

## The Cold War and Postwar Period in Europe (1945-Present)

### Effects of World War II

Approximately 50 million people died as a result of World War II. This is a number almost beyond imagination. The Soviet Union alone lost over 20 million people. Almost two million Japanese were killed, and nearly eight million Germans died. Many who died during World War II were **civilians**; they were *not* soldiers on active duty. To grasp this number of deaths, imagine everyone living in Florida, Texas, and New York in 1999 disappearing.

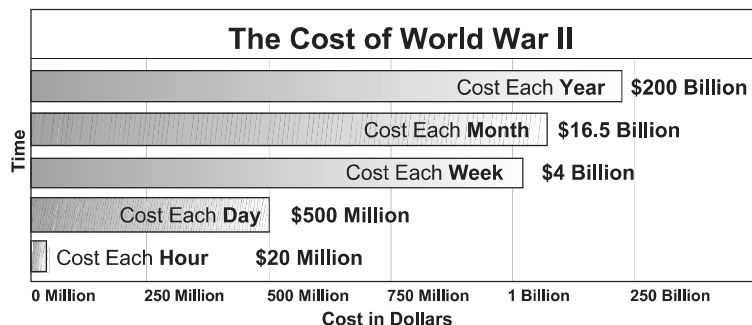
**Casualties in World War II**

Population	Military Dead	Civilian Dead	Total Dead
American	292,000	*	292,000
English	389,000	65,000	454,000
French	211,000	108,000	319,000
Russian	7,500,000	15,000,000	22,500,000
German	2,850,000	5,000,000	7,850,000
Italian	77,500	100,000	177,000
Japanese	1,576,000	300,000	1,876,000

All figures are estimates.  
\* Very small number of civilian dead.

Loss of life was not the war's only cost. Large areas of France, Germany, and the Soviet Union were completely destroyed. The war made rubble of hundreds of cities in Europe and Asia. Survivors found themselves homeless, hungry, and sick. Millions of Asians and Europeans were faced with uncertain futures. Almost every person in North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia lost relatives or friends in the war.

World War II was also the most *expensive* war in human history. A good estimate of the total cost of World War II is about \$1.2 trillion. For some idea of how much money this is broken down into years, months, weeks, days, and hours, see the following chart.



## Building a Peaceful Future after World War II

The period right after a war is particularly important for building future peace. This is true for two reasons. First, world leaders are aware of how much the war cost and are usually committed to avoiding another war. Second, new relationships between nations are being built. These relationships will determine whether the future holds peace or war.

World leaders after World War I did not build a peaceful future. Rather than create peace, the 1919 *Treaty of Versailles* (see Unit 4) only produced **hostilities** between the winners and losers. After World War I, the world economy suffered. The Treaty of Versailles and the world **economic depression** were two major causes of World War II.

However, world leaders after World War II had a vision for the future. They were, for the most part, effective leaders. They included President Harry S Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower in the United States, Prime Minister Clement Attlee in Great Britain, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), and President Charles de Gaulle in France. Through the efforts of these leaders and others like them, it was possible for people to rebuild their lives in the years following World War II.

### Postwar Developments

In June of 1945, fifty of the world's nations came together to create the **United Nations** (UN). This **international** organization was intended to help nations prevent future wars, maintain peace around the world, and try to solve world problems. Other UN missions were to help end disease and give aid to nations in times of disaster.

At the end of World War II, the world learned that the Nazis had killed more than six million Jews (see Units 7 and 8). The *Holocaust*, as the mass murders came to be known, shocked the world, as the gruesome details were revealed. Most of the nations around the world felt a tremendous amount of sympathy for the Jewish people. Consequently, most nations in the UN supported the creation of a Jewish homeland called *Israel* in the Middle East. Israel was created as a nation where Jewish people could live and feel safe.

Not all postwar developments were peaceful. The two **superpowers**, the United States and the Soviet Union, began challenging each other in many parts of the world. The **rivalry** or *competition* between the Soviet Union and the United States became known as the **Cold War**. The *Cold War* was a struggle between the two *superpowers* for power and influence in many parts of the world.



*Our World after the Next Atomic Bomb War*

Courtesy of the J. N. "Ding" Darling Foundation

## The United Nations

After World War I, many of the world's nations set up the League of Nations. The Allied leaders intended this worldwide organization to help keep peace and to prevent another major war. World War II is convincing evidence that the League of Nations failed.

