramatically increased. Thatcher was controversial and due to her strong standards and her leadership style, she became known as the “Iron Lady”—adapting as her political mantra a nickname the Soviet communists had coined as an insult. Her famous statement, “the lady’s not for turning,” refers to her refusal to back down on key issues. Thatcher and American President Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) became close friends because of their strong distrust of communism and their firm belief in the private market system. Next to Winston Churchill, Thatcher was the longest-serving British Prime Minister in more than 150 years. Her efforts to introduce market principles into the National Health Service and the educational system as well as her opposition to any closer integration with Europe led to divisions within the Conservative Party. The British film, and later play, Billy Elliot, provides a view of how Thatcher broke the power of coal miners during the strike of 1984–85. The closing of many of these mines created a national controversy. Victory in the Falklands War against Argentina in 1982 and divided opposition helped Thatcher win a landslide victory in 1983. She
narrowly escaped death in 1984 when the IRA planted a bomb at a Conservative political convention. In November 1990, she agreed to resign and was succeeded by John Major (b. 1943). Major was the leader of the Conservative Party until 1997. He followed most of Thatcher’s policies but was a greater advocate of European integration.

France

At the end of World War II, France was a weak country. The French Fourth Republic, set up at the end of World War II, suffered from the same weaknesses as the Third Republic: a weak executive and a strong legislature comprised of too many political parties—a combination that led to multiparty coalitions and frequent changes in government. In 1958, the threat of civil war in the North African colony of Algeria resulted in the downfall of the Fourth Republic. In 1958, Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970) was called out of retirement to head an emergency government. The National Assembly voted to give de Gaulle complete power for six months to draw up a new constitution for the country. That same year, de Gaulle set up the French Fifth Republic, which was accepted by an overwhelming majority. Its constitution provided for a much stronger presidential office with the power to dissolve the legislature, submit popular issues to the people, and assume emergency power whenever necessary. De Gaulle became the first president of the Fifth Republic. Through de Gaulle’s efforts, French prestige and power were restored and stability returned to the country. In July 1962, de Gaulle solved the Algerian issue by granting the colony its independence.

In his foreign policy, de Gaulle tried to make France an independent force in world affairs. His strongly nationalistic policies angered the United States and Great Britain. In 1963, he opposed British entry into the Common Market. In 1966, he decided to withdraw all French troops from NATO and demanded that all NATO bases and headquarters be removed from French soil. He even advocated the building of an independent French nuclear force. In 1965, de Gaulle had been reelected to a second term. However, by 1968, concern over inflation and housing as well as his expenditures on nuclear policies rather than on education, led to student revolts and strikes by 10 million workers. De Gaulle survived politically by promising educational reforms and wage increases. In April 1969, de Gaulle demanded a referendum to support a new constitution that would reduce the power of the Senate. His proposal for changes was rejected and he was forced to resign. De Gaulle’s successors, Georges Pompidou (1911–1974), president from 1969–1974 and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing (b. 1926), who was president from 1974 to 1981, continued to follow an independent foreign policy. However, France did finally agree to British entry into the Common Market. Like the rest of Europe, the economic recession of the 1970s and early 1980s hurt the country’s prosperity. The French Socialist François Mitterrand (1916–1996), who was president from 1981 to 1995, tried to revive the economy by nationalizing private companies and banks and increasing wages and other social benefits. However, the economic crisis deepened and Mitterrand was forced to cut social programs and taxes. Mitterrand was able to control inflation but unemployment increased. France continued to face economic problems during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Italy

At the end of World War II, Italy rejected and removed the monarchy, which had been associated with fascism, and set up a republic. Postwar Italy was economically divided into two regions: the prosperous and industrial north and the rural south, which was primarily agricultural. Politically, Italy had a multiparty system like France, and the Christian Democrats, who were allied with the Catholic Church, dominated the national scene. The leading figure in post-Fascist Italy was Alcide De Gasperi (1881–1954), who provided strength and stability for seven formative years. In the 1948 election, De Gasperi, supported by the United States and the Vatican, won a major victory over the Communists who were bidding for power. As in France, Italy’s Communist Party was strong, but never won enough votes to form a majority government. After 1948, the Christian Democrats would govern the country, but without the majority that they had won in 1948. Financial scandals and political corruption hurt the national parties. Yet, the alliance of the Catholic Church and the Christian Democrats supplied national unity to Italian politics by providing prime ministers with a coalition government.

