

CHAPTER 31

The Cold War and Decolonization, 1945–1975

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- I. The Cold War
 - A. The United Nations
 1. After World War II Western leaders perceived the Soviet Union as the center of a world revolutionary movement, while Soviet leaders felt themselves surrounded by the western countries and their North Atlantic Treaty Organization (founded 1949). The United Nations provided a venue for face-to-face debate between the two sides in the Cold War.
 2. The United Nations was established in 1945 with a General Assembly, Security Council, a full-time bureaucracy headed by the Secretary-General, and various specialized agencies. All signatories of the United Nations Charter renounced war and territorial conquest, but in practice, the United Nations was seldom able to forestall or quell international conflicts.
 3. The decolonization of Africa and Asia greatly swelled the size of the General Assembly, which became an arena for expressing opinions and whose resolutions carried great weight in the early years of the United Nations. The influx of new members made the General Assembly more concerned with poverty, racial discrimination, and the struggle against imperialism than with the Cold War, and so the Western powers increasingly ignored the General Assembly.
 - B. Capitalism and Communism
 1. Between 1944 and 1946 the western capitalist countries created a new international monetary system in which supply and demand determined prices and that included a system of exchange rates, an International Monetary Fund, and a World Bank. The Soviet Union, suspicious of Western intentions, established a closed monetary system in which the state allocated goods and set prices for itself and for the communist states of eastern Europe.
 2. The United States economy recovered and prospered during and after World War II. The economy of Western Europe, heavily damaged during World War II, recovered in the post-war period with the help of the American Marshall Plan.
 3. Western European governments generally increased their role in economic management during this period. In 1948 Europeans launched a process of economic cooperation and integration with the creation of the Organization of European Economic Cooperation, which expanded its membership as it developed into the European Economic Community or Common Market (1957) and then into the European Community (1970).
 4. The Soviet Union and eastern European states relied on the government to determine the production, distribution, and price of goods. In the communist states the recovery from World War II was rapid at first, but in the long run the Soviet and eastern European economies were unable to match those of the west in the production of consumer goods, housing, and food.
 - C. West Versus East in Europe and Korea
 1. The rapid establishment of communist regimes in eastern Europe led the United States to perceive the Soviet Union as a worldwide enemy. American perceptions led to the

Truman Doctrine (1947) and to the establishment of NATO (1949), to which the Soviet Union responded by organizing the Warsaw Pact (1955).

2. A third great war did not break out in Europe, but the Soviet Union and the West did test each other's resolve in incidents such as the Soviet blockade of West Berlin (1948–1949), the construction of the Berlin Wall (1961), and the West's encouragement of the rift between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Soviet power was used to ensure the obedience of eastern European nations such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia.
3. In Korea, Soviet and American occupation of zones north and south of the thirty-eighth parallel led to the establishment, in 1948, of a communist North Korea and a noncommunist South Korea. North Korea's invasion of South Korea in 1950 marked the beginning of the Korean War, in which the United States came to the aid of South Korea while China sent troops to assist the north. A truce in 1953 fixed the border again at the thirty-eighth parallel, but no peace treaty was concluded.

D. U.S. Defeat in Vietnam

1. After winning independence from France, communist North Vietnam supported a communist guerilla movement—the Viet Cong—against the noncommunist government of South Vietnam. John F. Kennedy decided to send American military advisers to assist South Vietnam, and President Lyndon Johnson gained Congressional support for unlimited expansion of U.S. military deployment.
2. Unable to stop the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese allies, the United States ended its involvement in Vietnam in 1973, and Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops took over South Vietnam in 1975.
3. The Vietnam War brought significant casualties to both sides and gave rise to serious economic problems and to an anti-war movement in the United States. Members of the American military and their civilian supporters argued that government restrictions on American military operations had deprived the Americans of their chance for victory; such restrictions were designed to prevent China from entering the war and possibly starting a nuclear confrontation.

