

The Fall of the Soviet Union and the End of the Cold War (1945-21st Century)

The United States and Soviet Union Solving Their Differences

After World War II, the Soviet Union and the United States became the world's two *superpowers*. Both nations had the capability to destroy each other and much of the entire world with nuclear weapons. Therefore, the future and safety of the world depended on United States and Soviet Union solving their differences without using nuclear weapons.



The Beginning and Ending of *Détente*

After World War II, both superpowers continued to develop large militaries. This military buildup was known as the *arms race*. In hopes of limiting the arms race, President Richard Nixon visited Moscow in 1972. Leaders in both countries agreed to limit production of nuclear weapons. This began a new *period of relaxing conflicts* between the superpowers, known as **détente** (day tahnt). However, the period of *détente* ended in 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. And, two years later, when the Soviets forced the Polish government to crush a democratic reform movement in Poland, relations between the two superpowers worsened. Both countries began to increase their military buildup again.

The Soviets, alarmed by the American buildup, increased the number of missiles they had in Eastern Europe. The United States and its NATO allies responded by placing additional missiles in Western Europe.

Mikhail Gorbachev Reforms the Soviet Union

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev, a new leader in the Soviet Union, recognized that the Soviet Union could no longer afford its costly arms race with the United States. After taking office, Gorbachev announced that he wanted to use *diplomacy* in Eastern Europe instead of military force and **intervention**. These new policies led to an easing of conflict between the superpowers.

As international tensions eased, Gorbachev turned to the problems in the Soviet Union. In 1987, Gorbachev started a program of reforms that included more freedoms and democracy for his nation's people. His programs brought about **glasnost**, a new *openness* in Soviet society. However, his **perestroika** (pehr uh stroy kuh), or *restructuring* of the Soviet economy, caused the Soviet people many hardships. In 1991, economic problems, as well as ethnic and nationalist unrest in the Soviet republics, led to the overthrow of Gorbachev's government. The Soviet Union eventually broke up into smaller and separate countries.



The Soviet economy caused the Soviet people many hardships.

The History of the Soviet Union: Life under Communist Dictatorship

For more than 70 years the Communist Party controlled the government of the Soviet Union. People had no real vote in who ran the government. The Communist Party and its leader, the general secretary, had almost complete control over the people.

The Planned Economy Produces a Strong Military but Few Consumer Goods

The Communist Party *planned* what the government-run industries produced. This kind of controlled economy is called a *planned economy* or *command economy*. The government planned what crops the government-controlled farms grew and what jobs people performed. Everything from how natural resources were used to the prices of manufactured goods was decided by the government. This planned economy, however, did not raise the **standard of living** in the Soviet Union. It lagged far behind that of many Western European nations and other industrialized nations of the world.

The Communist government needed a huge and growing **bureaucracy** to plan and direct the jobs of factory workers, farmers, and office workers. As it grew in size, the Soviet *bureaucracy* became less efficient.

The industrialized nations in the West have primarily used their resources to produce consumer goods. But the Soviets have used most of their factories to produce tanks, missiles, and other military weapons. Consequently, the Soviet Union had a strong military but produced few consumer goods for the Soviet people.

The Soviet focus on building a strong military caused serious economic problems during the 1960s and 1970s. Food and consumer goods became very scarce. The Soviet people also had a hard time finding adequate housing. Most families lived in small, crowded apartments. Few families owned automobiles, televisions, or telephones.

Still another issue was the poor quality of products that Soviet workers produced. All workers who held the same job received the same wages, whether they worked hard or not. Consequently, people had little motivation to work hard and produce a better quality of goods. Communist Party officials, however, enjoyed higher salaries and better living conditions than the average Soviet citizen.

Lack of Civil Rights and Freedoms in the Soviet Union

If you read the Constitution of the Soviet Union, you might think that the Soviet government treated all its citizens equally. You might think that all Soviet citizens shared equally in the economy of the Soviet Union and had many civil rights.

