

# The Modern Era



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### **Summary**

### **Key Terms**

International relations in the second half of the twentieth century serves as the immediate backdrop to contemporary global politics, characterized by ethnic and religious conflicts, nuclear proliferation, terrorist threats, and globalization. Understanding the Cold War, decolonization, and changes in the international economy of this period is critical for understanding today's and tomorrow's global landscape. Contemporary history is also illustrative of alternative theoretical perspectives as these focus on different aspects of the modern era and offer contrasting interpretations of its historical development.

## The Origins and Early Years of the Cold War

The post-World War II period began with high hopes. Leaders around the world convened in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944 to design international economic organizations that they hoped would rebuild the war-torn economies and avoid another economic depression like the one experienced in the 1930s. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were two of the organizations that came out of this initiative. The leaders of fifty-one states also convened in San Francisco in 1945 to create the United Nations. The primary purpose of the United Nations was to help states resolve conflicts of interest peacefully and avoid war. With these new initiatives, there seemed to be great promise that a new global order could be established. In fact, a new order would emerge over the next few years, but it was one that was largely unexpected and unwelcomed. Perhaps it was inevitable that at the climax of a gigantic struggle such as the Second World War, the settlements and agreements arrived at by the victorious coalition would shape the primary conflicts in the years to follow. No matter what these settlements contained, some of the parties would be dissatisfied, and their dissatisfaction would form the basis of future conflicts.

### Conflict over Eastern Europe

Perhaps the most heated and important conflict in the months immediately following the war involved Poland and the rest of the Eastern European countries. (Map 3.1 shows how the continent was divided after World War II.) Great Britain, after all, had resorted to war in the first place to ensure the existence of an independent Poland. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, after the United States entered the war, was anxious to protect the interests of the Poles at least partly because of a desire to avoid alienating an important voting bloc in the United States. So both countries began to press the Soviets about the future of Poland well before the Soviets had established their presence in that country. Conflict centered first on which government in exile would be recognized as the official representative of Poland. The British and the Americans favored one group in London, and the Soviets set up another more to their liking.

### Map 3.1 Squabbling over Eastern Europe After the Second World War

The roots of the Cold War developed as the Soviets moved into the power vacuum left in Eastern Europe when the Germans retreated at the end of the war.



The Soviets had several reasons to be suspicious of the Poles in London. In the years following the First World War, when the Soviets were weak and unable to resist, Poland had taken territory the Soviets considered their own. Mutual suspicions between the Poles in London and the Soviets were solidified by a controversy surrounding the discovery in 1943 by German soldiers of a mass grave for Polish army officers in the Katyn Forest in Russia. The Nazis accused the Soviets of these mass executions, while the Soviets blamed the Nazis. (The Soviets, under Mikhail Gorbachev's influence, accepted the blame for the massacre, or, to put it more accurately, admitted that Stalin probably ordered it.) The Polish government in exile in London believed the Nazi charges against the Soviets. If there had ever been any chance of compromise between the Poles in London and the Soviets (and it is not clear that there was), this incident certainly undermined it.

The future of Poland and other Eastern European states was one of many topics discussed at a 1945 meeting of Roosevelt, Stalin, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at the **Yalta Conference** in the Russian Crimea. One result of this discussion was that Stalin was persuaded to endorse the Declaration on Liberated Countries, which promised free elections and other democratic practices and liberties in Eastern European countries where the Red Army had been victorious over the Nazis.<sup>1</sup> Roosevelt's acceptance of this promise was to provoke controversy in the years following the war because Stalin, from the U.S. point of view, did not keep his promise. Elections were not held in Poland until 1947, and even then they were not what the Western powers considered the free and unfettered elections that had been promised in the Yalta declaration. The outcome in Poland would soon be seen in the rest of Eastern Europe, as the Soviet Union began to dominate the governments of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and East Germany.

Critics of Roosevelt charged that the U.S. president must have been incredibly naive to accept Soviet promises with regard to Eastern Europe after the Second World War and that his acceptance paved the way for a Communist takeover in these countries. In support of such critics, it must be said that there is good evidence that Roosevelt was more optimistic during the war about the prospects for U.S.-Soviet postwar cooperation than subsequent events proved was warranted. But it is important not to overlook the basic, if obvious, fact that at the time Roosevelt accepted Stalin's pledge concerning free elections in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union had troops there and the United States did not. A refusal by Roosevelt to accept Stalin's word on the matter might have put a serious strain on a coalition that was never entirely solid. Roosevelt was particularly concerned that the Soviets join the United States in the upcoming assault on Japan, which, in the days before an atomic bomb had been successfully exploded, was expected to be very difficult. In retrospect, of course, we know that the United States did not need help against Japan. But Roosevelt did not have the benefit of this hindsight.

#### **Yalta Conference**

1945 meeting of Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill to discuss the future of Eastern Europe.

In any case, the Soviet satellization of Eastern Europe was an important step toward the Cold War with the United States. But the view that the Cold War was a result of aggressive Soviet actions in Eastern Europe and elsewhere is hotly disputed. Several U.S. writers, for example, argue that Soviet policies in Eastern Europe were essentially defensive and that it was U.S. hostility toward the Soviets that was primarily responsible for the onset of the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> This controversy essentially turns on the question of which country took the actions that precipitated the Cold War conflict. Defenders of the United States point to Bolshevik propaganda against the Western nations from the earliest days of the Russian Revolution, the Soviet Union's control of Eastern Europe (including the Soviet-engineered coup against the democratically elected government in Czechoslovakia in 1948), its refusal to remove its troops from Iran in 1946, its pressure on Turkey for access to ports, and its blockade of the western sectors of Berlin in 1948 as evidence of Soviet hostility. Defenders of the Soviet Union, in contrast, point to the invasion of the Soviet Union by several Western states (including the United States) in an attempt to dismantle the revolutionary government in the years when it was struggling to survive, the U.S. delay in opening the western front against German forces, the U.S. preference for a strong, unified Germany (which the Soviets, as well as the French, saw as a threat), and the establishment in 1949 of the first postwar military alliance in Europe, the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO), as evidence of American hostility.

**North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**

Military alliance established in 1949 among the United States and West European states.

**iron curtain** Term coined by British Prime Minister Churchill referring to the Cold War division of Europe.

**Warsaw Pact** Military alliance established in 1955 among the Soviet Union and East European states.

It is difficult to say who started the Cold War (and alternative explanations will be discussed in Chapter 6), but it is clear that by 1949, the Allies of the Second World War had divided Europe along an "**iron curtain**," in British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's words. The Soviet Union would develop its own atomic bomb in 1949 and would form its own military alliance, the **Warsaw Pact**, in Eastern Europe in 1955 in response to West German reunification. Germany itself would remain divided until the end of the Cold War in 1990.

## The British Retreat and the U.S. Policy of Containment

The global power of the nineteenth century, Great Britain, was still in control of much of its possessions around the world, and although the British were not defeated in the Second World War, it soon became obvious that they had been severely weakened politically and economically. As a result, they were forced to pull back from areas of the world where they had previously exerted influence or control. In the British retreat from global leadership, power vacuums were created, and none was filled without conflict. In 1947, Britain pulled out of its colony India, sparking conflict between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority that continues today. In 1948 the British pulled out of Palestine. This area had been the scene of civil strife between Jews and Arabs from the time the

British had been given a League of Nations mandate to rule the region after the First World War.

Also about this time, Britain announced to the U.S. government that it could no longer support the government of Greece, then under attack by rebels, some of whom were Communists. President Truman decided to take over British responsibilities there, but the decision concerning Greece was embedded in and overshadowed by a decision of much wider application: the decision to institute the policy of **containment**. Henceforth, Truman announced, "It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."<sup>3</sup> If this did not mark the beginning of the Cold War, it was at least an official pronouncement of it. From this time on, there was no doubt as to which country in the West was going to lead the struggle against the Soviet Union. The United States had decided not to return to the days of "splendid isolation" when it tried to stay out of world politics. Instead, it would head the new alliance and seek to contain the Soviet Union.

The U.S. containment policy was designed to thwart any future expansionist moves by the Soviet Union. In the minds of U.S. policymakers, given Soviet actions in the early years after the Second World War, the nature of the Communist political system, and the nature of the bipolar international system, aggression by the Soviets was inevitable. Containment was about demonstrating U.S. resolve to meet and resist the Soviets. To do so, containment required a U.S. military presence in Europe as well as economic aid to strengthen the economies of allies. The **Marshall Plan** was an aid package to war-torn Europe designed for this purpose. It aimed to prevent Communist parties from coming to power in Western Europe and to bring the economies of Western Europe firmly into the capitalist fold of the world economy dominated by the United States. The Marshall Plan in particular and containment policy in general were born in Europe and first applied to the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union in the European region. It did not take too long, however, for the policy of containment and the Cold War to become global.

**containment** U.S. foreign policy strategy instituted after World War II to prevent Soviet expansion.

**Marshall Plan** Aid package to war-torn Western Europe designed to strengthen the area's economies and prevent Communist parties from coming to power.

## The Cold War in Asia

Eastern Europe was certainly not the only sector of the globe where victory by the Allies in the Second World War would lead to conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War. A broadly similar process took place in China. The Japanese had taken over large areas of that country during the war, pushing the Nationalist, conservative government of Chiang Kai-shek farther into the hinterland. In the meantime, the Communists, under Mao Zedong, took advantage of the Japanese invasion to strengthen their organization. The Japanese tended to concentrate on the cities as they took over Chinese territory, leaving the peasants in the countryside more or less on their own. The

Communists moved into this breach, organizing the peasants, carrying out some land reform measures, and generally strengthening this important part of their power base.

When the Japanese evacuated the country, the stage was set for the culmination of the struggle between Mao and Chiang. Despite considerable financial aid and free advice from the United States, Chiang was unable to quash the Communist rebellion, and in 1949 he was forced to flee to the island of Taiwan. The People's Republic of China was proclaimed on October 1 of that year. Although Mao first tried to maintain independence from the Soviet Union, Communist China and the Soviets would sign an alliance treaty in 1950. The United States would assume for many years that Mao was a puppet of the Soviet Union and supported the Taiwan government as the legitimate representative of the Chinese people. Economic and military support for Taiwan would become part of the U.S. containment policy in Asia. Politically, the United States backed Taiwan's bid to control the Chinese seat on the United Nations Security Council, against the wishes of the Soviet Union.

Just as in China, the defeat of the Japanese created conditions conducive to conflict in Korea, which had been formally annexed by Japan in 1910. In the final days of World War II, the Soviet Union and the United States came to an agreement that the Soviets would accept the surrender of the Japanese troops to the north of the thirty-eighth parallel, while the Americans would accept a similar surrender south of that parallel. The agreement was carried out by both sides without serious problems. But problems soon developed. The Americans and the Soviets ruled their zones separately, and by 1948, North Korea and South Korea had become two separate nations in fact, if not in theory. Border tensions between the two halves were constant; each side threatened to liberate the other, and while the Americans armed the South, the North received military aid from the Soviets.