Toward the end of World War II, leaders of the Allied powers began to develop another worldwide organization. This



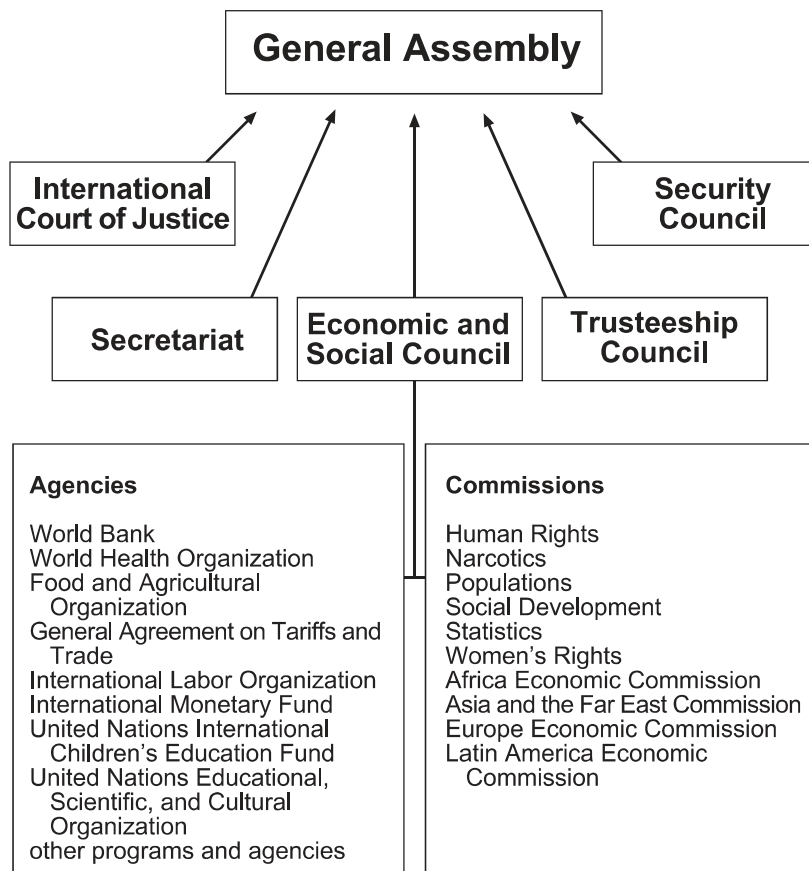
*United Nations emblem*

organization was meant to help keep the peace that many people had died to secure. At a meeting near Washington, D.C., a plan for the United Nations was written. The plan was approved by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin in early 1945. The United Nations was to be an organization of nations working for peace and promoting equal rights and the self-determination of peoples throughout the world. In June 1945, in San Francisco, California, the United Nations Charter was signed, and the United Nations (UN) was born. The UN today is located in New York City.

### The Structure of the UN

The UN has four active major divisions: the **General Assembly**, the **Security Council**, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. The other two inactive divisions are the Trusteeship Council and the Economic and Social Council. All member nations belong to the *General Assembly*, with each nation having one vote. The General Assembly, the policy-making body, approves new members, discusses a broad range of issues, and makes recommendations and agreements. The General Assembly functions like an international town meeting.

The *Security Council*, the peacekeeping division, currently has 15 members. The five permanent members are the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, and China. The other 10 members serve two-year terms. The main purpose of the Security Council is to keep peace in the world. It helps solve diplomatic, political, and military disputes. Each permanent member of the Security Council has **veto** power—the right to cast a vote prohibiting action on issues taken up by the Security Council. Each member can *veto* any Security Council action. This prevents any members of the Council from voting as a **bloc** to override the others. The Security Council is the most powerful branch of the UN.



Another important branch of the UN is the Secretariat. The Secretariat, headed by the Secretary General, runs the day-to-day affairs of the UN. The Secretary General is chosen by the members of the UN. The major job of the Secretary General is to act as a peacemaker in disputes among nations.

### Functions of the UN

Although the UN's major task is to preserve world peace, since 1945 the UN has helped many poor and war-torn countries. For example, the UN's Economic and Social Council has helped feed starving people around the world. It has sent doctors throughout the world to help fight disease. The UN also has sent experts to help the Third World or developing nations improve their industries and agriculture. The International Court of Justice handles international legal disputes. The Trusteeship Council promotes the welfare of people in colonial territories and guides them towards self-rule.