But Soviet citizens did not enjoy free speech, freedom of the press, or freedom of religion. Here are some examples of the Soviet Union's control of its people.

1. Soviet citizens read, watched, and heard only what the government produced. The Communist government used **propaganda**. Soviet citizens could not **demonstrate** without the approval of the government. Those who spoke out against the government were usually arrested. The KGB (secret police) watched Soviet citizens very carefully. The government discouraged the practice of religion.
2. The Soviet Union held elections. However, only members of the Communist Party could run for office. Soviet citizens simply marked their ballots showing their approval of Communist Party candidates. In other words, Soviets had no party choice in who ran their government.
3. Certain ethnic and religious groups within the Soviet Union were **discriminated** against. Jews, for example, could not travel freely or leave the country without special permission.

Soviet Leaders 1917–2000

Vladimir Lenin	1917-1924
Joseph Stalin	1924-1953
Nikita Khrushchev	1954-1964
Leonid Brezhnev	1964-1983
Yuri Andropov	1983-1984
Konstantine Chernenko	1984-1985
Mikhail Gorbachev	1985-1991*

**The Soviet Union was disbanded after August 1991.*

The Soviet Union (1954-1964)

Khrushchev (1954-1964) Points the Soviet Union towards Peace

Stalin ruled the Soviet Union as a dictator from 1928 until he died in 1953 (see Unit 5). His death touched off a struggle for power among the remaining leaders of the Soviet Communist Party. Unlike the United States, the Soviet Union did not have a system in place to determine who will replace a leader who dies in office. In 1953, an internal struggle took place for control of the Soviet Union. Nikita Khrushchev eventually rose to power in 1958. Khrushchev led the Soviet Union until 1964, when he was overthrown.



Joseph Stalin

Under Khrushchev's leadership, the government began a program called *de-Stalinization*, to purge the country of Stalin's memory. This program grew out of a speech by Khrushchev in which he blamed Stalin for many of the Soviet Union's troubles. He publicly denounced Stalin for jailing and killing many loyal citizens. The Soviets destroyed statues and monuments of the former dictator and moved and reburied his body outside the Kremlin Wall. Under de-Stalinization, society in the Soviet Union during the 1950s became more relaxed. Writers, artists, and composers began to enjoy some limited freedom of expression. Khrushchev closed many of Stalin's prison camps. Industry began producing more consumer goods. The power of the secret police was reduced. In his relations with the West and particularly the United States,

Khrushchev spoke of **peaceful coexistence**. *Peaceful coexistence* would include slowing the arms race and banning the testing of nuclear weapons. The Soviet would compete with the West but avoid war. Khrushchev also called for peaceful competition with the West.

Events of Conflict: Sputnik I, the U-2, and the Cuban Missile Crisis

However, many events that took place under Khrushchev's leadership strained relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. The first occurred in 1957 when *Sputnik I*, the first man-made satellite, was launched into space. The Russians had achieved something



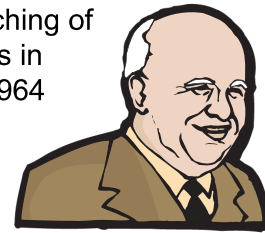
Kremlin

that the United States at that time was unable to do: send rockets into space. The United States feared that *Sputnik I* would give the Soviet Union a military advantage. United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower immediately set the United States on a course that would lead to American **superiority** in the space race. The second incident occurred in 1960 when an American *U-2 spy plane* was shot down over the Soviet Union. Soviet anger over the U-2 incident refueled the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev (1894-1971)

Nikita Khrushchev was a Soviet statesman, first secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, and premier of the USSR (1958-1964). He was born in Kalinovka, Ukraine. Khrushchev joined the Bolshevik Party in 1918, fought in the Russian civil war, and rose in the Communist Party. After Stalin's death, Khrushchev succeeded him as party secretary. Three years later at the 20th Party Congress, he denounced Stalin.

Among the events of Khrushchev's rule were the launching of the *Sputnik I* satellite, a failed attempt to install missiles in Cuba, and the break with China. He was deposed in 1964 partly due to his failed farm policy and loss of face in the Cuban missile crisis. He went into retirement and was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin.