In June 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea.<sup>4</sup> The motives for this invasion have been the topic of lively speculation. There is widespread agreement that the North Korean government was heavily influenced by the Soviets and therefore that the Soviets must have known about and approved the North Korean invasion plan. But why? At the time, the Americans and West Europeans were fearful that the attack was a diversionary tactic that Stalin adopted to pin down the United States in Asia so that he could move against Western Europe. Later, with the benefit of hindsight and knowledge of the conflict between Communist China and the Soviet Union, some observers surmised that the Korean War was Stalin's scheme to get the United States and the Chinese into a prolonged land war in Asia, thus weakening both. In his memoirs, Nikita Khrushchev insisted that the invasion was the brainchild of North Korean premier Kim Il Sung, who managed to convince Stalin that the South Koreans would greet the northerners as liberators, thus ensuring an easy, quick victory for the North.<sup>5</sup> Stalin also must have been



Map: Korean and  
Vietnam Wars, Atlas  
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influenced by the announcement of Secretary of State Dean Acheson on January 12, 1950, that Korea was outside the defense perimeter of the United States. Stalin was, finally, justifiably confident that the North Koreans would be able to defeat the South Koreans unless the latter got outside help.

Whatever the motivation, the attack by the North Koreans met with immediate success. With the U.S. and South Korean defenders rapidly reaching desperate straits, the United States, seeing the conflict as the first test of the new containment policy, urged the United Nations to resist the invasion. According to the UN Charter, the international community was supposed to collectively respond to the violation of state borders with a coordinated military response if necessary, and the Korean conflict provided the Security Council, the UN's highest authority, with its first test for the newly created United Nations. The UN's response to get involved was ensured by the great influence of the United States in the organization and by the absence of the Soviet Union from the Security Council. (The Soviets were temporarily boycotting the council to protest its exclusion of Communist China.) Eventually the United States and sixteen other nations sent additional troops to Korea and managed to halt the progress of the North Koreans.

In fact, the success of the UN forces (of which the U.S. contingent was by far the largest)<sup>6</sup> was so substantial and relatively easy that it brought about a change in U.S. policy in the middle of the war. When the intervention began, Acheson had explained that the UN troops were in Korea solely for the purpose of restoring the Republic of Korea to its status prior to the invasion from the North.<sup>7</sup> But as the UN forces moved up the peninsula, the temptation to bring about a more permanent solution to the problem posed by the North Korean government proved decisive. Instead of merely pushing the North Koreans back into their own territory, the UN troops moved to unify all of Korea by force. The U.S. government and General Douglas MacArthur, who commanded the UN forces, strongly believed that the Chinese would not intervene, despite Chinese warnings to the U.S. government that they would not allow UN troops to eliminate the North Korean government next to their border.<sup>8</sup>

But the Chinese did intervene, with immediate and dramatic success. Only after many months of hard fighting were the Chinese forced to halt their advance. As the war dragged on, its unpopularity in the United States grew, and the presidential election of 1952 resulted in the victory of Dwight Eisenhower, who promised to end the conflict. The new president did manage to bring about an armistice, partly by threatening to use nuclear weapons, which ended the fighting in July 1953 but did little or nothing to solve the problems that had fueled the conflict in the first place. Korea remains divided into two states today.

Another consequence of the Korean conflict was the further deterioration of relations between the United States and Communist China. This was due in part to the assumption by policymakers that the Communist



bloc of the Soviet Union and Mao's China was monolithic. Although the two states did have ideology in common, the alliance between the Soviets and the Chinese had, in retrospect, several powerful forces working against it. Relations between the Chinese and Russian empires had been unfriendly since the sixteenth century. And the fact that the Chinese have for centuries regarded their country as the Middle Kingdom—that is, at the center of the civilized world and surrounded by “barbarians”—must have made it difficult for them to accept another country's leadership even under the best of conditions.

By 1956, doctrinal disputes between the Soviets and the Chinese began to arise. At the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, in the same speech in which he denounced Stalin, Khrushchev announced that there was no inevitability of war between the Communist and capitalist worlds. From Khrushchev's viewpoint, this modification of Leninist doctrine was a reasonable compromise in the face of possible worldwide nuclear destruction. To the Chinese, it smacked of inadmissible timidity. In October 1957, Mao Zedong made a speech at an international Communist conference in Moscow in which he emphasized dogma. He talked of the “east wind prevailing over the west wind” and insisted that even if the capitalist imperialists did plunge the world into nuclear war, only they would be banished from the face of the earth; the socialists would survive. About a year later, the Chinese began what appeared to be an attempt to take over the Taiwanese-controlled offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu. From the Chinese perspective, the Soviets refused to back up these efforts with sufficient vigor. Convinced, perhaps, of the recklessness of their allies, in June 1959 the Soviets renounced an earlier agreement to help the Chinese develop their own atomic weapons.<sup>9</sup> Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated rapidly from that point, and in 1960, Soviet advisers left China and Soviet aid to China stopped. In 1969, the two Communist states engaged in military conflict in border clashes on the Ussuri River.

## Decolonization and Regional Conflict in the Cold War Context

**decolonization** Process in which colonies became independent from imperial powers.

The end of World War II also brought about the end of the age of imperialism. Following the war, the process of **decolonization**, in which the imperial powers voluntarily gave up or were forced to give up their colonial possessions, began. Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, for example, which had been placed under international mandate after World War I, became independent. Britain's retreat from its status as a global power brought independent states on the Indian subcontinent and in Africa. Eventually French and other European colonies in Africa and Asia would gain their independence (see Map 3.2). The result was a dramatic increase in the number of sovereign states in the international system. The number of states almost doubled between 1940 and 1970.

Map 3.2 Decolonization, 1945–1980



**Third World** Cold War term for states that were not directly part of the U.S.-led or Soviet-led alliances.

Decolonization was often, although not always, a violent process. Britain's exit from India led to war between the Muslims and Hindus and the establishment of two separate states, India and Pakistan. The French fought a long war in Algeria before that former colony would gain its independence and another long conflict in Indochina before an independent Vietnam was established. Many of these conflicts would quickly become caught up in the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. Indeed, the term **Third World** originated during the Cold War and was applied to the states that were not directly part of the United States–Western Europe–Japan alliance (the First World) or the Soviet Union–Eastern Europe alliance (the Second World). The two superpowers, particularly the United States in the early years of the Cold War, would see in the process of decolonization an opportunity to win allies and control strategic areas in the struggle between communism and capitalism. Although many of the new states tried to remain nonaligned, most were eventually aided by either the Soviet Union or the United States. In many of the struggles for independence, one or both of the superpowers became indirectly or directly involved militarily. For the United States, aiding the side in the civil war that was anti-Communist (although not necessarily pro-democratic) was part of the global strategy of containment.

## Vietnam

One example of the application of the containment policy in a Third World conflict was in Southeast Asia, in Vietnam. Before the war, Vietnam had been a French colony. It remained officially so even with the Japanese occupation during World War II. Vietnamese nationalists known as the Vietminh had staged uprisings against the French before the Japanese arrived. The Japanese, after their arrival, cooperated with the French in an attempt to stamp out the Vietminh, but by September 1945, the Vietminh were in effective control of the country and issued a declaration of independence. Their reign was short-lived. After the war, the former French colony was divided at the seventeenth parallel, with the northern part of the country becoming the Chinese zone and the southern part the British zone. The Chinese and the British interpreted their mandates to restore law and order in dramatically different ways. The Chinese recognized the de facto Vietminh regime. The British, anxious to establish the principle that pre-war colonies be returned to their rightful owners, set about dismantling the Vietminh regime in the South to transfer control of that area back to the French.

The French began to have problems almost from the moment they reassumed control. For the first few troubled years after the war, the United States opposed the efforts of the French, viewing them as dedicated to reimposing an outdated colonial regime and regarding the Vietminh as fighters for national liberation. As late as 1947, President Truman was so opposed to French policy in Vietnam that he insisted that U.S.-produced



Map: Korean and Vietnam Wars, Atlas page 58

propellers be removed from British aircraft sent to French troops there.<sup>10</sup> This attitude was to change quite rapidly without any essential change in the war taking place in Southeast Asia. With the increase in tensions between the Soviets and the Americans and the victory of the Communists in China, the Americans by 1950 had come to see the French as defenders of the free, or non-Communist, world and the Vietminh as agents of a worldwide Communist conspiracy. Accordingly, the U.S. government began to support the French military in Vietnam economically.

After his election in 1960, President John Kennedy inherited from the Eisenhower administration a commitment to the government of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam that already involved the presence of some 1,000 U.S. advisers to the South Vietnamese military. When Kennedy's aides recommended that he send 8,000 military troops to Vietnam, he instead sent 15,000 more advisers, who were supposed to avoid actual combat. They did not seem to help the situation substantially, and Kennedy became increasingly convinced that nothing would unless Diem, the Catholic leader of a predominantly Buddhist Vietnam, was replaced. The U.S. government looked the other way when a coup d'état in South Vietnam resulted not only in Diem's removal from office but also in his death. The removal of Diem did not stabilize the government of South Vietnam. Instead, a series of generals succeeded Diem, and the situation deteriorated further. When Kennedy was assassinated, Lyndon Johnson was faced with a problem in South Vietnam that he ultimately found insoluble.

Johnson delayed any serious increase in U.S. involvement during the election year of 1964. Then in 1965 he became convinced that some forceful response to the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam was necessary, and he committed large numbers of U.S. combat troops. That was the beginning of the escalation by the United States and counterescalation by North Vietnam that ended in disaster for Johnson. His military advisers would request additional troops, and Johnson would grant only half the number requested, feeling that he was following a wise, middle-of-the-road course and not willing to risk losing the domestic support he needed for his programs at home. The air force would submit an ever-expanding list of targets in the North to be bombed, and Johnson would trim that list at least partially, again feeling that his strategy was a moderate, reasonable one. The problem was that no matter how strongly Johnson resisted the pressures from the military, the escalatory trend continued. Eventually, the army wanted 1 million soldiers and Johnson could barely hold the line at 550,000. The reaction from the North Vietnamese was always the same: no movement toward the bargaining table, which the Americans were trying to bring about, and counterescalation through infiltration of more men and supplies into the South. Finally, in March 1968, following months of domestic unrest in the United States and precipitously falling ratings in the public opinion polls, President Johnson announced that he would not seek re-election.

Richard Nixon, who won the presidency in the 1968 election, inherited peace negotiations begun under Johnson and pledged to end U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia. Nixon did manage to get a peace settlement, but only after incursions into Laos and Cambodia, a bombing campaign against North Vietnam unprecedented in its scope and intensity, and the deaths of thousands more Americans and Asians. Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital, was taken by Communist forces in 1975, a little more than a year after the peace settlement was signed.

## The Arab-Israeli Conflict

After the Second World War, both the Palestinians and the Israelis claimed the land of Palestine, which had previously been controlled by Turkey and then Britain, as their national right.<sup>11</sup> In the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948, Israel captured all the land that the United Nations had declared would be divided into two—a Palestinian state and a Jewish state (see Map 3.3). The conflict between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East thus began before the Cold War and would continue after the Cold War ended. But this regional conflict, like many others, could not escape the superpower rivalry, and this already complex dispute would be caught up in the dynamics of the Cold War almost immediately after Israel declared its statehood in 1948.

