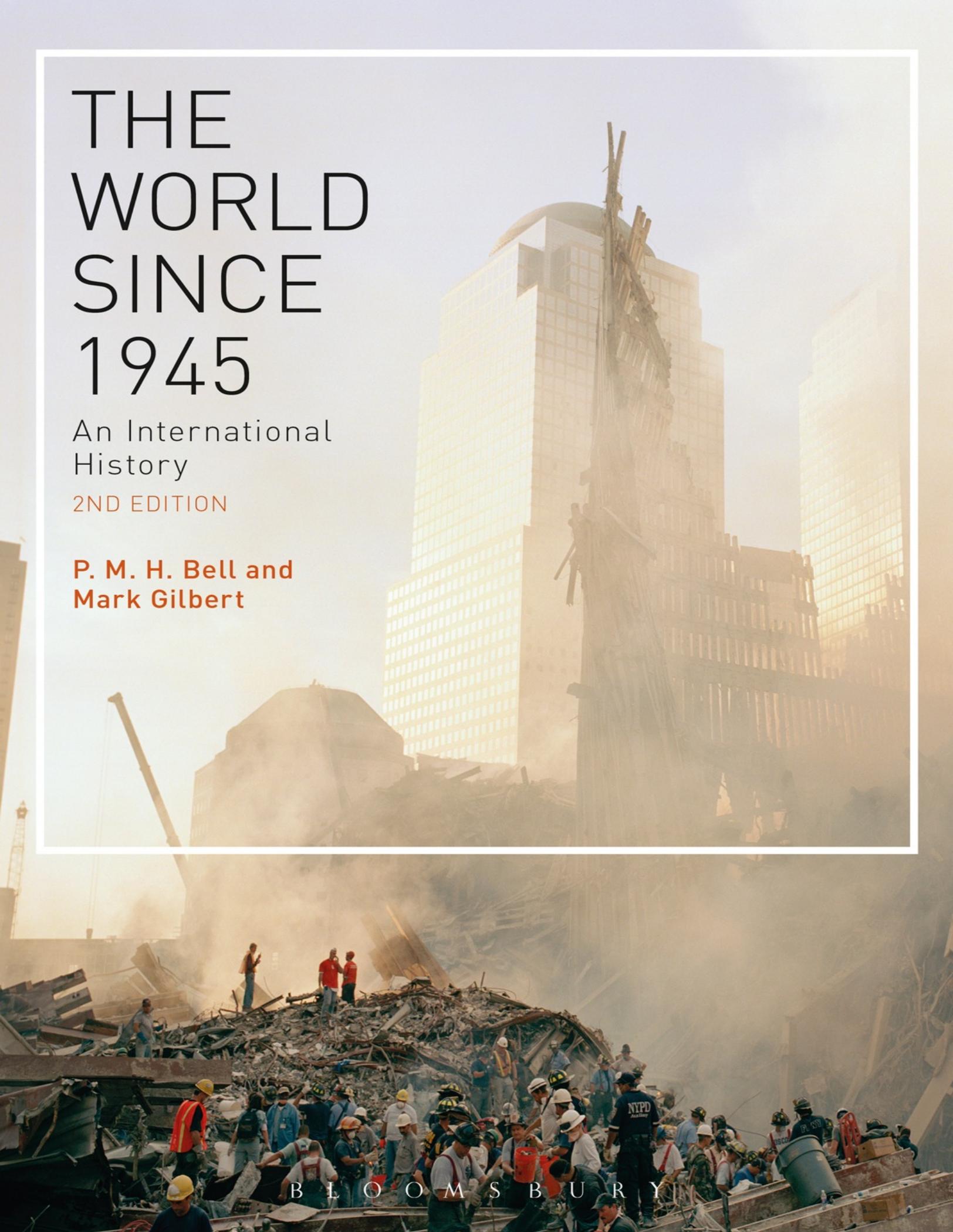


THE WORLD SINCE 1945

An International
History

2ND EDITION

**P. M. H. Bell and
Mark Gilbert**



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PMHB
MFG
21 August 2016

Introduction

This book presents a compact account and analysis of international affairs between 1945 and 2016 – from the end of the Second World War to the travails of the new millennium. It deals with international history in all its various aspects – relations between governments, the creation of new states through decolonization, the influence of international organizations, the impact of war and economic forces. The significance of such topics and the fascination there is for them need little emphasis. The world was split by the Cold War, and at the same time transformed by the emergence of new states in Asia and Africa. Since the 1990s, global politics has been affected by the accelerating shifts in population and economic activity away from the developed world and towards the giant societies of what were once called the ‘Third World’ – the rapidly developing countries of Asia, Latin America and, increasingly, Africa. In three decades of rapid economic growth, China has become a power second only to the United States.