Perhaps the most frightening incident that took place between the United States and the Soviet Union was the *Cuban missile crisis* in 1962. Fidel Castro had overthrown the government of Cuba and set up a Communist government in its place. Under Castro, Cuba developed close relations with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union gave financial and military aid to Cuba. Cuba is only 90 miles south of the United States. Having a Communist country so close to its borders made the United States government very uncomfortable.

United States spy planes began taking pictures of Soviet military bases in Cuba. In 1962 the United States government discovered that the Soviets were placing missiles with nuclear capability in Cuba. President John F. Kennedy demanded the removal of these missiles. At a special meeting of the Security Council at the United Nations, the United States showed the world pictures of these Soviet missiles at military bases in Cuba.



President John F. Kennedy

Kennedy told Khrushchev that the United States Navy would stop any Soviet ship carrying missiles to Cuba. The situation grew very tense. People in the United States thought war was certain.

After a week of suspense, Khrushchev withdrew the missiles in exchange for a pledge that the United States would not invade Cuba. The Cuban missile crisis was over. At first Americans felt pleased that they had won a diplomatic victory. However, it soon became apparent that following this event, the Soviet Union began increasing its arms buildup. The arms race between the superpowers was still very much alive. Because of the Cuban missile crisis, however, Khrushchev and Kennedy agreed that it would be wise to set up a “hotline,” a direct telephone line between Kennedy and Khrushchev, for emergency discussions. In this way, the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States could speak by telephone if a crisis occurred in the world.

The Khrushchev Era: Soviets and Americans Worked towards Peaceful Coexistence

The Khrushchev era, for all its tense moments, took some important steps towards peaceful coexistence with the United States. For example, Khrushchev visited the United States to gain a better understanding of the American people and their ways. He was impressed with the politeness of the American people. He probably realized that the average American, like the average Soviet, did not want to destroy the world. When Khrushchev left the United States, both governments felt a renewed hope for peace.

Finally, during the Khrushchev era, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to the first *nuclear test ban treaty*. This treaty did not stop the nuclear arms race between the two countries. It did, however, mark the first time that the two superpowers sat together and discussed the issue of nuclear weapons.

The Soviet Union (1964-1991)

The Brezhnev Era: 1964-1982



Leonid Brezhnev

After Khrushchev was removed from power, two men took over. Leonid Brezhnev (brehzh nehv) became the leader of the Communist Party, and Alexsei Kosygin (kuh see guhn) became the premier. Brezhnev was the more powerful of the two. Under Brezhnev and Kosygin, the Soviet Union continued to seek peaceful coexistence with the United States. Within the Soviet Union, Brezhnev worked to increase its industrial production. He also tried to improve the nation's agricultural productivity by allowing free enterprise on private plots given to members of communes.

However, under Brezhnev's leadership, the Soviet Union worked very hard to keep its Communist allies in line. In 1968 the people of Czechoslovakia tried to make its Communist government more democratic. Brezhnev saw the change as a threat to Soviet-style communism. He sent Soviet tanks into Czechoslovakia to halt the Czechs' attempts to reform their government. The Czechoslovakian people could do nothing in the face of the Soviet military.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Brezhnev also tried to prevent the government of Poland from giving more rights to its people. The Soviet Union prepared to invade Poland. To prevent a Soviet invasion of Poland, President Ronald Reagan placed trade restrictions on the sale of industrial and farming equipment and wheat to the Soviet Union. The Soviets continued to threaten the Polish government, but they chose not to invade Poland.

Brezhnev also clamped down on **dissidents** (persons who express opinions that differ from those held by the government). Anyone who protested government actions might be arrested. For example, the secret police arrested Alexander Solzhenitsyn (sol zhuh neet suhn), winner of a 1970 Nobel Prize, for his protests against the lack of civil rights in the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn was exiled from the Soviet Union for his anti-government writings and speeches.