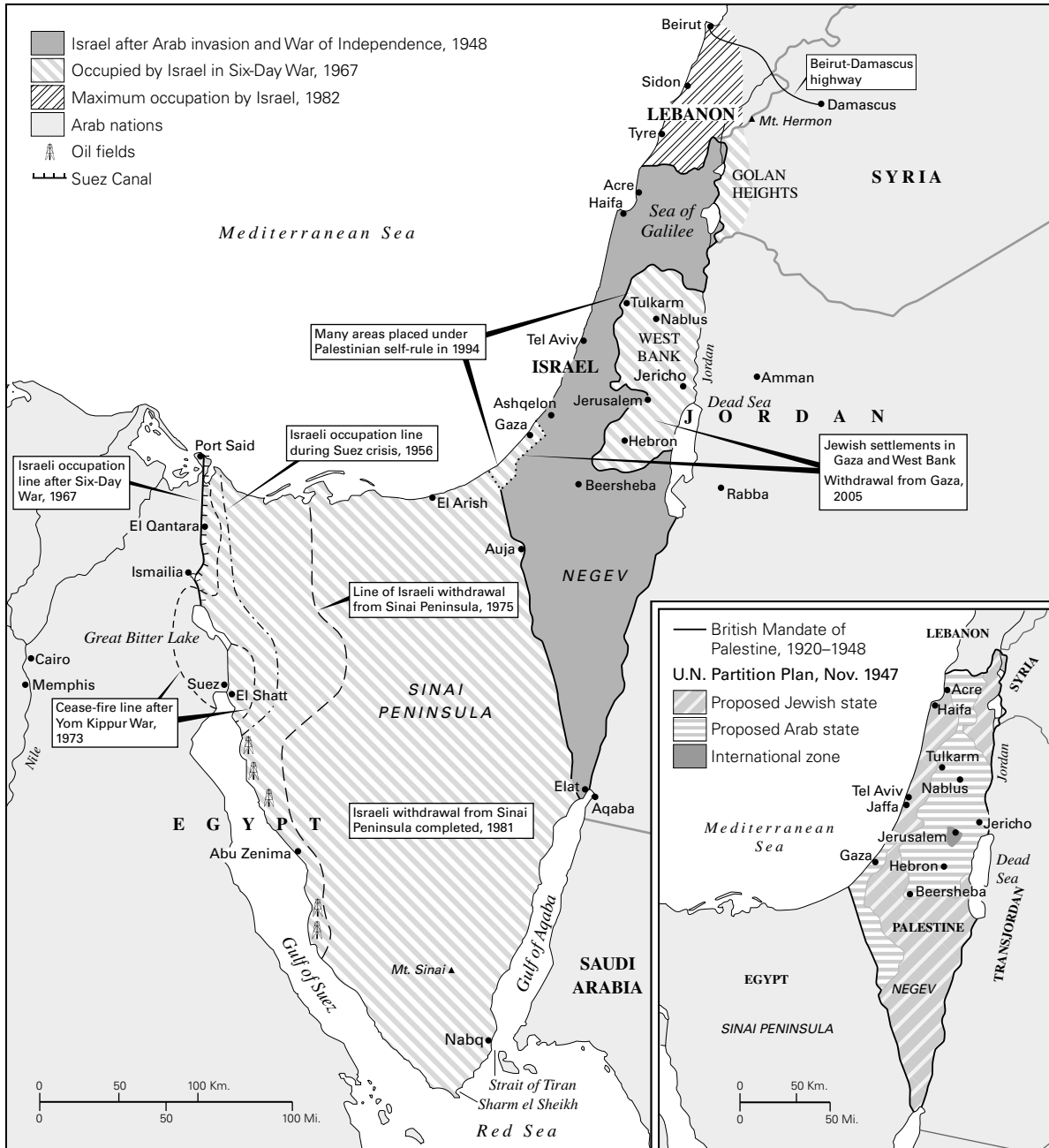
The United States, concerned about containing Soviet influence in the Middle East, saw in the new state a potential strategic ally and was the first state to recognize Israel in 1948. Egypt, the strongest Arab state, was the self-proclaimed leader of the Arab world and coordinated the resistance against Israel. Gamal Abdel Nasser became Egypt's leader in 1954 and looked to both the United States and the Soviet Union for assistance. But when Egypt formed a military alliance with Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen and recognized Communist China in 1956, the United States responded by withdrawing an offer to fund the building of the Aswan Dam there. Nasser, in turn, took control of the Suez Canal away from the British, sparking the **Suez crisis**. Britain, France, and Israel then coordinated an invasion of the Egyptian Sinai, confident of U.S. support. In one of the oddest moments of the Cold War, the United States sided with the Soviet Union and condemned the British, French, and Israeli invasion. After threats from both superpowers, Britain, France, and Israel withdrew. The United States went against its allies in the Suez case because of its anticolonialism policy, its desire to remain on good terms with the oil-rich Arab states, and, equally important, its fear that going against Egypt would drive Nasser into the Soviet orbit. Despite U.S. support of Egypt for this reason, Egypt would turn to the Soviets after the Suez crisis.

"The fear that a pro-Communist Syria would also threaten the adjacent pro-Western regimes of Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, prompted Washington to step up military assistance to those states, while American arms supplies flowed into Israel to counter the ominous buildup of Russian weaponry in Egypt."<sup>12</sup>

**Suez crisis** Cold War confrontation between Egypt, which nationalized the Suez Canal, and Britain, France, and Israel.

**Map 3.3 Conflict in the Middle East**

The control of territory has been at the center of much of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel's borders have significantly changed from the original UN partition (see inset), through the Six-Day War, to today.



**Six-Day War** 1967  
conflict in which Israel  
occupied territories  
previously controlled by  
surrounding Arab states.

From then on, Middle East tensions would become even more dangerous, always risking the possibility of superpower intervention. In 1958, the United States invaded Lebanon to support an anti-Communist government. In 1967, armed with Soviet weaponry, Nasser threatened Israel, and Israel preempted the attack. The **Six-Day War** has had long-lasting impact as Israel emerged with control over the Egyptian Sinai and Gaza Strip, the Syrian Golan Heights, and the Jordanian West Bank, including Jerusalem. Although they had armed opposing sides, the superpowers communicated to each other in the Six-Day War that they would not get further involved. This commitment would be tested again in the 1973 Yom Kippur War when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel. Again, both superpowers armed their sides, the Soviets threatened to involve its own forces, and the United States put its forces on nuclear alert. Eventually, however, the superpowers backed a United Nations cease-fire and the introduction of UN peacekeeping troops in buffer zones. In 1978, with the signing of the U.S.-brokered Camp David Accords, some of the territorial conflict was addressed. Egypt and Israel agreed to a peace treaty in which Israel would return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for Egyptian recognition of the state of Israel. Most Arab states opposed the Egyptian-Israeli agreement and the other territorial conflicts between Israel and its neighbors, and the issue of statehood for Palestinians remained unresolved through the end of the Cold War.

## Other Superpower Involvement in the Third World

Vietnam was not the only Third World country in which the United States was deeply involved. In the early 1950s, the Central Intelligence Agency supported a coup d'état in Guatemala and in Iran. In the 1960s, the United States aided an attempt to overthrow the Cuban government in the Bay of Pigs invasion and intervened with over 20,000 armed personnel in the Dominican Republic. The pattern of intervention in these countries was largely the same: The United States saw nationalists or Communists as a threat to allied governments and feared that not doing something to support their allies would lead to an expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence and a perception of American weakness on the part of the Soviets that would encourage further Communist expansion. Short of invasion or coups, the United States would support friendly governments around the globe militarily and economically in an effort to contain Soviet influence. States such as Israel, South Africa, Pakistan, Iran, and Nicaragua became America's client states, and were supported allies in the Cold War struggle.

Although the Soviet Union did not militarily involve itself in the Third World to the extent that the United States did (however, it did use force against its own "allies" in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968), it did become involved in the race for patron states, particularly by the late 1960s and early 1970s. Soviet support to Egypt, Cuba, Somalia, and India would ensure that in each region of the world, conflicts that may

**proxy wars** Conflicts in which the United States and the Soviet Union supported opposing sides.

have begun even before the Cold War became part of the superpower competition. Even if the roots of most these conflicts lay in the process of decolonization or regional rivalries and not in the Cold War, the money and arms that supported the sides certainly intensified and probably prolonged these conflicts. These **proxy wars**, in which the United States and the Soviet Union supported opposing sides, became part of the landscape of the Cold War. Because one or both of the superpowers were usually involved in these regional conflicts, the United Nations failed to operate as its architects had hoped. Collective security could not be achieved because each superpower had the opportunity to prevent UN action. Instead, the United Nations turned to peacekeeping operations in which military personnel were introduced into a region after a cease-fire had been negotiated.

## Changes in East-West Competition

**nuclear parity** A balance of nuclear capabilities.

Despite superpower involvement in proxy wars and regional competition, the Cold War remained “cold”—there was never any direct military confrontation between the two main belligerents. The Cold War did, however, undergo some dramatic transformations during its course. In particular, technological developments rendered the competition for military power, so important to more traditional wars, a stalemate. By the late 1960s, **nuclear parity** had been achieved. Because the Soviet Union and the United States had roughly equal capacity to destroy each other, the consequences of actual conflict reached doomsday proportions. This, and the proximity to war that the superpowers approached during the Cuban missile crisis, sparked reconsideration of the rivalry and a significant relaxation of tensions in the 1970s, only to be renewed again in the 1980s and up until the final days of the Cold War.

### Two Cuban Crises

The Kennedy administration’s thousand days were marked by several dramatic events in international affairs. One was the invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. The plan for this invasion originated in the Eisenhower administration shortly after Fidel Castro assumed power. The invasion was carried out by a small number of Cuban exiles who were financed, organized, and led into combat by agents of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).<sup>13</sup> It was assumed that the invasion would spur massive numbers of Cubans who were opposed to Castro to active rebellion. It did not, because there was poor coordination between the invading forces and the Cuban anti-Castro underground, and almost certainly because there was less opposition to Castro than the CIA had supposed. The total failure of the invasion was ensured when President Kennedy decided not to approve overt and substantial support for the effort by the U.S. Air Force.

The Bay of Pigs fiasco, along with the construction of a wall between East and West Berlin by the government of East Germany, set the stage for



**Cuban missile crisis**

1962 superpower confrontation over Soviet attempt to place nuclear weapons in Cuba.

the **Cuban missile crisis** in 1962. The Soviets had hoped to slip missiles into Cuba secretly in order to prevent another attempt by the United States to overthrow their Communist ally.<sup>14</sup> The United States discovered the missiles as they were being built and put a naval blockade into effect to prevent the Soviet Union from delivering more missiles. Kennedy might well have firmly resisted this Soviet move in any case, but his opposition was stiffened by the fear that having denied air support to the Bay of Pigs invaders and having failed to take effective action against the construction of the Berlin Wall, he could not acquiesce in the secret shipment of missiles to Cuba without leading Khrushchev to believe that the United States would not actively resist other bold moves on the part of the Soviets.

