EUROPE SINCE WORLD WAR II

Europe

**Introduction:**-Europe, conventionally one of the seven continents of the world. Although referred to as a continent, Europe is actually just the western fifth of the Eurasian landmass, which is made up primarily of Asia. Modern geographers generally describe the Ural Mountains, the Ural River, part of the Caspian Sea, and the Caucasus Mountains as forming the main boundary between Europe and Asia. The name *Europe* is perhaps derived from that of Europa, the daughter of Phoenix in Greek mythology, or possibly from *Ereb,* a Phoenician word for “sunset.”

The second smallest continent (Australia is the smallest), Europe has an area of 10,355,000 sq km (3,998,000 sq mi), but it has the third largest population of all the continents, 730 million in 2008. The northernmost point of the European mainland is Cape Nordkinn, in Norway; the southernmost, Punta de Tarifa, in southern Spain near Gibraltar. From west to east the mainland ranges from Cabo da Roca, in Portugal, to the northeastern slopes of the Urals, in Russia.

Europe has long been a center of great cultural and economic achievement. The ancient Greeks and Romans produced major civilizations, famous for their contributions to philosophy, literature, fine art, and government. The Renaissance, which began in the 14th century, was a period of great accomplishment for European artists and architects, and the age of exploration, beginning in the 15th century, included voyages to new territories by European navigators. European nations, particularly Spain, Portugal, France, and Britain, built large colonial empires, with vast holdings in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. In the 18th century modern forms of industry began to be developed. In the 20th century much of Europe was ravaged by the two world wars. After World War II ended in 1945, the continent was divided into two major political and economic blocs—Communist nations in Eastern Europe and non-Communist countries in Western Europe. Between 1989 and 1991, however, the Eastern bloc broke up. Communist regimes surrendered power in most Eastern European countries. East and West Germany were unified. The Soviet Communist Party collapsed, multilateral military and economic ties between Eastern Europe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) were severed, and the USSR itself ceased to exist.

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THE PEOPLE.Although it is not precisely known when humans first lived in Europe, they probably migrated there from the east in several waves, mostly via a no longer extant land bridge from Asia Minor into the Balkans and by way of grasslands north of the Black Sea. Parts of Europe had a substantial human population by about 4000 bc. Geographical barriers such as forests, mountains, and swamps helped divide the peoples into groups that remained largely separate for long periods. Some intermixing of peoples occurred as a result of migrations, however.

ETHNOLOGY.Europe includes a large number of ethnic groups—persons associated by a common culture, especially language. European nations are generally composed of one dominant group, such as the Germans of Germany and the French of France. Several countries, particularly in south central Europe, have large minorities, and most countries contain smaller groups, such as the Basques of Spain and the Saami of Norway. In addition, substantial numbers of Asian Turks, black Africans, and Arabs live in western Europe, many of them as workers on a temporary basis. The collapse of Communism during the period from 1989 to 1991 led to the breakup of the USSR into 15 separate republics, each with its own dominant ethnic group. The Croats, Slovenes, and Macedonian Slavs, each of which constituted the largest part of the population in their respective republics within Yugoslavia, all voted to secede from Yugoslavia in 1991 to become independent nations. Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a more diverse array of ethnic groups, became the site of great ethnic conflict after declaring its independence from Yugoslavia in 1992. More recently, Serbia’s southern province of Kosovo (administered by UN) has been the site of additional ethnic conflict between Serbian nationalists and ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo (administered by UN).

DEMOGRAPHY.The distribution of the European population has not been stable over long periods, but has shifted, both through differential birth and death rates and by migration. At the beginning of the Christian era, the most densely populated part of Europe bordered the Mediterranean Sea. At the beginning of the 21st century Europe had the second highest overall population density of the continents, after Asia. The most heavily populated area was a belt beginning in England and continuing eastward through the Low Countries, Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Poland, and into European Russia. Northern Italy also had a high population density.

The average annual growth rate for the European population from 1985 to 1995 was only 0.28 percent; in the same period the population of Asia grew by 1.69 percent per year, and that of North America by 1.33 percent annually. By 2000 the population was actually decreasing. The overall population decline was due primarily to a low birth rate (10.2 births per 1,000 people in 2005 compared to 18.3 births per 1,000 people in South America). Europeans generally enjoy some of the longest average life expectancies at birth—some 75 years in most countries, compared with 69 years in India and less than 60 years in most countries of Africa.Population movements, both voluntary and involuntary, have been a constant aspect of European life. In the late 20th century, two movements were particularly noteworthy—the migration of people seeking jobs as “guest workers” (German *Gastarbeiter*) and the migration of persons from rural to urban areas. Italian, Yugoslav, Greek, Spanish, and Portuguese workers (as well as some from Asian Turkey, Algeria, and other non-European areas) moved—mostly on a non-permanent basis—to Germany, France, Switzerland, Britain, and other countries in search of jobs. In addition, many Europeans moved within national boundaries from rural areas to cities. From 1950 to 1975, the population of Western Europe changed from roughly 70 to nearly 80 percent urban; that of Eastern Europe grew from 35 to 60 percent urban. On the other hand, far fewer Europeans left the continent than in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Most people leaving Europe in the late 20th century migrated to South America, Canada, or Australia.

In most European countries the national capital is the largest city, but the continent has many additional cities of substantial size. Most European capitals have great economic and cultural significance and contain many noted historical sites. Among the most famous cities are Berlin, Budapest, London, Madrid, Moscow, Paris, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, and Vienna.

LANGUAGES.Europeans speak a wide variety of languages. The principal linguistic groups are the Slavic, which includes Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Czech, Slovak, Bulgarian, Polish, Slovenian, Macedonian, and Serbo-Croatian; the Germanic, which includes English, German, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, and Icelandic; and the Romance, which includes Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian. These languages have basically the same origins and are grouped as Indo-European languages. Other Indo-European languages include Greek, Albanian, and Celtic languages such as Gaelic, Welsh, and Breton. In addition to the Indo-European language speakers, the continent has groups of people who speak Finno-Ugric languages, such as Finnish, Hungarian, and Saami, as well as speakers of the Basque and Turkish languages. Many Europeans use English or French as a second language.

RELIGION.In the early 2000s the great majority of Europeans were Christians. The largest single religious group, Roman Catholics, lived mainly in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Belgium, southern Germany, and Poland. Another large group was composed of followers of Protestant faiths, concentrated in countries of northern and central Europe such as England, Scotland, northern Germany, The Netherlands, and the Scandinavian nations. A third major Christian group was composed of members of an Orthodox church. They lived principally in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro. In addition, there were Jewish communities in most European countries (the largest of them in Russia), and the inhabitants of Albania and Turkey were predominantly Muslim.

CULTURAL ACTIVITY.Europe has a long tradition of excellence in literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and dance. In the late 20th century Paris, Rome, London, Madrid, and Moscow were particularly famous as cultural centers, but many other cities also supported important museums, musical and theatrical groups, and other cultural institutions. Most European countries had highly developed mass-communications media, such as radio, television, and motion pictures. European nations had excellent educational systems, and the literacy rate was high in most countries. Some of the world’s oldest and finest universities are in Europe, including the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford in England, the Universities of Paris in France, the University of Heidelberg in Germany, Charles University in the Czech Republic, the University of Bologna in Italy, and Moscow State University in Russia.

PATTERNS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Europe has long been a world leader in economic activities. As the birthplace of modern science and of the Industrial Revolution, Europe acquired technological superiority over the rest of the world, which gave it unquestioned dominance in the 19th century. The Industrial Revolution, which began in England in the 18th century and from there spread throughout the world, was a transformation involving the use of complex machinery and resulting in greatly increased agricultural production and new forms of economic organization. An important impetus for growth since the mid-20th century has been the formation of supranational organizations such as the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

AGRICULTURE.Farming in Europe is generally of the mixed type, in which a variety of crops and animal products are produced in the same region. The European portion of the former USSR is one of the few large regions where one-product agriculture predominates. The Mediterranean nations maintain a distinctive type of agriculture, dominated by the production of wheat, olives, grapes, and citrus fruit. In most of these countries farming plays a more important role in the national economy than in the northern countries. Throughout much of western Europe dairying and meat production are major activities. To the east, crops become more important. In the nations of the Balkan Peninsula, crops account for some 60 percent of agricultural production, and in Ukraine, wheat production overshadows all other agriculture. Europe as a whole is particularly noted for its great output of wheat, barley, oats, rye, corn, potatoes, beans, peas, and sugar beets. Besides dairy and beef cattle, large numbers of pigs, sheep, goats, and poultry are raised by Europeans.

In the late 20th century Europe was self-sufficient in most basic farm products. On most farmland advanced agricultural techniques, including the application of modern machinery and chemical fertilizers, were used, but in parts of southern and southeastern Europe, traditional, relatively inefficient techniques were still dominant. For much of the period when the Communists held power, agriculture in the countries of the Eastern bloc (with the exception of Poland and Yugoslavia) and the USSR was based on large, state-owned farms and state-dominated collectives.

FORESTRY AND FISHING.The northern forests, which extend from Norway through northern European Russia, are the main sources of forest products in Europe. Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia all have relatively large forestry industries, producing pulpwood, wood for construction, and other products. In southern Europe, both Spain and Portugal produce a variety of cork products from the cork oak. Although all of the coastal European countries engage in some commercial fishing, the industry is especially important in the northern countries, particularly Norway and Denmark. Spain, Russia, Britain, and Poland also are major fishing nations.

MINING.The present pattern of population distribution in much of Europe has been influenced by past mining activities, particularly coal mining. Coal mined in areas such as the British Midlands, the Ruhr district of Germany, and Ukraine attracted factories and helped establish the industrial patterns that continue today. Although employment in mining is declining in Europe, largely because of mechanization, several centers are still important. Northeastern England, the Ruhr region, the Silesian area of Poland, and Ukraine are major coal producers. Iron ore is produced in large quantities in northern Sweden, eastern France, and Ukraine. A wide range of other minerals, such as bauxite, copper, manganese, nickel, and potash, are mined in substantial amounts. One of the newest and most important extracting industries in Europe is the production of petroleum and natural gas from offshore fields in the North Sea. These products have been extracted in great quantity for longer periods in the southern part of European Russia, notably in the Volga River region.

MANUFACTURING.Since the Industrial Revolution, manufacturing has been a dominant force in shaping ways of life in Europe. Northern and central England were early centers of modern manufacturing, as were the Ruhr and Saxony (Sachsen) regions of Germany, northern France, Silesia in Poland, and Ukraine. Products such as iron and steel, fabricated metals, textiles, clothing, ships, motor vehicles, and railroad equipment have long been important European manufactures, and a great variety of other items also are produced. The production of chemicals and electronic equipment and other high-technology items have been leading growth industries of the post-World War II period. On the whole, manufacturing is particularly concentrated in the central part of the continent (an area including England, eastern and southern France, northern Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, southern Norway, and southern Sweden) and in European Russia and Ukraine.

ENERGY. Europe consumes great quantities of energy. The leading energy sources are coal (including lignite), petroleum, natural gas, nuclear power, and waterpower. Norway, Sweden, France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, and Spain all have major hydroelectric installations, which contribute large portions of the annual output of electricity. Nuclear power is important in France; Britain; Germany; Belgium; Lithuania, Ukraine, and other former Soviet republics; Sweden; Switzerland; Finland; and Bulgaria.

TRANSPORTATION.Europe has highly developed transportation systems, which are densest in the central part of the continent. Scandinavia, European Russia, and southern Europe have fewer transport facilities. Large numbers of passenger cars are owned in Europe, and much freight is transported by truck. Rail networks are well maintained in most European countries and are important carriers of passengers as well as freight. Water transport plays a major role in the European economy. Several countries, such as Greece, Britain, Italy, France, Norway, and Russia, maintain large fleets of merchant ships. Rotterdam, in The Netherlands, is one of the world’s busiest seaports. Other major ports include Antwerp, Belgium; Marseille, France; Hamburg; London; Genoa, Italy; Gdańsk, Poland; Bilbao, Spain; and Göteborg, Sweden. Much freight is carried on inland waterways; European rivers with substantial traffic include the Rhine, Schelde (Escaut), Seine, Elbe, Danube, Volga, and Dnieper. In addition, Europe has a number of important canals. Almost all European countries maintain national airlines, and several, such as Air France, British Airways, and KLM (Netherlands), are major worldwide carriers. Most transportation systems in European countries are government controlled. Since World War II a large number of pipelines have been built in Europe to transport petroleum and natural gas.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE.Almost all European countries conduct large amounts of international trade. Much of the trade is intracontinental, especially among members of the European Union, but Europeans also engage in large-scale trade with nations of other continents. Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and The Netherlands are among the world’s greatest trading nations. A large portion of European intercontinental trade involves the exporting of manufactured goods and the importing of raw materials.