During the postwar period, the UN helped resolve many crises. The first real test of the UN came at the end of the 1940s. Soldiers from the Communist country of North Korea attacked South Korea. The UN sent soldiers to protect South Korea. Most of these soldiers were American. However, soldiers from Greece, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain went to Korea as well. The Korean War ended in 1953 when the UN got both sides to stop fighting. The UN established a border—the 38th parallel of latitude (also known as the *demilitarized zone*)—that both the North Koreans and the South Koreans agreed not to cross.

The UN also has been involved in trying to keep the peace in many Middle East conflicts. The UN, however, is only as effective as its members choose to make it. If a member nation chooses not to cooperate, then the UN cannot work. Nevertheless, the UN provides a place where member nations can debate their views on world problems.

### **Actions Taken by the UN**

The UN has helped to resolve many international problems. Since its creation in 1945, the UN has used its military strength to stop armed **aggression**. It has also used its peacekeeping troops to preserve the peace. Listed below are some actions taken by the UN to help resolve some international problems.

- **1946**  
*Iran* The Security Council pressured the Soviets into removing their troops from Iranian territory.
- **1946**  
*Greece* The Greek government charged that Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria were helping Communist revolutionaries in Northern Greece. A UN commission demanded that Communist nations stop aiding Communist rebels.
- **1947-1948**  
*Palestine* The General Assembly approved the **partition** of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states.
- **1947-1949**  
*Indonesia* The UN arranged a **truce** or *agreement* ending hostilities between Dutch and Indonesian forces, which eventually led to Indonesia's independence.

- **1948**  
*Kashmir*

The UN tried to end hostilities between India and Pakistan over the **province** (or *territory*) of Kashmir. India **defied** (or *went against*) the UN and **annexed** part of Kashmir.
- **1949, 1971**  
*India and Pakistan*

The UN supervised a **cease-fire** (or *stop-fire*) agreement between India and Pakistan in 1949 and again in 1971 when there were renewed hostilities.
- **1950**  
*Korea*

When North Korean Communists invaded South Korea, the Security Council demanded that they withdraw. When the North Koreans ignored this demand, the UN's Security Council provided military aid to South Korea. The North Koreans were eventually forced to withdraw their troops.
- **1956**  
*Hungary*

The UN General Assembly **condemned** the Soviets for **suppressing** (or *putting an end to*) a Hungarian revolt against the Soviet-dominated government of Hungary. The General Assembly demanded a withdrawal of Soviet forces, but Russia defied the UN.
- **1956**  
*Egypt*

The General Assembly condemned the **invasion** of Egypt by British, French, and Israeli troops. It demanded a *cease-fire* or truce and withdrawal of invading forces. The invaders withdrew and the UN sent peacekeeping forces to the area.
- **1960-1961, 1999-to the present**  
*Congo*

1960-1961—The UN sent a *UN Emergency Force* (UNEF) to the Congo to restore order and prevent bloodshed when a civil war broke out between Communist and anti-Communist factions.

1999-2000—The Democratic Republic of the Congo and five regional states signed a cease-fire agreement, and the UN Security Council set up to expand the mission's orders in 2000.

- **1964, 1974**  
*Cyprus*

1964—The UN sent a peacekeeping force after a civil war broke out between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot people.

1974—The UN demanded a cease-fire when Greek Cypriot forces attempted to unite Cyprus with Greece by overthrowing the government. Turkish and Greek Cypriot forces eventually *ceased* or stopped fighting.
- **1965-1979**  
*Rhodesia-Zimbabwe*

UN **sanctions** (or *penalties*) were used to help Great Britain regain control of Rhodesia when the white-minority government refused to share power with the black majority. In 1980 Rhodesia became the independent country of Zimbabwe.
- **1966-1994**  
*South Africa*

The UN used *sanctions* and **banned** (or *prohibited*) arms sales to South Africa to force South Africa to end **apartheid**, a **racist** policy that allowed the white minority to discriminate against the black majority.

The UN refused to allow South Africa to occupy a seat in the UN's General Assembly until it ended *apartheid* in the 1990s and held all race-free elections in 1994.