In the end, the Soviets backed down, turning around ships headed for Cuba with additional missiles and agreeing to remove those already in Cuba. Although neither the American people at the time nor any others outside high government circles in the United States and the Soviet Union were aware of this secret arrangement, “it appears . . . that the withdrawal of [American] Jupiter missiles from Turkey in the spring of 1963 was indeed part of a private deal that led to the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba in November, 1962.”<sup>15</sup> Khrushchev put the best possible light on the affair, arguing that his primary aim was the defense of Cuba and that since in return for the removal of the missiles he had obtained a promise from the United States not to attack the island, his aim was accomplished. “The Cuban missile crisis has assumed genuinely mythic significance. . . . [It] represents the closest point that the world has come to nuclear war.”<sup>16</sup>

**Détente**

The Cuban missile crisis produced a desire on the part of the United States and the Soviet Union to “peacefully coexist” and take steps to avoid nuclear war. In 1963, the “hot-line agreement” established direct communications between the White House and the Kremlin. By the end of the 1960s, both sides had reached the conclusion that serious arms control negotiations were in their interests.

These negotiations, known as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), produced an agreement to limit the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles that each side could have and was signed during President Nixon’s trip to the Soviet Union in 1972. This was the high point of **détente**, or relaxation of tensions, with the Soviet Union.

At the same time, Nixon was pursuing détente with China.

Nixon journeyed over twenty thousand miles in February 1972 to become the first American president in history to set foot on Chinese soil. After several days of intensive negotiations, . . . the two governments issued a joint communiqué in the city of Shanghai. . . . This declaration candidly recorded the differences that continued to separate the United States and China. . . . On a positive note, both governments agreed to foreswear the pursuit of

**détente** Period of relaxed tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

“hegemony” in East Asia as well as to oppose any other nation’s efforts to that end (an unmistakable warning to Moscow).<sup>17</sup>

The Shanghai communiqué also established economic and cultural ties between China and the United States.

Rapprochement with China was particularly dramatic and significant because formal diplomatic communication between China and the United States had been almost nonexistent for more than two decades.

What brought about the sudden improvement in relations between Nixon, known for his rigid, vigorous anticommunism, and the leaders of China and the Soviet Union? Certainly, the most important factors contributing to the improvement in relations both between the United States and the Soviet Union and between the United States and China included the continuing conflict between the two Communist states themselves and their rising military-industrial might. As Henry Kissinger, Nixon’s chief foreign policy adviser, observed in his memoirs, “China’s cautious overtures to us were caused by the rapid and relentless Soviet military buildup in the Far East. . . . That China and the United States would seek rapprochement in the early 1970s was inherent in the world environment.”<sup>18</sup> The conflict between the Soviet Union and China led both countries to fear isolation from each other and from the United States. This made both amenable to any move by the United States to improve relations. In turn, the United States could not view the rising power of these two great Communist states with equanimity, especially if there were to be continued antagonism with them.

## The Rebirth of the Cold War

Détente between the United States and the Soviet Union was short-lived. The latter half of the 1970s was marked by what some observers referred to as a rebirth of the Cold War, although relations between Western Europe and the Soviet Union continued to improve on many fronts. Some architects of foreign policy in the United States were undoubtedly put into a belligerent mood by the fall of Saigon to the Communists in 1975. This mood was not improved when in the same year, Angola achieved independence from Portugal in an armed struggle joined by Soviet-supported Cuban troops.

Still, Jimmy Carter came into the presidency in 1976 vowing to cut defense expenditures. He left that post in 1980 in the wake of a campaign based on the promise of significant *increases* in the defense budget, as well as condemnations of his Republican predecessors for allowing previous budgets to shrink to dangerously low levels. Obviously, something had happened to change Carter’s view of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union rather drastically. The election of 1980 resulted in a victory for Ronald Reagan, who was even more enthusiastic than Carter about strengthening the country’s defenses. Many U.S. voters apparently were more concerned about the Soviet threat and less concerned about escalating defense budgets than they had been not too many years before.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the increasing distance in time from the painful experience of Vietnam made Americans more inclined to flex their military muscle. Events in Iran also had an important impact on American perceptions about the U.S. role in the world. First, in January 1979 the shah of Iran, whom the CIA had played a crucial role in restoring to power in 1953, was deposed, to be replaced by a revolutionary government headed by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The shah had been one of the more reliable allies of the United States in a strategically important area of the world for almost two decades. His fall contributed to an impression that the United States was losing its grip on the drift of world affairs. That impression was reinforced when another long-time ally, Anastasio Somoza, was overthrown in Nicaragua in July 1979 by a coalition of forces that contained some undeniably anti-American elements. Finally, U.S. feelings of impotence were heightened dramatically when Iranian students took ninety people hostage in the U.S. embassy in Tehran in November 1979, and the U.S. government could not secure their release for 444 days.

One can argue persuasively that none of these problems was created by military weakness on the part of the United States, and one can claim even more convincingly that significant increases in nuclear capabilities were irrelevant to their solution. But when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, proponents of such arguments were quite noticeably rare. President Carter announced that the invasion had been an important educational experience for him with regard to his attitude about the Soviets. He retaliated by imposing an embargo on grain shipments to the Soviet Union and boycotting the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. He also declared that the invasion of Afghanistan had created the most dangerous threat to peace since the Second World War.

In retrospect, that invasion can be seen as the beginning of a period of tense relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Antagonism between the Americans and the Soviets was fueled by actions on the part of both superpowers that may well have been defensive from their respective points of view but looked aggressive to their counterparts. From the Soviet vantage point, the operation in Afghanistan was meant to protect socialism in that country and perhaps stem the tide of Islamic fundamentalism so visible in Iran and so threatening to continued control of Islamic elements in the Soviet Union. When in 1983 the Soviets shot down a Korean airliner (en route from New York to Seoul) filled with civilian passengers as it flew over Soviet territory, the Soviets claimed that they were protecting themselves from a provocative spy mission. Americans viewed the act as barbaric. In the atmosphere created by that incident, the United States began to deploy new intermediate-range missiles in Europe in 1983, and the Soviets broke off arms talks with the Americans.

From the Soviet point of view, President Reagan was unpredictable and often aggressive in the early years of his administration. He referred to the Soviet Union as the "evil empire." He significantly increased U.S. defense budget, even in the face of massive budget deficits. He ordered an invasion

of the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada in 1983. He waged covert war against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Perhaps of greatest concern to the Soviets, he insisted on pushing ahead with the development of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), or Star Wars as it came to be called, designed to prevent nuclear war by providing the technological means to knock incoming missiles out of the air before they hit their targets.

## Changes in the International Economy and the Rise of Interdependence

The end of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and U.S. détente with the Soviet Union and China occurred at the same time that changes in the international economy were becoming evident (see Chapter 10). Until the 1970s, the United States had occupied an obviously dominant position in the international economic system. By 1971, however, Western Europe and Japan competed with the United States on much more equal terms economically. Problems in the U.S. economy, stemming in part from the Vietnam War, reinforced the trend away from U.S. dominance. When President Nixon announced in 1971 that the United States would no longer automatically convert dollars into gold, the whole international economic system set up after the Second World War was suddenly deprived of one of its key supports. By 1973, the U.S. dollar was basically allowed to “float” against other currencies of the world, and the “fixed” exchange rate system that had been established at the Bretton Woods conference was essentially abandoned. In principle, this meant that each country could now attempt to exercise control over the value of its currency, and thereby influence its imports, exports, and the likelihood of attracting foreign money for investment. In practice, however, this has proved difficult, and countries often find their currencies rising or falling depending on a wide variety of international factors over which they have little control.

The early 1970s was also an economically volatile period due to activities undertaken by the **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**. In 1973, OPEC successfully quadrupled the price of oil, causing a significant economic transformation that shook the foundations of global economics once again. Suddenly huge sums of money were passing from the economically wealthy regions of the world to previously economically poor regions of the world. With this change in the distribution of wealth came changes in international trade and finance. Moreover, as oil is not just a product but a vitally important element of both economic and military security, there was a dramatic shift in terms of thinking about international security. The Cold War had clearly demarcated the United States and the Soviet Union as the principal actors on the world stage, each vying for some advantage over the other. But as rising petroleum prices squeezed the industrial capacities of the superpowers, attention was shifted away from bipolarity and toward a greater appreciation of economic interdependence. Indeed, both of these

**Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** Organization of developing countries whose economies rely on oil export revenues.

shocks to the system—the abandonment of the fixed exchange rate system and the rise of OPEC—highlighted the interdependence of the economies of the richer countries. It became obvious that political and economic decisions in one industrialized society could have dramatic consequences for all the others.

The rise of economic interdependence by the 1970s was in part due to the increase in international trade to unprecedented levels. The trading regime that the United States and its allies had established after World War II worked to bring down political barriers to trade and expand the exchange of goods across borders. Related to this development were the multinational corporations, which did business in more than one country (see Chapter 4). By the 1970s, these corporations were large in number and size and connecting the economies of many states together in complex ways. Despite the economic turmoil of the 1970s, the increase in trade and multinational business seemed to be benefiting the wealthier states. This was not true for the developing world, at least those without oil. Although there had been great hopes after decolonization that these new states would follow the path of economic development of the United States, Europe, and Japan, this did not happen for most (see Chapter 11). Indeed, by the 1970s, it was clear that the gap between the wealth in the developed world and the wealth in the developing world was growing. And in addition to severe poverty, many states were facing serious internal and external security threats, complicated by the superpower competition. At the time, the developing world, encouraged by the success of OPEC, banded together in the United Nations to call for fairer economic relations. Indeed, the developing world was able to use the United Nations to promote economic and social development issues at the same time the Security Council was largely ineffective because of the Cold War. By the end of the 1970s, however, the economic situation in the developing countries had worsened, and political tensions among them hampered efforts at collective attempts to renegotiate economic relationships with the wealthier states.

In addition to a recognition that the world was more economically interdependent, the 1970s brought a recognition of the environmental interdependence of the world (see Chapter 13). In 1972, the United Nations held its first conference on the environment in Stockholm, Sweden. This was an important meeting in that it raised the awareness of environmental problems, such as air and water pollution, although significant international efforts at solving environmental challenges did not take place after the end of the Cold War.

## The End of the Cold War

**I**t is instructive to remember how grim international politics looked by the middle of the 1980s and how much change occurred (mostly for the better) in the ensuing decade. By the end of 1988, the United States

**Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty** 1988 agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to dismantle a whole category of nuclear weapons.

and the Soviet Union had agreed for the first time to dismantle a whole category of nuclear weapons, in an agreement formalized in the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty**. That was widely expected to be a first step toward a strategic arms reduction treaty (START) that would call for significant reductions in strategic weapons by both superpowers (see Chapter 8). Toward the end of his term in office, President Reagan had several cordial summit meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev. The eight-year war between Iran and Iraq finally ended in 1988. The Soviets pulled their troops out of Afghanistan. The Cubans pulled their troops out of Angola. The Sandinistas in Nicaragua lost an election and allowed a peaceful transfer of power to their opponents.

There is little doubt that the most dramatic political events in the late 1980s and the first half of 1990s took place in the Communist world. A decade of reforms in China culminated in massive prodemocracy demonstrations in Beijing in the spring of 1989. Those demonstrations were firmly repressed, and many of the leaders of the prodemocracy movement were jailed or executed. But as a result of reforms instituted in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the wake of the crackdown at Tiananmen Square, China's economic output and exports grew faster than either India's or the Soviet Union's and even more rapidly than those of the well-known economic superstars in its neighborhood: Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong (see Chapters 10 and 11).



The young man standing in front of Chinese tanks on Tiananmen Square became symbolic of popular resistance to the Chinese regime during demonstrations there in June of 1989.