EUROPEAN HISTORY.From prehistoric to modern times, Europe has been occupied by numerous peoples and nations. The following summary will emphasize only those events, developments, trends, and individuals that have been responsible for decisive transitions or transformations in Europe through the ages. The history sections of the articles on European countries contain more detailed data on the genesis, growth, and present state of continental civilization. These sections also refer the reader to a wide range of articles dealing with broader aspects of European history. Moreover, a number of articles contain references to other related entries on continental affairs. Further reading on specific periods of European history will provide greater understanding of the continent’s development.

1. PREHISTORIC AND ANCIENT TIMES. Modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) first appeared in Europe during the late Paleolithic Era (the Old Stone Age). Hunters and gatherers, they left behind notable examples of art, dating from approximately 32,000 to 10,000 years ago, that have been found in more than 200 caves, mostly in Spain and France (*see* Cave Dwellers). Some 10,000 years ago, at the end of the Pleistocene Epoch—the most recent of the Ice Ages—the climate began to improve and gradually approached that of the present. In time, Neolithic (New Stone Age) people developed agricultural economies that replaced hunting. During the 6th millennium bc, farming spread over most of western Europe. Some of these Neolithic cultures, beginning about 5000 bc, erected huge stone monuments (megaliths) either as grave structures or as memorials of notable events. Early Neolithic development was especially intense in the Danube and Balkan areas, in the so-called Starčevo (near Belgrade in present-day Serbia) and Danubian cultures. In the southern Balkans the Sesklo culture (in Thessaly, ancient Greece) had developed complex proto-urban forms by 5000 bc. This in turn led to the Dimini culture (also in Thessaly), which was characterized by fortified villages. Excavations in the Balkans have shown that copper was in use in that area about 4000 bc, during the Vinča culture (4500?-3000? bc). By this time, trade, especially in amber from the Baltic, was becoming more and more important. In central Europe (Bohemia, in what is now the Czech Republic) large deposits of copper and tin facilitated a bronze technology during the 3rd millennium bc. Typical royal or aristocratic burials of this period were covered by barrows or tumuli, but by the late 2nd millennium bc a change occurred; cremation then became common, and burial by urn (in urnfields) became the established custom.
2. THE 20TH CENTURY EUROPE. For most Europeans, the years from 1871 to 1914 constituted *La Belle Epoque* (“the beautiful times”). Science had made life more comfortable and secure, representative government had achieved wide acceptance in principle, and continued progress was confidently expected. Proud of their accomplishments and convinced that history had assigned them a civilizing mission, Europe’s powers laid colonial claim to vast territories in Africa and Asia. Some believed, however, that Europe was dancing on a volcano. Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and German sociologist Max Weber cautioned against a facile optimism and dismissed the liberal conception of rational humanity, while artists such as Dutch Vincent van Gogh and Norwegian Edvard Munch explored the darker regions of the human heart. Such forebodings began to seem less eccentric in the light of contemporary challenges to the liberal consensus. A new and virulent strain of anti-Semitism infected the political life of Austria-Hungary, Russia, and France; in the home of the revolution, the Dreyfus affair threatened to bring down the Third Republic. National rivalries were exacerbated by imperial competition, and the nationality problem in the Hungarian half of the Habsburg monarchy intensified as a result of the government’s Magyarization policies and the example German and Italian unifications set for the Slavic peoples.

As the industrial working class grew in number and organized strength, Marxist social-democratic parties pressured European governments to equalize conditions as well as opportunities. In the midst of an increasingly unsettled atmosphere, Emperor William II of Germany dismissed Bismarck in 1890. For two decades the Iron Chancellor had served as Europe’s “honest broker,” juggling with great dexterity a bewildering array of alliances and alignments and thereby maintaining the peace. None of his successors possessed the skill needed to preserve Bismarck’s system, and when the incompetent emperor jettisoned realpolitik in favor of *Weltpolitik* (imperial politics), England, France, and Russia formed the Triple Entente.

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| F1 |  | The World Wars |

The German danger, coupled with Russian-Austrian rivalry in the Balkans, created a diplomatic configuration that presented difficulties far too great for the mediocre men who headed European foreign offices on the eve of 1914. When Serbian terrorist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, he ignited the diplomatic powder keg.

World War II

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| I |  | INTRODUCTION |

World War II, global military conflict that, in terms of lives lost and material destruction, was the most devastating war in human history. It began in 1939 as a European conflict between Germany and an Anglo-French coalition but eventually widened to include most of the nations of the world. It ended in 1945, leaving a new world order dominated by the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

More than any previous war, World War II involved the commitment of nations’ entire human and economic resources, the blurring of the distinction between combatant and noncombatant, and the expansion of the battlefield to include all of the enemy’s territory. The most important determinants of its outcome were industrial capacity and personnel. In the last stages of the war, two radically new weapons were introduced: the long-range rocket and the atomic bomb. In the main, however, the war was fought with the same or improved weapons of the types used in World War I (1914-1918). The greatest advances were in aircraft and tanks.

Legacies of World War II

World War II ended with the surrender of Germany on May 8, 1945 and the surrender of Japan on August 14, 1945. Statistically, this military conflict overshadows every war ever fought. Some 1.7 billion people from 61 nations engaged in a struggle waged on the land, on the sea, and in the skies of Europe, East and Southeast Asia, North Africa, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean. The clash left behind a trail of carnage and destruction unparalleled in human history. World War II took the lives of some 55 million soldiers and civilians and destroyed untold amounts of property. It cost more to finance World War II than any war before it. Beyond the awesome and almost unfathomable statistics, the conflict left a permanent mark on all aspects of human experience and shaped the history of the postwar world. For a generation of men and women everywhere, World War II was “the war.”

World War II vastly affected the world, so some sort of understanding of the war is needed to grasp much of the present. However, how people know the war relates directly to their experience of the world after it. The war was global, so participants experienced only some aspect of it, thus making their war experiences unique. While the Japanese refer to World War II as the Greater East Asia War, the Chinese call it the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. For most citizens of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the war remains the Great Patriotic War, while Solomon Islanders call it, simply and appropriately, Big Death.

Contemporary politics and historical hindsight also affect current visions of the war and, therefore, visions of the world after the war. For example, Russian historians often have omitted or downplayed the importance of the 1944 Allied invasion of Normandy in concluding the war. However, they stress the strategic importance of the eastern front and the Red Army’s heroic campaigns against the Third Reich. Conversely, Americans have tended to view D-Day in Normandy as a key military operation, frequently ignoring the pivotal role of the USSR in ending the war in Europe.

In short, varying views on World War II have resulted in different histories and interpretations. Perhaps the most balanced assessment of World War II and its legacies is found in a global approach; one that downplays national or regional views, and instead focuses on war legacies affecting the larger world.

**The Price of Total War**

The most immediate legacy of World War II was the material damage and human suffering it inflicted. World War I (1914-1918) established a pattern of total war that nations quickly adopted in this conflict. Fundamental to the concept of total war was the premise that warfare is conducted between entire societies and their populations. Accordingly, World War II made enormous demands on economic resources and human beings. For example, governments collectively mobilized some 110 million people for military service. Moreover, the nature of the conflict ensured that an unprecedented number of women and children participated, often fighting in uniform alongside men. By 1943 Soviet leadership had added approximately 900,000 women (about 8 percent of all Soviet military personnel) to the Red Army. Meanwhile, as the Third Reich crumbled, Hitler called on 12-year-old boys to defend the fatherland. The mobilization of human resources, the unprecedented physical destruction, and the obscene number of human casualties were all part of waging total war.

During the course of the war, entire populations had become the legitimate targets of warfare, and by 1945 at least 55 million people had died. Any distinction between battlefront and home front had vanished, and over half of the dead were civilians, the victims of bombs, massacres, and famines. An even darker side of the war was the persecution and murder of entire populations viewed as enemies or undesirables. The Nazi regime targeted European Jews for physical annihilation, and in the resulting Holocaust more than 5 million Jews perished. The deliberate uprooting of ethnic populations and the transfer of prisoners of war and slave laborers resulted in the death of many more untold millions.

Total war also affected the economies of the world. At the end of the war, the United States accounted for almost half of all the goods and services produced in the global economy. The war had laid waste to every major industrial region in the world except for those of North America. The landscapes of much of Japan and central and eastern Europe were barren: their cities jagged with bombed-out ruins, their industries and shipping destroyed, and their waterways choked with debris. Agricultural production everywhere had fallen precipitously, and in Europe most of the 45 million homeless survivors of the war relied on American aid for sustenance. But while the war was measured in costs to human life, habitat, and industry, it produced much more than that.

**The United Nations**

Another legacy of World War II was the creation of a new international organization dedicated to promoting peace, cooperation, and human rights. In 1945 nations determined to maintain the hard-won peace of that total war founded the United Nations (UN). The UN is an association of sovereign nations that provides the machinery to cope with international disputes and to find solutions to problems that exceed the boundaries and means of national states.

The organization’s founding document, the United Nations Charter, was an international treaty obligating member states to settle their disputes by peaceful means—that is, to refrain from the threat or use of force against other states. The primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security rests with the 15-member Security Council. To enforce its decisions, the Council can impose economic sanctions on countries that threaten the peace. It can send peacekeeping missions to troubled areas to wedge opposing forces apart or implement a peace agreement. As a last resort, the Council can authorize coalitions of member states to use military action to deal with a conflict.

While the effectiveness of the UN’s peacekeeping efforts often is debated, most experts acknowledge that the UN positively affects the lives of many people. Through its specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Program, or the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN tackles problems facing people everywhere. Throughout the world, the UN and its agencies fight epidemics, combat famine, help advance the rights of women and children, assist refugees, help expand food production, and make loans to developing countries. For example, in the last 10 years UN agencies have made safe drinking water available to 1.3 billion people in rural areas, helped institute family planning programs in developing countries, and eradicated smallpox from the planet.

**Justice in Nürnberg (Nuremberg) and Tokyo**

World War II also contributed to the development of international law. The victorious Allies were determined to bring to justice those believed to be responsible for starting the war and committing many of its atrocities. At the end of the war the Allies convened international military tribunals to try those who committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes against peace.

At the war crime trials in Nürnberg, Germany (November 1945–October 1946), the primary defendants were the surviving leaders of the Nazi regime. Others, such as Adolf Hitler, Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, and German Police Commander Heinrich Himmler had committed suicide to avoid prosecution. The postwar trials in Nürnberg also tried industrialists who had taken advantage of slave labor as well as physicians charged with cruelly experimenting on human beings. Of the 22 major war criminals arraigned at Nürnberg, 12 were executed. The Western Allies held additional trials in their zones of occupation, and by 1960 they had tried more than 5,000 war criminals and executed 500 of those convicted. In separate proceedings, the Soviets tried 10,000 additional Germans and executed many of them.

The International War Crimes Tribunal in Tokyo (May 1946–November 1948) sentenced 7 out of 25 Japanese wartime leaders to death, including the former prime minister General Tojo Hideki. Throughout Japan’s former empire, additional war trials charged Japanese detainees with crimes ranging from the mistreatment of prisoners of war to cruelty inflicted on local populations. Over 900 of the accused faced execution.

While there was little controversy over trials and convictions on charges of war crimes, the introduction at Nürnberg and Tokyo of charges involving crimes against peace and against humanity raised two criticisms. First, before the war, no specific laws addressed crimes against peace or humanity, so those on trial could not have committed any crimes in a legal sense. Second, only persons from or allied with the defeated nations were tried, so the tribunals and their proceedings were seen by some as unfair. Nevertheless, in 1946 the General Assembly of the United Nations affirmed the principles recognized by the Tribunals’ judgement. And in 1950 an International Law Commission recognized war crimes, crimes against peace, and crimes against humanity as violations of international law.

**Jewish Survivors and the Establishment of Israel**

An unintended outcome of the Nazis’ war against the Jews of Europe was the establishment of a Jewish state. The Holocaust had deepened the desire of Jewish survivors and Zionists (Jewish nationalists) to establish Palestine as a Jewish state capable of defending the world’s remaining Jews. Zionists had been settling in Palestine since the late 1800s, but the end of World War II heightened the Zionist yearning for these lands as a refuge and for religious fulfillment. Palestine, however, was no empty haven waiting to receive the Jews of Europe. Since the end of World War I, Britain had ruled Palestine and tried desperately to balance the interests of Jewish immigrants and the Palestinian Arabs who possessed the land. Britain limited the migration and settlement of Jews while it promised to protect Arab political and economic rights, but its efforts to balance these competing aims fairly proved futile. Arab hostility to British rule and Zionist settlement, in conjunction with Jewish resistance to immigration quotas, resulted in repeated outbreaks of violence that British military forces could barely contain.

Shortly after the end of World War II, Britain announced its intention to withdraw from Palestine. The British placed the Palestine issue before the newly founded UN in 1947. The UN General Assembly recommended the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states and the creation of international enclaves that included Jerusalem and Bethlehem, both of which contained sites of religious significance for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. While the partition plan was acceptable to most Jews, Arabs inside and outside of Palestine found this solution unacceptable. As the British completed their withdrawal, a civil war erupted between Arabs and Jews. In May 1948 the Jews in Palestine proclaimed the creation of the independent state of Israel, which provoked an attack by surrounding Arab nations. This first Arab-Israeli war ended in victory for the Jewish state. It also resulted in the flight of more than half of Palestine’s Arab population. To this day, the hostility engendered by the creation of Israel threatens the peace and stability of the Middle East.

