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In the summer of 1959, the world was treated to a verbal slugfest—subsequently known as the kitchen debate—between representatives of the world's two most powerful nations. In July of that year the vice president of the United States, Richard M. Nixon (1913–1994), arrived in Moscow to open the American National Exhibition, a rare display of U.S. goods on Russian soil. Nixon's host, Soviet premier Nikita S. Khrushchev (1894–1971), was in no mood, however, to embrace his guest from the capitalist United States. The U.S. Congress had just passed the “captive nations” resolution, which openly criticized the Soviet Union for mistreating its satellite nations, and Khrushchev was convinced that Nixon's visit to Moscow was timed to humiliate the Soviet leader publicly.

Before visiting the exhibit, Khrushchev and Nixon met privately and exchanged heated words about captive nations. According to Nixon's memoirs, the colorful and candid Soviet premier initiated the conversation by remarking, “It stinks like fresh horse shit, and nothing smells worse than that.” The equally frank Nixon—aware that Khrushchev had tended pigs in his youth—quickly replied, “There is something that smells worse than horse shit and that is pig shit.” Having thus set the mood, Nixon and Khrushchev descended on the exhibit, where they continued their barbed exchange.

The high point of their vocal showdown took place in the kitchen of a U.S. model house built expressly for the exhibit. Without hesitation, Khrushchev mocked the many modern appliances in the kitchen, including a lemon juicer and a built-in dishwasher. In his opinion they epitomized “the capitalist attitude toward women.” Besides, Khrushchev argued, the working class could never afford such useless gadgets in the first place. Stung by the criticism, Nixon poked a finger at the chest of the Soviet premier and boisterously declared that any U.S. steelworker could purchase this \$14,000 home. What followed was an unrehearsed polemical discourse on communism and capitalism, climaxing with a dispute concerning the relative merits of everything from dishwashers to missiles.

The kitchen debate between Nixon and Khrushchev took place at the height of the cold war and illustrated how deep the rift between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) had grown since 1945. The cold war was a strategic struggle that developed after World War II between the United States and its allies on the one hand and the USSR and its allied communist countries on the other. Yet the confrontation was more than an instance of great-power rivalry; it was also a tense encounter between rival social and economic systems and competing political ideologies. It was this clash between the

OPPOSITE: The visceral beauty of nuclear explosions, such as this one in the Marshall Islands in 1954, masked the terror and the tensions that beset the Soviet Union, the United States, and the rest of the world during the cold war.

forces of capitalism and communism that gave rise to a new set of global relationships, shaping the foreign policies, economic systems, and political institutions of nations throughout the world. The cold war signaled a major realignment in international relations and the global balance of power.

The geopolitical and ideological rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States lasted almost five decades and affected every corner of the world. The cold war was responsible for the formation of military and political alliances, the creation of client states, and an arms race of unprecedented scope. It engendered diplomatic crises, spawned military conflicts, and at times brought the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation. It was a contest in which neither side gave way, yet in the end the United States and the Soviet Union always avoided a direct clash of arms, hence the term *cold war*. However devoid of direct military conflict, the cold war nonetheless spurred ideological clashes and led to changing societal and economic practices in the Soviet Union and United States. Societies in this atmosphere could not avoid scrutiny and comparison. Discontented women and African-Americans in U.S. society protested the failings of democratic capitalism, while Soviet and east European societies had difficulty matching the increasing wealth and consumerism of western European and U.S. societies.

The Formation of a Bipolar World

The cold war began at the end of World War II, and its initial arena was war-torn Europe. By the time Germany surrendered in the spring of 1945, the wartime alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States was disintegrating. With the advent of peace, the one-time partners increasingly sacrificed cooperation for their own national interests. The competing ideologies of capitalism and communism shaped the postwar aims of the two superpowers. (The term *superpower* came into use during this period to distinguish their supreme global power from the more limited resources of other, merely great, powers.) The hostility between these new adversaries resulted in a divided world. First Europe, and Germany in particular, was split into separate blocs and states. Then the cold war became global in scale as the superpowers came into conflict in nations as far afield as Korea and Cuba.

The Cold War in Europe

Among the first manifestations of the cold war was the division of the European continent into competing political, military, and economic blocs—one dependent on the United States and the other subservient to the USSR—separated by what Winston Churchill called an “iron curtain.” In essence, both blocs adopted the political institutions, economic systems, and foreign policies of the two superpowers. Thus western European nations that were tied to the United States embraced parliamentary political systems and capitalist economic structures and adjusted their foreign policies to the U.S. vision of the postwar world. On the other hand, under the watchful eyes of Soviet occupation armies, the governments of eastern European states adopted Soviet political and economic institutions and supported Moscow’s foreign policy goals. Outside Europe, members of the socialist and capitalist blocs often diverged significantly from the political and economic norms of their patrons. Nevertheless, when it suited their needs, both sides in the cold war welcomed regimes that practiced neither democracy nor socialism.

A Divided Germany

The fault lines of cold war Europe were most visible in Germany. There in 1948–1949 an international crisis arose when the Soviet Union pressured the western powers to relinquish their jurisdiction over Berlin. After the collapse of Hitler’s



Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon sharing a rare “lighter” moment during the kitchen debate.

Third Reich, the forces of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France occupied Germany and its capital, Berlin, both of which they divided for administrative purposes into four zones. In accordance with agreements made at Yalta, specific travel corridors running through the Soviet occupation zone of Germany gave the French, British, and Americans access from their sectors in Berlin to their respective zones of occupation in western Germany. Tensions mounted between Soviet authorities and their western counterparts in 1947–1948 after the western powers decided to merge their occupation zones in Germany into a single economic unit and to introduce a new currency, the German mark, throughout their occupation zones and in their sectors of Berlin.

The Soviets retaliated by blockading all road, rail, and water links between Berlin and western Germany. The Soviet Union maintained that western economic measures violated wartime agreements and, on 24 June 1948, announced that the four-power administration of Berlin was no longer in effect and that the Allies no longer had any jurisdiction there. Two days later, in the first serious test of the cold war, the Americans and British responded with an airlift designed to keep the city’s inhabitants alive, fed, and warm. For eleven months, in a daunting display of airpower, American and British aircrews flew around-the-clock missions to supply West Berlin with the necessities of life. Tensions remained high during the airlift, but the cold war did not turn hot. Stymied by British and U.S. resolve and stung by an embargo on exports from communist countries, the Soviet leadership called off the blockade in May 1949, though the airlift continued until September. The blockade failed to force the British, French, and Americans to vacate their advance outpost deep in communist-controlled eastern Europe. In the aftermath of the blockade, the U.S., British, and French zone of occupation coalesced to form the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) in May 1949. In October the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) emerged out of the Soviet zone of occupation. A similar process repeated itself in Berlin, which was deep within the Soviet zone. The Soviet sector formed East Berlin and became the capital of the new East Germany. The remaining three sectors united to form West Berlin, and the West German capital moved to the small town of Bonn.

Blockade and Airlift



Map 38.1 **Occupied Germany, 1945–1949.** Locate the city of Berlin in Soviet-controlled territory. How was it possible for the British, American, and French to maintain their zones of control in Berlin, given such geographical distance from western Germany?

Berlin Wall

By 1961 the communist East German state was hemorrhaging from a steady drain of refugees who preferred life in capitalist West Germany. Between 1949 and 1961 nearly 3.5 million East Germans—many of them young and highly skilled—left their homeland, much to the embarrassment of East Germany's communist leaders. In August 1961 the communists reinforced their fortification along the border between East and West Germany, following the construction of a fortified wall dividing the city of Berlin. The wall, which began as a layer of barbed wire, quickly turned into a barrier several layers deep, replete with watchtowers, searchlights, antipersonnel mines, and border guards ordered to shoot to kill. Although the erection of the Berlin Wall was an obvious violation of four-power control in Germany, the United States and its British and French partners avoided a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union for fear that the crisis would escalate into a full shooting war. In subsequent years several thousand East Germans escaped to West Germany, often by ingenious means, but several hundred others paid with their lives for attempting to do so. Meanwhile, the Berlin Wall accomplished its purpose of stemming the flow of refugees, though at the cost of shaming a regime that obviously lacked legitimacy among its own people.

The Nuclear Arms Race

A central feature of the cold war world was a costly arms race and the terrifying proliferation of nuclear weapons. The struggle between the United States and the

Soviet Union led to the creation of two military blocs: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO (1949), intended to serve as a military counterweight to the Soviet forces in Europe, and the Warsaw Treaty Organization, or Warsaw Pact (1955), established as a response to the rearming of West Germany. Because the United States was determined to retain military superiority and because the Soviet Union was equally determined to reach parity with the United States, both sides amassed enormous arsenals of thermonuclear weapons and developed a multitude of systems for deploying those weapons. Not until the 1960s did the Soviet Union approach parity, and by the end of that decade both sides had achieved what Richard Nixon later called “essential equivalence” in their strategic forces. Thus by 1970 both superpowers had acquired the capacity for mutually assured destruction, or MAD. Yet the balance of terror restrained the contestants and stabilized their relationship, with two important exceptions.