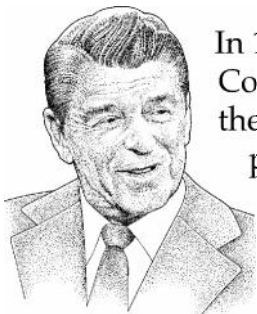
During Brezhnev's leadership, the Soviet Union and the United States carried on a policy of *détente* (relaxation of conflict). Under *détente*, the superpowers would work together to improve relations. This was done through nuclear arms talks, cultural and sports exchanges, and trade. Both countries knew they had many differences to overcome, but they tried to find common ground on which to cooperate. For example, the United States had *surplus* (or extra) wheat; the Soviet Union needed wheat. Under *détente*, they agreed to trade.

Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev (1906-1982)

Leonid Brezhnev was a Soviet political leader who became the first secretary of the Communist Party and head of the Soviet government in 1964. He was born in Dneprodzerzhinsk, Ukraine. He was trained as a metallurgical engineer but soon became involved in government and party work. Brezhnev served in the Red Army, rising to the rank of major general. He also rose in rank as a party official after he returned to civilian life in 1946.

In 1952 Brezhnev became a member of the party central committee and was chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet (the national legislature). Brezhnev's career was temporarily interrupted by Stalin's death in 1953. He was eventually asked to serve again in the Secretariat, working closely with Nikita Khrushchev. In 1964 a group of other leaders and Brezhnev succeeded in ousting Khrushchev, and Brezhnev and Kosygin took over. During his administration, he oversaw a military buildup while also pursuing a policy of *détente* with the West. Soviet relations with China grew worse, however. After several years of bad health, Brezhnev died in 1982, leaving the Soviet Union without strong leadership until Mikhail Gorbachev.

Under Brezhnev's leadership, relations between the Soviet Union and China grew worse. (At the same time, the United States and China began a friendly relationship after years of *hostility*, or angry relations.) The breakdown of relations between the Soviet Union and China was perhaps Brezhnev's greatest failure.



President Ronald Reagan

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan, a strong anti-Communist leader, took office. During his administration, the United States began to abandon *détente*. A new program known as the *Strategic Defense Initiative* (SDI) was established to protect the United States against enemy missiles. The *Star Wars* program, as it came to be called, increased tensions between the United States and Soviet Union.

Following the death of Brezhnev in 1982, the Soviet Union's aging Communist leaders desperately tried to maintain their power. Brezhnev's successor, Yuri Andropov, died after only 15 months in power. Just 13 months after that, Andropov's successor, Konstantin Chernenko, became deathly ill. In March of 1985, the Soviet government chose Mikhail Gorbachev as the new leader of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's leadership would bring about the final *thaw* in the Cold War.

The Reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev: 1985-1991

Mikhail Gorbachev represented a new generation in Soviet leadership. He was the first Soviet leader born *after* the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Gorbachev's policy of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) brought about many changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. His policies promoted economic growth and encouraged discussion of new ideas. Some of his changes included the following.

- Gorbachev fired hundreds of incompetent officials. He gave managers of factories and farms greater authority in decision-making. He permitted citizens to privately own small businesses.
- He relaxed censorship, or government control of the press, literature, and other media. Citizens were permitted to express opinions about the nation's social and economic problems.
- Government reforms included the secret ballot and permitting more than one candidate to run for election to office. The Soviet constitution was changed, and, by 1989, multi-party-candidate elections were held.
- Gorbachev persuaded Soviet leaders to agree that the Communist Party would loosen its control of Soviet society and politics. This new policy was called **demokratizatsiya** or *democratization*, the gradual opening of the political system.
- In Eastern Europe, Gorbachev reduced Soviet military forces in Europe. He allowed the countries of Eastern Europe to make decisions and reform their governments.

Gorbachev's outlook and personality made him a popular world leader in the West. However, at home in the Soviet Union, he faced increasing criticism. The reforms promised through his programs of perestroika and glasnost came slowly. The large Soviet bureaucracy resisted change. Gorbachev was criticized by both hard-line Communists and reformists. Uncertainty and distrust of Gorbachev and his programs grew among government and business leaders.