Despite these problems, Italy developed economically, and by the 1970s had advanced into one of the ten industrial powers. However, as in other European countries, the Arab oil embargo adversely affected the economy, which was more dependent on oil imports than other industrialized countries. By 1973, Italy’s inflation rate was
25 percent, and was still 16 percent in the early 1980s; her unemployment rate was high and the lira had dropped in value. Italy also suffered from terrorism, and the 1978 assassination of Aldo Moro (1916–1978), a respected Christian Democrat and former prime minister, by a radical group known as the Red Brigades, added to the difficulties of the Italian government. However, in January 1983 about 25 members of the Red Brigades were sentenced to life imprisonment in connection with Moro’s kidnapping and murder. By 1986, internal security had improved. A major effort against organized crime was under way by the mid 1980s: over 1,000 suspects were convicted in trials against the Camorra in Naples and the Mafia in Sicily. Although there have been 48 coalition governments in Italy from 1945 to 1988, Italy has remained a stable country.

The End of Colonialism

The post–World War II era marked the final collapse of European imperialism. Winston Churchill had hoped to maintain control of the vast holdings of the British Empire, but Britain was militarily too weak to defend its possessions. The Cold War also undermined British imperialism, as the United States supported the right of people to self-determination, and so did the Soviet Union. The demise of the empire began in 1947, when India, “the jewel in the crown,” declared its independence. This began a chain reaction. In 1948, the British withdrew from Palestine and left to the United Nations the task of determining the area’s future. The Jewish state of Israel was created out of part of British-controlled Palestine.

The Arab nations of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria refused to accept (and have still not accepted) the state of Israel and immediately attacked it. The Israeli army defeated these nations but the issue of a Palestinian state was still not resolved. Wars broke out in 1956, 1967, and 1973. In Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956, ending British control. Britain, France, and Israel invaded, but the United States and the Soviet Union immediately condemned the attack. Working through the United Nations, they secured the withdrawal of the invading forces and stationed a United Nations Emergency Force on the Egyptian border. The negative response by the United States and the Soviet Union was a reminder to Britain that the “sun was setting on the British Empire.” By 1957, Ghana declared its independence and the rest of the British African Empire declared its independence without any major upheavals.

The Dutch and French did not relinquish their control over the colonies as readily as Britain. During World War II, the Dutch colonies fell under Japanese control. After the war, Indonesian Nationalists set up a republic. The Dutch tried to restore control, but the United Nations Security Council secured a cease-fire, and in 1949 granted independence to Indonesia. France also struggled to maintain its empire in Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos). After World War II, the French promised partial independence, but their offer was rejected. Led by Nationalist Ho Chi Minh (1890–1969), the Vietnamese, who had fought against the Japanese in World War II, waged an eight-year struggle for freedom. In 1954, France lost Vietnam. The Geneva Accord recognized the independence of Cambodia and Laos and divided Vietnam into the North (backed by the Communists) and the South (supported by the United States). Despite massive American aid to South Vietnam and the commitment of about 500,000 troops in the 1960s, South Vietnam could not defeat the North Vietnamese. In 1968 the guerrilla forces (Viet Cong) launched a massive attack on American and South Vietnam forces. Although this assault which took place during the Tet or Vietnamese New Year did not capture any major cities, it convinced Americans that the war was not going well. Growing antiwar sentiment eventually forced the United States to withdraw in 1973. In 1975 North Vietnam captured Saigon, the capital of the south and the country was united. By 1956, the French had also ended their colonial rule over Morocco and Tunisia. The struggle over Algeria was different, as the French had controlled Algeria since 1830 and French settlers and the French military opposed Algeria’s independence. Civil war threatened the country over this issue. In 1958, Charles de Gaulle took over the government and in 1962 made peace with Algeria and granted her independence. Within two decades of the conclusion of World War II, the colonial empires of the Western countries had been dismantled.
## Chronology of the Cold War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Potsdam Conference—Truman and Stalin disagree over the Yalta Conference on Eastern Europe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Churchill gives his “Iron Curtain” speech.</td>
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<td>1947</td>
<td>India becomes independent. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan are announced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>The Berlin Blockade begins. The Berlin Airlift lasts for 321 days. Marshal Tito breaks with the U.S.S.R. State of Israel is created.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>The Berlin Blockade ends. NATO is formed. Chinese Communists defeat the Nationalists. The Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic are created. The Soviet Union tests an atomic bomb.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>The Korean War begins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Greece and Turkey join NATO. The United States tests the H-bomb.</td>
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<td>1953</td>
<td>Joseph Stalin dies.</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh defeats the French at Dien Bien Phu.</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>The Warsaw Pact is formed.</td>
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<td>1956</td>
<td>Khrushchev begins de-Stalinization. Uprisings occur in Poland and Hungary. Suez Canal Crisis takes place.</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>The European Common Market is formed. The U.S.S.R. launches Sputnik I and Sputnik II—the first earth satellites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Belgian Congo becomes free.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>The Berlin Wall is built.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>John Glenn orbits the earth. The Cuban Missile Crisis occurs.</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>Dr. Michael Ellis DeBakey demonstrates the first use of an artificial heart.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Leonid Brezhnev becomes General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>South African cardiac surgeon Christian Barnard performs the first successful heart transplant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Apollo 11 lands on the moon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser dies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>President Nixon visits Moscow, signs SALT I treaty, limiting anti-ballistic missile systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Oil crisis affects the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Pope John Paul II elected as the first Polish pope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Margaret Thatcher leads Conservative Party to victory. The Soviets invade Afghanistan. The United States imposes a grain embargo on the Soviet Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Solidarity is formed in Poland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>François Mitterrand is elected President of France.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The revolt in Hungary (1956), the demonstrations in Czechoslovakia (1968), and the formation of Solidarity in Poland (1980s) are similar in that they