The UN also helped Namibia gain independence from South Africa and supervised a cease-fire. They supervised the first elections in this new nation.
- **1967, 1973**  
*The Arab-Israeli Wars*

The UN security council ordered a cease-fire and urged **negotiations** between Israel and its Arab neighbors in both wars. Both times the UN demanded withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories, a **resolution** of the Palestinian **refugee** problem, and a guarantee of freedom to travel on all waterways. The Security Council also approved the creation of a UNEF force of several thousand troops in the region. In 1974 the General Assembly approved a *resolution* that supported the right of the Palestinian people to have independence.



- **1978, to the present**  
*Israel's invasions of Lebanon*

Tensions between Israel and Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) **terrorists** led Israel to twice invade southern Lebanon. Israel was condemned for the invasions. An immediate withdrawal and a cease-fire was ordered. Peacekeeping forces were sent to southern Lebanon to restore international peace and security and to assist the government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area.
- **1991, to the present**  
*Iraq and Kuwait*

Following the forced withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the UN monitored the Iraq-Kuwait border to discourage border violations and report any hostile action.
- **1992-2000**  
*East Timor*

After East Timor's independence from Indonesia in 2002, the UN helped administer the territory and exercised both legislative and executive authority during its transition to statehood.
- **1995, to the present**  
*Bosnia and Herzegovina*

The UN performed a wide range of functions related to law enforcement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Security Council also coordinated other UN activities in the country relating to human rights, elections, and economic recovery.
- **1999, to the present**  
*Kosovo*

The UN Security Council set up a mission to help the people of Kosovo to rebuild their lives and heal the wounds of conflict. This was the UN's most far-reaching mission ever, designed to turn war-torn Kosovo into a functioning, democratic society. Among the key tasks were to help Kosovo establish self-government, promote human rights, maintain civil law and order, conduct elections, and begin economic recovery.
- **1999, 2000, to the present**  
*Sierra Leone*


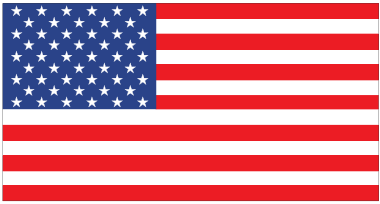
The Security Council established a mission to assist in the Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999. The Security Council expanded the mission in 2000.
- **2000, to the present**  
*Ethiopia and Eritrea*

Ethiopia and Eritrea signed an agreement to stop hostilities, and the UN Security Council sent a mission to maintain cooperation between the countries.

## The Cold War

At the end of World War II, the United States and Soviet Union were the two most powerful countries in the world. Their wartime **alliance**, however, had ended. Conflicting **ideologies** and distrust divided the former **allies** and soon led to increased tensions between the two countries. These two countries, or *superpowers*, began a struggle to influence other countries around the world. The Soviet Union wanted to spread **communism** and also create a defensive **buffer zone** of friendly governments between itself and Germany. Germany had invaded Russia during both World War I and World War II. The United States wanted other countries to have free elections and to develop democratic governments. In this conflict, the two nations did not use military force against one another. Instead, this was a war of *ideas*. The state of tension and hostility that existed between the United States and the Soviet Union was called the *Cold War*.