(© Bettmann/Corbis)

**Gorbachev** Soviet leader who initiated political, economic, and foreign policy reforms, leading to the end of the Soviet Union and the Cold War.

**perestroika** Russian term referring to Gorbachev's restructuring of the economy.

**glasnost** Term referring to Gorbachev's political reforms for greater openness.

The story in the rest of the Communist world (when it was Communist and afterward) was virtually the mirror image of that in China. In Eastern Europe, and especially in the Soviet Union, dramatic strides toward political liberalization and democracy coincided with equally dramatic economic deterioration. Mikhail **Gorbachev** came to power in 1985 and put into effect his policies of **perestroika** and **glasnost**—the former referring to market-oriented economic reforms, the latter to political



The destruction of the Berlin Wall symbolized the beginning of an era in which the political and economic divisions between Eastern and Western Europe would largely disappear, especially as both the European Union and NATO would move to incorporate countries from the former Communist bloc.  
(AP Photos/AP Images)

reforms in the direction of greater openness and democratization. The political reforms certainly did decrease autocratic controls, but the economic reforms never achieved anything like the Chinese successes.

Gorbachev instituted an equally profound revolution in foreign policy, especially in Soviet relations with its erstwhile satellites in Eastern Europe. "In 1989," according to one historian, "while the nations of Western Europe celebrated the bicentenary of the French Revolution, the nations of Eastern Europe reenacted it."<sup>20</sup> In that year, a long process of liberalization in Poland culminated in open parliamentary elections, and other states were soon to follow Poland's lead. As the *Los Angeles Times* observed in the wake of the 1989 revolution in Eastern Europe, "It took 10 years in Poland, 10 months in Hungary, 10 weeks in East Germany, and 10 days in Czechoslovakia."<sup>21</sup> By the end of the year, the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania had also been overthrown. By 1991, even the long-isolated regime in Albania was liberalizing in various ways. In October 1990, East and West Germany were unified in one Federal Republic of Germany, and in 1991, the Warsaw Pact was officially disbanded. The Cold War was over (see Map 3.4).



Map: Political Changes Since 1989, Atlas page 47

Map 3.4 Europe (1991) After the Disintegration of the Soviet Union





The consequences of the end of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry became quite evident when Iraq attacked Kuwait in August 1990. The attack led the United States to lead a coalition of states against Iraq and eventually evict it from Kuwait. What made the operation historic was the cooperation of the United States and the Soviet Union in the framework of the UN Security Council. Throughout its history, the United Nations had been largely ineffective at responding to aggression because in almost every instance, the United States or the Soviet Union supported opposite sides in the conflict and thus one of the superpowers would veto UN action against its ally. After months of negotiations among Security Council members, the Soviet Union agreed to support the operation against Iraq, with which it previously had a close relationship. To those who were part of the coalition, it seemed that the United Nations was finally working the way it was designed, prompting U.S. President George H. W. Bush to declare that a **new world order** had emerged.

**new world order** Term used by U.S. President George H. W. Bush to describe the new political structure of the world at the end of the Cold War.

Political reform in the Soviet Union came to a screeching halt in August 1991, when a group of high-level conservative Communists in the party, the army, and the KGB (the Soviet intelligence and security agency) deposed Mikhail Gorbachev and began to restore the old system. But Boris Yeltsin, a reformist leader who had withdrawn from the Communist Party and established legitimacy by winning a free election for the presidency of the Russian Republic, took the lead in resisting the coup attempt, which collapsed under the combined pressures of popular resistance and its leaders' incompetence and indecision. By the end of 1991, not only was the Communist Party of the Soviet Union deprived of its power; the Soviet Union itself dissolved, to be replaced by its constituents, fifteen formerly Soviet Socialist republics, such as Russia, Ukraine, and Tajikistan.

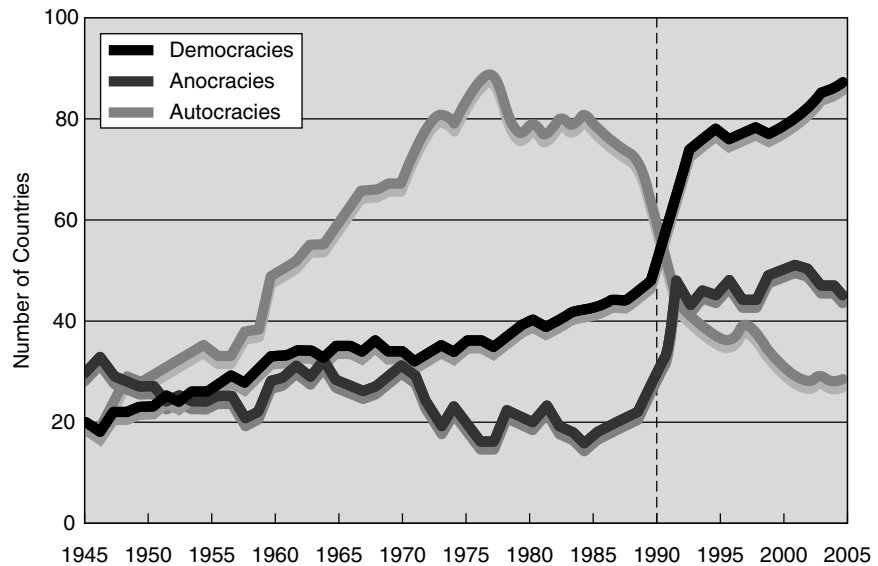
Despite the fact that they were marked more by economic setbacks than impressive economic achievements, political reforms in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe seemed to have a kind of demonstration effect, encouraging emulation around the world. Throughout the 1980s, military dictatorships were replaced by more democratic regimes in Latin America.<sup>22</sup> In Asia outside the People's Republic of China, a trend toward democracy in the 1980s and early 1990s was visible in Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, Nepal, Mongolia, and Bangladesh. In 1991 one informed observer in Africa declared that "after decades of unspeakable repression at the hands of authoritarian regimes, Africans stand at the threshold of a new epoch. Across the continent, millions are demanding freely elected legislators, an independent judiciary and an accountable executive."<sup>23</sup> The Middle East has not been fruitful ground for democratic reforms, but even there, Turkey and Pakistan moved in a democratic direction in the 1980s, King Hussein of Jordan instituted a series of liberalizing reforms, the newly unified Yemen showed some signs of moving in a pluralist direction, and Algeria's socialist regime moved toward multiparty elections (which were, however, postponed indefinitely in 1991).

Overall, from the early 1970s to 2006, the number of democratic states in the world increased from about forty to almost ninety, with more than fifty additional states moving in a democratic direction. In 1973, about half the people in the world lived in states with regimes that could be classified as “free” or “partly free.” By 2006, that proportion had increased to a little over three-quarters.<sup>24</sup> Figure 3.1 shows the trend toward democratization since 1950. “In the 1980s and 1990s, the world made dramatic progress in opening up political systems and expanding political freedoms. Some 81 countries took significant steps toward democracy, and today 140 of the world’s nearly 200 countries hold multiparty elections—more than ever before.”<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, this trend toward democratization may be tenuous. Many states “that took steps towards democracy after 1980 have since returned to more authoritarian rule: either military, as in Pakistan since 1999, or pseudo-democratic, as in Zimbabwe in recent years. Many others have stalled between democracy and authoritarianism, with limited political freedoms and closed or dysfunctional politics.”<sup>26</sup> In the Middle East, non-democratic regimes are well-entrenched and “steps toward democracy in the Arab world . . . are slowing, blocked by legal maneuvers and official changes of heart.”<sup>27</sup> Many partly democratic states, including Russia and many other former Soviet republics, are increasingly seeing Western efforts at promoting democracy as interference in their internal affairs.<sup>28</sup> Efforts to promote democratization are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

**Figure 3.1 Global Regimes by Type, 1950–2006**

Anocracies are countries with governments in the mixed or transitional zone between autocracy and democracy.

Source: Reprinted with permission from Amy Pate, “Trends in Democratization: A Focus on Instability in Anocracies,” in *Peace and Conflict 2008* by J. Joseph Hewitt, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Ted Robert Gurr (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008).



## The Post–Cold War World: Challenges to Sovereignty

The optimism from the political, economic, and security developments in the late 1980s and early 1990s quickly sobered in the face of ethnic conflict, nuclear and terrorist threats, and the disintegration of states by the beginning of the twenty-first century. The world economy is also struggling with the effects of rapid globalization. Many of these issues and the national and international responses to them have led some to question the future of the sovereign state as the distinction between domestic politics and international politics increasingly blurs. Indeed, some have suggested that global politics may be entering a “post-Westphalian phase” in which sovereign states are not the primary way the international system is organized. The outcome of this potential reorganization, however, is quite uncertain.

### Ethno-Religious Conflict and Failed States

The bloody, seemingly endless dissolution of Yugoslavia and the murderous war among the Serbians, the Croats, the Muslims, and Kosovars did a lot to diminish post–Cold War euphoria. For years, the international community, whether in the form of the United Nations, NATO, or the European Union, seemed impotent and sometimes incompetent in the face of interminable warfare between and within the republics in the former Yugoslavia. Civil war first erupted in 1991, when Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence. The international community eventually recognized them as sovereign states, and the old Yugoslavia was dead. War then turned to Bosnia, where, during the course of more than three years, over 200,000 would lose their lives, and brutal violations of human rights would occur. The conflict eventually erupted in Kosovo and Macedonia. In Kosovo, NATO resorted to force in the spring and summer of 1999 with a bombing campaign of Serbia. Although the wars in most of Yugoslavia ended in negotiated agreements, the future stability of the area remains uncertain, particularly when the peacekeeping forces leave Bosnia and Kosovo.

What made the ethnic strife in the former Yugoslavia especially disheartening was that such conflict was not isolated to the Balkans. Ethnic and religious groups—groups that perceive themselves to be culturally distinct—in South Africa, Burundi, India, Egypt, Mexico, and Azerbaijan also engaged in brutal conflict, to name just a few of the countries struck with this plague. In Rwanda in 1994, violence between the Hutu and Tutsi groups resulted in more than 800,000 deaths. In a three-month period, more than 5,000 people a day were massacred, leaving one-tenth of the people in the country dead. Ethnic strife played a key role not only in the dismantling of Yugoslavia but also in the breakup of the Soviet Union, as well as Czechoslovakia, and was tearing at the seams of India and Canada (with tensions between its English-speaking and French-speaking populations),

too. Although ethnic conflicts did increase in number and intensity after the end of the Cold War, this is part of a longer-term trend since the 1950s of rising ethnic violence. This trend has recently shown signs of changing, as the high number of ongoing conflicts may have peaked in the 1990s.<sup>29</sup>

Still, ethnic and religious conflict inside countries and across their borders remains a feature of the contemporary global political landscape. Tensions between Hindus and the Muslim minority in India remain high, with periodic associated violent events. In Sri Lanka, the two-decade-long civil war between the Tamil minority fighting for autonomy and the Sri Lankan government resumed in 2006, despite a ceasefire accord that had been brokered in 2002. In the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues. The end of the Cold War helped generate the establishment of limited Palestinian control over the Gaza territory and parts of the West Bank, but the final status of key territories remains unresolved and violence between Palestinians and Israel persists. In Iraq, fighting between Sunni and Shia Muslims added to conflict already present between the U.S. military, the insurgents fighting against their presence, and foreign groups joining them. By 2006, Iraq was on the brink of full-scale civil war, despite the presence of U.S. troops.<sup>30</sup>

And in Darfur, a region in western Sudan, the conflict between rebel groups, drawn from some of the region's non-Arab ethnic groups, and government-backed militias (known as the "Janjaweed"), composed from several small Arab nomadic tribes, has brought devastating results. Since the current conflict began in 2003, the Janjaweed have attacked the civilian population living in Darfur, and an estimated 200,000 people have been killed, thousands have been raped, and 2 million refugees have fled their homes. The United States has called the killings an act of genocide, and the International Criminal Court is investigating war crimes in the crisis. Despite the signing of a peace agreement in 2005, and the presence of a (small) African Union ceasefire monitoring force, the situation remains dire today.<sup>31</sup> Citing concerns for state sovereignty, the Sudanese government objected to but then reluctantly accepted a U.N. Peacekeeping mission in June 2007. At the time of this writing, this mission was expected to be established in Darfur sometime in 2008.