**Science and Technology**

World War II catalyzed advances in science and technology and stimulated the maturation of planned research and development. Before the outbreak of the war, scientists in British, German, and Soviet research labs had been engaged in a “wizard war” of new combat-weapon technology. As governments made war-related research and development a national priority, scientists and engineers produced a dazzling array of new products and devices. For example, military demands for the ability to identify and pinpoint the location of targets propelled the development of radar. Likewise, the modern jet engine was born out of military demands. The U.S. Office of Scientific Research and Development stimulated the production of destructive technologies, such as the proximity fuse and antitank bazooka rockets. But it also helped introduce DDT to combat malaria and sparked the widespread use of antibiotic penicillin for treating wounds.

Yet nothing shaped postwar military strategy and politics more than the scientific and technological developments that resulted in the ballistic missile and the atom bomb. As the tide of the war turned, the Nazi government called upon German rocket scientists to develop ballistic missiles, which carry explosives along a long, arced trajectory. In 1944 the Germans deployed some 4,300 V-2 rockets against targets in western Europe and England. The harnessing of the atom for military aims was more dramatic in its effects. In 1938 German physicists had effectively demonstrated nuclear fission, and scientists in Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States subsequently assessed the prospects of constructing an atomic device. Ultimately, the U.S. government-sponsored efforts, code-named the Manhattan Project, developed the world’s first atomic bomb. In July 1945 a test explosion in New Mexico ushered in the nuclear age. Little or no official thought was given to the consequences of this potentially cataclysmic creation. In the Cold War world that existed after World War II, nuclear weapons, especially when attached to ballistic missiles, threatened to engulf the entire planet in an atomic blaze.

**Superpower Rivalry and Cold War**

The end of World War II signaled a dramatic change in global relations. The war seriously undermined the ability of Germany, Japan, Britain, and France to continue playing leading roles in the world. As these countries ceased to be great powers in economics, politics, and military might, two new superpowers, the United States and the USSR, took their place. The collective policies and actions of these superpowers dominated international relations and the global balance of power for more than 45 years.

The leaders of the United States and the USSR joined forces in 1941 to defeat their common enemies. Ultimately, it was the material and military resources of the two nations that ended the war. Yet this wartime alliance, which always had been a marriage of convenience, collapsed shortly after 1945 in the face of conflicting postwar aims and deep-seated ideological animosities. By 1947, both sides were engaged in what political observers labeled a “cold war.” Devoid of direct military confrontation, the Cold War soon extended beyond Europe and assumed the character of a global geopolitical and ideological rivalry that lasted until the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

The Cold War was not simply a great-power rivalry. At its heart was a conflict between different social, economic, and political systems, a conflict that dated back to the Russian Revolution of 1917. This clash of capitalism and democracy against socialism and one-party politics manifested itself in the division of the world into military alliances and political blocs. This division led to an unprecedented arms race that repeatedly threatened the world with nuclear annihilation. The Cold War also was responsible for diplomatic crises and warfare between pro U.S. and pro USSR forces in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and other countries. Moreover, the competition between the superpowers influenced the foreign policies, political institutions, and economic systems of societies in almost every corner of the world.

Many nations—especially those recently freed from colonial rule—tried to avoid becoming pawns in the Cold War by announcing policies of nonalignment. However, the USSR and the United States used military and economic strategies to win what U.S. president John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) described as “the hearts and minds of the underdeveloped and uncommitted peoples of the world.” Both sides backed often-brutal dictatorships to further their own geopolitical advantages. As the Cold War intensified during the 1960s, the process of decolonization kept pace.

**Decolonization**

Like the Cold War, decolonization—or the loss of colonial possessions—gave rise to great changes in global politics. World War II set the stage for the rapid collapse of European and Japanese empires. On the eve of World War II, the countries of western Europe, with the notable exception of Spain, still ruled or otherwise controlled immense territories in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. In 1941 British prime minister Winston Churchill confidently announced, “I have not become His Majesty’s Chief Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.” But Churchill was decidedly mistaken in his optimism.

German and Japanese victories in Europe and Asia had dealt a devastating blow to the military might of the European colonial powers and shattered their aura of invincibility. As nationalist independence movements in the colonies and protectorates arose, the public back home began to view overseas empires as liabilities. Continued imperial rule loomed as an unappealing financial burden as the prolonged war also seriously sapped the economic strength of imperial societies. Beginning in 1945 decolonization accelerated rapidly. As European imperialism expired, more than 90 independent nations joined the global community of national states, and some 800 million people became responsible for their own destinies.

By the 1990s the process of decolonization had essentially run its course. European empires either are extinct or are now miscellaneous claims to scattered real estate. Likewise, the resurgence of democracy in Eastern Europe, the collapse of the USSR, and the unification of Germany ended the Cold War. World War II gave rise to decolonization and the Cold War, and together they were responsible for forging the political and economic contours of the postwar world. While it is apparent that their force has been spent, it is less clear what will take their place. Meanwhile, technological and scientific advancements have continued to thrive in the world’s growing economies. The Jewish-Palestinian conflicts of the Middle East are largely unresolved. And the power of the UN and international law are challenged and reasserted continually. How these developments of World War II will continue to shape our world in the coming centuries is yet to be known, but understanding war gives us a greater possibility for understanding the world as it unfolds.

United Nations

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| I |  | INTRODUCTION |

United Nations (UN), international organization of countries created to promote world peace and cooperation. The UN was founded after World War II ended in 1945. Its mission is to maintain world peace, develop good relations between countries, promote cooperation in solving the world’s problems, and encourage respect for human rights.

The UN is an organization of countries that agree to cooperate with one another. It brings together countries that are rich and poor, large and small, and have different social and political systems. Member nations pledge to settle their disputes peacefully, to refrain from using force or the threat of force against other countries, and to refuse help to any country that opposes UN actions.

UN membership is open to any country willing to further the UN mission and abide by its rules. Each country, no matter how large or small, has an equal voice and vote. Each country is also expected to pay dues to support the UN. As of 2007 the UN had 192 members, including nearly every country in the world.

The UN’s influence in world affairs has fluctuated over the years, but the organization gained new prominence beginning in the 1990s. It was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001. Still, the UN faces constant challenges. It must continually secure the cooperation of its member nations because the organization has little independent power or authority. But getting that support is not always easy. Many nations are reluctant to defer their own authority and follow the dictates of the UN.

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| II |  | CREATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS |

The UN is the result of a long history of efforts to promote international cooperation. In the late 18th century, German philosopher Immanuel Kant proposed a federation or “league” of the world’s nations. Kant believed that such a federation would allow countries to unite and punish any nation that committed an act of aggression. This type of union by nations to protect each other against an aggressor is sometimes referred to as collective security. Kant also felt that the federation would protect the rights of small nations that often become pawns in power struggles between larger countries.

Kant’s idea came to life after World War I (1914-1918). Horrified by the devastation of the war, countries were inspired to come together and work toward peace. They formed a new organization, the League of Nations, to achieve that goal. The League would last from 1920 to 1946 and have a total of 63 member nations through its history, including some of the world’s greatest powers: France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Germany, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). But the League had two major flaws. First, several of the world’s most powerful countries were not members, most notably, the United States. Second, the League required consensus among its members to oppose aggression. Dissent by any one member could prevent consensus and render the League impotent. When Japan, Italy, and Germany undertook military aggression in the 1930s, they would not agree to censure themselves, thus preventing the consensus necessary for League action. This aggression ultimately led to World War II (1939-1945). In the end, the League failed in its most basic mission, to prevent another world war.

Despite this failure, the idea of a league did not die. The first commitment to create a new organization came in 1941, when U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt and British prime minister Winston Churchill announced the Atlantic Charter, in which they pledged to work toward a more effective system to keep world peace and promote cooperation. In 1942 representatives of the Allies—the World War II coalition of 26 nations fighting against Germany and Japan—signed a Declaration by United Nations accepting the principles of the Atlantic Charter. The declaration included the first formal use of the term *United Nations*, a name coined by President Roosevelt. A year later, four of the Allies—the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and China—agreed to establish a general international organization. The four countries met in 1944 at the Dumbarton Oaks estate in Washington, D.C., and drafted a charter for the new organization. They called the new league the United Nations. But they still could not agree to certain details, such as membership and voting rights.

The four countries met again in early 1945 at a summit in Yalta, Ukraine (*see* Yalta Conference). There, they settled their differences and called for a conference of nations to complete their work. On April 25, 1945, the United Nations Conference on International Organization convened in San Francisco, with delegates from 50 countries attending. The delegates worked for two months to complete a charter for the UN that included its purpose, principles, and organizational structure. The charter contained a formal agreement committing all the world’s nations to a common set of basic rules governing their relations. The UN officially came into existence on October 24, 1945, with 51 member countries-the 50 represented at the conference and Poland, which had not been able to send a delegate.

Like the League of Nations, the UN was founded to promote peace and prevent another world war. The UN recognized it would not be successful unless it had the ongoing support of the world’s most powerful countries. The organization took several steps to ensure that support. To encourage continued U.S. involvement, the UN placed its headquarters in New York City. To reassure the world’s most powerful countries that it would not threaten their sovereignty, the UN gave them veto authority over its most important actions. Five countries received this veto power: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union, and China. (Russia inherited the Soviet Union’s veto after the breakup of that country in 1991.)

Another major strength of the UN, unlike the earlier League of Nations, is that virtually every territory in the world is a member, or a province, or a colony of a member. Some nonmember political entities, such as the Vatican City and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), also have permanent observer mission status at the UN.

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| III |  | STRUCTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS |

The UN’s charter established six distinct bodies that serve different functions: (1) the General Assembly, (2) the Security Council, (3) the Secretariat, (4) the Economic and Social Council, (5) the International Court of Justice, and (6) the Trusteeship Council.

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| A |  | General Assembly |

The General Assembly is made up of all 192 member countries, each with one vote. It undertakes all major discussions and decisions about UN actions. It is like a global town hall, providing a powerful medium for countries to put forward their ideas and debate issues. The Assembly can discuss and make recommendations on any issue covered by the UN’s charter. However, the recommendations are not binding and the Assembly has no authority to enforce them. Members decide routine matters with a simple majority vote. Important decisions require a two-thirds majority.

The General Assembly meets annually in regular sessions that generally run from mid-September to mid-December. Recently the General Assembly has been meeting year round. It also convenes for special sessions every few years on specific topics, such as economic cooperation or disarmament. In addition, the Assembly can meet in emergency session to deal with an immediate threat to international peace. At the beginning of each regular session, Assembly members elect a president to preside over the assembly. The Assembly sessions, like most UN deliberations, are simultaneously translated into many languages so that delegates from around the world can understand any speaker.

The General Assembly has the power to admit new members to the UN. It approves the budget for UN programs and operations. The Assembly can establish agencies and programs to carry out its recommendations. It elects members to serve on certain agencies and programs, and it coordinates those programs through various committees.

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| B |  | Security Council |

The Security Council is the most powerful body in the UN. It is responsible for maintaining international peace, and for restoring peace when conflicts arise. Its decisions are binding on all UN members and have the force of international law. The Security Council has the power to define what is a threat to security, to determine how the UN should respond, and to enforce its decisions by ordering UN members to take certain actions. For example, the Council may impose economic sanctions, such as halting trade with a country it considers an aggressor.

The Council convenes any time there is a threat to peace. A representative from each member country who sits on the Council must be available at all times so that the Council can meet at a moment’s notice. The Security Council also frequently meets at the request of a UN member—often a nation with a grievance about another nation’s actions.

The Security Council has 15 members, 5 of which hold permanent seats. The General Assembly elects the other 10 members for rotating two-year terms. The 5 permanent members—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia (formerly the Soviet Union), and China—have the most power. These nations were the winning powers at the end of World War II, and they still represent the bulk of the world’s military might.

Decisions of the Council require nine votes. But any one of the permanent members can veto an important decision. This authority is known as the *veto right of the great powers*. As a result, the Council is effective only when its permanent members can reach a consensus. This created problems during the Cold War, the post-1945 struggle between the United States and Soviet Union that ended when the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991. During that time, the council was frequently deadlocked because the United States and Soviet Union could not agree. Beginning in the 1990s, increased cooperation between the United States and Russia enabled the council to become more effective.

The Council has a variety of ways it can try to resolve conflicts between countries. Usually the Council’s first step is to encourage the countries to settle their disagreements without violence. The Council can mediate a dispute or recommend guidelines for a settlement. It can send peacekeeping troops into a distressed area. If war breaks out, the Council can call for a ceasefire. It can enforce its decisions by imposing economic sanctions on a country, or by authorizing joint military action.