Mikhail Sergeyeovich Gorbachev (1931-)

Mikhail Gorbachev was general secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR and president of the Supreme Soviet from 1988 to 1991. He was born in Privolye, Russia (located in Southern Russia). He studied at Moscow State University and Stavropol Agricultural Institute. He joined the Communist Party in 1952 and held a variety of posts in the district party organization. Gorbachev became secretary for agriculture in 1979. In 1988 he became chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and in 1990 he became the first (and last) executive president of the USSR.

Concerned by the country's economic backwardness, he tried to help the stagnant Soviet economy. He called for quick technological modernization and granted greater degrees of civil liberty and journalistic and cultural freedom. A review of Soviet history was allowed under the policy of glasnost. Gorbachev pursued a policy of détente and nuclear disarmament with the West, reduced military expenditure, and ended the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan in 1989. He survived a brief coup in August 1991, but he was eventually forced to resign following the abolition of the Communist Party and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991.



Mikhail Gorbachev

Economic problems that had existed in the Soviet Union in the past continued and worsened as Gorbachev began his reforms. People became impatient. Promises of improved Soviet technology and improved quantity and quality of goods were not fulfilled. Gorbachev believed the changes he wanted to make would, in time, strengthen the Soviet system.

Another problem facing Gorbachev were new challenges to his leadership. In the past, Soviet leaders had faced little opposition within the government. During Gorbachev's leadership, however, bureaucrats worked quietly to defeat his reforms. Military leaders also opposed his changes as well.

Boris Yeltsin, once a powerful ally, was now Gorbachev's rival. He felt that perestroika was moving too slowly. Yeltsin's popularity and his criticism of Gorbachev's policies won him the presidency of the Russian Republic. Soviet citizens led by Yeltsin called for Gorbachev to step down.

The Breakup of the Soviet Union

Until 1991 the Soviet Union was a union of 15 separate republics or states. The largest was Russia, which included the Soviet capital, Moscow. The republics together included many nationalities and ethnic groups. Many of the ethnic groups within the Soviet republics had disliked Russian control over Soviet affairs. Many had long-standing ethnic, religious, and political conflicts among themselves. During the years of Communist control, Soviet security forces and the army kept rival ethnic and religious groups under control. However, in the open atmosphere of glasnost, people began expressing some old hatreds for different ethnic and religious groups.

In the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, ethnic hatreds led to violence. Many republics demanded sovereignty, or self-rule. Anti-Soviet demonstrations spread throughout the Baltics. In 1990 the Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia declared that they wanted to become independent nations, free of Soviet rule. The Soviet military attacked and killed demonstrators in Lithuania and Latvia in early 1991. The Western countries denounced this crackdown. They threatened to cancel trade agreements and financial aid. Gorbachev eventually withdrew troops from the Baltic republics. The crackdown on the Baltic States and the lack of economic progress in the Soviet Union hurt Gorbachev's popularity. Public demonstrations against Gorbachev and the Communist Party took place throughout the Soviet Union.



During the *coup* (takeover) on August 19, 1991, Gorbachev was overthrown by hard-liners (people who resist change) in the military and secret police. The hard-liners, who called themselves the *State Committee*, declared a state of emergency and tried to rule using the military. The Russian Republic's President Boris Yeltsin, however, called for a general strike and denounced the coup and its attempt to take control of the government. Some 50,000 people *demonstrated* at the Russian Parliament in support of Yeltsin. By August 21, the coup had failed, and Gorbachev was restored as president. The coup attempt sparked anger against the Communist Party leaders. Two days later Gorbachev resigned as General Secretary of the Communist Party. He suggested that the party be disbanded, or end its existence. The coup was a turning point. It led to the final breakup of the Soviet Union. Several republics quickly declared their independence including Russia, the Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.