The ethnic and religious conflict occurring in the post-Cold War era is particularly destructive and intractable for many reasons. First, it is occurring in many of the poorest regions in the world and in states with little legitimacy to begin with and no stable framework on which to build. Most disturbing, many of these conflicts are not simply political fights to win control of the state. In many, the only acceptable outcome to all sides is to rid the area of the others' presence, one way or the other. Hence, there is not even any pretense of following traditional rules of war, such as those pertaining to the distinction between civilians and military personnel. Also, in many of the conflicts, the fighting is not carried out by well-organized forces, but rather by undisciplined, highly autonomous groups of fighters, making negotiations more difficult, if not impossible.

**failed states** Unstable countries with no clear functioning government.

Causes and potential solutions to ethnic conflict in global politics will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Internal conflict between ethnic and religious groups is one of the most important causes of **failed states**, but it is not the only one. In many parts of the globe in recent years, a number of states seem to have no viable political framework. There have been a number of failed states or states on the verge of failing, such as Somalia and Haiti, where no power is clearly in charge. This type of instability in the post–Cold War period usually occurs in states experiencing ethno-religious conflict, in states where the superpowers have pulled out their support and left a power vacuum, and in states that are so economically devastated that stability is impossible in the foreseeable future. In such cases, food shortages, refugee crises, or significant human rights violations may ensue. Failed states may also arise after military interventions. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, following U.S.-led interventions and regime change, there have been significant challenges to establishing legitimate political authority and internal security. Failed, or failing, states are problems for the international community. “Although the phenomenon of state failure is not new, it has become much more relevant and worrying than ever before. In less interconnected eras, state weakness could be isolated and kept distant. Failure had fewer implications for peace and security. Now, these states pose dangers not only to themselves and their neighbors but also to peoples around the globe. Preventing states from failing, and resuscitating those that do fail, are thus strategic and moral imperatives.”<sup>32</sup>

The challenge for the international community if it chooses to get involved is separating the internal factions, constructing a legitimate political framework, and carrying out this work in a way that gives some chance to the newly constructed state. The United Nations, at its creation in 1945, said that this is something that it would not and could not do—that internal wars in sovereign states were out of its jurisdiction. But in the new millennium, that is exactly what the UN and member states like the United States have attempted to do. There has developed in the international community more concern for the internal conditions of states, particularly human rights conditions, and more action has been taken to address these conditions (see Chapter 9). Examples of such action include NATO intervention in Kosovo, the arrest of political and military leaders for war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Liberia, and U.S. interventions and state-building policies in Haiti, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Such interventions in the domestic affairs of states, however, are inconsistent with the Westphalian conception of state sovereignty and may suggest a dramatic change in global politics.

## Security Threats

The celebration of several successful arms reduction agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union (and later Russia) in the aftermath

**nuclear proliferation**  
Spread of nuclear weapons into the hands of more actors.

of the end of the Cold War was accompanied by concerns over new security threats. In particular, **nuclear proliferation**, or the spread of nuclear weapons into the hands of more actors, became an important issue on the global agenda in the 1990s. India and Pakistan, rivals in South Asia, both joined the “nuclear club” when they conducted nuclear tests in 1998. Concerns about Iraq’s potential to develop and deploy nuclear weapons led to the creation of UN inspection of Iraq’s military facilities, and Iraq’s resistance to those inspections produced U.S. attacks in the late 1990s and a U.S.-led intervention into Iraq in 2003. The Policy Choices box summarizes the significant international debate over the intervention.

The dilemma of how to prevent new states from joining the nuclear club arose with North Korea as well. When North Korean leaders threatened to build nuclear weapons in the early 1990s, the United States, fearing an arms race in East Asia, responded with its own threats of economic sanctions and considered an attack on North Korean facilities. North Korea responded by deploying many more troops on the border with South Korea, and for several weeks in 1994, a replay of the 1950s Korean war was considered a real possibility. After negotiations, North Korea agreed to freeze and ultimately dismantle its nuclear program in exchange for U.S. funds to construct nuclear power generators that would not yield plutonium. North Korea revealed in 2002 that it did not dismantle its nuclear materials production program, and the question of what to do about its nuclear capabilities was placed on the international agenda once again. Multiparty talks failed to definitively address the threat of North Korean nuclear proliferation, and North Korea became a nuclear power when it tested a nuclear bomb in October 2006. Iran has also been part of the nuclear proliferation debate. Although Iran insists its nuclear activities are only for peaceful, energy purposes, other countries remain unconvinced. In 2006, the UN Security Council threatened Iran with sanctions if it did not suspend certain aspects of its nuclear program.

In addition to concerns about nuclear weapons, fears of the spread of biological and chemical weapons have surfaced. Although most states have signed treaties that ban the use of chemical and biological weapons, several states have not signed the treaties and some that have nevertheless maintain stockpiles of them. Chemical and biological weapons are relatively attractive to poorer, developing countries because they are cheap to produce and fairly easy to hide, which makes the proliferation of them very difficult to track. This concern has been heightened recently now that more states have ballistic missile capability, allowing them to hit targets with conventional or unconventional (chemical and biological) bombs. The potential threat from suspected Iraqi stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons was another stated reason for the U.S.-led intervention in 2003.

The proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (discussed in more detail in Chapter 8) raises two implications concerning state sovereignty. The first, a more practical question, concerns how states go about preventing proliferation. As the situations in Iraq, Iran,



**ISSUE:** In late 2002 and early 2003, the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, was faced with the question of how to deal with Iraq and its possible weapons of mass destruction programs. The following arguments divided the international community *at the time* and continue to surface in the debate over whether the United States should have initiated military intervention as it did in March 2003. Since the invasion, additional questions regarding the integrity of the intelligence on pre-war Iraq and the effectiveness of post-war planning and occupation have entered the debate over the intervention in Iraq.

**Option #1:** Regime change should occur through the use of military force.

**Arguments:** (a) Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein, represented a grave security threat to its neighbors and the rest of the world. Iraq resisted disarming itself of the capabilities to build weapons of mass destruction, and its past actions demonstrated its willingness to commit aggressive acts. (b) Iraq was a “rogue” state that had been or was likely to support terrorist networks like Al Qaeda. Changing the regime in Iraq would have helped dismantle the support network for such groups and addressed the post-September 11 global terrorist threat. (c) It was important for the control of Iraqi oil to be in the hands of a cooperative regime, given the importance of this economic asset to the world economy.

**Counterarguments:** (a) Military intervention was not the only solution to the Iraqi security threat and should have been used only as a last resort. After several years, UN inspectors had returned to Iraq and were making progress in verification and disarmament. There was no imminent threat to justify intervention at the time. (b) There is no known link between Iraq and groups such as Al Qaeda, which historically have been opposed to secular regimes like Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. Moreover, military intervention and “occupation” of Iraq will itself likely spark more terrorism. (c) Using military force to acquire needed resources is imperialistic and lacks legitimacy.

**Option #2:** Military force should not be used.

**Arguments:** (a) Military intervention in Iraq, particularly with the aim of changing the political leadership and government, represented a violation of the UN Charter and the principle of state sovereignty, the bedrock of international law. (b) Given the ethnic and political tensions within Iraq and between Iraq and its neighbors (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, and Jordan), military intervention would destabilize an already unstable region, spreading insecurity throughout the region. (c) The human consequences of war (civilian casualties, refugees, economic strife, civil wars that might be sparked) outweighed the potential threat in this case.

**Counterarguments:** (a) State sovereignty should not be used as a cloak to keep a brutal dictator in power, a leader who himself has violated international law and the UN Charter. (b) The Iraqi regime was a central feature of regional insecurity, having attacked Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990. (c) Repressive regimes that maintain power will, if unchecked, create greater suffering and hardship. Declining infrastructure, squandered resources, and persecution of various sectors of society are more devastating on a human level over the long term.

and North Korea demonstrate, states resist outside action regarding their capability to defend themselves and protect their interests as a matter of sovereign rights. The second question is more fundamental. Given the development of such destructive capability, is the world best organized into sovereign states, each having the capacity to control this capability?

Terrorist threats to security also highlight the potential change away from state-centered conceptions of global security. Although terrorism is difficult to define (see Chapter 7), nonstate actors that target civilians for political purposes are not a new phenomenon. Yet the number of terrorist attacks have generally increased in the twenty-first century. Contemporary terrorist groups, such as Al Qaeda, are quite transnational, with membership and coordinated attacks in a number of countries. The attacks of September 11, 2001, on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the United States brought the threat of terrorist groups to the forefront of international attention and formed a coalition of diverse state actors to counter these nonstate actors. This effort was termed the “global war on terror” by U.S. policymakers, and “has already surpassed the amount of time that the United States fought World War II. And by any measure, it has already had a seismic effect on the United States and the entire world.”<sup>33</sup> Counterterrorism is, however, a difficult goal, as the terrorist attacks in Bali in 2002, in Madrid in 2004, in London in 2005, and in Mumbai in 2006 demonstrate.

How the world copes with contemporary security issues, such as terrorism and proliferation, is affected by the distribution of power in the international system, the policies pursued by great powers, and the reaction to them. In the twenty-first century, the United States sits at a position of economic and military predominance. On almost every dimension of state power (discussed in Chapter 4), the United States dwarfs other actors

Suicide bombers targeted London buses and the subway system, killing over 50 people and injuring more than 700 in July 2005.

(© Peter Macdiarmid/epa/Corbis)





in world politics. Indeed one analyst refers to the post-Cold War era as the United States' "unipolar moment" and another labels the United States an "überpower."<sup>34</sup>

This position has arguably led the United States to pursue unilateral policies, particularly under the leadership of George W. Bush. As the first U.S. president in the new millennium, "Bush had set in motion a revolution in American foreign policy. It was not a revolution in America's goals abroad, but rather in how to achieve them. In his first thirty months in office, he discarded or redefined many of the key principles governing the way the United States should act overseas. He relied on unilateral exercise of American power rather than on international law and institutions to get his way. He championed a proactive doctrine of preemption and de-emphasized the reactive strategies of deterrence and containment."<sup>35</sup>

**Bush Doctrine** Set of policies proposed by U.S. President George W. Bush emphasizing unilateralism, preemption, and military strength.