In recent years, there has been growing controversy over which countries should have permanent seats on the Council. Some nations believe that other countries beside the original five should be included. For example, Japan and Germany are powerful countries that pay large membership dues and make substantial contributions to the UN, yet they do not have permanent seats. There is no easy solution to this problem. Adding more permanent members creates its own set of complications, including how to decide which countries get a seat and which do not. For example, if Germany joined, three of the permanent members would be European, giving that region an unfair advantage. Several proposals for addressing this problem have been considered, including adding Germany and Japan as permanent members, waiving the veto power of the permanent members, and limiting Council membership to one year. Thus far, none of the proposals have been adopted, partly because the present structure works well for the five permanent members and they can veto any changes to it.

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| C |  | SecrSecretariat |

The Secretariat is the UN’s executive branch. It oversees the administration of the UN’s programs and policies and carries out day-to-day operations. This branch is headed by the secretary general, who acts as the UN’s spokesperson.

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| C1 |  | Secretariat Staff |

The UN’s staff includes administrators, experts on technical issues such as environmental protection, and economic advisors working on various programs and projects in the member countries. These workers have a variety of responsibilities, such as overseeing the operations of peacekeeping missions, preparing studies on world issues, organizing international conferences, surveying economic and social trends, and providing translations of speeches. They perform the day-to-day work necessary for basic UN operations. The largest concentration of staff outside New York City is in Geneva, Switzerland, where several UN programs and agencies have headquarters.

One purpose of the Secretariat is to develop an international civil service of diplomats and bureaucrats whose loyalties are not tied to any one country. The staff answers only to the UN and takes an oath not to obey any outside authority. The UN charter calls on its members to respect the independence and international character of the staff. However, the UN has had mixed success following through on this ideal. The secretary general is generally seen as an independent diplomat. But member nations still compete to place their citizens in control of staffs that administer important UN programs.

In the early 1990s the UN bureaucracy came under increasing criticism for inefficiency and even corruption. Much of this criticism came from the United States, which believed it was bearing an unfair share of the costs of supporting the UN. By the mid-1990s, these criticisms had led to a series of reforms, including budget and staff reductions.

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| C2 |  | SecrSecretary General |

The secretary general is a powerful public figure who oversees the daily operations of the UN and plays a major role in setting the organization’s agenda in international security affairs. The secretary general can bring to the Security Council any matter that might threaten world peace. The secretary general has the authority to serve as a neutral mediator in international conflicts and to bring hostile parties together to negotiate. The secretary general’s personal attention to a problem can often help bring about a resolution. For example, in the 1990s Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali personally mediated conflicts in Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, and elsewhere. In the 1980s, Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar mediated conflicts in Central America. The secretary general also works to build consensus among the five permanent members of the Security Council, knowing that without it the Council cannot act.

The secretary general is formally chosen by the General Assembly. But the secretary general must first be nominated by the Security Council and win the consent of all five of its permanent members. The secretary general serves a five-year term, which may be renewed. The Security Council can nominate a candidate from any country, but it is an unwritten tradition that the position rotates geographically, with a secretary general chosen from a new region after every two terms. In 1997 the General Assembly created the post of deputy secretary general to assist in the management of the Secretariat. The secretary general appoints the deputy secretary general.

The secretary general, like the rest of the UN staff, is supposed to be independent. In reality, the secretary general must rely on member countries, especially the five permanent Security Council members, to get anything done. As a result, the secretary general often struggles with the Security Council over what direction the UN should take. Since the Security Council chooses the secretary general, there is a limit on how independent the position can be.

Kofi Annan of Ghana was elected by the General Assembly to be secretary general from 1997 through 2001. In 2001 the General Assembly unanimously elected him to a second term, running from 2002 through 2006. He was the first secretary general from sub-Saharan Africa and the first to rise through the UN staff to the top job. Before becoming secretary general, Annan served as undersecretary general for peacekeeping operations. He was credited with doing the best job possible with difficult peacekeeping missions in Somalia and Bosnia in the early 1990s. Annan was educated in the United States and knew the UN bureaucracy well. As secretary general, Annan reformed the UN secretariat’s finances and management and significantly improved relations between the UN and the United States. He also worked to improve human rights worldwide and to slow the spread of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), particularly in developing countries.

Annan’s immediate predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt, was secretary general from 1992 through 1996. He tried to expand the UN’s role as peacekeeper and peacemaker. He was outspoken with the Security Council, a trait that got him into trouble with its members, particularly the United States. For example, he scolded the Council for giving him big projects without enough money to carry them out. In 1996 the United States vetoed his candidacy for a second term. Since both Annan and Boutros-Ghali represented African nations, Annan’s selection preserved the tradition of keeping the secretary general’s post in the same geographic region for two terms. Annan was succeeded in 2007 by Ban Ki Moon, former foreign minister of South Korea.

Secretaries general have come from various regions of the world, but it is an unwritten rule that they never should come from one of the most powerful countries. This tradition is a response to concerns that a secretary general selected from such a country would not be perceived by other nations as objective or neutral. There is also a fear that such a selection would give the world’s most influential nations that much more power. Past secretaries general include Trygve Lie of Norway, who served from 1946 to 1953; Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden, 1953 to 1961; U Thant of Burma (now Myanmar), 1961 through 1971; Kurt Waldheim of Austria, 1972 to 1982; and Javier Pérez de Cuéllar of Peru, 1982 through 1991. No woman has yet served in this position.

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| D |  | Economic and Social Council |

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) works under the authority of the General Assembly to coordinate the economic and social work of the UN. ECOSOC has 54 member countries elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms. ECOSOC coordinates studies and recommends actions on international topics such as medicine, education, economics, and social needs. It promotes higher living standards, full employment, respect for human rights, and economic and social progress. It oversees the work of a large number of UN programs and agencies.

ECOSOC operates mainly through various standing committees, functional commissions, and regional commissions. There are five regional commissions that look at how the UN’s programs in a particular region are working together. There are ten functional commissions that deal with topics such as population growth, narcotics trafficking, human rights, and the status of women. Other committees work on topics relevant to several UN programs, such as crime prevention, public finance, natural resources, science and technology, and geographical names.

ECOSOC coordinates the work of many specialized agencies that provide a variety of social, economic, and related services. The agencies operate independently but work with other programs in the UN. Those agencies include the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). ECOSOC also works closely with the private sector and with more than 2,000 nongovernmental organizations.

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| E |  | InI International Court of Justice |

The International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court, is the judicial arm of the UN. It is located in The Hague, Netherlands. The court hears cases brought by nations against each other. It has 15 judges, elected by the Security Council and the General Assembly. A country is not required to participate in the court’s proceedings, but if it agrees to participate, it must abide by the court’s decisions.

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| F |  | Trusteeship Council |

The Trusteeship Council was established to oversee the transition of a handful of colonies to independence. The last of those colonies, the Palau Islands, gained independence in 1994, making the Trusteeship Council obsolete.

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| IV |  | MEMBERSHIP IN THE UN |

The UN started in 1945 with 51 founding members—including the 50 countries that had attended the San Francisco conference, and Poland, which was not at the conference but signed the charter later.

New members are admitted to the UN on the recommendation of the Security Council, if approved by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly. Membership is open to any country that supports the UN’s mission and is willing to follow the rules and responsibilities specified in the charter.

In its early years, Western countries dominated the UN and the General Assembly regularly sided with the United States. The Soviet Union provided a balance to Western influence by using its veto power in the Security Council.

The balance of power began to change in the 1950s and 1960s, as colonies in Asia and Africa gained independence and became members of the UN. The UN’s membership more than doubled during that time and the new members had different concerns than did the once-dominant Western industrial nations. Many of the new members believed the United States was too powerful and the UN too often gave in to American interests. As newly independent developing nations began to predominate, they affected voting patterns in the UN. The United States found itself in the minority on many issues. By the end of the 1970s, the United States had become the primary user of the veto.

Another change in UN membership involved representation for China. In 1945 China joined the United Nations as a founding member and was represented by the Nationalist government in Nanjing. In 1949 the Nationalists lost the Chinese civil war against the Communists and retreated to the island of Taiwan. Backed by the United States and other Western nations, the Nationalist government on Taiwan claimed to be the legitimate government of all China and continued to hold the China seat in the UN until 1971. That year the General Assembly took the seat away from Taiwan and gave it to the Communist government in Beijing, on the mainland. This action left Taiwan without representation in the UN. Taiwan would like to be a member and has tried to win a separate seat. But China regards Taiwan as a province and has opposed independence for the island, despite the fact that Taiwan functions like an independent nation in many international matters. China has vehemently objected to UN membership for Taiwan because leaders there believe if the UN recognizes Taiwan with a seat it would help that government’s bid for independence.

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| V |  | UN FUNDING |

The UN is funded by dues paid by each of its members. Each country’s dues are based upon its wealth and ability to pay. The UN also requires countries to make financial contributions to its peacekeeping efforts. In addition, many countries make voluntary contributions to support various UN programs. The United States is the largest contributor to the UN.

The UN cannot force member nations to pay their dues. Many nations have failed to pay their full dues and have cut their voluntary contributions, causing the organization to fall into considerable debt.

The financial crisis began in the 1980s when countries started falling behind in their payments. Yet as financial support declined, the UN’s expenses grew. In 1996 the UN came perilously close to bankruptcy. After Kofi Annan became UN secretary general in 1997, he pushed through reforms to consolidate some major UN offices, in part to encourage the United States to pay its back dues. In 1999 the U.S. Congress agreed to pay nearly $1 billion of back dues, but only on the condition that the UN decrease the U.S. share of the administrative budget from 25 to 22 percent and its share of the peacekeeping budget from 31 to 25 percent.

In 2000 the General Assembly responded to these terms by overhauling its system of financing. It set a ceiling of 22 percent as the maximum amount any country would pay toward the administrative budget. It also replaced its ad hoc system of funding peacekeeping operations with a sliding scale of dues based on a country’s per capita income. As a result, the U.S. contribution to peacekeeping operations declined to about 27 percent by 2004, and more than two dozen countries accepted increases in their peacekeeping contributions.

The UN also receives money from private citizens. Individuals may donate to various UN programs, such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Program (WFP). In 1997 American business executive Ted Turner pledged $1 billion to UN programs, the largest single gift to the UN in its history.

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| VI |  | FUNCTIONS OF THE UN |

The UN today has the same basic purpose and structure as it did when it was founded in 1945. Its primary purpose—and greatest benefit to its members—is to maintain world peace. That, in turn, helps countries to develop and prosper, thereby improving the lives of their citizens. In addition to that primary mission, the UN serves its member countries in a variety of other ways. The UN provides a forum for countries to promote their views and settle conflicts without violence. It allows countries to cooperate to solve world problems, such as poverty, disease, and threats to the environment. It serves as a symbol of international order and global identity. It works to address economic and social problems in developing countries, with the idea that such problems create sources of conflict that can lead to war. The UN helps coordinate the work of hundreds of agencies and programs, both within its own organization and outside it. It also collects and publishes global statistics.

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| A |  | Maintenance of International Peace and Security |

The UN has three primary ways to maintain international peace and security. All directly involve the Security Council. Under chapter 6 of the UN charter, the UN can assist in the peaceful resolution of international disputes. This authority has evolved into the use of UN authorized peacekeeping forces. Under chapter 7 of the UN charter, the UN can authorize military action to enforce its resolutions. Finally, the UN can serve as a forum for international deliberations on long-term solutions to pressing security issues, such as arms control and terrorism.

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| A1 |  | Peacekeeping |

Peacekeeping is the nonaggressive use of military force to help nations in conflict reach a settlement. The UN charter does not mention peacekeeping forces, although chapter 6 of the charter does establish guidelines for peaceful resolution of international conflicts.

The UN’s first peacekeeping effort took place in the Middle East in 1948. The UN sent unarmed observers to help maintain the truce negotiated after five Arab countries attacked Israel earlier in the year. The UN first used armed peacekeepers during the Suez Crisis of 1956, when England, France, and Israel fought Egypt for control of the Suez Canal. The peacekeepers oversaw the withdrawal of French, British, and Israeli troops and acted as a buffer between the warring parties.

Today, the UN’s peacekeeping forces play a neutral role, working to calm regional conflicts in several ways. They can go into an area of conflict as observers, making sure agreements reached between opposing sides are being followed. They can provide a buffer between warring parties by physically interposing themselves in the middle. They can negotiate with military officers on both sides, providing a channel of communication. They can also monitor ceasefires, supervise elections, and provide humanitarian aid.

Peacekeepers are lightly armed. They travel in armored vehicles with automatic rifles, but lack artillery, tanks, or other heavy weapons. Their work can be hazardous, especially if one of the warring sides doubts their neutrality. They are often caught in the middle when ceasefires collapse and they sometimes have been deliberately attacked. By 2007 more than 2,300 peacekeepers had died in the line of duty.

The Security Council grants authority for peacekeeping missions, usually for several months, although the Council can reauthorize missions for many years. The UN does not have its own army, so the Security Council borrows forces for each mission from the military and police personnel of member countries. The Security Council also chooses a single commander, and the forces operate under UN command. The forces operate only if the parties in conflict agree to their presence. Thus, the success of a peacekeeping mission depends upon the cooperation of the opposing parties.