E. The Race for Nuclear Supremacy

1. The existence of weapons of mass destruction affected all aspects of the Cold War confrontation, causing paranoia in the United States and spreading fear of nuclear destruction throughout the world. Fear of nuclear war seemed about to be realized when the Soviet Union deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba in response to American deployment of such missiles in Turkey, but Khrushchev backed down and withdrew the missiles from Cuba.
2. The number, means of delivery, and destructive force of nuclear weapons increased enormously, but at the same time, the Soviet Union, the United States, and other countries made some progress on arms limitations. After 1972 the superpowers began the slow, arduous process of negotiating weapons limits.
3. Rather than attempting to keep up with the expensive Soviet-American arms race, the European nations sought to relax tensions between east and west through such organizations as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which led to the signing of the Helsinki Accords.
4. Space exploration was another offshoot of the nuclear arms race, as the ability to launch satellites and to send manned rockets into space was understood to signify equivalent achievements in the military sphere.

II. Decolonization and Nation Building

A. New Nations in South and Southeast Asia

1. After partition in 1947, the independent states of India and Pakistan were strikingly dissimilar.

2. Pakistan defined itself in terms of religion, fell under the control of military leaders, and saw its Bengali-speaking eastern section secede to become the independent nation of Bangladesh in 1971. India, a secular republic with a 90 percent Hindu population, inherited a larger share of industrial and educational resources and was able to maintain unity despite its linguistic heterogeneity.
 3. In Southeast Asia, the defeats that the Japanese inflicted on the British, French, and Dutch forces in World War II set an example of an Asian people standing up to European colonizers. In the post-war period nationalist movements led to the independence of Indonesia (1949), Burma and the Malay Federation (1948), and the Philippines (1946.)
- B. The Struggle for Independence in Africa
1. The postwar French government was determined to hold on to Algeria, which had a substantial French settler population, vineyards, and oil and gas fields. An Algerian revolt that broke out in 1954 was pursued with great brutality by both sides, but ended French withdrawal and Algerian independence in 1962.
 2. None of the several wars for independence in sub-Saharan Africa matched the Algerian struggle in scale. But even without war, the new states suffered from a variety of problems including arbitrarily drawn borders, overdependence on export crops, lack of national road and railroad networks, and overpopulation.
 3. Some of the politicians who led the nationalist movements devoted their lives to ridding their homelands of foreign occupation. Two examples are Kwame Nkrumah, the independence leader and later president of Ghana and Jomo Kenyatta, who negotiated the independence and became first president of the Republic of Kenya.
 4. The African leaders in the sub-Saharan French colonies were reluctant to call for independence because they realized that some of the colonies had bleak economic prospects and because they were aware of the importance of the billions of dollars of French public investment. Nevertheless, the French colonies achieved independence between 1958 and 1960.
 5. Decolonization in Africa often involved struggles as people of European descent fought against indigenous Africans in an attempt to retain their personal privileges, control of resources, and political power. Race conflict was particularly severe in the southern part of Africa, including the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, the British colony of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and in South and Southwest Africa.
- C. The Quest for Economic Freedom in Latin America
1. In Latin America, independence from European rule was achieved earlier, but American and European economic domination increased.
 2. In Mexico, the revolutionary rhetoric of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party was accompanied by a large and persistent disparity between the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural. In Guatemala, President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman's attempt to expropriate the property of large landowners including the United Fruit Company prompted the United States Central Intelligence Agency to assist in a military coup that removed Arbenz from power and condemned Guatemala to decades of political instability and violence.
 3. In the 1950s the Cuban leader Fulgencio Batista presided over a corrupt, repressive regime, while the United States and a small class of wealthy Cubans dominated the economy. In 1959 Fidel Castro led a popular revolution that forced Batista to leave the country, redistributed land, lowered urban rents, raised wages, and seized the property of U.S. and Cuban corporations.
 4. There is little evidence that Castro undertook his revolution to install a communist government, but faced with a U.S. blockade, he turned to the Soviet Union for economic aid, thereby committing his nation to economic stagnation and dependence on the Soviet Union. In April 1961 some fifteen hundred Cuban exiles whom the CIA had trained

landed at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba in an effort to overthrow Castro, but the attempt failed, partly because the United States did not supply all the air support that the plan had called for.