Confrontations in Korea and Cuba

With the unforeseen outbreak of hostilities on the Korean peninsula in the summer of 1950, the focus of the cold war shifted from Europe to east Asia. At the end of World War II, the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States had partitioned Korea along the thirty-eighth parallel of latitude into a northern Soviet zone and a southern U.S. zone. Because the superpowers were unable to agree on a framework for the reunification of the country, in 1948 they consented to the establishment of two separate Korean states: in the south, the Republic of Korea, with Seoul as its capital and the conservative anticommunist Syngman Rhee (1875–1965) as its president; in the north, the People’s Democratic Republic of Korea, with Pyongyang as its capital and the revolutionary communist Kim Il Sung (1912–1995) as its leader. After arming their respective clients, each of which claimed sovereignty over the entire country, U.S. and Soviet troops withdrew.

On the early morning of 25 June 1950, the unstable political situation in Korea came to a head. Determined to unify Korea by force, the Pyongyang regime ordered more than one hundred thousand troops across the thirty-eighth parallel in a surprise attack, quickly pushing back South Korean defenders and capturing Seoul on 27 June. Convinced that the USSR had sanctioned the invasion, the U.S. government lost no time persuading the United Nations to adopt a resolution requesting all member states “to provide the Republic of Korea with all necessary aid to repel the aggressors.” Armed with a UN mandate and supported by token ground forces from twenty countries, the U.S. military went into action. U.S. forces were unable to dislodge the North Koreans, who inflicted a series of humiliating defeats on the Americans during the summer of 1950. In September, however, following an extremely risky but successful amphibious operation at Incheon (near Seoul) far behind North Korean lines, U.S. forces went on the offensive. Americans and their allies eventually pushed North Korean forces back to the thirty-eighth parallel, thereby fulfilling the UN mandate. Sensing an opportunity to unify all of Korea under a friendly government, U.S. leaders sent American forces into North Korea, where they soon occupied Pyongyang. Subsequent U.S. advances toward the Yalu River on the Chinese border caused the government of the



Barbed wire and a concrete wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin symbolized the cold war division of Europe.

The Korean War



In August 1950, U.S. troops marched toward North Korea while South Koreans moved in the opposite direction to escape the fighting.

People's Republic of China to issue a warning; the U.S. incursion across the thirty-eighth parallel threatened Chinese national interests and could result in Chinese intervention in the Korean conflict.

When U.S. leaders gave no indication of heeding China's warning, some three hundred thousand Chinese soldiers surged across the Yalu River into North Korea. A combined force of Chinese and North Koreans pushed U.S. forces and their allies back into the south, and the war settled into a protracted stalemate near the original border at the thirty-eighth parallel. After two more years of desultory fighting that raised the number of deaths to three million people—mostly Korean civilians—both sides finally agreed to a cease-fire in July 1953. The failure to conclude a peace treaty ensured that the Korean peninsula would re-

main in a state of suspended strife that constantly threatened to engulf the region in a new round of hostilities. The war had also intensified the bitterness between north and south, making the prospect for a unified Korea even more remote.

Beyond the human casualties and physical damage it wrought, the Korean conflict also encouraged the globalization of containment. Viewing the North Korean offensive as part of a larger communist conspiracy to conquer the world, the U.S. government extended military protection and economic aid to the noncommunist governments of Asia. It also entered into security agreements that culminated in the creation of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), an Asian counterpart of NATO. By 1954 U.S. president Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969), who had contemplated using nuclear weapons in Korea, accepted the famous “domino theory.” This strategic theory rationalized worldwide U.S. intervention on the assumption that if one country became communist, neighboring ones would collapse to communism the way a row of dominoes falls sequentially until none remains standing. Subsequent U.S. administrations extended the policy of containment to areas beyond the nation's vital interests and applied it to local or imagined communist threats in Central and South America, Africa, and Asia.

The Cuban missile crisis of 1962, which brought the superpowers to the brink of a nuclear exchange, dramatically underscored the risks inherent in extending the cold war throughout the world. The one region the United States had declared off-limits to all foreign intrusion, including Soviet influence, was the western hemisphere; the

The Globalization of Containment

Cuba: Nuclear Flashpoint



■ Prime Minister Fidel Castro of Cuba addresses a rally.

United States believed its dominance here was undisputed. Ironically, the cold war confrontation that came closest to unleashing nuclear war took place not at the expected flashpoints in Europe or Asia but on the island of Cuba.

In 1959 a revolutionary movement headed by Fidel Castro Ruz (1926–) overthrew the autocratic Fulgencio Batista y Zaldivar (1901–1973), whose regime had gone to great lengths to maintain the country's traditionally subservient relationship with the United States and especially with the U.S. sugar companies that controlled Cuba's economy. Denouncing Yankee imperialism, Castro worked to limit its operations, purging the Batista supporters remaining in Cuba and seizing foreign properties and businesses, most of which were U.S. owned. He also accepted assistance from the Soviet Union, which fueled U.S. fears about his communist leanings. The U.S. government promptly retaliated by cutting off Cuban sugar imports to the U.S. market and imposing a severe export embargo of U.S. goods on Cuba. Officials in the Eisenhower administration also cut diplomatic relations with Cuba and secretly began planning an invasion of the island.

The severing of ties between Cuba and the United States gave the Soviet Union an unprecedented opportunity to contest the dominant position of the United States in its own hemisphere. Soviet support also provided Castro with a buffer against U.S. hostility, and Castro's regime accepted a generous Soviet offer of military and economic aid, including an agreement to purchase half of Cuba's sugar production. Before long thousands of Soviet technicians, advisors, and diplomatic personnel arrived in Cuba. In return for the Soviet largesse, Castro declared his support for the USSR's foreign policy. This he did loudly and dramatically on 26 September 1960. Clad in battle fatigues, he delivered a four-and-a-half-hour lecture to the UN General Assembly.

Cuba's alignment with the Soviet Union spurred the U.S. government to action. Newly elected President John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) gave the go-ahead to the invasion of Cuba planned by the previous administration and intended to overthrow

The Bay of Pigs

Castro and his supporters. In April 1961 a force of 1,500 anti-Castro Cubans trained, armed, and transported by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) landed on Cuba at a place called the Bay of Pigs. The arrival of the invasion force failed to incite any internal uprising, and when the promised American air support failed to appear, the invasion quickly fizzled. Within three days, Castro's military had either captured or killed the entire invasion force. The Bay of Pigs fiasco diminished U.S. prestige, especially in Latin America. It also, contrary to U.S. purposes, actually strengthened Castro's position in Cuba and his commitment to communism. In December 1961 Castro publicly announced, "I have been a Marxist-Leninist all along, and will remain one until I die." The failure of the Bay of Pigs led members of the U.S. government and CIA to institute "Operation Mongoose," a clandestine campaign aimed at destabilizing Cuba and assassinating Castro. The invasion attempt likely encouraged Castro to accept and the Soviets to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba as a deterrent to any future invasion.

The Cuban Missile Crisis

On 22 October 1962 President Kennedy went on national television to inform the public about the U.S. discovery of offensive nuclear missiles and launch sites in Cuba and to frame the nation's response to this crisis. The Soviet government apparently took this bold step to protect the Castro government, give the USSR greater diplomatic leverage vis-à-vis the United States, undermine U.S. credibility in the region, and gain more influence in Latin America. Whatever the precise motives, the deployment of nuclear missiles that could reach targets in the United States within minutes represented an unacceptable threat to U.S. national security. Under pressure from Congress to deal with the Soviet menace, President Kennedy delivered his public ultimatum, calling on the Soviet leadership to withdraw all missiles from Cuba and stop the arrival of additional nuclear armaments. To back up his demand, Kennedy imposed an air and naval quarantine on the island nation that went into effect two days later. The superpowers seemed poised for nuclear confrontation, and for a week the world's peoples held their collective breath.

Negotiations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. continued during these emotional days, and Nikita Khrushchev best understood the seriousness of the risk of a superpower nuclear showdown over Cuba. He agreed to Kennedy's demand that he withdraw the missiles on the condition that the United States pledge to not invade Cuba. He also received a promise from Kennedy, though one not to be made public, that U.S. missiles in Turkey would be removed. Khrushchev informed the public of the end of the crisis in a worldwide radio broadcast on 28 October, and global tension began to ebb. Nonetheless, the Cuban missile crisis revealed the dangers of the bipolar world, because the world trembled during this crisis, awaiting the apocalypse that potentially lurked behind any superpower encounter.

Cold War Societies

The global political arena after World War II resounded with clashes stemming from the cold war and decolonization. The conflicts emanating from those dual forces naturally had repercussions in societies around the world. Postwar social transformations demonstrated how domestic policies and international affairs often become linked, particularly as peoples living in disparate parts of the world discovered commonalities and differences, mutual sympathies and antipathies. Cold war competition for allies prodded the United States and the Soviet Union to commit their financial resources, military and diplomatic personnel, and goods and services to diverse countries that experienced firsthand encounters with superpower representatives. Officials



*Domestic
Containment and
Female Liberation*

of the superpowers also came face-to-face with one another for the first time in the late 1950s, and those meetings suggested the extent to which Soviet and U.S. societies had also transformed as a result of the cold war and decolonization.