Peacekeeping forces are funded by special fees paid by UN members. The General Assembly must approve the funds. Today, lack of funds is the single greatest constraint in the use of peacekeeping forces. As peacekeeping operations have expanded, they have required more and more money.

UN peacekeepers won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988 in recognition of their successes. In the early 21st century the UN had nearly 90,000 troops from 112 countries in almost 20 separate peacekeeping missions in regions of the world including South Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Africa. In July 2007 the UN Security Council authorized a peacekeeping force of 26,000 for the Darfur region of Sudan. It became the UN’s largest peacekeeping force.

*See also* United Nations Peacekeeping Forces.

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| A2 |  | Peace Enforcement |

In addition to peacekeeping missions, the UN can also authorize peace enforcement operations. Unlike peacekeeping missions, which help willing parties maintain an existing peace agreement, peace enforcement operations seek to repel international aggression, using military force if necessary. Under chapter 7 of the UN charter, the Security Council may authorize member countries to take military action in response to international breaches of the peace. The UN’s founders initially envisioned chapter 7 as the teeth in the UN charter.

An early example of the UN’s role in peace enforcement came in 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea, starting the Korean War. The UN Security Council condemned the invasion and authorized a multinational force, led by the United States, to repel the attack. This resolution was only possible because the USSR boycotted the Security Council meeting to protest the UN’s refusal to recognize the communist government of China. When the USSR returned to the Security Council, it used its veto to protect its ally, North Korea. After the Korean War, the Cold War prevented further UN peace enforcement operations.

The UN again authorized a peace enforcement mission in 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait. After Iraq refused to comply with UN demands to withdraw, the UN launched a military operation to expel Iraq from Kuwait. This operation was again led by the United States, and it included a vast coalition of forces from many UN member countries (*see* Persian Gulf War). UN-sponsored peace enforcement operations remain rare, however, because of the difficulty of getting all five of the veto-wielding great powers to agree to military action.

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| A3 |  | Ar Arms Control |

The UN charter authorizes the Security Council to plan for worldwide disarmament and arms control. To help achieve those goals, the UN has sponsored arms control negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, for decades. The General Assembly also held a special session on disarmament in June 1982. None of these UN activities have had much direct effect on actual arsenals.

Instead, during the Cold War, the most important arms control agreements were reached by countries negotiating directly with each other, particularly by the United States and Soviet Union. At that time, arms control was dominated by the nuclear arms race between the superpowers. The United States and the Soviet Union reached several important agreements, and then other countries signed on. Examples include the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 1968 Nonproliferation Treaty, and the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. In some instances the General Assembly ratified these agreements. But in none of these cases did the UN play a major role.

After the 1991 Persian Gulf War, UN agencies assumed a lead role in enforcing a Security Council resolution to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. IAEA inspectors uncovered and dismantled Iraq’s secret nuclear weapons program, and other UN weapons inspectors monitored the destruction of stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. However, in 1998 Iraq announced it would no longer cooperate with the UN. In 2002, in response to renewed U.S. efforts to enforce Iraqi disarmament, the Security Council approved a resolution warning of “serious consequences” if Iraq did not disarm. Weapons inspections resumed, but U.S. authorities charged that Iraq was not cooperating fully and was hiding banned weapons. In March 2003, after diplomatic talks broke down, the United States led a military assault on Iraq. However, U.S. forces failed to find any evidence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, and subsequent investigations revealed that much of the prewar intelligence about Iraq's weapons programs was flawed. *See* U.S.-Iraq War.

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| B |  | Economic and Social Development |

The second major function of the UN is to promote economic and social development worldwide. The UN engages in a myriad of activities and sponsors a large number of agencies to meet this goal. The UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) oversees these activities.

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| B1 |  | Economic Development |

The UN operates under the principle that promoting economic and social development will help bring about lasting world peace. The organization’s charter calls on the UN to promote full employment for all, higher standards of living, and economic and social progress. As a result, the UN devotes a major proportion of its staff and budget to economic development programs worldwide. The General Assembly has recognized the need to restructure international economic relations to help developing countries and has recommended a series of steps aimed at reducing the gap between wealthy and poor countries.

The UN operates many programs and special agencies to promote economic development and provide assistance and technical expertise to developing countries. One of those programs is the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Many developing nations rely on income from trade to support their economic development efforts at home and are especially vulnerable to price fluctuations on international markets and other trade problems. UNCTAD was founded in the 1960s to help negotiate international trade agreements that stabilize prices and promote trade with developing countries. During the 1970s the General Assembly included those goals in its call for a New International Economic Order to promote growth in developing countries. But developing countries have little power in the international economy, and as a result UNCTAD has been largely ineffective in advancing their interests in international trade.

Other efforts include the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which coordinates all UN efforts in developing nations. It is funded through voluntary contributions and has thousands of projects operating around the world. UNDP is the world’s largest international agency providing development assistance on technical issues. Two related agencies are the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

UN programs offer several advantages in promoting economic development. Governments of developing nations see the UN as a friend of the developing world, not as an outsider threatening their authority or as a reminder of colonial rule. Many UN experts and volunteers are themselves from other developing countries. UN workers who come from the developing world may be more sensitive to local conditions and to the pitfalls of development assistance than their counterparts from more wealthy countries. The UN can also organize its assistance on an international scale, avoiding duplication of efforts. Some issues, such as prevention and treatment of major diseases and environmental protection, particularly benefit from the UN’s international approach.

A major disadvantage of the UN development programs is that their funding largely depends on voluntary contributions from wealthy nations. Each program has to solicit contributions to carry on its activities, and contributions can be abruptly cut off if the program displeases a donor government. In addition, programs sometimes lack the efficiency and resources that governments and businesses in wealthy countries take for granted. This has given the programs a reputation for being inefficient and bureaucratic.

The UN also helps finance development through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, better known as the World Bank. The World Bank was created in 1944 to help developing nations get funding for projects. The bank grants loans to member countries to finance specific projects and this in turn encourages foreign investing. A related agency, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), was created at the same time to promote international cooperation on monetary issues. It encourages a stable, orderly pattern of monetary exchange rates between nations.

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| B2 |  | Health |

The UN has recognized that adequate health and control of disease are essential to economic and social development. The World Health Organization (WHO) is the leading UN agency to address global health concerns. Its goal is to improve the health of all people, and it does this through a number of global health programs. WHO epidemiologists help track outbreaks of new diseases and epidemics. For example, WHO was instrumental in diagnosing and containing the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003. WHO also helps deliver basic immunizations to underserved populations. One of the greatest accomplishments of the WHO was the eradication of smallpox, a viral disease that once devastated humans around the globe.

The UN has also taken action to combat the worldwide epidemic of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In 1995 it established the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to coordinate the international response to the disease. In 2000, the United States led a special session of the Security Council to address the global threat from AIDS, and the General Assembly held a special session on AIDS the following year. Sessions such as these focused global attention on the disease and helped to win commitments of resources to the UNAIDS program.

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| B3 |  | Environment |

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) encourages and coordinates sound environmental practices throughout the world. It grapples with ways to approach environmental problems on an international level, provides expertise to member countries, monitors environmental conditions worldwide, develops environmental standards, and recommends alternative energy sources.

UNEP’s work is guided by principles adopted at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit. The summit, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was the largest such conference ever held, attracting with more than 100 national leaders. It was the third international environmental conference hosted by the UN.

The first UN environment conference took place in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. It adopted general environmental principles, such as the idea that one country’s actions should not cause environmental damage to another. It also raised awareness about the international aspects of environmental damage. A second conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1982. Nairobi is the headquarters of the UN Environment Program.

The 1992 Earth Summit was larger and more ambitious than its predecessors. Its major theme was sustainable economic development, meaning development that does not use up or destroy so many of the world’s natural resources that it cannot be sustained over time. The meeting produced an overall plan, called Agenda 21, in which large developing countries promised to develop their industries with an eye toward protecting the environment. Industrialized countries pledged to help them do that. The Earth Summit also produced major treaties on biodiversity and global warming, although the latter treaty lacked enforcement provisions.

In 2002, UNEP sponsored the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. This conference sought to help developing countries undergo industrialization without harming the environment. But progress on environmental issues is slow because proposed solutions continue to pit the interests of poorer developing countries against those of richer industrialized nations. Most developing countries cannot afford to build an environmentally sound industrial base, while industrialized countries are unwilling to absorb the entire cost of environmental reform.

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| B4 |  | Other Economic and Social Programs |

The UN operates a host of other economic and social programs. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) addresses the needs of children worldwide. The International Labor Organization (ILO) advocates for workers’ rights. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) helps countries improve education and literacy, promotes ethics in science, and works to preserve cultural diversity. The United Nations Population Fund promotes family planning, safe pregnancies and childbirths, and reproductive health in developing countries, and it helps countries formulate population policies. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime helps countries fight illicit drugs, crime, and terrorism. The UN has an organization, commission, or specialized agency to address nearly every social issue on the global agenda.

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| C |  | Human Rights |

One of the UN’s major goals under its charter is to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people, regardless of race, sex, language, or religion. But once again, the UN’s effectiveness in promoting its agenda is limited by its lack of authority over member nations.

After the atrocities committed by the Germans in the Holocaust, the slaughter of Jews that occurred during World War II, the UN adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration was adopted on December 10, 1948, which is now celebrated annually as Human Rights Day. It proclaims that “all human beings are born free and equal” and establishes basic rights for all people and norms for the behavior of governments in many areas. For example, it says that all people have the right to liberty, religious and political freedom, education, and economic well-being. It bans torture and states that all people have the right to participate in their governments. The declaration does not have the force of law, however, and seems to have had little visible effect on the UN’s member countries. Governments with poor human rights records, such as China, criticize the UN’s attempts to promote human rights, saying that such actions interfere with their internal affairs.

Until 2006 the UN operated a Commission on Human Rights. In 2006 this commission was replaced with a Human Rights Council. The work of the previous commission had been largely discredited because countries known to violate human rights had become members. As members they often blocked the commission from censuring them for their human rights abuses. The reformed Human Rights Council was created to address this problem. The UN General Assembly now elects individual countries to the council by majority vote. Previously, membership on the council was allocated by region. The council also reviews the human rights records of member countries, and systematic violators of human rights can be suspended from the council by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly. The council also meets more frequently than the commission did. The council meets three times a year for a total of ten weeks, compared with the commission’s single session of six weeks each year. The council has the ability to meet quickly to address a human rights emergency. The purpose of the council is to monitor human rights abuses in countries and address complaints about human rights violations.

The UN also operates the office of High Commissioner for Human Rights. The General Assembly created this position in 1993. The commissioner oversees all the UN’s human rights programs, works to prevent human rights violations, and investigates human rights abuses. The commissioner also has the power to publicize abuses taking place in any country, but does not have the authority to stop them. However, most publicity about human rights abuses does not come from the UN but from rival countries or from nongovernmental organizations, such as Amnesty International.

The UN has also drawn up four international conventions (treaties) on human rights, which are legally binding but hard to enforce. The conventions address the problems of genocide, racial discrimination, civil and political rights, and economic and social rights. The treaties have been ratified by only about half of the world’s nations. The United States has only ratified the convention on genocide and has declined to ratify the others. Other countries have also refused to sign the conventions, citing concerns about the specific terms of the conventions and the loss of authority that such treaties imply.

During the Cold War, Western countries continually criticized nations under Soviet rule for their lack of respect for human rights, such as freedom of expression and fair elections. But the UN played a small role in these arguments because of the Soviet Union’s veto power, and because many other national governments did not guarantee human rights in their own domestic politics. The most important Cold War pact regarding human rights, the 1975 Helsinki Accords, a diplomatic agreement between 35 countries that encouraged human rights, was negotiated outside the UN framework.

One of the UN’s most visible recent activities regarding human rights has been the creation of special war crimes tribunals to prosecute those responsible for atrocities committed during the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone. These tribunals, established by the Security Council in 1993, 1994, and 2002, respectively, operate independently of the UN (*see* War Crimes Trials). The UN also played an important role in the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to prosecute war criminals, although the ICC is not a UN organ.

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| D |  | Humanitarian Assistance |

Since the end of the Cold War the UN has become increasingly involved in providing humanitarian assistance to people in need. All too frequently, the humanitarian crises to which the UN responds are caused by international conflict. The UN can also respond to humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters such as floods or hurricanes. Conflicts and wars may create refugee crises, as when people flee their homes for fear of persecution or harm. Agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Program (WFP) can mobilize international assistance in a short time frame to respond to a crisis.

Increasingly, UN agencies work with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that provide relief and assistance, as well as with the aid agencies of governments, to coordinate a global response to humanitarian crises. For example, in 1999 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began to bomb the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (*see* Serbia and Montenegro) to protest its treatment of ethnic Albanians in the province of Kosovo. The conflict created a massive flow of refugees out of Kosovo and into the neighboring province of Montenegro and the countries of Albania and Macedonia. These governments were not able to absorb the large number of refugees. International aid agencies, led and coordinated by the UN, responded to the crisis and were able to house, feed, and care for the thousands of refugees who had fled the fighting.