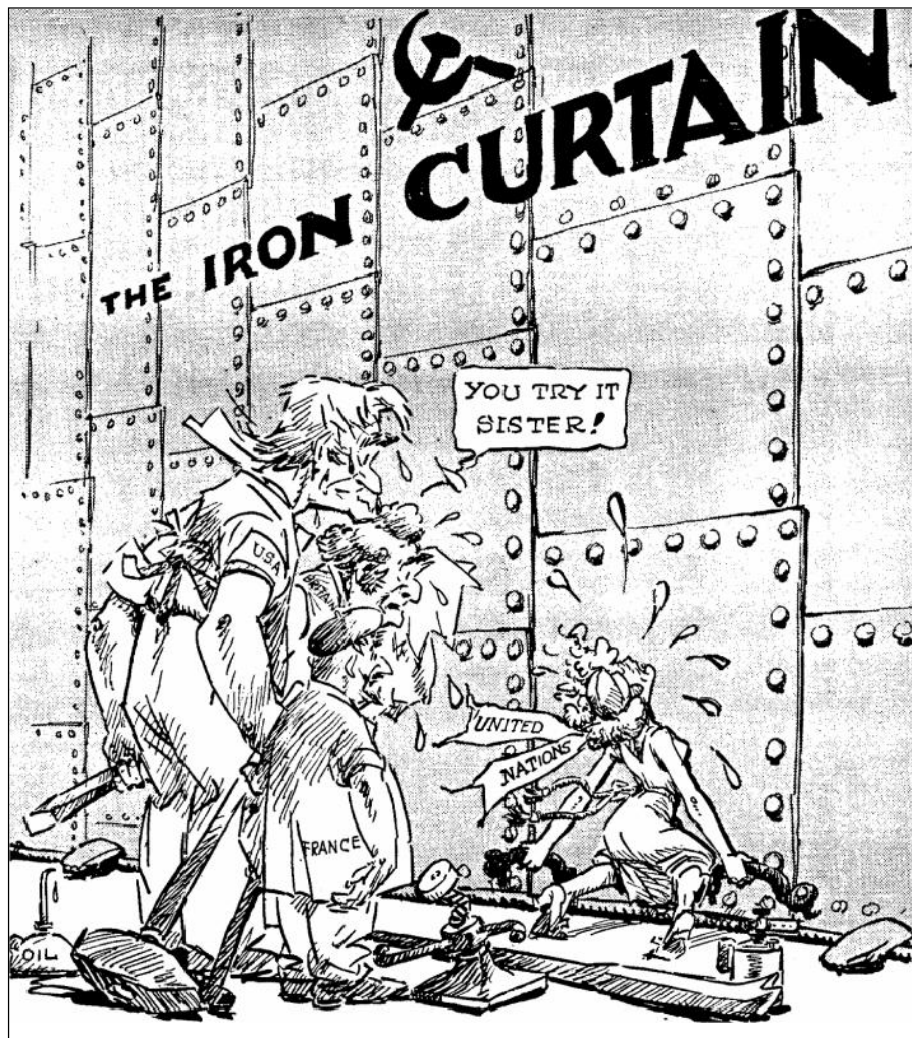
### The Cold War

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<p>The Soviet Union wanted to spread communism.</p>		<p>The United States wanted other countries to develop democratic governments.</p>

## The Iron Curtain Goes Up

In March of 1946, Winston Churchill described the political barrier between Eastern and Western Europe: “An *iron curtain* has descended across the continents.” The Soviet Union controlled almost every nation to the east of the **Iron Curtain**, which was an imaginary line separating Communist and non-Communist countries that could never be crossed. This included most of Eastern Europe and part of Germany. Churchill also warned that the Soviets would try to push their Iron Curtain farther west. Churchill felt that unless they were stopped, the Soviets would try to take over Western Europe and Southern Europe (mainly Greece and Turkey), as well. Churchill’s belief was correct. Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, however, took action that prevented the Soviets from taking Greece and

Turkey. Both presidents told the Soviets that the United States would take military action if the Soviet Union tried to expand into Southern Europe. The policy of *halting* or *stopping* the spread of Communist influence was known as **containment**.



*The conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union developed gradually. Each side tried to win over other countries to their way of government. Both the United States and the Soviet Union built many nuclear weapons, which they pointed at each other. The Cold War lasted from the end of World War II until 1989, when Soviet Communism ended and the Berlin Wall was torn down.*

Courtesy of the J. N. "Ding" Darling Foundation

## The Truman Doctrine of 1947

In 1947 the Soviet Union put pressure on Greece and Turkey. Greece was under attack from Soviet-backed Communist rebels. Turkey was being forced to grant control of the Dardanelles, which is the body of water connecting the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

President Truman wanted to prevent the spread of Communist influence in the eastern Mediterranean. On March 12, 1947, he announced that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples against direct and indirect Communist *aggression*. This policy became known as the **Truman Doctrine**. The United States sent military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey so that they could resist the Communist threat. The *Truman Doctrine* worked well because it helped *contain* communism. The doctrine helped to limit communism to areas already under Soviet control.



## The Marshall Plan (1948-1951)

Secretary of State George C. Marshall created a massive economic assistance plan to help all European nations recover from the destruction of World War II. Marshall believed that economic aid to war-torn Europe would strengthen democratic governments and help countries rebuild their economies. Billions of dollars spent on the rapid recovery of European nations helped to reduce the risk of Communist influence. The **Marshall Plan** aided most of the non-Communist nations of Europe. President Truman also offered aid to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but Stalin *prohibited* Eastern European nations from accepting American aid. He promised that the Soviet Union would give them economic assistance.