When Nikita Khrushchev and Richard Nixon squared off in the kitchen debate in Moscow, their argument underscored the importance of women and domesticity as a means of understanding the differences between their respective societies—and by extension, between all capitalist and communist societies. Citizens of the United States, like Nixon, celebrated the wondrous home appliances that made the lives of housewives and mothers so comfortable and that distinguished these U.S. women from their toiling Soviet counterparts. Clinging to the notion that U.S. women best served their families and their nation by staying home and rearing patriotic children, social and political leaders in the United States believed that families provided the best defense against communist infiltration in their nation. Women did not need to work, as they did in the Soviet Union, because their husbands earned enough to support the family in suburban splendor and because a mother's most important job was keeping the family happy and loyal.

Cold war concerns about the spread of communism reached into the domestic sphere, particularly in the United States. Politicians, FBI agents, educators, and social commentators warned of communist spies trying to undermine the institutions of U.S. life, and Senator Joseph McCarthy (1909–1957) became infamous in the early 1950s for his unsuccessful quest to expose communists in the U.S. government. Supporting any radical or liberal cause, or behaving in any odd way, subjected citizens of the United States to suspicions about their loyalty. Thousands of citizens—especially those who were or once had been members of the Communist Party—lost their jobs and reputations after being deemed risks to their nation's security. Conformity to a socially sanctioned way of life became the norm during the early, most frightening, years of the cold war. Staying safely protected in family life meant avoiding suspicion and ignoring some of the more anxious elements of the cold war as waged by the United States—the atomic peril in particular. Some scholars have dubbed this U.S. retreat to the home and family “domestic containment,” indicating its similarity to the U.S. foreign policy of the containment of international communism.

Although the burden of domestic containment fell on all members of the family, women were most affected by its restraints. Married women in the United States worked in larger numbers during the cold war than during World War II, and many resented having to feel shame or guilt at not living up to the domestic ideals being showcased on the new and widely viewed television shows that sustained the U.S. public during the cold war. Not all women aspired to be June Cleaver on *Leave It to Beaver* (1957–1963 TV show), and female discontent with postwar domesticity in the United States helped to fuel the modern feminist movement. Aligning themselves to some extent with women in societies such as the Soviet Union and taking inspiration from women in Asia and Africa who fought for their independence from the colonial powers—and often won legal equality as a result—U.S. women rejected cold war norms and agitated for equal rights.

Building on the dissatisfaction that surfaced after World War II with their often forcible return to the home from war work, women in European and North American societies expressed a newfound understanding of their oppression at the hands of men. French writer Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) wrote *The Second Sex* in 1949, denouncing the second-class status of women. In 1963 U.S. author Betty Friedan (1921–) published *The Feminine Mystique*, laying bare the severe unhappiness of women who presumably enjoyed the best life the United States could offer. Feminists provided one signal that not all was well within the capitalist orbit, as African-Ameri-

cans and university students around the world also contested elements of cold war life. When student radicals objected to U.S. policies in Vietnam, for example, by rioting and demonstrating from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, it became clear that a consensus about cold war policies had broken down. Women activists adopted the language and terms of Marxism and anticolonialism in their quest for equality and independence. They referred to women as an “oppressed class” and argued against male “colonization” of female bodies and for “women’s liberation.” Support for domestic containment, and containment itself, wavered.

A cross-fertilization between domestic and foreign policies and between European, American, and decolonizing societies took place throughout the early cold war years. This condition was particularly noticeable in regard to black nationalism, in the Caribbean, the United States, and the newly emerging states in Africa. The reggae music of Jamaican Bob Marley (1945–1981) spread throughout the world, rallying blacks to the cause. Marley’s song “Get Up Stand Up,” although written as a form of resistance to persistent racism and poverty in Jamaica, nonetheless spoke to millions of blacks struggling for their freedom. In his song, Marley urged people to stand up for their rights and to continue fighting for them.

Africans and African-Americans were influenced by the radical ideas of another black nationalist from Jamaica, Marcus Garvey (1887–1940), who advocated that U.S. blacks seek repatriation in Africa. Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972), who later led Ghana to independence from colonial rule, familiarized himself with the works of Garvey while studying in the United States. Moderate civil rights leaders in the United States who distanced themselves from more radical forms of black nationalism, however, also adopted the ideas and strategies of other nationalist leaders fighting for independence from colonial rule. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968), the most prominent of these leaders, relied openly on the Indian leader Mohandas K. Gandhi’s examples of passive nonresistance and boycotting in the struggle to win African-Americans their equality and independence in the United States.

The coinciding of the cold war with the modern civil rights movement in the United States showed the links between domestic and foreign policies. The Soviet Union could and did use the appalling conditions of African-Americans to expose the weaknesses of the capitalist system in the United States. In virtually every sphere of life, southern U.S. states institutionalized segregation, a system of laws and customs designed to separate blacks and whites. African-Americans contended with segregation and the loss of voting rights, widespread discrimination, and extralegal violence. Discrimination was less pronounced in northern states, where African-Americans could usually vote, but informal segregation practices also influenced northern society. U.S. politicians and lawmakers recognized the adverse propaganda value of this institutionalized racism during the cold war. The U.S. Supreme Court in 1954 ruled segregation in the schools illegal in *Brown v. Board of Education*, but it was direct action on the part of African-Americans—through the civil rights movement—that brought down segregation and impediments to voting.

The civil rights movement was first and foremost a challenge to segregation. In 1955, when Rosa Parks, an African-American woman living in Montgomery, Alabama, refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man—as required by law—she accelerated a civil rights revolution that resulted in major advances for blacks in the United States. African-Americans in Montgomery refused to ride city buses until they were desegregated, and the Montgomery bus boycott—led by Martin Luther King—proved the effectiveness of Gandhi’s methods. King went on to lead numerous marches and demonstrations and, despite the violence visited on him and his followers, to win major civil rights battles. Until his assassination in 1968, King clung to his

Black Nationalism

The Civil Rights Movement

Sources from the Past

Nikita Khrushchev on the Capitalist Iron Curtain

In early 1946 Winston Churchill (1874–1965) delivered his “Iron Curtain” speech, stirring audiences with its image of a Europe firmly and frighteningly divided between communist and capitalist nations and marking, for some, the beginning of the cold war. Fifteen years after Churchill delivered his speech, Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) acknowledged the power of Churchill’s imagery by using it in his own speech to the Communist Party Congress. In his 1961 “Report to the Communist Party Congress,” Soviet premier Khrushchev blasted capitalism with the same force Churchill had employed in his earlier condemnation of communism.

Comrades! The competition of the two world social systems, the socialist and the capitalist, has been the chief content of the period since the 20th Party Congress [February 1956]. It has become the pivot, the foundation of world development at the present historical stage. Two lines, two historical trends, have manifested themselves more and more clearly in social development. One is the line of social progress, peace and constructive activity. The other is the line of reaction, oppression and war.

In the course of the peaceful competition of the two systems, capitalism has suffered a profound moral defeat in the eyes of all peoples. The common people are daily convinced that capitalism is incapable of solving a single one of the urgent problems confronting mankind. It becomes more and more obvious that only on the paths to socialism can a solution to these problems be found. Faith in the capitalist system and the capitalist path of development is dwindling. Monopoly capital, losing its influence, resorts more and more to intimidating and suppressing the masses of the people, to methods of open dictatorship in carrying out its domestic policy and to aggressive acts against other countries. But the masses of the people offer increasing resistance to reaction’s acts.

The ruling circles of some imperialist powers have elevated subversive activities against the socialist countries to the level of state policy. With cynical frankness, the United States of America is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on espionage and subversion against socialist countries and organizing so-called “guerrilla units,” assembling in them criminal elements and cut-throats prepared to undertake the vilest crimes for money. For

several successive years the United States has been holding provocation “captive nations weeks.” The hired agents of the monopolies call “captive” all those peoples who have liberated themselves from imperialist bondage and taken the path of free development. Truly, imperialist demagoguery and hypocrisy know no bounds!

Our society is open to those people who come to us from abroad with open hearts. It is open to honest trade, to scientific, technical and cultural exchanges, to the exchange of truthful information. If it’s an iron curtain we’re talking about, where it really exists is in the world of capitalism, which, though dubbing itself the “free world,” every now and then fearfully slams its gates shut to Soviet people, one moment to our cooks, the next to our chess players. There was a case where one state, which calls itself the “most open,” was afraid to let in Soviet dancers. Can they really have feared that Russian folk dancing might shake the foundations of the capitalist world?!

We have long proposed to the capitalist world that we compete not in an arms race but in improving the working people’s lives. We are confident that capitalism cannot stand up under that kind of competition! We are confident that in the end all peoples will make the correct choice, will give their preference to the truly free world of communism and turn their backs on the so-called “free world” of capitalism.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Why did Khrushchev contend that faith in capitalism had dwindled and that the true “iron curtain” closed capitalist nations to outside contacts?