D. Challenges of Nation Building

1. Decolonization occurred on a vast scale and led to the establishment of dozens of new nations between 1945 and 1965. Each of these new nations had to establish some form of government, and most of them had to do so while facing severe economic challenges.
2. The new nations also had to address serious educational concerns including questions such as which language to teach, how to inculcate a sense of national unity in places where it had not previously existed, and how to provide satisfying jobs for graduates. The new nations were rarely able to surmount these hurdles, and many nations, even those as successful as South Korea, opted for authoritarian rule.

III. Beyond a Bipolar World

A. The Third World

1. In 1955 Indonesia's President Sukarno hosted a meeting of twenty-nine African and Asian countries at Bandung, Indonesia. This meeting marked the beginning of an effort by the many new, poor, mostly non-European nations emerging from colonialism to gain more weight in the world by banding together in what became known as the nonaligned movement or Third World.
2. Leaders of the so-called Third World countries preferred the label "nonaligned," but as the movement had the sympathy of the Soviet Union and included communist countries such as China and Yugoslavia, the West did not take the term nonaligned seriously.
3. For the movement's leaders, nonalignment was primarily a way of extracting money and support from one or both of the superpowers. One example is the ability of the Egyptian leaders Nasir and Sadat to play the two superpowers against each other in order to get assistance in hydroelectric projects, arms, and loans from both sides.

B. Japan and China

1. Both Japan and China were able to take advantage of the superpowers' preoccupation with the Cold War.
2. The American occupation (1945–1952) gave Japan a constitution that allowed the country only a limited self-defense force and banned the deployment of Japanese troops abroad. The Japanese stayed out of the Cold War and concentrated on building up their industries and engaging in world commerce, gradually developing new markets in Southeast Asia. The Japanese government aided Japanese business in developing three industries that were crucial to Japan's emergence as an economic superpower after 1975: electricity, steel, and shipbuilding.
3. China was deeply involved in Cold War politics, being allied to and receiving aid from the Soviet Union in the 1950s. The PRC and the Soviet Union began to diverge in 1956, and Mao introduced his own radical policies with the disastrous Great Leap Forward in 1958 and with the Cultural Revolution, which was begun in 1966. The rift between the PRC and the Soviet Union opened so wide that President Richard Nixon was able to establish a cooperative relationship between the United States and China in the early 1970s.

C. The Middle East

1. As the Arab states slowly gained independence in the postwar years, the struggle with Israel came to overshadow all Arab politics.
2. After World War II intense pressure to resettle European Jewish refugees forced Britain to turn the Palestine question over to the United Nations General Assembly, which voted in November 1947 to partition Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. Israel declared its independence in May 1948 and defeated the Palestinian and other Arab forces that attempted to crush the newborn state.

3. In a six-day war in 1967 Israel took Arab lands including East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula. The Palestine Liberation Organization, headed by Yasir Arafat, waged guerilla war against Israel and engaged in acts of terrorism.
 4. The growing demand for oil in the postwar era prompted the oil-producing Arab states to form the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1960. OPEC embargoed the United States and the Netherlands for their support of Israel during the Arab-Israeli war of 1972 and quadrupled oil prices in 1974.
- D. The Emergence of Environmental Concerns
1. The Cold War and the tremendous postwar economic recovery focused public and government attention on technological innovation and enormous industrial projects; only a few people, such as Rachel Carson, warned that technologies and industrial growth were rapidly degrading the environment.
 2. The student protests of the late 1960s in the United States, France, Japan, and Mexico indicated a rising current of youth activism that focused attention on environmental problems.