## Military Alliances

**The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of 1949.** Increased tensions between the superpowers and several Soviet acts of aggression led the free nations of Europe to form a defensive military alliance called the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** in April 1949. The United States, Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Canada were the original members. In 1952 Turkey and Greece joined, and in 1955 West Germany joined. Members of the NATO alliance agreed to help one another in the event that any one of them was attacked. An attack on one would be considered an attack on all. In 1950 the member nations created a NATO army. Throughout the Cold War, NATO successfully stopped the Soviets from taking any acts of aggression in Western Europe. During the 1980s, the United States stationed more than 300,000 military personnel in Europe and supplied vast quantities of weapons to support NATO.

**Warsaw Pact of 1955.** In response to the creation of NATO, the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies formed its own military alliance known as the **Warsaw Pact**. Member nations included the Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. Its main purpose was to strengthen the Soviet Union's hold over Eastern European countries and to defend them. As a result of these alliances, Europe was again divided into hostile alliance systems as it was before World War I. In 1956 Soviet troops stationed in Hungary were used to suppress a rebellion there. In 1968, the Soviets used the treaty to justify invading Czechoslovakia when its government introduced liberal reforms.

Both the *Warsaw Pact* and the NATO alliance reached a major turning point in 1991. The system of alliances in opposition—with NATO in Western Europe opposing Warsaw Pact members in the East—was abandoned. With the end of the Cold War, NATO members decided to cut the overall size of their militaries and retain a much smaller military force. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved in March 1991 by mutual consent of the Soviet Union and the five Eastern European member nations.

### The Arms Race

Both superpowers competed to strengthen their weapons systems. For a while, the United States had the advantage because it had the technology for producing the *atomic bomb*. By 1949 the Soviets had also developed their own atomic bomb. The **arms race** began as each side raced to arm itself to withstand an attack from the other. Over the course of four decades, the superpowers spent billions of dollars developing deadly nuclear weapons capable of mass destruction.



*The arms race began as the United States and the Soviets raced to arm themselves to withstand an attack from the other.*

### The First Crisis between the Superpowers: The Berlin Airlift

In Germany, the Soviet Union tried to cut off West Berlin from the rest of West Germany. The Soviets blocked all roads to Berlin so its people could not receive food or other supplies. President Truman responded by ordering the army to fly supplies to the people of West Berlin. In the end, the Soviets backed down and reopened the roads. The Berlin Blockade and the resulting 1948 **Berlin Airlift** was the first major crisis between the Soviet Union and the United States since the end of World War II. It marked the beginning of the *Cold War*: a state of tension and hostility between the superpowers.

### The Superpowers Use Propaganda in the Cold War

The Cold War was a war of **propaganda**. *Propaganda* is the spreading of ideas intended to influence people's beliefs or attitudes to promote a given cause or damage an opposing cause. Both sides in the Cold War tried to look good to other parts of the world. The United States promoted **capitalism** and **democracy** against *communism* and **totalitarianism**. The

Soviet Union claimed to support the rights of the weak in the struggle against Western **imperialism**. Both sides sought world power. Later, the United States and the Soviet Union took sides in wars involving the people of Asia and of Africa. Soviet and American soldiers did not actually shoot at each other. Instead, the two sides gave weapons to the local people. Since the end of World War II, Soviet and American weapons have been used by the soldiers of Vietnam, Central America, the Middle East, and Afghanistan. At times, United States or Soviet soldiers have fought directly in foreign countries. American soldiers fought in Vietnam and Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan.

### The Cold War Stays Hot through the '60s, '70s, and '80s

Even though relations between the Soviet Union and the United States eventually improved, the Cold War continued until the early 1990s. Rivalries between the superpowers not only divided Europe but also spread around the world. During the late 1960s and 1970s, conflicts in Southeast Asia, Afghanistan, and Poland kept the Cold War alive. In the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan let the Soviet government know that the United States would defend communism and not sit back and watch as Soviets tried to spread communism around the world. One of the most important duties of every American president is to ensure that the United States military can preserve, protect, and defend the United States. The Soviet Union built up a powerful navy and placed warships in major oceans of the world. The United States, in response, began a major military buildup and would continue to build its defenses as long as the Soviets refused to talk peace.

### The Cold War Begins to Cool Down

In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev became the new Soviet leader. He began to restructure the Soviet government. He also began to reduce Cold War tensions. In 1987 Gorbachev and Reagan signed the *Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty* calling for a reduction of American and Soviet long-range nuclear missiles.