SOURCE: Nikita Khrushchev. “Report to the Communist Party.” In *Current Soviet Policies IV*, ed. Charlotte Saikowski and Leo Gruliov, from the translations of *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 1962.

dream of black equality in the United States, a nation pressured by the cold war and African liberation movements to accede rights to its black population.

The United States fell short in cold war ideological battles in its treatment of African-Americans, but the Soviet Union had difficulty matching the United States and its allies in the provision of material wealth, leisure, and consumer goods. Like women and domesticity, consumerism became one means of distinguishing communist and capitalist societies. This issue too gave bite to the kitchen debate between Nixon and Khrushchev. As the two squabbled over the significance of appliances, it was apparent that the Soviet Union and its satellites had achieved success with military and scientific endeavors, but had not provided their people with the stuff of dreams—automobiles, Hollywood movies, record albums, supermarkets, or month-long paid vacations. European and North American peoples suffered atomic anxiety and the insecurity of living in the cold war world, but the postwar economic prosperity that stemmed in part from waging the cold war relieved some of that pain.

*Cold War
Consumerism*

The contrasting economic and social conditions of western and eastern Europe after World War II demonstrated the different lifestyles that emerged in Europe during the cold war. Western European nations experienced what many people termed an economic miracle, recovering swiftly from the war's devastation. Starting with an infusion of \$13 billion from the U.S. Marshall Plan between 1948 and 1952, west European government leaders rebuilt their nations by encouraging economic growth and by providing social services that outpaced those in the United States—including, over time, the guarantee of a thirty-day paid vacation. The increased standard of living and consumerism in western Europe was visible in the rapidly growing numbers of Europeans driving the automobiles they could afford. In 1955 only five million people owned cars in western Europe. By 1963 that figure had jumped to forty-four million.

Although Soviet and eastern European societies could not compete with the abundance of consumer goods available in the United States and western Europe, they could take pride and some comfort from the technological triumphs enjoyed by the Soviet Union in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Soviet experts demonstrated to the world their apparent superiority in science and technology when in the late 1950s news spread that a workable intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) had been tested. That success was overshadowed on 4 October 1957 by the more spectacular Soviet launching into space of the first satellite, *Sputnik*. Between the ICBM and *Sputnik*, the Soviets grabbed the initiative in the newly dubbed space race, an extraterrestrial form of the cold war. The Soviet head start in this race provoked panic among U.S. citizens and politicians. A deep questioning of U.S. social and educational systems followed, and it intensified in April 1961 when the Soviets rocketed cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin (1934–1968) into space, where he became the first man to orbit the earth.

The Space Race

The United States soon copied those Soviet successes in space with its own—launching the satellite *Explorer I* in 1958 and sending astronaut John Glenn (1921–) into orbit in 1962. When John F. Kennedy became president, having worried for years about the missile and space gaps between the United States and the Soviet Union, he dedicated himself and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to the task of landing a man on the moon. That came to fruition on 20 July 1969 when *Apollo XI* gently set down on the moon's Sea of Tranquility and thereby ensured that Americans were the first to make this “great leap for mankind.” The moon landing reassured U.S. citizens of their world status, but the earlier years of the cold war had left them insecure about missile gaps and diminished scientific ingenuity in a society relentlessly devoted to consumerism.

However buoyed by their scientific prowess, the peoples of the Soviet Union and eastern European nations experienced less economic growth and enjoyed far fewer

Peaceful Coexistence

consumer items and far less leisure than did their counterparts in western Europe and North America. After the war, Stalin imposed Soviet economic planning on governments in east Europe and expected the peoples of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe to conform to anticapitalist ideological requirements in their cultural productions. Rebellious artists and novelists found themselves silenced or denounced in an exaggerated and reversed form of McCarthyism (anticommunist repression) that affected government workers, writers, and filmmakers in the United States in the same years. A relaxation of economic and cultural dictates took place after Stalin's death in 1953 and during most of the years of Khrushchev's leadership in the Soviet Union. With respect to foreign policy, Khrushchev emphasized the possibility of "peaceful coexistence" between different social systems and the achievement of communism by peaceful means. This change in Soviet doctrine reflected the recognition that a nuclear war was more likely to lead to mutual annihilation than to victory. The peaceful coexistence that Khrushchev fostered with the United States appeared to apply to domestic Soviet and eastern European societies also. There were limits to this Soviet liberalization, though: Soviet troops cracked down on Hungarian rebels in 1956, and Soviet novelist Boris Pasternak (1890–1960), author of *Dr. Zhivago*, was not allowed to receive his Nobel Prize for literature in 1958.

Societies in the Soviet Union and the United States may have resembled each other in some ways—in their domestic censorship policies, in their space racing, in their pursuit of nuclear superiority, and in their quest for cold war supremacy—but they also resembled each other in their basic humanity: a fact that may have prevented the ultimate tipping of the balance of terror. A few weeks after the famous kitchen debate, Khrushchev visited the United States and became the first Soviet leader to set foot on U.S. soil. Despite some tense moments, Khrushchev's tour of the United States contributed to a thaw in the cold war, however brief. In his September 1959 travels, which included stops in New York, California, and Iowa, he showed himself to be a formidable leader and a warm and witty man. Television coverage of his trip allowed millions in the United States to see the previously perceived demonic Soviet premier as a human being—understanding his disappointment at not getting to see Disneyland because of security concerns, watching him talk with U.S. farmers, and listening as he thanked his U.S. hosts on his departure for their hospitality. This encounter between a Soviet leader and a U.S. audience suggested the ever-shifting possibilities for peace in the perilous cold war world. The search for peace and security in a bipolar world was revamping societies in the Euro-American world and beyond. When peace remained elusive, however, the superpowers confronted challenges on many fronts, some coming from their own allies and others from small nations seeking freedom from any superpower interference.

Challenges to Superpower Hegemony

The global preeminence of the two new superpowers evoked challenges from several quarters. In western Europe, French politicians sought to free their nation from superpower dominance by transforming Europe into an independent strategic bloc. That gambit ultimately failed, although it set the stage for a cautious, more independent political course on the part of other western European nations. Eastern European states also tried to gain independence, or at least to gain a measure of autonomy from the Soviet Union. Except for Yugoslavia, which resisted Soviet pressure and became a nonaligned, or neutral, state, the nations of the Soviet bloc did not fare well in their autonomy endeavors. On several occasions, Soviet tanks ruthlessly crushed rebels'

efforts to leave the Soviet orbit. The leadership of the People's Republic of China mounted the most serious challenge to Soviet hegemony within the communist world. What began as a quarrel over national interests and disagreements concerning ideology grew into a schism. Finally, in Vietnam and Afghanistan, respectively, the United States and the Soviet Union suffered serious political and military setbacks that signaled the decline of superpower hegemony.

Defiance, Dissent, and Intervention in Europe

The first direct assault on the bipolar world emanated from France under the leadership of President Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970), who dreamed of a Europe that could act as a third force in world affairs. De Gaulle's pursuit of independence stemmed from dissatisfaction with the international order dictated by leaders in Washington and Moscow. In particular, he regarded subservience to U.S. authority and unqualified support for U.S. global objectives as intolerable conditions.

De Gaulle and many of his compatriots believed that France could never regain great power status—a standing it once held as a great continental and imperial power—if it depended for security on U.S. military protection. Moreover, military dependence carried with it the risk that a nuclear confrontation between the superpowers over issues unrelated to European interests could engulf Europe by virtue of its alliance with the United States. De Gaulle and others also questioned the credibility of the American promise to defend Europe against a Soviet attack by threatening nuclear retaliation against the Soviet Union.

De Gaulle pursued independent policies wherever he could. Thus in 1963, despite U.S. disapproval, the French government rejected a partial nuclear test ban treaty that had been signed by the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States and recognized by the communist People's Republic of China. The focus of French policy, however, was disengagement from the U.S.-dominated NATO and the development of an independent nuclear strike force. The latter became a realistic proposition in 1964 when the French detonated their first atomic bomb in the Sahara desert. Four years later the French military put together a nuclear delivery system consisting of long-range bombers and land- and submarine-based missiles. French military doctrine and capability—the *force de frappe* or nuclear strike force—failed to convince Europeans to leave the protective fold of the United States, however, and by the time de Gaulle left office in 1969 his grand design for France and Europe had nearly disappeared. Nevertheless, the vision of a Europe free from superpower domination persisted in a different guise.

There were many challenges to the hegemonic position of the Soviet Union during the cold war decades. The first opposition from within the communist world emanated from Yugoslavia, where a postwar communist regime came to power without the assistance of the Soviet Union. That fact, along with strong support at home, enabled Josip Broz, known as Marshal Tito (1892–1980), to rule the federation of Yugoslavia with an iron hand from 1945 until his death and to assert his nation's independence. Tito's resistance to Soviet control led to a major split with Stalin, and in 1948 Stalin expelled Yugoslavia from the Soviet bloc. In foreign affairs, Tito pursued an independent course that consisted of maintaining good relations with eastern European communist states and establishing strong ties with nonaligned nations, states that refused to take one side or the other in the cold war.