A. were movements to restore the power of the aristocracy.
B. were tolerated by the Communist leaders, who accepted the need for change.
C. represented a challenge to Communist leadership.
D. represented attempts to rid these countries of Western ideas and influence.
E. were attempts by the Communists to provide humanitarian aid.

4. Which of the following leaders is associated with the Prague Spring of 1968?

A. Lech Walesa
B. Alexander Dubček
C. Władysław Gomulka
D. Imre Nagy
E. Václav Havel

5. Which was one of the causes of the Cold War between the United States and the U.S.S.R. after World War II?

A. The struggle for colonies in Africa
B. The Soviet Union's support of Fidel Castro
C. Rivalry in Asia
D. Ideological differences
E. The United States' support of dissidents within the Soviet Union

6. Which had the greatest impact on ending the Summit meeting of 1960?

A. Fidel Castro’s announcement that he was a communist
B. The claim that the United States promoted revolution in Hungary and Poland
C. An American U-2 spy plane being shot down by the Soviet Union
D. The construction of the Berlin Wall
E. Refusal of the United States to abandon military bases in Western Europe
7. Nikita Khrushchev introduced the policy of
   A. peaceful coexistence.
   B. détente.
   C. perestroika.
   D. glasnost.
   E. Spirit of Glassboro.

8. The most significant occurrence in Africa since 1950 has been the
   A. decrease in the birth rate.
   B. decline of European colonialism.
   C. unification of East African nations.
   D. establishment of communist regimes in most nations.
   E. establishment of industrial economies.

9. The Labour Party which controlled the English government after World War II introduced a
   A. democracy.
   B. welfare state.
   C. communist state.
   D. corporate state.
   E. capitalist state.

10. The primary purpose of the European Common Market (European Community) was to
    A. create a central location for the distribution of goods.
    B. force Eastern European nations to change their trading partners.
    C. establish a tariff-free flow of goods among member nations.
    D. reduce European dependence on foreign oil reserves.
    E. promote a one-product economy.
**Multiple-Choice Questions: Answers and Explanations**

1. **C.** The map represents Europe at the beginning of the Cold War during which NATO was formed (1949). Consisting of Western European countries and the United States, NATO was a defensive alliance against communism. The Warsaw Pact (1955) consisted of the U.S.S.R. and seven satellite nations in Eastern Europe. The Crimean War was fought in 1854 and involved Russia, Great Britain, and France. The Triple Alliance and Triple Entente were formed in the late 1890s and early twentieth century. The League of Nations was created in 1920.

2. **C.** Revolts broke out in Poland and Hungary. Khrushchev’s policy of de-Stalinization and his speech before the 20th Congress, attacking Stalin’s cult of personality, led to a thaw in relations with the Western countries, and Poland and Hungary perceived Khrushchev’s policy of liberalization as a mandate for change. Workers in Poland went on strike for better working conditions. In Hungary, the people demanded that Soviet troops leave. In 1956, Khrushchev sent the Soviet army to crush the Hungarian revolt. Khrushchev’s policy led to a relaxation of tension and not to democratic elections or revolts in Yugoslavia. There was no improvement in relations with the Catholic Church. The Russian author, Boris Pasternak, received the Nobel Prize in Literature but was not allowed to travel to Sweden to accept it.