Gorbachev took other steps to improve relations with the *Free World*. In 1988 he reduced the Soviet military and pulled Soviet troops out of Afghanistan. In addition, Gorbachev did *not* use Soviet troops to prevent the overthrow of Communist governments in the Warsaw Pact countries during 1989.



Mikhail Gorbachev

In 1989 George H. W. Bush became president of the United States. In response to Gorbachev's actions, Bush began to cut the size of the American military. The two leaders also met to work on new arms control agreements.



President George  
H. W. Bush

In the early 1990s, the Soviet Union began to crumble because of food shortages and its inefficient systems for producing and distributing consumer goods. Dissent threatened Soviet unity and eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and of communism in Eastern Europe. In 1991 hard-line Communists staged an unsuccessful coup against Gorbachev.

One by one the 15 member republics of the former Soviet Union broke away and declared their independence. After 11 of the former Soviet republics created the *Commonwealth of Independent States* (CIS) in December of 1991, President Gorbachev resigned, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist. These startling changes in the Soviet Union signaled the end of the 45-year Cold War.

## European Unity

After World War II, the countries of Western Europe realized that to promote free trade within Europe, they would have to cooperate with each other. As a result, in 1957 six Western European countries—Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany—set up the *European Economic Community* (EEC) or *Common Market*. The purpose of the Common Market was to help member nations improve their economies through trade. They agreed to remove all trade barriers to the movement of goods, services, and money among member nations.

The Common Market benefited member nations by reducing the threat of conflict and by helping them to pursue cooperative technological programs in nuclear energy and space research. The Common Market enabled Europe to compete with North America and Asia in world markets on an equal basis.

Great Britain twice applied for Common Market membership but this was vetoed by France under President de Gaulle in the 1960s. France saw Great Britain as a threat to its leadership role in Europe. After de Gaulle's retirement, Great Britain was admitted in 1973. Five other European nations joined during the 1970s and 1980s: Ireland, Denmark, Greece, Spain, and Portugal. By 1986 there were 12 member nations of the



*European Community* (EC). When East and West Germany were reunited in 1990, EC further expanded its economic influence. In the 1980s and 1990s, EC countries wanted to further promote economic ties with each other. The *Treaty of European Union*, also known as the *Maastricht Treaty*, was a means by which to create a true economic and monetary union of all EC members. On January 1, 1994, the European Community became the *European Union* (EU). The EU wanted a common currency and to extend cooperation among its members in such areas as defense policy, immigration, and crime. By 1995 Austria, Sweden, and Finland joined the EU, increasing membership to 15. Plans to include some former Communist countries of Eastern Europe were underway.

In 1999 the EU created an *Economic and Monetary Union* (EMU). Its main goal was to create a common currency known as the *euro* and a central bank for all EU nations. On January 1, 1999, the EMU introduced the euro as the common currency for all the member countries. Twelve of the 15 EU nations adopted the euro as their nation's currency on January 1, 2002. In 2004 the EU expanded southward and eastward to include (the Greek part of) Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. By 2020 the national currencies of participating member states will cease to exist.

## **Expansion and Constitution**

In February of 2002, representatives of EU member nations met in Brussels to present the draft of a new constitution for the EU. The document consolidated many of the existing EU treaties. It also included a bill of rights, a single foreign minister, and majority voting in many policy areas such as energy, agriculture, immigration, and criminal law to deal with terrorism, corruption, and fraud. In 2005, despite support for the constitution by their government leaders, voters in both France and the Netherlands soundly defeated the constitution.

Many opponents to the EU constitution voted “no” because they feared a loss of national identity and sovereignty. Others worried that competition between EU nations would result in job migration to eastern Europe. Since approval of the EU constitution requires a unanimous vote, many believe it is unlikely that the constitution will be approved any time soon.

## Political Changes in Western Europe

Following World War II, the Allied nations faced many difficult questions. What, for example, should be done with Germany? Germany was now a country with no government and had been destroyed by the war. What about Austria, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, countries that had been taken over by Germany during the war? Even France faced a difficult rebuilding period. Its government had been forced out when Germany occupied France. Like so many countries in Europe, France had also lost most of its industry during the fighting. Who would decide the answers to these questions? How would war-torn European nations begin to rebuild?