On August 29, 1991, the Soviet Parliament voted to suspend all activities of the Communist Party. On December 21, 1991, the Russian Parliament approved a new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a loose federation open to all former members of the Soviet Union. By early December, all 15 republics declared their independence. The Soviet Union ended with President Gorbachev's resignation on Christmas Day, 1991.

The Yeltsin Era (1991-1999)

Gorbachev was not able to hold the Soviet Union together. He turned over his responsibilities as commander-in-chief to Boris Yeltsin, the president of Russia. As president of Russia, Yeltsin was the most powerful and influential leader in the CIS. In early 1992, Yeltsin began to *dismantle* or take apart Russia's huge nuclear weapons arsenal. About 80 percent of the former Soviet Union's nuclear weapons are in Russia. The rest of the nuclear weapons were scattered throughout the other former Soviet republics. The independent republics agreed to shift the control of all weapons to the Russians. Eventually a nuclear arms agreement, known as *START II*, was reached between Russia and the United States. They agreed on a mutual reduction of the nuclear arsenals of each country.

Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin (1931-2007)

Boris Yeltsin was the president of Russia from 1991-1999. He was born in Bukta, Russia and studied at the Urals Polytechnic. Yeltsin joined the Communist Party in 1961 and in 1985 was made Moscow party boss and a Politburo member by Mikhail Gorbachev. Rising in the ranks and resigning from the Communist Party, Yeltsin was elected president of the Russian Federation in 1991. This was the first direct presidential election. Yeltsin overshadowed Gorbachev. In August of 1991, an anti-Gorbachev coup that Yeltsin opposed began the final disintegration of the USSR.

In December 1991, Yeltsin declared the Soviet Union dead, and he remained in power as president of the Russian Federation. He pursued economic reforms. Confrontation with conservative hard-liners followed, leading to his decision to suspend parliament in 1993. In 1995, opposition to Yeltsin grew as a result of ongoing economic problems and the war in Chechnya. Ill health and accusations of widespread corruption in government led him to resign six months before his term in office was up. The former leader died from heart failure April 23, 2007.

As a result of the fall of communism in Europe and the former Soviet Union, the United States and Western Europe decided to change the role of the National Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). No longer a military alliance against the Communists, it became an alliance of collective security for Europe. Russia and many former Warsaw Pact nations joined NATO.

Yeltsin and the leaders of the newly independent republics faced many problems in their efforts to make the transition from a communist **command economic system** to a capitalist or free **market economic system**. The quick shift to a free *market economic system* caused shock

waves throughout Russia. When trade barriers, price controls, and government subsidies to state-owned businesses were removed, inflation and prices soared. Many inefficient factories were forced out of business and thousands of workers lost their jobs. These economic hardships led to a political crisis. In 1993, former Communists in the Russian Parliament who opposed Yeltsin's policies attempted to take control of the government. Anti-Yeltsin forces called for a strike and members of Parliament locked themselves inside the Parliament building. The stand-off ended when the military defeated the rebels. Military troops bombed the building and forced the rebel legislators to surrender. Yeltsin used this victory to expand his political powers. He banned several opposition parties, fired opponents, and called for new parliamentary elections. The country's new constitution centralized power in the executive presidency and limited the powers of the regions. One of these regions, *Chechnya*, wanted to secede (withdraw) from Russia.



Russia's continued economic decline left millions in poverty.

Chechnya is a Muslim area in southwestern Russia. In 1991 Chechnya declared its independence. The Russian government denied its right to form an independent republic. In 1994 Chechnya's leaders proclaimed their independence. Yeltsin ordered the army to restore the Russian government's control over the breakaway republic. After months of fighting, Grozny, the rebel capital, fell to Russian troops.

"Russia must enter the new millennium with new faces, with new intelligent, strong, energetic people, and we who have been in power for many years must go." Boris Yeltsin

By 1996, Yeltsin's popularity had been severely weakened. In the 1996 presidential elections, former Communists and a right-wing Nationalist candidate forced Yeltsin into a runoff. Yeltsin won the election and organized a new government. However, between 1996-1999, the Russian economy continued to worsen. Russia's continued economic decline left millions in poverty. Ill health sidelined Yeltsin during much of his second term. Although he continued to dominate Russian politics, his ill health and accusations of widespread corruption in government led him to

resign from the presidency six months before his term was up. However, after Yeltsin left office, world leaders later praised his leadership for dismantling the Communist system and building new political institutions in Russia.