3. **C.** The revolt in Hungary, the demonstrations in Czechoslovakia, and the formation of Solidarity in Poland are similar in that they represented a challenge to Communist leadership. In Hungary, Imre Nagy was a liberal Communist who wanted to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. In Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubček wanted to liberalize his Communist regime, and Solidarity was formed to promote political and social changes. In Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union sent in troops. In Poland, the Communists declared martial law and arrested Solidarity leaders. These movements were designed to change Communism, not restore the power of the aristocracy. These movements were not tolerated by the Communists nor were they attempts to provide humanitarian aid. These movements were interested in promoting Western ideas of democracy and not an attempt to rid their countries of Western influence.

4. **B.** Alexander Dubček began the series of reforms known as the Prague Spring reform. He wanted to bring about more humanistic socialism such as lifting censorship and trading with the West. The reform movement was crushed. Lech Walesa was the leader of the Polish Solidarity movement. Walesa was an electrician at the Gdansk shipyard who organized Solidarity, an independent trade union. In 1990, he was elected president of the Republic of Poland after the fall of Communism. Władysław Gomułka was part of the Polish uprising in 1956. Imre Nagy was the Hungarian leader who opposed the Soviet Union in 1956. Václav Havel was a playwright who was elected President of Czechoslovakia in 1989 and the first President of the Czech Republic in 1993.

5. **D.** Ideological differences were one basic cause of the Cold War between the United States and the U.S.S.R. after World War II. The United States’ political system is based on democracy, capitalism, and the importance of the individual. Both the United States and the U.S.S.R. supported self-determination in Africa to end Western imperialism. They disagreed on which form of government they would follow. Soviet support of Fidel Castro began in the 1950s. Rivalry in Asia existed among the United States, Soviet Union, and China. The United States’ support of dissidents within the Soviet Union was an ideological outgrowth of a difference between communism and democracy.

6. **C.** On May 1, 1960, the Soviets shot down a CIA spy plane and captured the pilot, Francis Gary Powers. The United States first issued public denials, but President Eisenhower was later forced to admit the plane had been spying on the Soviet Union. On May 16, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev lashed out at President Eisenhower at the Paris summit meeting between the two heads of state. Khrushchev’s outburst angered Eisenhower and doomed any chances for successful negotiations at the summit. The summit meeting officially adjourned the next day with no further meetings between the two men. Eisenhower’s planned trip to Moscow in June was cancelled. Castro’s announcement that he was a communist and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 did not affect the Paris summit meeting, but added to the Cold War tensions during the Kennedy administration. The uprisings in Poland and Hungary had occurred in 1956. The issue of military bases in Western Europe was not discussed at the Paris summit meeting.
7. A. Nikita Khrushchev introduced a policy of peaceful coexistence after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. Although Khrushchev believed that the Soviet Union would eventually bury the United States, he sought nonviolent ways to compete and coexist with non-communist nations. He introduced a relaxation of tensions, or a thaw with the United States. Yet by 1961, he built the Berlin Wall and brought the United States to the brink of war in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Détente is associated with the Brezhnev regime. Mikhail Gorbachev introduced perestroika and glasnost. The Spirit of Glassboro was a meeting between United States and Soviet leaders held in New Jersey in 1967, which produced nothing of substance.

8. B. The decline of European colonialism is the most significant occurrence in Africa since 1950. At the end of World War II, most of Africa was under European rule. By 1959, the following nations were independent: Libya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, and the Union of South Africa. Since 1959, more than 40 nations have gained their independence. The population in Africa has been increasing despite the AIDS epidemic. There has been no unification of East African nations. Communism is no longer a threat to the African continent. Despite its vast resources, most of Africa has not been industrialized.

9. B. The Labour Party introduced the welfare state after World War II. Clement Attlee, the Labour Prime Minister who succeeded Winston Churchill in 1945, transformed Britain into a welfare state. The Labour Party introduced social programs that provided public housing and established old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, and the creation of a National Health Service, or free medical care. The Conservatives, under Margaret Thatcher in 1979, began to roll back the welfare state. England has had a parliamentary-type democracy since 1689. It has never followed a communist or corporate form of government. The Labour Party nationalized the Bank of England but did not introduce communism to England.

10. C. The primary purpose of the European Common Market was to establish a tariff-free flow of goods among member nations. In 1957, the European Common Market was formed by six industrialized Western nations to expand trade by ending tariffs and allowing capital and labor to move freely across the borders of these European nations. The Common Market was a trade agreement, not a distribution center for goods. It was only for Western industrialized countries. The Common Market did not reduce dependence on foreign oil reserves as the Arab Embargo of the 1970s demonstrated. The Common Market was for industrialized and diversified economies.