Developments within the Soviet Union caused more serious changes in eastern Europe. Within three years after Stalin's death in 1953, several communist leaders started the world when they openly attacked Stalin and questioned his methods of rule. The most vigorous denunciations came from Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, during

*France under
de Gaulle*

Tito's Yugoslavia

De-Stalinization



Czech citizens confront Warsaw Pact troops in Prague during the Soviet invasion in the spring of 1968.

a secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956. Khrushchev subsequently embarked on a policy of de-Stalinization, that is, the end of the rule of terror and the partial liberalization of Soviet society. Government officials removed portraits of Stalin from public places, renamed institutions and localities bearing his name, and commissioned historians to rewrite textbooks to deflate Stalin's reputation. The de-Stalinization period, which lasted from 1956 to 1964, also brought a thaw in government control and resulted in the release of millions of political prisoners. One of these was Alexandr Solzhenitsyn (1919–) who, thanks to Khrushchev's support, was able to publish his novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962), a short and moving description of life in a Siberian forced labor camp. The new political climate in the Soviet Union tempted communist leaders elsewhere to experiment with domestic reforms and seek a degree of independence from Soviet domination.

The Hungarian Challenge

The most serious challenge to Soviet control in eastern Europe came in 1956 from nationalist-minded communists in Hungary. When the communist regime in Hungary embraced the process of de-Stalinization, large numbers of Hungarian citizens demanded democracy and the breaking of ties to Moscow and the Warsaw Pact. In the wake of massive street demonstrations joined by the Hungarian armed forces, communist Imre Nagy (1896–1958) gained power and visibility as a nationalist leader who announced Hungary's neutrality and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. Soviet leaders viewed those moves as a serious threat to their security system. In the late autumn of 1956, Soviet tanks entered Budapest and crushed the Hungarian uprising. Soviet authorities installed János Kádár (1912–1989) as a dependable communist leader who adhered strictly to a pro-Soviet line of foreign policy and secretly executed Nagy, along with many others who had mistakenly trusted a Soviet promise of safe conduct.

The Prague Spring

Twelve years after the Hungarian tragedy, Soviets again intervened in eastern Europe, this time in Czechoslovakia. In 1968 the Communist Party leader, Alexander Dubček (1921–1992), launched a "democratic socialist revolution." He supported a liberal movement known as the "Prague Spring" and promised his fellow citizens "socialism with a human face." The Czechs' move toward liberal communism aroused fear in the Soviet Union because such ideas could lead to the unraveling of

Soviet control in eastern Europe. Intervention by the Soviet army, aided by East German, Bulgarian, and Polish units, brought an end to the Prague Spring. Khrushchev's successor, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev (1906–1982), justified the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Doctrine of Limited Sovereignty. This policy, more commonly called the “Brezhnev doctrine,” reserved the right to invade any socialist country that was deemed to be threatened by internal or external elements “hostile to socialism.” The destruction of the dramatic reform movement in Czechoslovakia served to reassert Soviet control over its satellite nations in eastern Europe and led to tightened controls within the Soviet Union.

The People's Republic of China

The birth of a communist China further transformed the cold war. With the defeat of Japan in 1945, the civil war in China resumed. Between August 1945 and the end of 1946, the nationalists and the communists conducted negotiations for a peaceful settlement, but at the same time, each side fought limited military engagements with the other and raced to take over territories once held by the Japanese. By mid-1948 the strategic balance favored the communists, who inflicted heavy military defeats on the nationalists throughout 1948 and 1949. With the People's Liberation army controlling most of mainland China, the national government under Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) sought refuge on the island of Taiwan, taking along most of the nation's gold reserves. From Taiwan, Jiang Jieshi continued to proclaim that the government in Taiwan was the legitimate government of all China. That rhetoric, however, did not prevent Mao Zedong, the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, from proclaiming the establishment of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949. That declaration brought to an end the long period of imperialist intrusion in China and spawned a close relationship between the world's largest and most powerful socialist states. Idolizing the achievements of the Soviet Union, Chinese leaders under Mao Zedong set out to imitate Soviet socialism.

The reorganization of all aspects of Chinese society amounted to a frontal attack on Chinese traditions. First came the formation of new political institutions that were anchored in a constitution that took effect in 1954. Although the constitution stipulated a national assembly chosen by popular election, it was the Communist Party that monopolized political power through a central committee and a politburo, chaired by Mao. To protect its authority, the government orchestrated campaigns to mobilize revolutionary enthusiasm and remove from power all of those likely to be a threat to the new leaders. In a 1951 campaign that singled out individuals previously affiliated with the nationalist government or its armed forces, tens of thousands were executed while many more disappeared in labor reform camps.

Next came the economic and social transformation of Chinese society, which centered on rapid industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture (making landownership collective, not individual). Emulating the Soviet experiment of 1929, the Chinese introduced their first Five-Year Plan in 1955. Designed to speed up economic development, the Five-Year Plan emphasized improvements in infrastructure and the expansion of heavy industry at the expense of consumer goods. A series of agrarian laws promoted the unprecedented transfer of wealth among the population, virtually eliminating economic inequality on the village level. After confiscating the landholdings of rich peasants and landlords—effectively removing their source of income and influence—the government redistributed the land so that virtually every peasant had at least a small plot of land. After the government took over the grain market and prohibited farmers from marketing their crops, however, collective farms

Economic and Social Transformations

replaced private farming. Health care and primary education anchored to collectives permitted the extension of social services to a larger part of the population. In the wake of economic reforms came social reforms, many of which challenged and often eliminated Chinese family traditions. Supporting equal rights for women, Chinese authorities introduced marriage laws that eliminated such practices as child or forced marriages, gave women equal access to divorce, and legalized abortion. Foot binding, a symbol of women's subjugation, also became a practice of the past.

Fraternal Cooperation

Moscow and Beijing drew closer during the early years of the cold war. That relationship was hardly astonishing because the leaders of both communist states felt threatened by a common enemy, the United States, which sought to establish anti-communist bastions throughout Asia. Most disconcerting to Soviet and Chinese leaders was the American-sponsored rehabilitation of their former enemy, Japan, and client states South Korea and Taiwan. The Chinese-Soviet partnership matured during the early 1950s and took on a distinct form when Beijing recognized Moscow's undisputed authority in world communism in exchange for Russian military equipment and economic aid. In return, Soviet diplomats instigated a campaign in the United Nations to transfer the Chinese seat in the Security Council from Taiwan to the communist government on the mainland. The Soviet tendency to lecture the Chinese on how to construct a socialist society nonetheless undermined the growing partnership between the two nations.

Cracks in the Alliance

As the Chinese embarked on a crash program of industrialization, the Soviet Union rendered valuable assistance in the form of economic aid and technical advisors. By the mid-1950s the Soviet Union was China's principal trading partner, annually purchasing roughly half of all Chinese exports. Before long, however, cracks appeared in the Soviet-Chinese alliance. From the Chinese perspective, Soviet aid programs were far too modest and had too many strings attached. For example, Soviet military aid to China during the Korean War had to be repaid in full at a time when China was in desperate need of capital. Likewise, in 1955 the Soviet Union supplied more economic aid to noncommunist countries such as Egypt and India than to China. Another source of friction was the conflict between China and India over Tibet. After forcibly restoring Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in 1950, the Chinese ruthlessly quelled an armed resurrection in favor of Tibetan independence eleven years later. Beijing accused the government of India of fomenting the revolt, and both sides subsequently became involved in border clashes high in the Himalayas. Most infuriating to the Chinese, however, was Moscow's announcement of neutrality in the conflict, which the Soviets belied by giving a loan to India that exceeded any similar loan ever granted to China. Border clashes between Chinese and Soviet forces in central Asia and Siberia further fueled the smoldering conflict between the two communist states.

By the end of 1964, the rift between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China became embarrassingly public, with both sides engaging in name-calling. Because Nikita Khrushchev, fearing nuclear attack, was pursuing a policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States and western Europe at the time, the Chinese government accused the Soviets of being "revisionists," a highly insulting term in the communist vocabulary. The Soviets, for their part, accused the Chinese of being dangerous "left-wing adventurists" because Mao Zedong asserted the inevitability of war with capitalist nations. In addition to name-calling, both nations openly competed for influence in Africa and Asia, especially in the nations that had recently gained independence. The fact that the People's Republic had conducted successful nuclear tests in 1964 enhanced its prestige. An unanticipated outcome of the Chinese-Soviet split was that many countries gained an opportunity to pursue a more inde-

pendent course by playing capitalists against communists and by playing Soviet communists against Chinese communists.