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| E |  | Development of International Law |

The UN plays an important role in the development of international law. Formally, the UN can produce international law in two ways. Security Council resolutions are binding on all UN members and have the force of international law. Decisions by the World Court are also binding as international law. Through these two bodies, the UN has been responsible for the development of a significant body of international law. However, much of this law deals with specific issues of peace and security—the Security Council’s main focus—and becomes obsolete after the crisis in question has been resolved. For example, Security Council resolutions prohibit Iraq from invading its neighbors and possessing weapons of mass destruction. Following the U.S.-Iraq War, however, much of this law became obsolete because it pertained to a regime no longer in power.

Informally, the UN also has a large role in the development of international law. The standing committees of the General Assembly and the standing UN commissions and functional agencies routinely hold global conferences on topics such as arms control, the environment, and human rights. These large diplomatic sessions often produce the ideas and early momentum for international treaties that are not formally part of the UN system but owe their existence to UN discussion of an issue. Treaties such as the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the 1997 Kyōto Protocol on greenhouse gases, and the 1998 Rome Statute approving the International Criminal Court were the topic of UN deliberations before they became treaties in their own right.

Two UN commissions are specifically charged with developing and codifying international law. The UN’s International Law Commission, created in 1947, studies important questions of international law and prepares drafts of treaties codifying these topics. Over the years, topics have included the law of the sea, diplomatic relations and immunity, treaties between nations, shared natural resources, nationality and statelessness, relations between nations and international organizations, and many other issues. The UN’s Commission on International Trade Law, created in 1966, drafts texts on laws concerning international commerce and economic development. These commissions submit their texts and recommendations to the General Assembly, which may then call an international diplomatic conference to incorporate the texts into a treaty.

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| F |  | Decolonization |

At the end of World War II (1939-1945), the great powers held vast colonial empires in the developing world. One goal of the UN charter was *decolonization*—ending the practice of colonialism. The Trusteeship Council was established as the UN organ to aid in the decolonization process. As colonies gained their independence in the mid-20th century, one of their first steps was to join the UN. This act announced their arrival on the international stage as a full-fledged member of the international community. The Trusteeship Council served as a transitional authority to help a country make the transition from colony to independent nation. In 1994 the last colony gained its independence and the Trusteeship Council suspended its operations.

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| VII |  | INFLUENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS |

The UN’s influence on international politics is significant and cannot be ignored. The main goal of the UN’s founders was to avoid a third world war, and in that respect, the organization has succeeded. The UN has peacefully resolved numerous international disputes since its founding and has established a set of rules for the use of force in the contemporary world. Although these rules are not always followed, the UN has nevertheless established itself as a significant player on the world stage.

The UN has been involved in every major war and international crisis since World War II in one fashion or another. It authorized the international coalitions that fought the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Persian Gulf War of 1991. A UN resolution created the state of Israel in 1948, and the UN has been both a forum for debate and an active mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the United States used the UN as a forum to challenge the Soviet Union in front of the whole world.

Since the end of the Cold War, the UN has asserted the right of the Security Council to be the sole body with the power to declare international uses of military force legitimate. However, this claimed authority does not always work. In some cases, the UN may fail to muster support for a force to intervene in a violent conflict. For example, lacking support for intervention from UN member nations, the UN failed to stop the 1994 genocide in Rwanda that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians. In other cases, great powers such as the United States take action on their own when they cannot get the UN to grant the authority they wish. In 2003 the United States sought but did not receive explicit Security Council approval of military action against Iraq. The United States nevertheless led an invasion of Iraq, inviting the UN to play a role in postwar humanitarian assistance and running elections for a new government (*see* U.S.-Iraq War).

Certain tensions constrain the UN’s influence and effectiveness. The first is the tension between the UN’s role as an autonomous actor and its role as a collection of nations. The UN can call on member nations for action, but it has a hard time enforcing its own resolutions because it is also committed to the principle of sovereignty, which asserts each country’s right to set its own policies. The UN requires member nations to contribute to its peacekeeping operations and relief missions, but when no nation wants to contribute, it is an impotent body. On the one hand, the UN has a mandate to work on its own to promote the values of its charter. On the other hand, the UN Charter is a treaty among nations. Thus, the UN cannot do anything without the expressed approval of its members, particularly the great powers. The UN’s authority comes from the countries that join the organization, sign the charter, and provide the UN with the resources it needs to accomplish its mission.

The UN also faces the tension of the gap between the developed and developing world. The developing world represents the majority of the UN’s members, both in terms of number of countries and global population. The developed world, meanwhile, controls the majority of financial and military resources available to the UN. Developing countries want the chance to build their societies, but to do this they need help from the richer, already developed countries, many of which are reluctant to spend their resources on others. The struggle to set priorities and allocate scarce resources is a constant tension within the UN.

There is a constant tension between the International Law of the UN Charter and the diplomacy that the member nations conduct on a daily basis. The UN Charter only has value to the extent that members follow its provisions. Nations can ignore elements of the charter and can also work outside the charter. Peacekeeping, for example, is never mentioned in the Charter but has become a key UN diplomatic function. Trying to maintain the integrity of international law while still playing effective diplomacy that satisfies the needs of the member countries consumes much of the day-to-day business of the UN.

Finally, a longstanding tension exists between the UN and the United States, the world’s most powerful nation. The UN constrains the United States by creating the one coalition that can rival U.S. power—that of all other nations. In addition, the United States has a streak of isolationism in its foreign policy that runs counter to the idea of the UN. But the UN also benefits the United States in many ways. It amplifies U.S. power because the United States usually leads the UN coalition. It helps keep world peace, which the United States is not rich or strong enough to do by itself. And it helps keeps the world stable, providing a good climate for global economic growth.

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| VIII |  | THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS |

Since its creation in 1945, the UN has done much to promote international cooperation in economic and social goals, and to a lesser extent, world peace. The end of the Cold War and new possibilities for cooperation among the world’s major powers has given the UN an opportunity to realize the original vision of its founders. The UN now has a chance to become an international organization that can effectively maintain world peace within the limits of a system where individual nations maintain their own authority and independence.

Constantly challenged, the UN remains the only forum where all the nations of the world can gather to discuss pressing issues of peace and security. The UN’s greatest asset remains its ability to speak as the world’s voice, offering legitimacy and guidance on the paths nations follow to solve their problems. Despite the challenges it faces, the UN will likely play an increasingly central role in international politics in the coming decades.

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| F1c |  | World War II |

In the face of the growing belligerence of these totalitarian states and the confirmed isolationism of the United States, the European democracies found themselves on the defensive. Under the leadership of Neville Chamberlain, England and France adopted a policy of appeasement, which was finally abandoned only after the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. As World War II began, the stunning victories of the German armies persuaded almost everyone but Winston Churchill that Hitler’s “new order” was Europe’s destiny. But after 1941, when Hitler ordered an attack on the USSR and the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the USSR and the United States joined a stubborn England in a concerted effort to compel Germany to surrender unconditionally. The tide turned in 1942 and 1943, and after the Normandy (Normandie) invasion in June 1944, Germany and its remaining allies succumbed in the wake of bitter fighting on two fronts. In the spring of 1945, Hitler committed suicide and a ravaged Germany surrendered to the Allied powers.

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| F2 |  |  |

In the final days of war, advancing units of the United States and Soviet armies met near the German town of Torgau. This dramatic encounter symbolized the decline of European power and the division of the continent into United States and Soviet spheres of influence. Before long, the tension and suspicion engendered by the geographical proximity of the world’s two superpowers took the form of the Cold War, a test of resolve that was particularly nerve-racking at the dawn of the atomic age.

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| F2a |  | East-West Divisions |

Having sustained staggering losses during the war, the USSR was determined to establish a buffer zone in Eastern Europe. Between 1945 and 1948, Soviet-sponsored dictators contrived to seize power in Europe’s war-torn heartland. In Germany, the pivotal arena, the zones of Allied occupation began to harden into political entities; by 1949, West and East German governments had been organized, finalizing the division of the continent. Alarmed by the ruthless imposition of Communist governments in Eastern Europe and by the vulnerability of a Western Europe that lay in economic ruin, U.S. secretary of state George C. Marshall proposed a far-reaching program of aid designed to speed European recovery (*see* European Recovery Program). Rejected by the Soviet-dominated governments to the East, the Marshall Plan made possible a miraculous economic recovery in the West. The creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 further evidenced Western Europe’s dependence upon the United States.

No longer masters of their own destiny, the European nations, particularly England and France, were forced to dismantle their far-flung empires. During the first two postwar decades a stunning process of decolonization occurred, which had been prepared in part by the rise of the national movements in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East in the period between the wars. This decline of empire reflected a European crisis that was as much spiritual as it was political. Shattering revelations concerning Nazi death camps and painful memories of collaboration were transmuted into a sense of general guilt.

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| F2b |  | Resistance to Soviet Control |

Nevertheless, Europe proved remarkably resilient. Almost from the first, the Soviet leaders learned that the fierce national pride that animates the peoples of Eastern Europe could not easily be suppressed. In 1948 they were unable to prevent Josip Broz Tito, a resistance fighter and loyal Communist, from embarking on a distinctly Yugoslav road (*see* Communism). In 1953, the year of Stalin’s death, the East Germans rioted, and in 1956 the Hungarians waged a heroic if ill-fated battle against their Soviet masters. In 1968 Soviet control was tested in Czechoslovakia, where Communist leader Alexander Dubček began to liberalize Czech life during a brief period that became known as the Prague Spring. Again, Soviet military force, along with troops from other countries of the Warsaw Pact—the military alliance adopted in Eastern Europe to counter NATO—crushed the experiment, but voices of resistance and reform continued to be heard. The USSR itself faced nationalist pressures as the constituent republics began to repudiate central government.

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| F2c |  | Resistance to U.S. Influence |

Far more welcome than the Soviets, the Americans had addressed Europeans as partners in an Atlantic alliance. Some, however, perceived dangers in America’s embrace. Chief among these proud Europeans was General Charles de Gaulle, who became president of France in 1958. Refusing to concede a permanent presence in Western Europe to the United States, de Gaulle ended military collaboration with NATO and began to develop France’s own nuclear deterrent. Because of the “special relationship” Britain was then cultivating with the United States, the French president vetoed British membership in the European Economic Community, or EEC (Common Market). De Gaulle had a vision of a Europe extending from the Atlantic to the Urals and advocated a loose federation of independent states. This vision was opposed by those who believed that a more integral union was both necessary and possible. The first step in that direction had been taken in 1951, when France, West Germany, Italy, and the Low Countries agreed to establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). This was followed in 1957 by the formation of the EEC. Although a considerable economic success, the Common Market did not evolve into a Western European political union as rapidly as some of its founders had hoped.

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| F3 |  | The End of the Cold War |

From the 1960s to the 1980s, strict conformity to the Communist system in the USSR discouraged economic innovation and punished dissent. Consequently, the economy stagnated. Despite this, the Soviet Union continued to increase its military strength and act more assertively around the world, a trend that culminated in the invasion of Afghanistan in 1980. As the Cold War progressed, however, it gradually became clear to the Soviet leadership that they could not win a full-scale war with the United States, primarily because their defense costs were already straining the inefficient Soviet economy.

In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet leader. Gorbachev wanted to secure Western aid to modernize the Soviet economy. To achieve this end, he reduced defense spending and worked to ease international tensions. He also wanted to make government less repressive and more responsive to popular concerns, and he urged the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe to do the same. In the early 1980s the USSR had regularly provided military support for Eastern European governments to contain political protests and strife. By the late 1980s, however, economic conditions in Eastern Europe were deteriorating so rapidly that Communist governments could no longer hold back the tide of public protest. In 1989 Gorbachev made it clear that Eastern European governments could not expect Soviet military aid to suppress domestic unrest.

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| F3a |  | Collapse of the USSR |

In 1989 nationalist and democratic protests in Eastern Europe escalated rapidly into revolutions that swept Communists from power. By the end of the year, many Eastern European countries—including Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria—had new governments that pledged themselves to liberal democracy and market economies. In Germany, the Berlin Wall, which had separated East and West Berlin, was opened in 1989, and East and West Germany reunited the following year. The two major organizations of Soviet control over Eastern Europe, the military Warsaw Pact and the economic Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), were dissolved in 1991.

Gorbachev’s ambition to modernize the Soviet economy under the continued supremacy of the Communist Party failed. His reforms had allowed other political and economic views to be expressed. Popular opposition to Communist rule grew, as did nationalist agitation in the Soviet republics against the domination of Russia. When the three Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) seceded in 1991, it was the beginning of the end of the USSR. By the end of 1991, the USSR had been replaced by 15 independent states.

Russia, the largest of these independent states, persuaded all but the three Baltic nations to form a loose intergovernmental association, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The new governments of the successor states, including that of Russia, introduced a form of liberal democracy and accepted the need to establish free-market economies.