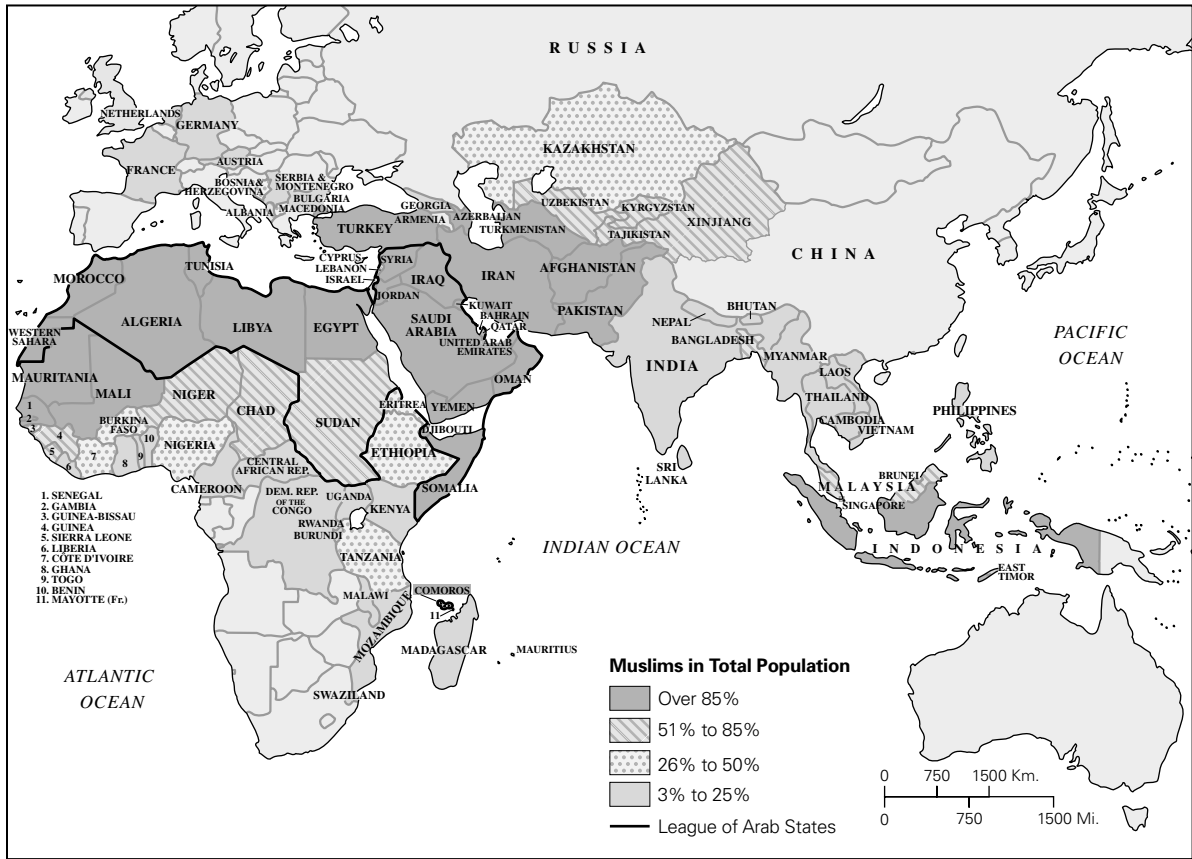
The **Bush Doctrine** encapsulates this change in U.S. foreign policy, proposing that unilateral and preemptive action may be necessary and that U.S. military predominance is critical in the post-September 11 era.<sup>36</sup> Members of the Bush administration also advocated that democratization of the Middle East was feasible and was the best strategy to secure U.S. interests in the region and in the global war on terror. These views were used by U.S. policymakers to justify intervention in Iraq in 2003.

Much of the rest of the world disagreed with the Bush Doctrine and its application in Iraq. Moreover, many were alienated by what they saw as arrogance in the United States' treatment of others. With the Bush administration's belief that others would follow its lead, with the division of the world into those that were with the United States and those that were against it, and with the criticism and ostracism of long-time allies when they disagreed with the U.S. approach (such as France and Germany on the Iraq war), the image of the United States suffered.<sup>37</sup> Both the failure to democratize and stabilize Iraq and charges of prisoners' rights abuses in prisons in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, further depleted goodwill toward the United States. Indeed, very few people in the rest of the world viewed the United States favorably by 2006. In a survey of people in fifteen countries, the Pew Global Attitudes Project found that "America's global image has again slipped and support for the war on terrorism has declined even among close U.S. allies like Japan. The war in Iraq is a continuing drag on opinions of the United States, not only in predominantly Muslim countries but in Europe and Asia as well. And despite growing concern over Iran's nuclear ambitions, the U.S. presence in Iraq is cited at least as often as Iran—and in many countries much more often—as a danger to world peace."<sup>38</sup> According to the survey, only in Great Britain did a majority (56 percent) of people express a favorable opinion of the United States. In some predominantly Muslim countries, such as Jordan and Turkey, fewer than 20 percent of the respondents held favorable opinions of the United States.<sup>39</sup>

The disenchantment with the United States and its policies is arguably greater and more intense in the Muslim world (see Map 3.5). "As is the

Map 3.5 Modern Islam, 2005

Source: McKay et al., *A History of World Societies*, 7th ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), p. 1046. Data from CIA World Factbook, 2005.



case with many great powers, the United States has a problem of being unpopular abroad. But in the Muslim world, the issue is different and far deeper. The United States is not simply seen as being mean-spirited or unfair. Today, in the wake of the Iraq War especially, nearly 90 percent of the inhabitants of Muslim countries view America as the primary security threat to their country.”<sup>40</sup> While anti-Americanism in the Muslim world may serve the interests of certain religiously fundamental groups, it is more than that: “The ferment within the Muslim world must be viewed . . . through a geopolitical rather than theological perspective. . . . Hostility toward the United States, while pervasive in some Muslim countries, originates from specific political grievances—such as Iranian nationalist resentment over the U.S. backing of the Shah, Arab animus stimulated by U.S. support for Israel or Pakistani feelings that the United States has been partial to India—than from a generalized religious bias.”<sup>41</sup>

As the situation in Iraq deteriorated from 2003 to 2007, the strategies associated with the Bush Doctrine and the Bush administration—strategies such as preemption, democratization and regime change, and unilateralism—came under severe criticism, even in the United States. Outside the United States, “the cumulative effect of . . . [the U.S. foreign policies] was substantial. It angered even America’s closest allies, many of whom came to see their role not as America’s partner but as a brake on the improvident exercise of its power. It weakened their support for American actions. And it undermined their willingness to cooperate in dealing with those challenges that were common to all.”<sup>42</sup> The Policy Choices box summarizes the controversy surrounding the Bush Doctrine.

## Globalization

### globalization

Economic, political, and cultural integration across state borders.

Economic **globalization** is another significant trend in the post–Cold War period with which states are struggling. Although the economies of the world have been very interdependent since the European powers began colonizing the globe and interdependence increased dramatically by the early 1970s, the integration of economies at the beginning of the twenty-first century is more geographically widespread (more parts of the world are connected) and is deeper (more connections across economies have developed). Trade, production, and investment are now truly multinational. “Consider the Microsoft Xbox—a high-technology game console containing cutting-edge technology. Manufacturing is outsourced to a Taiwanese company. The Intel processors are sourced from any of 11 production sites, including China, Costa Rica, Malaysia and the Philippines. Graphics processors are manufactured by a U.S. company at a plant in . . . China. The hard drive is assembled in China from components produced in Indonesia. Final assembly has recently been moved from Mexico to China. The Xbox is a microcosm of what is happening under globalization.”<sup>43</sup>

The end result of further globalization is the development of one world market, uncomplicated by state boundaries. Efforts toward creating single markets across states have recently been made in various regions of the world, including South America with Mercosur, North America with the North American Free Trade Agreement, southern Africa with the Southern African Development Community, and Asia with the Asian Pacific Economic Community. In Western Europe, the move toward a single economy began over fifty years ago, but only recently did the European Union reach its highest level of integration with its single currency.

States are certainly struggling with their responses to increased globalization. While the economic advantages associated with greater interdependence are attractive to many states, the costs are worrisome as well. Some political leaders in the United States, for example, were concerned that the creation of the **World Trade Organization** (WTO) to monitor free trade would establish an authority that could infringe on state sovereignty if states violated global free trade principles. Increased

### World Trade Organization

Intergovernmental organization dealing with the rules of trade between states



**ISSUE:** The Bush Doctrine, articulated by the U.S. president in speeches and developed in official policy documents in 2002, represents a significant break with both past U.S. foreign policy practices as well as with some general international laws and principles. The justification for such a change has been largely rooted in the global war on terror, itself a response to the attacks of September 11, 2001. Key aspects that have generated the most controversy are the Bush Doctrine's emphasis on military preemptive strikes and its focus on unilateral action.

**Option #1:** Unilateral and preemptive actions are necessary approaches to contemporary security threats.

**Arguments:** (a) Terrorism represents a new kind of threat that limits the effectiveness of traditional deterrence. Thus states must be allowed to act preemptively and unilaterally if necessary to attack and destroy terrorist organizations before they strike. (b) With the spread of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of rogue states and terrorist organizations, states no longer have the luxury of watching tanks and troops amass on their borders to make a determination that a military threat is imminent. States must act preemptively to prevent future threats. (c) When capability is distributed, responsibility is distributed. When capability is concentrated in the hands of one state, such as the United States, that state bears disproportionate responsibility for ensuring global stability. The United Nations is not always capable and willing to effectively respond to threats.

**Counterarguments:** (a) Terrorist threats are better met with cooperative action to track down and treat individual terrorists as criminals. Multilateral coalitions that isolate or confront states that harbor terrorist groups are more effective than is unilateral preemptive action. (b) Though the costs of waiting to fight only truly defensive wars may at times be high, the chaos of allowing all actors in the international system to take military action based on speculative or distant threats would be far worse. If all states followed the logic of the Bush Doctrine, there would be unrestrained interventions in the pursuit of narrow national interests. (c) The U.S. capability to act alone does not mean that it should. The United States does not

interdependence also means that economic crises, such as the financial crises that hit Russia, Asia, and Latin America in recent years, quickly spread through the international economy to affect many other states. Furthermore, free trade often clashes with other issues, such as security, human rights, labor standards, and environmental regulations, and recent protests at WTO meetings demonstrate some of the intense backlash against globalization. The poor economies of the South—containing the less economically developed countries—also fear that globalization simply means an Americanization of the world economy, with all profit returning to the multinational corporations in the North—consisting of the richer, industrialized economies. China is a good example of a state that is experiencing the sovereignty versus globalization dilemma:

The era of globalization places China's deep commitment to sovereignty in peril. State security remains paramount in Chinese

have the exclusive right and responsibility for determining when action is required. As signatories of the United Nations charter, states have agreed that the Security Council shall determine the existence of threats to peace and the measures to take to restore security.