Détente and the Decline of Superpower Influence

Amid the complications of the cold war and the challenges issuing from allies and enemies alike, Soviet and U.S. leaders began adjusting to the reality of an unmanageable world—a reality they could no longer ignore. By the late 1960s the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States agreed on a policy of *détente*, or a reduction in hostility, trying to cool the costly arms race and slow their competition in developing countries. Although *détente* did not resolve the deep-seated antagonism between the superpowers, it did signal the relaxation of cold war tensions and prompted a new spirit of cooperation.

Between 1972 and 1974, U.S. and Soviet leaders exchanged visits and signed agreements calling for cooperation in areas such as health research, environmental protection, science and technology, space ventures, and expanded cultural exchange programs. However, the spirit of *détente* was most visible in negotiations designed to reduce the threat posed by strategic nuclear weapons. In 1972 U.S. and Soviet negotiators concluded their Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) with two agreements and reached another accord in 1979. The two cold war antagonists cooperated despite the tensions caused by the U.S. incursion into Vietnam, Soviet involvement in Angola and other African states, and continued Soviet repression of dissidents in eastern Europe.

By the early 1980s, however, relations between the superpowers had deteriorated notably. The establishment of full diplomatic relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China in January 1979 and the announcement in 1981 that the United States would sell weapons to the Chinese military undermined U.S.-Soviet cooperation. The situation was aggravated in December 1979 by Soviet armed intervention to save a Marxist regime in Afghanistan. That action doomed ratification of the most recent SALT agreement by the U.S. Congress and led the U.S. government to impose economic sanctions. The era of *détente* nonetheless reflected a significant transformation of superpower relations. It coincided with a marked decline in superpower influence, which also changed relations between the superpowers and threatened their standing in the world. First the United States in Vietnam and then the Soviet Union in Afghanistan experienced serious military and political setbacks that undermined their global status.

Throughout its long history, Vietnam resisted Chinese and French imperialism and, most recently, U.S. military intrusion and political influence. (See chapter 39 for Vietnam's colonial struggles against France.) In the early part of the cold war's globalization, U.S. leaders extended aid to noncommunist Vietnamese in the south after the French were defeated. Nationalist communists had installed themselves in the north. U.S. involvement in South Vietnam steadily escalated and militarized under Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973), until by 1968 more than half a million U.S. troops served in-country in defense of South Vietnamese democracy. Heavy bombing campaigns were also unleashed on North Vietnam. Even with the major U.S. presence, U.S. and South Vietnamese military leaders and troops achieved only a stalemate in their struggles with the North Vietnamese and with South Vietnamese communists organized as the National Liberation Front (NLF), derisively termed the Viet Cong or VC by U.S. soldiers. War weariness and outright, militant protests against the U.S. role in Vietnam spread in the United States, signaling a public distancing from U.S. cold war policy—especially as more and more young men died on the other side of the world.

An Era of Cooperation

The Demise of Détente

The U.S. Defeat in Vietnam



The Vietnam War: with her home going up in flames behind her, a Vietnamese woman pleads with a U.S. soldier.

Recognizing his country's distaste for the U.S. role in the Vietnam War, presidential candidate Richard Nixon pledged in 1968 to end the war. After his election, he implemented his strategy of turning over the war to the South Vietnamese (termed *Vietnamization*) by escalating the conflict. Nixon extended the war into Cambodia through bombing and invasion in 1969 and 1970, and he resumed heavy bombing of North Vietnam. At the same time, however, he opened diplomatic channels to the Soviet Union and China, hoping to get them to pressure North Vietnam into a negotiated end to the war. Under those circumstances the continuation of the battle in Vietnam seemed futile. U.S. troops gradually withdrew from the conflict, and in January 1973 the U.S. phase of the Vietnam War ended with the Paris Peace Accords, a complex set of agreements signed

by Britain, France, the Soviet Union, the United States, North Vietnam, the National Liberation Front, and South Vietnam. Although the U.S. presence in Vietnam came to an end, the war did not. Within two years the agreements were torn up as forces from North Vietnam and the NLF continued their struggle to conquer South Vietnam and unite their nation. They achieved their goals with the military defeat of South Vietnam in 1975 and unification in 1976.

Muslim Afghanistan had quietly remained aloof from the cold war as a nonaligned nation until 1978, when a pro-Soviet coup drew the republic into the cold war, precipitated foreign intervention, and fomented civil war. Once in power, the leftist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) wasted little time in introducing radical reforms in education and land and family law. This movement caused a backlash. Especially in rural areas, Islamic religious and ethnic leaders objected to rapid social change and to the PDPA's brutal methods and called for armed resistance. By the summer of 1979, antigovernment rebels controlled much of the Afghan countryside. At that point the Soviet Union intervened, installing the Marxist Babrak Karmal as president. With the help of Soviet air and land forces and civilian advisors, Karmal tried to establish control over the country. He promised to combine social and economic reform with respect for Islam and Afghan traditions. Nevertheless, the Soviet-backed government remained unpopular, and a national resistance movement spread throughout the country.

Soviet Setbacks in Afghanistan

For nine years, well-equipped Soviet forces fought a brutal, unsuccessful campaign against Afghan mujahideen, or Islamic warriors, who gradually gained control of most of the countryside. Weapons and money from the United States, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and China sustained the mujahideen in their struggle. The Central Intelligence Agency of the United States supplied the decisive weapons in the war: ground-to-air Stinger missiles, which could be used to shoot down heavily armored Soviet helicopters, and thousands of mules to haul supplies from Pakistan.

In 1986 the Soviet leadership replaced the unpopular Karmal with the equally unpopular Muhammad Najibullah, a Soviet favorite who had been in charge of the Afghan secret police. In the same year, the Kremlin also decided to pull its troops out of the costly, unpopular, and unwinnable war. A cease-fire negotiated by the United Nations in 1988 led to a full Soviet withdrawal in 1989. However, the fighting continued and by 1992 civil war broke out among factions within the mujahideen. The shared Islamic identity that mobilized and unified the mujahideen in their struggle against Soviet forces gave way to ancient tribal, ethnic, and religious rivalries. By 1994 the Taliban, an organization claiming to be an army of religious students, began a campaign to unify the Afghan lands. In 1996 they captured the capital of Kabul after an eleven-month siege, executed Najibullah, and proclaimed the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

The experiences of the superpowers in Vietnam and Afghanistan demonstrated that they had overextended their influence by involving their military forces in conflicts that did little to further their cold war policies. Those forays taxed their nations financially but, more important, caused dissatisfaction with cold war politics within the superpower nations. Internationally, the wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan undermined the prestige of the superpowers and exposed the hollowness of their claims to military superiority.

While de Gaulle, Brezhnev, and Nixon worked from within their political systems to modify international relations, their citizens and others throughout the world agitated for the abolition of the cold war systems. By 1964 cultural criticism of the cold war and its leaders had clearly influenced the films coming out of Hollywood. The political oppression that tried to stifle dissent in the United States in the late 1940s and 1950s lifted by the early 1960s. The 1964 release of Stanley Kubrick's film *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* was proof positive. The film comedically represented the leaders of the United States and the USSR as insane morons whose irrational policies guaranteed the destruction of all life on earth through nuclear war.

Dr. Strangelove belonged to an era of European and North American cultural ferment that had its roots in the global changes caused by the cold war. Anxiety about nuclear weapons and doubts about cold war policies flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, and the world's youth formed the vanguard in a countercultural revolution that challenged the basic political and cultural precepts of post-World War II societies. Disturbed by their nations' apparent commitment to war and social conformity, European and American students in particular took to the streets or disrupted their universities through mass demonstrations designed to promote peace, end the nuclear arms race and the war in Vietnam, and abolish unfair university rules and restrictions. In the United States, students at the University of California at Berkeley formed the Free Speech Movement in 1964 to encourage free political expression on campus; four years later, students in France erected barricades in Paris reminiscent of nineteenth-century French revolts.

Student activism suggested the extent to which global youth experienced empowerment in these years, whether in France, the United States, or China, where Red

*Cold War
Countercultural
Protests*

Rock and Roll

Watergate

Guard youths controlled much of the Cultural Revolution. This youthful influence also accounted for the worldwide popularity of rock and roll, a new form of musical expression born in the postwar era. Whereas U.S. singer Elvis Presley (1935–1977) shocked parents and attracted the young with his wild rock and roll music and dancing, British groups such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones invaded the United States and the world in the 1960s (this phenomenon was called the “British invasion”). Rock and roll in the 1960s and 1970s also underscored the political radicalism of youths disaffected from their states’ leaders and policies. The Beatles sang of “Revolution,” and the Rolling Stones wrote rock musical odes to a “Street Fighting Man.”

Although himself a fan of Elvis Presley, Richard Nixon became a victim of the societal discontentment aroused by the cold war and exploited by the young. In an atmosphere of increased scrutiny of leaders, Nixon’s operations in the Vietnam War (bombing and invading Cambodia) and in the Watergate scandal (1972–1974) were exposed by journalists and members of the U.S. Congress. Upset at news leaks to the *New York Times* about his unauthorized bombings in Cambodia, Nixon ordered wiretaps placed on the phone lines of reporters and members of his staff. This action started the trend toward criminal activities in the Nixon White House that culminated in the scandal surrounding a break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters (at the Watergate building) during the 1972 presidential elections.