Everyone who has lived through these changes has been affected by them, and succeeding generations will also feel their effects. To understand them helps us to make sense of the world in which we live.

The goal of this volume, in fact, is to present a broad overview of the changes that have occurred in the international system of states in the last seventy years. Of course, to deal with so vast a subject in a single volume (even a rather long one) requires a good deal of simplification, with its consequent dangers. Anyone familiar with the detail and depth of historical research knows that simplification can distort a complicated reality. Yet simplification also has its advantages in opening up any subject. Winston Churchill sometimes urged his military advisers not to start by expounding all the difficulties involved in a proposed operation – the difficulties, he said, would speedily argue for themselves. Similarly, in any general history, it is a good plan to start by simplifying, and we can be sure that the complexities will argue for themselves. To start with the complexities may well mean getting lost straight away! In this book, therefore,

complicated matters are dealt with as straightforwardly as possible. Readers will find ample means to pursue them further, starting with the suggestions for further reading at the end of the book.

The structure of the book may need a few words of explanation. After a prologue on the Second World War, which sets the scene for much of what follows, the main body of the work is divided into six sections, which are both thematic and chronological in organization. [Part One](#) deals with the Cold War, from its origins to the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. [Part Two](#) deals with international relations as they affected the rest of the world in approximately the same period (although the chapter on Latin America concludes with the 1973 coup in Chile). This section, obviously, is much concerned with European decolonization from Asia and Africa and its significance for global affairs. [Part Three](#) is again concerned with the Cold War, but this time we concentrate on the phenomenon of détente and discuss, chronologically, the years from 1963 to the end of the Carter presidency in the autumn of 1980. [Part Four](#) is once again a global survey: it contains chapters on key developments in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and two chapters (on the Arab–Israeli question and the ‘geopolitics of oil’) that have the Middle East as their primary subject matter. [Part Five](#) deals with the high politics of the end of the Cold War. [Part Six](#) strives, in four thematic chapters, to give an impression of key developments in international affairs since the end of the Cold War. A chapter on ‘global issues’ (demographics, economic development, migration, global warming, international trade) is followed by a chapter on the revival of nationalism in post-Cold War Eurasia. The next chapter, ‘The wounded hegemon’, deals with the role of the United States in world politics since the end of the Cold War. The final chapter in this section looks at democracy and human rights in the world since the 1990s.

At the end of each section we have paused for a ‘reflection’ – a short essay on some aspect of the section in question. At times, these ‘reflections’ act as conclusions, drawing together the threads present in the substantive chapters preceding them; at other times, they introduce new material in order to make a general point.

Organizing the book in this way necessarily led to some overlap, but we have striven to keep this to a minimum, and, in any case, each part may be read separately if need be.

Two things perhaps need to be said about the book’s treatment of its subject matter. First, the book is in many ways traditionalist in its approach towards

international affairs. It deals primarily with wars, treaties, international organizations, power politics, arms races, states and the actions of statesmen (and a handful of stateswomen). Nor does it apologize for this. To paraphrase one of Isaiah Berlin's favourite remarks, the world is what it is, not something else. Second, and despite the fact that both authors are scholars of the international history of modern Europe, the book is genuinely global in scope and, to this extent, is anything but traditional. Precisely *because* the book deals with the traditional questions of international history, its focus is not 'Eurocentric' or even 'Atlantocentric'. The Cold War was a global conflict, and most of the post-war world's distinctive events – its great wars, but also its most important ideological and political shifts – took place in Asia, in Africa and in the Middle East. We have tried to capture what these events meant for the societies affected by them and to analyse their broader significance for international politics. We may not have succeeded, but the attempt was sincerely made.

The great Polish-British historian Lewis Namier urged the general historian – and here we return to the theme of simplification – to 'discover and set forth, to single out and stress that which is the nature of the thing, and not to reproduce indiscriminately all that meets the eye'.¹ We think that the international politics of the last seventy years has been characterized by the Cold War and by the shift in the global power from the North and West of the world to the East and South. These developments are the 'nature of the thing'. We do not pretend that this represents an insight of any great originality, but it is one that has the advantage of being true. General histories are crafted upon (or perhaps around) such truths.

Reference notes are used mainly to acknowledge the sources for quotations and statistics; every now and then we have made a bibliographical recommendation in an endnote. We have all but abstained from citing our own previous works, which makes this book very traditional indeed.