On December 31, 1999, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin became the acting president. He became Russia's second democratically elected president in March 2000. Putin, a 47-year-old former KGB officer, faced the challenge of restoring Russia's national pride and economic health after decades of decline. He also faced ending the continued fighting in Chechnya. Putin's handling of the war in Chechnya and his no-nonsense attitude appealed to many Russians, who wanted strong leadership to



Vladimir Putin became Russia's second democratically elected president in March 2000.

handle their country's economic, political, and social problems. Putin promised to continue Yeltsin's democratic and free market policies. He also promised to crush widespread lawlessness and corruption that weakened the government.

Russia under Vladimir Putin

After Putin's election, in 2000, Russia took a more assertive role in foreign affairs by strengthening Russia's relations with members of the CIS. Putin also strongly opposed the United States invasion of Iraq without the support of the United Nations.

During Putin's first term of office, fighting in Chechnya continued. In 2002 Chechen militants launched a series of terrorist attacks in both Chechnya and Moscow. Violence and instability plague Chechnya to this day.

In 2004, Putin won reelection as president of Russia. Many claim that the electoral campaign process was manipulated by the state-run media. Putin's government made it impossible for opposition candidates to have fair access to the media during the presidential campaign.

Efforts to improve the economy have had mixed results. Putin has supported a market economy and has promoted more trade and investment; however, economic and social problems like unemployment, a poor *standard of living* and life expectancy, and a continued population decline still plague Russia.

Challenges Facing the Global Community

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to many changes in the map of Europe. All of the former Soviet republics became independent nations. In Eastern Europe, Communist dictatorships collapsed and new, more democratic governments replaced them. Some former Communist countries in Europe which had depended on aid from the Soviet Union struggled to survive. Without the Soviet Union's political and military control, many of these Eastern European nations experienced civil wars as ethnic, nationalist, and religious groups battled for power and freedom. In Yugoslavia, for example, the effects of the fall of communism in 1989 and the Soviet collapse in 1991 led to the break-up of Yugoslavia into individual republics. Its many ethnic groups were involved in a brutal civil war that lasted for years. In another instance, however, Czechoslovakia peacefully split into two new independent nations, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Twice before in the 20th century, the world has had to cope with the collapse of an empire. The first period of collapse came at the end of World War I when three of Europe's great empires fell. At the end of World War II, more empires were left to rebuild.



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A new world order has come about due to the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the end of the Cold War. Many nations that are now free of Soviet influence will struggle to determine what kind of government will rule them. These nations will also have to develop their own economic policies and programs. The collapse of the Soviet Union has peacefully ended the Cold War with the United States. The global supremacy of the two superpowers has ended.

Although the number of countries turning toward democracy has increased over the past decade, there are still many countries ruled by a range of military dictatorships, repressive or *severely restrictive* monarchies, and dominant one-party systems. Most of these dictatorships are located

in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa—most notably, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Myanmar, China, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Most dictatorships have a long history of human rights violations, and thus are a threat to world peace and economic and social prosperity.

The expansion of free trade by opening up the world's markets and the elimination of trade barriers is one of the trends of the 21st century. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the European Union (EU) have worked toward the goal of creating trade policies that will enable member nations the opportunity to raise their standard of living, promote investment, and create a sense of world community. A global economy and culture will be created as new technologies link our world together.

The 21st century has also seen an increase in global terrorism. The United States and its global allies will have to work closely together to locate and eliminate terrorist networks. Some terrorist groups are connected to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah have used various forms of terror tactics, such as roadside bombings, suicide bombings, and missile attacks against innocent civilians as a means to prevent a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians.



The twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City before 09/11/01.