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| F3b |  | Partition of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia |

Yugoslavia had remained apart from the Soviet bloc after 1948, when it had split with the USSR after conflicts over Communist doctrine, but Yugoslavia’s brand of national Communism also collapsed violently in 1991. Until that time the country had been a federation of six separate republics—Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro—and had comprised several ethnic groups, but strict Communist control had been able to keep internal conflicts in check. However, after the fall of the Communists, many of the republics began to demand more autonomy for themselves. At the same time, the federal government, which was dominated by the Serb ethnic group, wanted to increase centralization and Serb influence. Ethnic conflicts and resentment against the Serb population led the republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia to secede. The secessions were opposed by Serbia, and in Croatia and Bosnia, where there were large Serb minorities, violent conflict broke out. The bloodshed did not end until 1996, after the United Nations endorsed military intervention and policing by NATO forces (*see* Wars of Yugoslav Succession). Nationalist disputes also brought about the end of Czechoslovakia, but its 1993 separation into the Czech Republic and Slovakia was achieved peacefully.

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| F3c |  | Political Questions |

Western Europe welcomed the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe and the former USSR and promised economic assistance to many Eastern countries. Initially, Western governments believed that the end of the Cold War would permit them to significantly reduce their defense spending. All Western European governments cut defense budgets and level of armed forces, and the United States reduced the number of American military personnel and bases in Europe.

However, while the balance of power in Europe may have changed, Russia was still a major force and a nuclear power. The new state of Ukraine also had a nuclear capacity. This led to concerns about the political stability of these new countries. A consensus emerged in the West that any large reduction in NATO troop strengths would be unwise and that American participation in the defense of Western Europe was still important. While NATO no longer had an obvious enemy or target, it continued to take responsibility for European security.

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| F3d |  | Economic Problems |

When the Eastern European nations moved to a capitalist economy, they often encountered severe economic problems. After years of Communist protection and subsidization, many Eastern European industries were unable to compete in a free-market economy. Unemployment and inflation rose, but the Eastern European countries did not have effective social security systems to deal with such problems. In some countries economic hardship led voters to return reconstituted Communist parties to government. However, these parties stressed their commitment to democratic principles and market economics, and changes in government were achieved democratically.

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| F3e |  | Beginnings of Cooperation |

Links between West and East continued to develop. NATO established a Partnership for Peace agreement with all Eastern countries, including Russia, in which these nations could share information, conduct joint military exercises, and participate in peacekeeping operations with NATO forces. In 1999, despite Russian concerns and objections over the growing strength of the organization, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic officially joined NATO. This marked the first time that countries of the former Warsaw Pact had been allowed to join NATO (with the exception of East Germany, which became part of the organization with the reunification of Germany in 1990), and it was seen by many as an important step toward further European cooperation and integration.

In addition to growing relations with NATO, many Eastern countries also had economic and trade agreements with the former EEC, which by this time had become first the European Community (EC) and then, in 1993, the European Union (EU). Although the EU did not immediately offer membership to Eastern European countries, by the late 1990s all European nations belonged to several European cooperative organizations, including the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

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| F4 |  | The Growth of Cooperation and Integration |

The cooperation and integration in Western Europe that had begun with the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community had continued to grow in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the admission of new members to the EEC or further integration of the EEC was impossible while Charles de Gaulle was president of France. De Gaulle opposed any possible reduction of French authority in the EEC. De Gaulle resigned in 1969, and the new French president, Georges Pompidou, was more receptive to expansion. In 1970 the six member states of the EEC, by this time renamed European Community, or EC, agreed to consider applications for new members. The enlargement process was successful. Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined in 1973. Greece became a member in 1980, and Portugal and Spain joined in 1986.

Less successful was another agreement made by the six original members of the EEC in 1970. They had agreed to establish by 1980 an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), in which the economies and currencies of the member states would be integrated. The timetable for EMU was quickly destroyed by instability in the international monetary system, the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973, and economic recession. However, progress was made gradually, and in the mid-1970s two structural funds, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund, began to provide grants for economic restructuring in the less-developed areas of the EC. In addition, the European Monetary System (EMS) was established in 1979 and linked the exchange rates of members’ currencies to the strong and stable West German deutsche mark. The EMS helped to create a zone of relative monetary stability in Europe.

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| F4a |  | The Single European Act |

By the early 1980s several issues, including worries about escalating EC costs and disputes among member states, had arisen in the community. These problems led to the 1987 Single European Act (SEA), which committed the EC to establishing a single market—in which all trade barriers and customs frontiers would be eliminated—by the end of 1992. In addition, the SEA committed EC member states to adopting common policies in areas ranging from employment and taxation to health and the environment.

After 1987 the budgetary system of the EC was radically restructured, a social charter outlining workers’ and citizens’ rights was accepted, and the debate on monetary union was reopened. In 1988 and 1989 the EC established two intergovernmental conferences (IGCs), meetings of member governments to discuss amending or changing the founding treaties of the EC. One IGC considered economic and monetary union, and the other worked to further political integration. The IGCs submitted their reports in 1991, and the founding treaties of the EC were reworked to create a framework and timetable for political and economic union.

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| F4b |  | Economic and Monetary Union |

This reworking resulted in the Treaty on European Union (also called the Maastricht Treaty). The treaty set 1999 as the deadline for monetary union and the adoption of a single currency. The treaty also set strict monetary criteria that members had to meet in order for monetary union to occur. These criteria related to level of inflation, size of government deficit, level of interest rates, and stability of the national currency.

The treaty also called for cooperation among member nations on foreign and security policies, created the Cohesion Fund to help the poorer members meet the requirements for monetary union, and transformed the EC into the European Union. However, some aspects of the treaty, especially the move to a single currency, alarmed European electorates. This alarm delayed ratification of the treaty and the inauguration of the EU until 1993.

Many member countries found it difficult to meet the criteria to adopt the single currency, and their efforts to do so sometimes produced more economic problems, including higher unemployment. In 1998, however, the EU declared that all members except Greece were eligible to adopt the single currency, but the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Sweden declined to do so. Greece later met the criteria and in 2000 was invited to adopt the single currency. The new currency, called the euro, was introduced in 1999 for accounting purposes and electronic money transfers. Euro-denominated coins and banknotes entered circulation in 2002 and replaced the currencies of countries participating in monetary union. Many EU supporters saw the establishment of a single currency as essential if the EU was to be a major international player and as an important step toward political union.

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| F4c |  | Expansion |

After 1987 other Western European countries sought EC/EU membership, and Austria, Finland, and Sweden joined in 1994. However, after the ratification of the Treaty on European Union, the EU focused more on consolidation than on innovation or expansion. Although the EU received membership applications after 1994 from all the new democracies of Eastern Europe, it did not immediately act on them.

In 1997 the EU agreed to begin membership negotiations with Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia. Clearly, however, if the EU accepted the Eastern European countries, it would need to significantly revise EU institutions, finances, and policies to accommodate the weaker economies and less-developed social programs of these nations. These issues have caused the EU to move slowly on accepting the Eastern Europe nations.

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| F5 |  | The Future of Europe |

The most powerful force in modern European history has been nationalism, which has been at the same time both unifying and divisive. The horrors of World War II showed the potentially disastrous results of nationalism and demonstrated the need for cooperation and integration to maintain peace. With the beginning of the Cold War, Europe was divided into two armed camps. Eastern Europe became a client of the USSR, controlled by the threat of Soviet military intervention, while Western Europe sought and welcomed American involvement. After 1945 Europe lived in a state of tension, the likely battleground of any direct conflict between the world’s two superpowers.

However, the Cold War era also provided stability and peace. The battle lines in Europe were so clearly drawn that both sides knew that the slightest trespass could result in total war. However, stability did not necessarily equal prosperity, as Communist suppression froze Eastern Europe politically and economically. By contrast, the American protective umbrella allowed the Western European nations to prosper economically and to develop closer cooperation and integration.

The fall of Communism after 1989 brought a new uncertainty to Europe. Other than a common concern about the stability of the former Soviet republics, there is no clear consensus on how to achieve security in a Europe that now possesses some 40 states. All belong to the OSCE, but its authority and resources are limited. The EU may eventually develop its own defense capability and accept more members, but until then, European security will remain in the hands of NATO and will continue to depend on American involvement. NATO has developed a capacity to intervene in territorial disputes in Europe. It demonstrated in the former Yugoslavia how it can act in collaboration with the UN and the OSCE as a peacekeeping force in situations that are not only military problems. Moreover, in 1999 NATO demonstrated its role in maintaining European security by conducting an air campaign against Serbia in an attempt to halt aggression against ethnic Albanians in the Serbian province of Kosovo (administered by UN). For these reasons, Eastern countries see NATO as the guarantor of their independence and wish to follow the lead of Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic in joining it.

In addition to the question of stability, several violent conflicts between ethnic groups remain unresolved in Eastern Europe and Russia. These problems could potentially be overcome if states are prepared to grant a degree of autonomy to ethnic groups, as has largely happened in Western Europe. That possibility will become more likely as Eastern governments become more familiar with the political accommodations that are part of a democratic state. Moreover, a regard for human and group rights is a condition for receiving Western aid and for admission to the Western network of international organizations.

Western Europeans are also concerned about mass migration to the West from the East where countries have found the transition to a market economy very difficult. Despite injections of Western aid, the problems of economic dislocation, collapsing industries, and high unemployment were endemic in Eastern Europe during the 1990s. While some in Western Europe want a more open market that includes all of Europe, others fear that removing border controls would lead to a large influx of immigrants seeking employment or greater social security benefits in the West.

An equal worry is that substantial immigration could inflame public opposition to foreigners in the West. Some Western Europeans feel that immigration from developing countries dilutes traditional cultural values and threatens national sovereignty and distinctiveness. Although such sentiments are confined to the political fringes, they could become more problematic if immigration from Eastern Europe increases significantly.

Europe therefore faces a dilemma. The West wants closer economic integration with the East but fears what the consequences might be for its own societies and economies. It has preferred to encourage Eastern Europe to solve its own problems, providing assistance for economic development while trying to keep the Eastern states at arms’ length. This dilemma pervades all East-West relations, and it will be a major issue in the 21st century. It is apparent in defense and security policy, especially over the role of NATO and its recent expansion to the east. It is also central to the expansion of the EU. Although the EU is committed in principle to admitting members from Eastern Europe, it has yet to address what that will mean for its own structures, policies, and finances. At the same time, the EU fears that enlargement would encourage immigration from East to West. The nature of future political and economic union will be affected by how the EU expands its membership.

The EU has become the focus of integration and cooperation in Europe and an important international player. However, while it is the largest trading bloc in the world, the EU’s political influence lags far behind its economic power. Its ability to become a major political force will depend on the outcome of two situations. First, on how far the EU can persuade its member states to adopt a single and coherent foreign and security policy. Second, on whether the euro successfully establishes itself as a major world currency.

The European future in the next century remains uncertain, with many issues to be resolved. However, the continent has reason to be optimistic. It is, overall, a happier place than it ever has been. Bodies such as NATO and the EU have made cooperation the norm. Western countries are locked together in a multitude of cooperative institutions and exercises that make war almost inconceivable. National differences in policies and priorities will remain, but cooperation will continue because without it no European country can guarantee its security or economic prosperity.

The task for Western Europe will be to ensure that the new democracies of Eastern Europe are not kept out of that cooperation. The peaceful turnover of governments in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, which sometimes brought Communists back to power, indicates that free elections and multiparty democracy have begun to replace the one-party systems and political repression of the past. The integrationist dream of a United States of Europe may still lie in the distant future, but a peaceful and prosperous Europe united in common aims and working for common solutions to shared problems is certainly a possibility. However, achieving this goal will require both political will and, even more so, political understanding of each nation’s difficulties.

Cold War

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| I |  | INTRODUCTION |

Cold War, term used to describe the post-World War II struggle between the United States and its allies and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and its allies. During the Cold War period, which lasted from the mid-1940s until the end of the 1980s, international politics were heavily shaped by the intense rivalry between these two great blocs of power and the political ideologies they represented: democracy and capitalism in the case of the United States and its allies, and Communism in the case of the Soviet bloc. The principal allies of the United States during the Cold War included Britain, France, West Germany, Japan, and Canada. On the Soviet side were many of the countries of Eastern Europe—including Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, East Germany, and Romania—and, during parts of the Cold War, Cuba and China. Countries that had no formal commitment to either bloc were known as neutrals or, within the Third World, as nonaligned nations (*see* Nonaligned Movement).

American journalist Walter Lippmann first popularized the term *cold war* in a 1947 book by that name. By using the term, Lippmann meant to suggest that relations between the USSR and its World War II allies (primarily the United States, Britain, and France) had deteriorated to the point of war without the occurrence of actual warfare. Over the next few years, the emerging rivalry between these two camps hardened into a mutual and permanent preoccupation. It dominated the foreign policy agendas of both sides and led to the formation of two vast military alliances: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), created by the Western powers in 1949; and the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact, established in 1955. Although centered originally in Europe, the Cold War enmity eventually drew the United States and the USSR into local conflicts in almost every quarter of the globe. It also produced what became known as the Cold War arms race, an intense competition between the two superpowers to accumulate advanced military weapons.