The burglars were caught, Nixon and his staff attempted to cover up the crimes committed for the president’s benefit, and journalistic and congressional investigations ultimately unraveled the criminal links that led to Nixon’s resignation in August 1974. Richard Nixon was a prominent leader associated with the cold war throughout his entire political career. He left office in disgrace and reinforced the negative images of politicians featured in films such as *Dr. Strangelove* and in the youth movement. His fate suggested the vulnerability of cold war leaders whose hegemony was contested abroad and at home.

The End of the Cold War

Whereas superpower leaders intimately associated with the cold war such as Richard Nixon lost face and power, new superpower leaders such as Mikhail S. Gorbachev (1931–) arose and helped bring an end to the cold war. Some older U.S. cold warriors also made final pushes against the Soviet Union, most notably Ronald Reagan (1911–2004), president during most of the 1980s (1981–1989). Reagan reinvigorated cold war animosities, zeroing in on communism and the USSR, which he called “the evil empire.” Beyond adopting this rhetorical fervor, Reagan advocated steep increases in military spending, including a controversial proposal called the Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983. Popularly termed “Star Wars” after the contemporary science fiction film, the Strategic Defense Initiative presumably would have provided the United States with full high-tech protection from nuclear attack, thereby limiting or ending one of the Soviet Union’s main threats to U.S. security.

Reagan’s cold war rhetoric and budgets challenged détente and the Soviet ability to match U.S. spending, but internal changes in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe worked most effectively to end communism and the cold war. Whether forced by internal dissent or by the horrendous military and economic costs of the cold war, the superpowers soon backed down from their traditional polarizing division of the world. The result was the collapse of the bipolar world, whose disintegration began in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Between 1989 and 1990, through a series of mostly nonviolent revolutions, the peoples of eastern and central Europe regained

their independence, instituted democratic forms of government, and adopted market-based economies.

The downfall of communist regimes in Europe was the direct consequence of interrelated economic and political developments. The economic weakness of the communist regimes in eastern and central Europe and the Soviet Union became so apparent as to require reforms. The policies espoused by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to power in 1985, represented an effort to address this economic deterioration, but they also unleashed a tidal wave of revolution that brought down governments from Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union. As communism unraveled throughout eastern and central Europe, Gorbachev desperately tried to save the Soviet Union from disintegration by restructuring the economy and liberalizing society. Caught between the rising tide of radical reforms and the opposition of entrenched interests, however, there was little he could do except watch as events unfolded beyond his control. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the Soviet vision of socialism had ceased to inspire either fear or emulation. The cold war system of states and alliances became irrelevant to international relations.

Revolutions in Eastern and Central Europe

The inability to connect communism with nationalism left communist regimes vulnerable throughout eastern and central Europe. Those regimes were born in Moscow, transplanted by the Soviet army, and shored up by tanks and bayonets. To most eastern and central Europeans, the Soviet-imposed governments lacked legitimacy from the beginning, and despite the efforts of local communist leaders, the regimes never became firmly established.

For a while it seemed possible that Stalin's "friendly governments" might succeed in establishing rapport with indigenous populations. By the end of World War II, conservative political parties had lost credibility because they had not supported democracy in the interwar period and had subsequently aided the Nazis during the war. Conversely, left-wing parties had acquired a solid record of opposition to authoritarian regimes in general and German rule in particular. As for the Soviet Union, its prestige was high after the war because it played a major role in defeating fascism and liberating eastern and central Europe from German rule.

Emanating from the Soviet Union was the hope that reform might push the regimes of eastern and central Europe toward less harsh and more enlightened communist rule. Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of the Stalin era and his vision of a more prosperous and humane communism inspired a generation of reformers in the Soviet Union and Europe. The brutal Soviet interventions in 1956 (Hungary) and 1968 (Czechoslovakia), however, dashed the aspirations and dreams of reformers. By the early 1970s, intellectuals and dissidents abandoned all hope for a humane socialism. The Polish intellectual Leszek Kolakowski echoed the sentiments of many reformers when he bitterly



At a U.S./U.S.S.R. summit in 1985, a Soviet flag served as a dramatic backdrop and counterpoint to U.S. President Ronald Reagan's speech.

Moscow's Legacies

Gorbachev's Impact

Polish demonstrators raise a placard with Mikhail Gorbachev's photograph, illustrating the impact of his reforms on the collapse of communism in Europe.

complained in 1971 that “the dead and by now also grotesque creature called Marxist-Leninism still hangs at the necks of the rulers like a hopeless tumor.”

Despite economic stagnation, an accelerated arms race with the Reagan administration that further strained the Soviet economy, and obvious signs of discontent, the rulers of eastern and central Europe were too reluctant to confront the challenge and restructure their ailing systems. It remained for a new Soviet leader, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, to unleash the forces that resulted in the disappearance of the Soviet empire in Europe. By the time Gorbachev visited East Berlin in 1989 on the fortieth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic, he had committed himself to a restructuring of the Soviet Union and to unilateral withdrawal from the cold war. In public

interviews he surprised his grim-faced hosts with the announcement that the Brezhnev Doctrine was no longer in force and that from then on each country would be responsible for its own destiny. As one observer put it, the “Sinatra doctrine” (“I did it my way”) replaced the Brezhnev Doctrine. The new Soviet orientation led in rapid succession to the collapse or overthrow of regimes in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and East Germany.

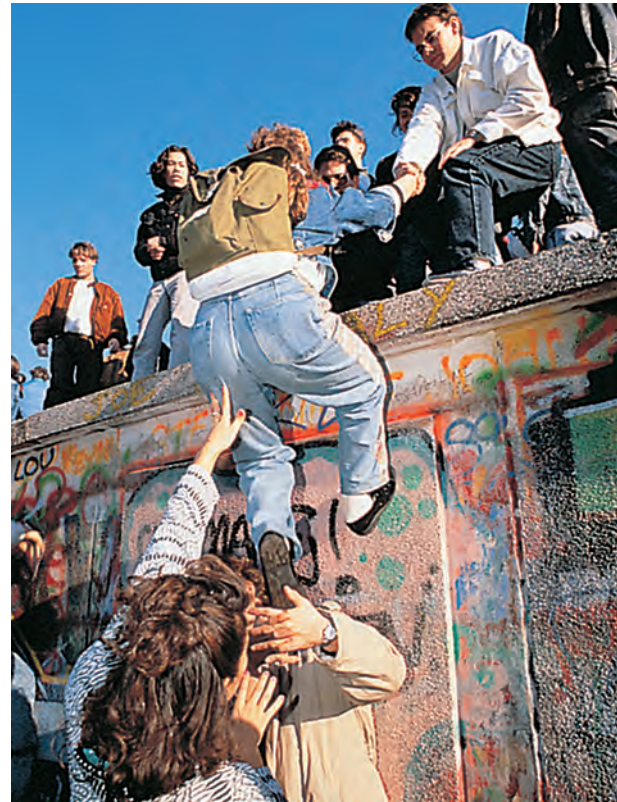
Revolutions in Eastern Europe

The end of communism came first in Poland, where Solidarity—a combined trade union and nationalist movement—put pressure on the crumbling rule of the Communist Party. The Polish government legalized the previously banned Solidarity movement and agreed to multiparty elections in 1989 and 1990. The voters favored Solidarity candidates, and Lech Walesa (1943–), the movement’s leader, became president of Poland. In Bulgaria popular unrest forced Todor Zhivkov (1911–1998), eastern Europe’s longest surviving communist dictator, to resign in November 1989. Two months later a national assembly began dismantling the communist state. Hungarians tore down the Soviet-style political system during 1988 and 1989. In 1990 they held free elections and launched their nation on the rocky path toward democracy and a market economy.

The disintegration of communism continued elsewhere in eastern Europe. In Czechoslovakia a “velvet revolution” swept communists out of office and restored democracy by 1990. The term *velvet revolution* derived from the fact that aside from the initial suppression of mass demonstrations, little violence was associated with the

transfer of power in societies formerly ruled by an iron fist. The communist leadership stood by and watched events take their course. In 1993 disagreements over the time frame for shifting to a market economy led to a “velvet divorce,” breaking Czechoslovakia into two new nations, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In Romania, in contrast, the regime of dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918–1989) refused to acknowledge the necessity of reform. In 1989 *Securitate*, a brutal secret police force, savagely repressed demonstrations, setting off a national uprising that ended within four days and left Ceaușescu and his wife dead.

East Germany had long been a staunchly communist Soviet satellite. Its aging leader, Erich Honecker (1912–1994), openly objected to Gorbachev’s ideas and clung to Stalinist policies. When he showed genuine bewilderment at the fact that East German citizens fled the country by the thousands through openings in the iron curtain in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, his party removed him from power. It was too late for anything other than radical changes, and when the East German regime decided to open the Berlin Wall to intra-German traffic on 9 November 1989, the end of the German Democratic Republic was in sight. The end to a divided Berlin was also in sight, literally, as thousands of east and west Berliners tore down the Berlin wall in the last weeks of 1989. In 1990 the two Germanies, originally divided by the cold war, formed a united nation.