**Option #2:** Unilateral and preemptive actions are dangerous to world peace.

**Arguments:** (a) The Bush Doctrine undermines international law based on the protection of state sovereignty. Although international law is evolving to allow for the violation of state sovereignty, it is only doing so in the extreme cases of genocide and large-scale humanitarian crises, and then only multilateral forces are seen as legitimate. Weakening international law and norms is not in the interest of the United States or the international community. (b) Unilateral action generates animosity, even from traditional allies. Aggressive intentions of others are difficult to judge, and without clear signs of an imminent threat, preemptive action will be seen as illegitimate. (c) Unilateral military actions are not effective against threats of weapons of mass destruction. Multilateral efforts to track and control the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are more effective than are military attacks on “rogue” states.

**Counterarguments:** (a) International law allows for action taken in self-defense and should evolve to account for the nature of new threats. International laws designed to regulate state-to-state interactions are simply inadequate for dealing with such nonstate actors. States should not be constrained by the UN Charter, which was written in a very different period of world politics. (b) Although states should work to influence how their actions are judged by others, they should not be constrained by them. Policies that promote a state’s national interests and protect it from threats are inherently legitimate. (c) The use of force is an effective way to deal with states that refuse to comply with international rules and represent a danger to others.

foreign policy. The Chinese government’s desire to reap the benefits of the global economy and play an active role in world affairs make it nearly impossible to maintain a clear distinction between internal and external politics. The Tiananmen Square episode of 1989 illustrates China’s fundamental foreign policy dilemma. What was ostensibly a domestic policy decision—to impose order in the face of threats to the political establishment—was immediately transformed into a foreign policy crisis whose consequences are still being felt more than a decade later (e.g. in debates surrounding China’s entry into the World Trade Organization).<sup>44</sup>

In addition to economic globalization, the world is arguably experiencing political globalization, with the increased importance of international organizations, such as the United Nations, and nongovernmental

organizations, such as human rights advocates, that act across borders and provide services once reserved for sovereign states (see Chapters 4, 9, and 14). Cultural globalization refers to the notion that people around the world are conforming in their habits (such as watching the same television shows and eating the same food) and their attitudes (such as beliefs about democracy and human rights). While there is considerable debate about the novelty of contemporary globalization, there is certainly strong opposition and countertrends occurring in global politics. Chapter 14 discusses economic, cultural, and political globalization and the impact that current trends may have on the sovereign state system.

## Theoretical Perspectives on Global Politics in the Modern Era

Each of the theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 1—realism, liberalism, idealism, world economic system analysis, constructivism, and feminist perspectives—reflects on the history of global politics in the twentieth century by focusing on different time periods and events and by using alternative interpretations of history as evidence to support the perspective's arguments.<sup>45</sup>

For realism, the Cold War was completely understandable, if not predictable. Given the international condition of anarchy, realists assume that the two most powerful states will come into conflict and attempt to balance each other through military buildup, alliance formation, and spheres of influence. Thus, the behavior of the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War was perfectly natural. The advent of nuclear weapons, according to realists, transformed what might have been a traditional conflict resulting in a conventional war into an indirect or "cold" war, but the underlying power dynamics and competition remained the same as they were in ancient Greece and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. *Détente* made sense to realists such as Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger because the tripolar balance of power between the United States, the Soviet Union, and China was roughly equal, and stability could be maintained among the great powers in the twentieth century as it had been during the Concert of Europe. *Détente* did not mean that competition would cease, however, and thus the superpower interventions in regional conflicts that persisted into the 1970s and 1980s were inevitable as part of the power struggle. Once the distribution of power in the international system changed, as it did with the end of the Cold War, realists expected the dynamics of global politics to change as well, but they did not expect an end to conflict, as many had hoped. Indeed, recurring conflicts of interests in the post-Cold War period between, for example, the United States and China and security threats coming from regional powers that seek nuclear weapons are inevitable given that states continue to maximize their power, as realists expect.

Whereas realism sees continuity across the history of international relations in the twentieth century, liberalism sees great change. As discussed in Chapter 1, developments after World War II, such as the spread of democracy, decolonization, nuclear weapons, the integration of the world economy, and technological developments that facilitated contact between actors in global politics, contributed to the rise of complex interdependence. As a result, global politics become the product of more non-state actors, particularly with the increase in multinational corporations and nongovernmental organizations interested in economic and other nonsecurity issues. These actors with multiple interests and the linkages that developed among them served to constrain states from conflict and encourage cooperation. For liberalism, *détente* and the trade agreements it included were recognition that the basis for power had shifted to economic sources and that states were interdependent and had more to gain from cooperation. Interdependence further eroded the dominance of security conflicts by facilitating political liberalization in the Soviet Union and economic liberalization in China. In the post Cold-War world, liberals point to the powerful forces of globalization and democratization that are changing international politics and challenging the state-centric system.

In contrast to realism, idealism looks at the Cold War not in terms of a conflict of interests but a conflict of values. On the one side, the conflict was about capitalist and individualist values; on the other side, it was about Communist and social values. Idealists argue that it is difficult to understand the vehemence that characterized the conflict without accounting for this clash of ideology and values. Realists would counter that the ideological rhetoric of the Cold War was simply window dressing—that at its heart, the conflict was a power struggle. Idealists also see that values played a role in the end of the Cold War, starting with agreements signed during *détente*. In 1975, thirty-three European and North American states signed the Final Act of the European Security Conference in Helsinki, Finland. The Helsinki agreement included a provision on human rights and political freedom. While the Soviet Union and East European states routinely violated many of the rights they had agreed to protect, the agreement nevertheless established a norm of behavior, and the discrepancy between the rhetoric of the agreement and the behavior of the governments is what spawned the growth of many dissident groups across the Soviet bloc in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of these groups, pursuing the values of human rights that are important to idealism, would play a significant role in transforming their countries and ending the Cold War. For idealists, the application of values in global politics is particularly important in the types of conflicts in the post-Cold War period. Ethnic conflict and a variety of war crimes, idealists argue, provide moral imperatives for the global community to respond. Values dividing cultures and religions are also key to current global debates, according to idealists.

For the world economic system perspective, the international economy of the twentieth century had its roots in earlier times. What is particularly salient about the modern era, however, is the continued division of labor into the core, in the North, and periphery, in the South, even after decolonization. Many former colonies remain tied to the economies of the imperialist powers in many respects. The difficulties that these states have experienced in economic development are, according to this perspective, due to the structure of the international economy. In the post-Cold War era, world economic system analysts point to the different effects that globalization is having on core and periphery economies.

Constructivism and feminism provide alternative interpretations of historical events in the modern era. Constructivists, for example, argue that a state's action during the Cold War had less to do with the "real" situation of a bipolar system and more to do with the state's understandings of their interactions and their identities in world politics. Along these lines, constructivists argue that the Cuban missile crisis was a "crisis" only because of how the "Cuban problem" and the "Soviet threat" were constructed by U.S. policymakers. The missiles themselves, after all, were not more of a threat based in Cuba than they were based in the Soviet Union; they could hit the United States from either location. Thus, according to constructivists, the threat from the missiles was not real but constructed. This, they argue, helps explain why U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba remains largely hostile and unchanged despite the disappearance of the "Soviet threat." U.S. foreign policy has more to do with the construction of the "Cuban problem," which continues unchanged.<sup>46</sup> In contemporary global politics, constructivism emphasizes the importance of socially constructed norms and institutions that constrain the highly powerful United States. For constructivists, "the debate in the [UN] Security Council over war with Iraq highlighted this complex interplay between institutional norms and processes, the politics of international legitimacy and the power of the United States. Washington commanded the material resources to oust Saddam Hussein from power, but without Security Council endorsement it has struggled to shake off an aura of illegitimacy and illegality, seriously undermining [the U.S.] . . . occupation and reconstruction."<sup>47</sup>

For feminism, the military conflict of the Cold War that dominated the second half of the twentieth century was masculine in character, and the preoccupation with power and the superpower rivalry masked or ignored more feminine issues and agendas. The Cold War did, however, depend on women, affect women, and affect conceptions of gender:

A lot of women and men in Poland, Chile, South Africa, and France never served in their governments' militaries; yet between 1945 and 1989 their lives were also militarized. The militarization which sustained Cold War relationships between people for forty years required armed forces with huge



appetites for recruits; it also depended on ideas about manliness and womanliness that touched people who never went through basic training.<sup>48</sup>

Feminists are now asking what the end of the Cold War means for women. As men and women who fought in the proxy wars that have now ended return to civil society, a renegotiation of gender roles must occur. As the Soviet systems were dismantled across Eastern Europe, the number of women representatives in parliament has declined.<sup>49</sup> As ethnic conflict has spread, local and international women's groups have fought to get rape, a form of violence that has occurred in many of the recent ethnic conflicts, classified as a violation of human rights.<sup>50</sup> As globalization pressures lead some to embrace economic and political integration, some women protest that economics is being pursued at the expense of health, environmental, and safety concerns and that the new global economic structures, such as the World Trade Organization, are even more patriarchal than are state governments.

## SUMMARY

- Despite high hopes for peace and stability after the Second World War, disagreements between the Soviet Union and the United States over the future of Eastern Europe formed an important basis for the beginning of the Cold War. By 1949, the United States had formed a military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, to protect Western Europe from Communist encroachment and began developing a global policy of containment.
- The Cold War quickly spread to Asia as the Communists won the civil war in China in 1949. When North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, the United States led a UN military mission against North Korea.
- Decolonization following World War II would dramatically increase the number of sovereign states by 1970. These states, called the Third World during the Cold War, rarely escaped the superpower rivalry as internal conflict within them became proxy wars and as they became client states in the competition for allies around the globe.
- By the 1960s, the Soviet Union and China became vigorous enemies. Not coincidentally, relations between the Soviet Union and the United States improved when the Soviet dispute with China became even more serious at the beginning of the 1970s. The United States pursued more peaceful relations with both the Soviet Union and China in a period known as *détente*. But *détente* between the United States and the Soviet Union did not survive the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the Cold War was reborn.
- The world economic system underwent dramatic changes by the 1970s as the dominance of the United States declined with the rise of strong

economies in Western Europe and Japan. The 1970s also revealed the dependence of these economies in the North on the states in the South, particularly with the development of OPEC.

- The dramatic end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union in the war against Iraq in 1991, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union signaled significant changes in world politics. A period of euphoria following the end to many conflicts and a wave of democratization was replaced by concerns over ethnic violence, failed states, nuclear proliferation, and the challenges of globalization. U.S. policies based on unilateralism, preemption, and regime change, as well as continued violence in Iraq, generated much criticism and resentment in most of the rest of the world.
- Each of the major political perspectives uses different parts of the history of international relations in the second half of the twentieth century to advance their claims about global politics. Realism concentrates on the Cold War rivalry, liberalism on the rise of economic interdependence, and idealism on the value conflicts and growing concern over human rights. The world economic system perspective focuses on the continued division of the international capitalist system into a core and a periphery, constructivism on how the Cold War rivalry was socially constructed, and feminism on the masculine nature of the Cold War and the effects that the Cold War and its end have had on women.

## KEY TERMS

Yalta Conference	56	détente	69
North Atlantic Treaty Organization	57	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)	72
iron curtain	57	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty	74
Warsaw Pact	57	Gorbachev	75
containment	58	<i>perestroika</i>	75
Marshall Plan	58	<i>glasnost</i>	75
decolonization	61	new world order	77
Third World	63	failed states	81
Suez crisis	65	nuclear proliferation	82
Six-Day War	67	Bush Doctrine	85
proxy wars	68	globalization	87
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