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| II |  | BACKGROUND |

Hostility between the United States and the USSR had its roots in the waning moments of World War I. Soon after the Bolsheviks (later Communists) overthrew the existing Russian government in October 1917, Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin resolved to withdraw Russia from the war. In 1918 the United States, along with Britain, France, and Japan, intervened militarily in Russia. They did so to restore the collapsed Eastern Front in their war effort against Germany; however, to Lenin and his colleagues, the intervention represented an assault on Russia’s feeble new revolutionary regime. In fact, the European powers and the United States did resent Russia’s new leadership, with its appeals against capitalism and its efforts to weld local Communist parties into an international revolutionary movement. In December 1922 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was formed as a federal union of Russia and neighboring areas under Communist control. The United States refused to recognize the Soviet state until 1933. The deep ideological differences between the USSR and the United States were exacerbated by the leadership of Joseph Stalin, who ruled the USSR from 1929 to 1953.

In August 1939, on the eve of World War II, Stalin signed a nonaggression pact with German dictator Adolf Hitler. The two leaders pledged not to attack one another and agreed to divide the territory that lay between them into German and Soviet spheres of influence. Hitler betrayed the agreement, however, and in June 1941 he launched his armies against the USSR. Britain and the United States rallied to the USSR’s defense, which produced the coalition that would defeat Germany over the next four years. This American-British-Soviet coalition—which came to be known as the Grand Alliance—was an uneasy affair, marked by mistrust and, on the Soviet side, by charges that the USSR bore a heavier price than the other nations in prosecuting the war. By 1944, with victory approaching, the conflicting visions within the alliance of a postwar world were becoming ever more obvious.

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| III |  | COURSE OF THE COLD WAR |

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| A |  | The Struggle for Europe |

Even before the defeat of Nazi Germany in May 1945, the United States and the USSR had become divided over the political future of Poland. Stalin, whose forces had driven the Germans out of Poland in 1944 and 1945 and established a pro-Communist provisional government there, believed that Soviet control of Poland was necessary for his country’s security. This met with opposition from the Allies, and it was not long before the quarrel had extended to the political future of other Eastern European nations. The struggle over the fate of Eastern Europe thus constituted the first crucial phase of the Cold War. Yet during this period, which lasted from 1944 to 1946, both sides clung to the hope that their growing differences could be surmounted and something of the spirit of their earlier wartime cooperation could be preserved.

While the United States accused the USSR of seeking to expand Communism in Europe and Asia, the USSR viewed itself as the leader of history’s progressive forces and charged the United States with attempting to stamp out revolutionary activity wherever it arose. In 1946 and 1947 the USSR helped bring Communist governments to power in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland (Communists had gained control of Albania and Yugoslavia in 1944 and 1945). In 1947 United States president Harry S. Truman issued the Truman Doctrine, which authorized U.S. aid to anti-Communist forces in Greece and Turkey. Later, this policy was expanded to justify support for any nation that the U.S. government considered to be threatened by Soviet expansionism. Known as the *containment doctrine*, this policy, aimed at containing the spread of Communism around the world, was outlined in a famous 1947 *Foreign Affairs* article by American diplomat George F. Kennan*.* Containment soon became the official U.S. policy with regard to the USSR.

By 1948 neither side believed any longer in the possibility of preserving some level of partnership amidst the growing tension and competition. During this new and more intense phase of the Cold War, developments in and around postwar Germany emerged as the core of the conflict. Following its defeat in World War II, Germany had been divided into separate British, French, American, and Soviet occupation zones. The city of Berlin, located in the Soviet zone, was also divided into four administrative sectors. The occupying governments could not reach agreement on what the political and economic structure of postwar Germany should be, and in mid-1947 the United States and Britain decided to merge their separate administrative zones. The two Western governments worried that to keep Germany fragmented indefinitely, particularly when the Soviet and Western occupation regimes were growing so far apart ideologically, could have negative economic consequences for the Western sphere of responsibility. This concern echoed a larger fear that the economic problems of Western Europe—a result of the war's devastation—had left the region vulnerable to Soviet penetration through European Communist parties under Moscow's control. To head off this danger, in the summer of 1947 the United States committed itself to a massive economic aid program designed to rebuild Western European economies. The program was called the Marshall Plan, after U.S. secretary of state George C. Marshall (*see* European Recovery Program).

In June 1948 France merged its administrative zone with the joint British-American zone, thus laying the foundation for a West German republic. Stalin and his lieutenants opposed the establishment of a West German state, fearing that it would be rearmed and welcomed into an American-led military alliance. In the summer of 1948 the Soviets responded to the Western governments’ plans for West Germany by attempting to cut those governments off from their sectors in Berlin through a land blockade. In the first direct military confrontation between the USSR and the Western powers, the Western governments organized a massive airlift of supplies to West Berlin, circumventing the Soviet blockade. After 11 months and thousands of flights, the Western powers succeeded in breaking the blockade.

Meanwhile, in February 1948 Soviet-backed Communists in Czechoslovakia provoked a crisis that led to the formation of a new, Communist-dominated government. With this, all the countries of Eastern Europe were under Communist control, and the creation of the Soviet bloc was complete. The events of 1948 contributed to a growing conviction among political leaders in both the United States and the USSR that the opposing power posed a broad and fundamental threat to their nation’s interests.

The Berlin blockade and the spread of Communism in Europe led to negotiations between Western Europe, Canada, and the United States that resulted in the North Atlantic Treaty, which was signed in April 1949, thereby establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Berlin crisis also accelerated the emergence of a state of West Germany, which was formally established in May 1949. (The Communist republic of East Germany, comprising the remainder of German territory, was formally proclaimed in October of that year.) And finally, the Berlin confrontation prompted the Western powers to begin thinking seriously about rearming their half of Germany, despite the divisiveness of this issue among West Europeans.

The death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 had a significant impact on the course of the Cold War. His successors, including Nikita Khrushchev, who ultimately replaced Stalin as Soviet leader, sought to ease some of the rigidities of Soviet policy toward the West, but without resolving the core issue: a divided Germany at the heart of a divided Europe. The Western powers responded cautiously but sympathetically to the softening of Soviet policy, and in the mid-1950s the USSR and the Western powers convened the first of several summit conferences in Geneva, Switzerland, to address the key issues of the Cold War. These issues now included not only the problem of German reunification, but also the danger of surprise nuclear attack and, in the background, the momentarily quieted but still unresolved conflicts in Korea and Indochina (for more information, see *The Cold War Outside Europe* below). The 1955 Geneva Conference achieved little progress on the central issues of Germany, Eastern Europe, and arms control. However, on the eve of the conference the two sides resolved the issue of Austria, which had been united with Germany during the war and divided into American, British, French, and Soviet occupation zones in its aftermath. The signing of the State Treaty between Austria and the Allies established Austria’s neutrality, freed it of occupation forces, and reestablished the Austrian republic. This period also saw fundamental change in one critical realm: Both the United States and the USSR came to recognize that nuclear weapons had produced a revolution in military affairs—making war among the great powers, while still a possibility, no longer a sane policy recourse.

Meanwhile, the struggle over Europe continued. West Germany was recognized as an independent nation in 1955 and was allowed to rearm and join NATO. In response to this development, a group of Eastern European Communist nations led by the USSR formed the Warsaw Pact . In the late 1950s Khrushchev launched a new series of crises over Berlin, and in 1961 the Soviet government built the Berlin Wall to prevent East Germans from fleeing to West Germany.

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| B |  | The Cold War Outside Europe |

In 1950 the superpowers’ involvement in Third World areas—limited previously to sporadic jousting—changed suddenly, as the USSR and the United States became entangled in an Asian war. In June of that year, Stalin appeared to endorse the plans of North Korean Communist leader Kim Il Sung to attack South Korea, assuming—according to documents that have since come to light—that the United States and other major powers would not get involved. This mistaken assumption led to the Korean War (1950-1953), which pitted American-led United Nations forces against the military forces of North Korea and China (which had become a Communist republic under the leadership of Mao Zedong in late 1949). The first armed conflict of the Cold War, the Korean War led to a major increase in defense spending by the United States. Because American leaders saw Stalin’s actions in Korea as a potential precursor to aggressive movements in Europe, the war helped prompt the United States to turn NATO into an ambitious and permanent military structure.

In 1954, following the military defeat of France in its bid to reclaim Vietnam in the First Indochina War (1946-1954), the great powers assembled in Geneva with representatives from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to negotiate an end to that conflict. Among other provisions, the resulting agreement, known as the Geneva Accords, provided for the temporary partition of Vietnam into northern and southern portions, with the Viet Minh (a Communist group seeking Vietnamese independence) concentrated in North Vietnam and the French and their Vietnamese supporters in the south. To avoid permanent partition, the accords called for national elections to reunify the country to be held in 1956. When the South Vietnamese refused to hold the elections because Viet Minh leader Ho Chi Minh was favored to win, the North Vietnamese began to seek the overthrow of the South Vietnamese government.

The Vietnam War, which began in 1959, pitted the Communist North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front, a Vietnamese nationalist group based in South Vietnam, against the South Vietnamese. In 1965 the United States sent troops into Vietnam to fight alongside the South Vietnamese. A long and bloody conflict, the Vietnam War lasted until 1975. Before it ended, it spread to the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia, where it continued long after 1975. In Cambodia, the war brought to power the Communist movement known as the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, whose regime inflicted a genocidal massacre on the Cambodian people. Meanwhile, by the mid-1960s the Communist world had been dramatically reconfigured as the result of an increasingly bitter and open split between the USSR and China. The dispute stemmed in part from ideological disagreements but also reflected the intense rivalry of two former empires.

The most serious Cold War confrontation between the United States and the USSR that took place in the Third World—one that raised the specter of nuclear war—occurred in 1962. In the summer of that year, the U.S. government discovered that the Soviets were in the process of deploying nuclear missiles in Communist Cuba. In October the United States moved to block Soviet ships carrying missiles to Cuba. The resulting standoff, during which the world stood seemingly on the brink of ultimate disaster, ended with Khrushchev capitulating to the demands of U.S. president John F. Kennedy. From the Cuban missile crisis both sides learned that risking nuclear war in pursuit of political objectives was simply too dangerous. It was the last time during the Cold War that either side would take this risk.

In the early and mid-1960s the great powers even superimposed their competition on local conflicts in faraway Africa. In newly independent nations such as the Republic of the Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Nigeria, the United States and the USSR chose sides and lent military backing and other assistance to groups or leaders thought to be sympathetic to their interests. In the Middle East, the underlying conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors became entangled with maneuvering by the superpowers to push one another out of the region. The Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973 drew in the United States and the USSR, creating the possibility of escalation to a direct confrontation between them.

In the early 1970s the tenor of the Cold War changed. During the first administration of U.S. president Richard Nixon (1969-1973), the United States and the USSR sought to put their relationship on a different footing. While neither side abandoned its basic positions, the two superpowers tried to take the first steps toward controlling the costly nuclear arms race and finding areas for mutually advantageous economic and scientific collaboration. Détente, as this policy came to be called, collapsed in the second half of the 1970s, when the American-Soviet competition in the Third World intensified once again, this time during the civil war in Angola and the Somali-Ethiopian war over the Ogadēn region. During this phase of the Cold War, Communist Cuba played a significant role alongside the USSR, while the Chinese, now deeply wary of the USSR, participated on the side of the United States.

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| IV |  | END OF THE COLD WAR |

The early 1980s witnessed a final period of friction between the United States and the USSR, resulting mainly from the Soviets’ invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 to prop up a Communist regime and from the firm line adopted by U.S. president Ronald Reagan after his 1980 election. Reagan saw the USSR as an “evil empire.” He also believed that his rivals in Moscow respected strength first and foremost, and thus he set about to add greatly to American military capabilities. The Soviets initially viewed Reagan as an implacable foe, committed to subverting the Soviet system and possibly willing to risk nuclear war in the process.

Then in the mid-1980s Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the USSR. Gorbachev was determined to halt the increasing decay of the Soviet system and to shed some of his country’s foreign policy burdens. Between 1986 and 1989 he brought a revolution to Soviet foreign policy, abandoning long-held Soviet assumptions and seeking new and far-reaching agreements with the West. Gorbachev’s efforts fundamentally altered the dynamic of East-West relations. Gorbachev and Reagan held a series of summit talks beginning in 1985, and in 1987 the two leaders agreed to eliminate a whole class of their countries’ nuclear missiles—those capable of striking Europe and Asia from the USSR and vice versa. The Soviet government began to reduce its forces in Eastern Europe, and in 1989 it pulled its troops out of Afghanistan. That year Communist regimes began to topple in the countries of Eastern Europe and the wall that had divided East and West Germany since 1961 was torn down. In 1990 Germany became once again a unified country. In 1991 the USSR dissolved, and Russia and the other Soviet republics emerged as independent states. Even before these dramatic final events, much of the ideological basis for the Cold War competition had disappeared. However, the collapse of Soviet power in Eastern Europe, and then of the USSR itself, lent a crushing finality to the end of the Cold War period.