On September 11, 2001 (9/11), 19 Arab terrorists hijacked four commercial airplanes and crashed two of the planes into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and another into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The fourth plane crashed in a remote field in Pennsylvania. More than 2,800 innocent civilians lost their lives. Many of these people were passengers on the hijacked airlines and people who worked at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Many fireman and policemen also lost their lives when they attempted to rescues

those that were trapped in the fiery wreckage. Those who planned and carried out these attacks were members of a radical fundamentalist Muslim terror network known as **al Qaeda** or **al-Qaeda**. After a lengthy investigation by United States



As seen from New York Harbor, downtown Manhattan is obscured by smoke after the attacks.

government officials, it was concluded that Osama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi Arabian exile, had organized and directed the terrorist attacks. Efforts to bring him to justice led to a war to overthrow the **Taliban** government in Afghanistan (see Unit 10).

The stated goals of al-Qaeda are to expel all western or American influences from Muslim nations, destroy Israel, and to overthrow all pro-West governments in the Middle East. Despite the global war on terrorism, al-Qaeda continues to be a worldwide threat. Since September 11, 2001, there have been at least 12 major attacks carried out by al-Qaeda-linked terrorist groups. Al-Qaeda has also been linked to the bombing of the United States embassies in Africa in 1998 and the attack on the USS Cole, a Navy vessel that was harbored in the Yemeni port of Aden in 2000. Two of the most recent attacks include the Madrid bombings and the London bombing. In March of 2004, over 200 people were killed and over 1,000 injured in the bombings of Madrid's railway station. In July of 2005, four bombs exploded in three London subway stations and on a double-decker bus, killing 52 and injuring more than 700. An al-Qaeda-linked group in Europe claimed responsibility and claimed the attacks were in retaliation for Great Britain's involvement in the war in Afghanistan and Iraq (see Un□

Another threat to global security is the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). North Korea and Iran pose the greatest threat to world peace because these countries have been developing both nuclear and chemical weapons. Both nations have resisted pressure to discontinue their weapon's programs. Many nations worry that these countries will sell these weapons to terrorist groups.

Review

The generation of people born after 1945 have lived with the Cold War most of their lives. The Cold War superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—threatened each other with their nuclear weapons. The arms race they carried on threatened the existence of the entire world. The fact that we sit here now is evidence that leaders of the superpowers were able to avoid a nuclear war and its immense destructive force.

The Soviet people's discontent and the decline of communism led to changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Communist governments fell in the former Soviet Union and in many countries in Eastern Europe. After 70 years of Communist rule, the Soviet Union and its empire collapsed. A new world order began to emerge. In 1992 the United States and Russia signed an arms control treaty to stop the spread of dangerous nuclear weapons. The *START II treaty*, as it is called, reduced the total of nuclear warheads and missiles in the former Soviet Union and the United States.

All former Soviet republics became independent nations, and most of the nations in this new world order have been trying to develop democratic governments. This has caused division and hostilities between many ethnic groups in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as various groups battle for power and freedom. Different nationalities and ethnic groups within nations are struggling to create a state or nations of their own. In some cases this has led to ethnic violence and civil war.

As Communist dictatorships and state-run economies disappeared from Europe, the 21st century saw a highly competitive global economy open up. New technologies have linked world regions more closely together, creating a global economy and culture. The global economy stands to create great wealth and wonderful opportunities. However, like all economic systems, it also has the potential to create problems. The global economy, based on sophisticated technology, may widen the already large gap between rich and poor nations.

After September 11th (9/11), the United States and its allies began a global war on terrorism. The United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan when the *Taliban* refused to shut down the al-Qaeda terrorist training camps



The United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan.

and turn over Osama bin Laden. The invasion of Iraq resulted in the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of a democratically elected government; however, a prolonged insurgency continues. Terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and most especially the threat posed by the nuclear weapons systems being developed by Iran and North Korea, pose the greatest threat to world peace. The world's nations must learn to cooperate to find solutions and to meet the needs of all peoples on Earth.