### France: The Fourth and Fifth Republics

After the war, Charles de Gaulle became the leading political figure in France. He helped set up a democratic government known as the *Fourth French Republic* on December 24, 1946. The Fourth French Republic, however, was never stable. The National Assembly was strengthened, while the presidency was weakened. Different political parties wanted power. No single political party or leader could gather enough strength to rule France for more than a few months.

**Coalitions** (or *temporary alliances of several parties*) were formed. When these parties disagreed, a new government had to be formed. The Fourth French Republic lasted from 1946 to 1958. The threat of civil war in the French African **colony** of Algeria led to the downfall of France's weak Fourth Republic. In 1958, Charles de Gaulle helped to set up the *Fifth French Republic*. Under the Fifth French Republic, the French people elected a president for a term of seven years. The presidency was strengthened, and the National Assembly's powers were reduced. De Gaulle became the first president of the Fifth Republic on December 21, 1958.



France

A major problem facing postwar France was the breakup of its colonial empire. France's Asian and African colonies wanted their independence. For many years, the French Empire had included territory in Southeast Asia and North Africa. France resisted the independence movements in many of its colonies. It fought and lost bloody wars in North Africa and Indochina. In the end, however, these countries won their independence from France. In 1954 France lost its hold on Indochina. Indochina eventually was split into Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

In North Africa, France controlled Morocco and Tunisia. These countries gained their independence in 1956. French West Africa was partitioned, and the new nations were given independence in 1960. France was less willing to give up its hold on Algeria. Algerian Nationalists won a seven-year-long war with France in 1962, and Algeria became an independent nation. After the loss of France's colonial empire, de Gaulle worked to expand France's cultural and economic influence throughout Europe. He angered other European countries and the United States when he withdrew French troops from NATO in 1967.

In 1968 de Gaulle's government was weakened when French students rioted in Paris. A **strike** in protest against economic and social problems. De Gaulle resigned in 1969 when his plans to *reform* the economy were defeated by a popular vote. Throughout the 1970s, right-wing pro-business parties dominated French politics. However, at the same time, opposition parties grew in strength and number. The worsening conditions in France's economy led to a shift to the left. In 1981 the French people elected a Socialist president, François Mitterrand. Mitterrand began to **nationalize** more industries—that is, to put industries under government control—and to introduce new social reforms. He froze prices and wages in order to reduce the large budget deficit and high **inflation**. Minimum wages were increased, and higher taxes were placed on the rich.

The Socialists' policies during Mitterrand's first two years created even more economic problems for France. Support for Socialist policies began to decline. Eventually, the government returned some control of the economy to private business. France's economy continued to decline. The unemployment rate in 1993 was greater than 10 percent. In elections held that year, Socialists won only 28 percent of the vote. The Conservative coalition continued to gain support. In 1995, Jacques Chirac, a Conservative, won the presidency. His government worked to reduce France's high unemployment rate and improve the French economy.

Elections for the National Assembly in 1997 gave the Socialist coalition a majority. France caused widespread international protests when it resumed nuclear testing in the South Pacific. In January 1999, France adopted the *euro* as its currency.

## France

In 2002, Jacques Chirac won reelection by a landslide. He declared that his top priority for his country was to reduce its 10 percent unemployment rate and France's chronic youth unemployment rate of 22 percent, which is more than twice the national average. In 2003, Chirac was a leading voice against the United States-led invasion of Iraq. He threatened to veto a resolution in the UN Security Council that would authorize the use of military force to rid Iraq of its alleged weapons of mass destruction. "Iraq today does not represent an immediate threat that justifies an immediate war," claimed Chirac. (See Unit 11.)

Chirac did not run again in 2007. His authority was weakened by the "no" vote of the EU constitution. It was also weakened by the protests in Paris against the new employment laws and the violent suburban riots involving thousands of North African **immigrants** who complained of widespread discrimination and unemployment.

## Italy Declares Itself a Republic

After Benito Mussolini fell from power, he was arrested and shot, then hung as a war criminal on April 28, 1945. In June 1946, Italy rejected its **monarchy** and set up a parliamentary government and declared itself a **republic**. Unlike France, where the president has the most power, in Italy the prime minister (the leader of the most popular political party) runs the government. Although many different political parties existed, two stood out: the moderate conservative *Christian Democrats* and the *Communists*. In the

1960s, Italy became a major industrial power. In the 1970s, however, Italy suffered from high unemployment and *inflation*. Voters began to blame the ruling Christian Democrats. They had been in office since the 1960s.



Italy