■ Berliners climb the wall after it fell on 9 November 1989.

The Collapse of the Soviet Union

The desire to concentrate attention and resources on urgent matters at home motivated Gorbachev’s decision to disengage his nation from the cold war and its military and diplomatic extensions. When he came to power in 1985, Gorbachev was keenly aware of the need for economic reform and the liberalization of Soviet society, although he never intended to abolish the existing political and economic system. Yet it proved impossible to fix parts of the system without undermining the whole. The desire of the Communist Party to control every aspect of the system precluded partial reforms.

Gorbachev’s reform efforts focused on the ailing economy. Antiquated industrial plants, obsolete technologies, and inefficient government control of production resulted in shoddy and outmoded products. The diversion of crucial resources to the military made it impossible to produce enough consumer goods—regardless of their quality. The failure of state and collective farms to feed the population compelled the Soviet government to import grains from the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. By 1990 the government imposed rationing to cope with the scarcity of essential consumer goods and food. Economic stagnation in turn contributed to the decline of the Soviet standard of living. Ominous statistics documented the disintegration of the state-sponsored health care system: infant mortality increased while life expectancy decreased. Funding of the educational system dropped precipitously, and pollution threatened to engulf the entire country. Demoralization affected ever-larger numbers

Gorbachev’s Reforms

of Soviet citizens as divorce rates climbed, corruption intensified, and alcoholism became more widespread.

Under the slogan of *uskorenie*, or “acceleration,” Gorbachev tried to shock the economy out of its coma. Yet the old methods of boosting production and productivity through bureaucratic exhortation and harassment paid few dividends; in fact, they called attention to the drawbacks of centralized economic control. Gorbachev then contemplated different kinds of reform, using the term *perestroika*, or “restructuring,” to describe his efforts to decentralize the economy. To make perestroika work, the Soviet leader linked it to *glasnost*, a term that referred to the opening of Soviet society to public criticism and admission of past mistakes.

Perestroika and Glasnost

Perestroika proved more difficult to implement than Gorbachev imagined, and glasnost unleashed a torrent of criticism that shook the Soviet state to its foundations. When Gorbachev pushed economic decentralization, the profit motive and the cost-accounting methods he instituted engendered the hostility of those whose privileged positions depended on the old system. Many of Gorbachev’s comrades and certain factions of the military objected to perestroika and worked to undermine or destroy it. Glasnost also turned out to be a two-edged sword as it opened the door to public criticism of party leaders and Soviet institutions in a way unimaginable a short time earlier. While discontent with Soviet life burst into the open, long-repressed ethnic and nationalist sentiments bubbled to the surface, posing a threat to the multi-ethnic Soviet state. Only half of the 285 million Soviet citizens were Russian. The other half included numerous ethnic minorities, most of which never fully reconciled themselves to Soviet dominance.

By the summer of 1990, Gorbachev’s reforms had spent themselves. As industrial and agricultural production continued their downward slide against a backdrop of skyrocketing inflation, the Soviet economy disintegrated. Inspired by the end of the Soviet empire in eastern and central Europe, many minorities now contemplated secession from the Soviet Union. The Baltic peoples—Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians—were first into the fray, declaring their independence in August 1991. In the following months the remaining twelve republics of the Soviet Union followed suit. The largest and most prominent of the Soviet republics, the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, and its recently elected president Boris N. Yeltsin (1931–2007), led the drive for independence. Soviet leaders vacillated between threats of repression and promises of better treatment, but neither option could stop the movement for independence.

Collapse

Although the pace of reform was neither quick nor thorough enough for some, others convinced themselves that they had gone too far. While Gorbachev was vacationing in the Crimea in August 1991, a group of conspirators—including discontented party functionaries, disillusioned KGB (secret police) officials, and dissatisfied military officers—decided to seize power. Gorbachev’s former friend and ally, the flamboyant Boris Yeltsin, crushed the coup with the help of loyal Red Army units. Gorbachev emerged unscathed from house arrest, but his political career had ended. He watched from the sidelines as Yeltsin dismantled the Communist Party and pushed the country toward market-oriented economic reforms. As the Soviet system disintegrated, several of its constituent regions moved toward independence. On 25 December 1991 the Soviet flag fluttered for the last time atop the Kremlin, and by the last day of that year the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ceased to exist.

Toward an Uncertain Future

In many ways the cold war provided comfort to the world—however cold that comfort seemed at the time. World War II left most of the major imperialist, fascist, and



Map 38.3 The collapse of the Soviet Union and European communist regimes, 1991. Note the number of states suddenly created by the breakup of the Soviet Union. How would this affect the ability of each to survive, both economically and politically?

militarist nations in shambles, and the United States and the Soviet Union stepped into what could have been an uncomfortable vacuum in global leadership. Perilous and controlling it may have been, but the cold war that resulted from the ideological contest between the superpowers had ordered and defined the world for almost fifty years. The cold war also shaped how the nations and peoples of the world perceived themselves—as good capitalists fighting evil communists, as progressive socialists battling regressive capitalists, or as nonaligned peoples striving to follow their own paths. Although those perceptions placed constraints on the choices open to them, particularly given the control exerted by the United States and the USSR at the peak of their power, the choices nonetheless were familiar. At the end of the cold war, those easy choices disappeared. The stunning impact of the end of the cold war reverberated in policy-making circles and on the streets.

The most immediate and obvious loss that accompanied the end of the cold war involved the alliance systems built by the two former superpowers. At one time, critics of the cold war routinely denounced military alliances such as NATO or the Warsaw Pact for promoting an expensive arms race and for constantly threatening to transform local conflicts into nuclear confrontations between the superpowers. After the end of the cold war, it became fashionable to praise the same alliances for their ability to manage rather than to escalate such conflicts. Moreover, many observers praised the cold war system for providing peace and security around the world despite the nuclear balance of terror. The loss of deterrence against global disorder and violence was matched by a corresponding lack of certainty regarding the future and by a declining sense of purpose in an era no longer characterized by ideological struggle.

A Future without Divisions

The disappearance of communist regimes in eastern Europe, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the increasing market orientation of the People's Republic of China virtually guaranteed the diminishing popularity of the communist model. To be sure, a few states, such as Cuba and North Korea, clung to communism, but their economies teetered on the edge of collapse, and, without the support once furnished by the Soviet Union, their long-term viability as communist regimes was doubtful. The end of the cold war suggested the possibility of a radical shift in power relations, a global realignment that marked a new era of world history devoid of the categories embraced during the cold war.

The cold war defined much of the global political landscape after World War II. The United States and the Soviet Union stepped into the void created by the disappearance of European empires after 1945, and global encounters between the proponents of democracy and communism stretched from a divided Europe to Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. Adding elements of tension to these conflicts were the increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons and delivery systems that threatened radioactive disaster and human annihilation. Like the nuclear weapons systems, neither cold war societies nor the cold war remained static. The cold war evolved from mutual hostility to peaceful coexistence and détente, finally reaching extinction at the close of the twentieth century. Facing opposition at home and military humiliation abroad, the superpowers relinquished their hegemonic dreams of world control. From its beginning to its end, the cold war suggested the powerful new global forces at work in the wake of World War II. The process of decolonization—itsself complicated by the cold war—also symbolized this same phenomenon of radical postwar alterations in the global balance of power.

CHRONOLOGY

1948–1949	Berlin blockade and airlift
1949	Division of Berlin and Germany
1949	Establishment of People's Republic of China
1950–1953	Korean War
1956	Uprising in Hungary
1959	Castro comes to power in Cuba
1961	Bay of Pigs invasion
1961	Construction of Berlin Wall
1962	Cuban missile crisis
1964	Sino-Soviet rift
1965–1973	U.S. troops to Vietnam
1968	Prague Spring
1973	U.S. Defeat in Vietnam
1989	Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan
1989	Fall of Berlin Wall
1990	Reunification of Germany
1991	Collapse of the Soviet Union
1991	End of the cold war

FOR FURTHER READING

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- David Calleo. *Beyond American Hegemony: The Future of the Western Alliance*. New York, 1987. A broad treatment of Europe during and after the cold war.
- Samuel Farber. *Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered*. Chapel Hill, 2006. Argues that the Cuban Revolution of 1959–1961 was born of endemic ideologies and political visions rather than being simply a reaction to American policy.
- John Lewis Gaddis. *The Cold War: A New History*. New York, 2005. A fresh and concise history of the cold war by the dean of cold war historians.
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- Christopher A. Preble. *John F. Kennedy and the Missile Gap*. DeKalb, Ill., 2004. Explores the ways that President Kennedy used the myth of a missile gap to further American economic interests.
- William Stueck. *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*. Princeton, 2002. Reappraisal of the Korean War in a cold war context.
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- Daniel Yergin. *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State*. Boston, 1977. An interpretative history that looks at the origins of the cold war and its impact on U.S. political life.