P. M. H. BELL
MARK GILBERT
Kew and Trento, August 2016

Note

- ¹ Lewis Namier, 'History and Political Culture', in *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*, ed. Fritz Stern (London, 1970), p. 379.

PROLOGUE

A New Era in International Politics



PHOTO 1 *A symbolic moment: American and Soviet Soldiers meet on the River Elbe, 27 April 1945. There is already a crack between them – to become the great rift of the Cold War (Getty Images. Credit: Allan Jackson).*

1

The Second World War and its consequences

The Second World War in Europe and the Pacific – The politics of the Grand Alliance – The Yalta Conference – Europe in ruins – The war and the Western European empires – Long-term consequences of the war.

The Second World War cast a long shadow, and what was for a long time called ‘the post-war world’ can still only be understood in the context of the Second World War and its consequences.

The war in Europe

The war in Europe opened with a series of overwhelming German victories. First, in September and October 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union together crushed the Polish Army and partitioned Poland between them. Then, from April to June 1940, the Germans invaded Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries and France and drove the British Expeditionary Force back across the Channel, establishing a predominance over Western Europe which was to last for a further four years. On 22 June 1941 – one of the most fateful dates in modern history – Germany invaded the Soviet Union and in sweeping victories came to within 20 miles of Moscow before their advance was checked. For a time, the existing European state system was completely demolished, and it seemed unlikely that it could ever be put together again.

In the wake of these victories, Nazi Germany embarked on ‘the final solution of the Jewish problem’; that is to say the annihilation of the Jewish population of

German-occupied Europe.¹ This massacre of European Jews, and the appalling horror of the camps into which they were concentrated, gave a new and desperate resolve to the Zionist movement in its mission to establish a Jewish state in Palestine; it also produced an immense wave of sympathy for this cause among Western governments and public opinion. In this way, the Holocaust of Jewish lives and the revulsion against it created the final impulse to set up the state of Israel in 1948, from which there arose the long and bitter conflict between Israel and the Arabs which persists to this day.

The tide of German victories, which had swept all before it in 1939–42, began to ebb at the end of 1942. On the Eastern front, the Soviet triumph at Stalingrad (from August 1942 to February 1943) was a psychological as well as military victory. The Battle of El Alamein in October 1942 was another decisive turning point, marking the end of the German drive towards Cairo. Behind the scenes, the battle of industrial production shifted conclusively in favour of the Allies. For example, in 1942, the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union together produced over 100,000 aircraft against Germany's 15,000 – a prodigious disproportion which desperate German efforts could not reverse.² It is true that even the possession of overwhelming material strength does not in itself guarantee victory, as the Americans were to find out in the Vietnam War in the 1970s; but in the Second World War, the weight of industrial production *applied with ruthless determination* proved decisive.

In the final stages of the war, between 1943 and 1945, the Soviets pursued their westward drive with relentless perseverance, occupying large areas of Central and Eastern Europe, including the great capital cities of Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Warsaw and Berlin. Through these tremendous victories the Soviet Union secured a military grip on half of Europe; and every bit as important enjoyed an unrivalled prestige which extended beyond the Soviet armies to the regime that had created them. It was after all the Red Army which fought all the way to Berlin, and it was the Red Flag which was hoisted over the Reichstag building. Victory conferred a powerful aura upon the Soviet system and upon Joseph Stalin as its leader.

At the same time, the British and Americans closed in upon Germany from the south and west, fighting their way up Italy and winning the decisive Battle of Normandy in June–July 1944. They advanced into Germany, to within 50 miles from Berlin, and met Soviet troops at Torgau on the River Elbe on 25 April 1945, shaking hands in genuine greeting as well as for the benefit of newsreel cameramen and press photographers.

At that point, the Soviet Union and the United States had emerged as the principal victors of the war in Europe. It is true that Britain also shared the glory of victory, having fought the whole war from first to last: until the summer of 1944 the British and Commonwealth armies had more troops in action in Europe than the Americans. But after that the balance of power shifted decisively towards the Americans; and in any case the economic and industrial strength of the United States had long been predominant.

The victorious Allied armies met in the middle of a ruined continent. Parts of the Soviet Union and Poland had been fought over no less than four times, as the conflict swung to and fro. German cities had been laid waste by aerial bombardment as well as by land campaigns. Casualties among all countries were enormous. In Germany, war-related deaths were estimated at about 6,500,000, with another 370,000 to be added for Austria, which was part of Germany during the war. For the Soviet Union, a frequently cited figure for war dead was about 20 million, but other (and more reliable) estimates were as high as 25 or even 27 million. Polish war dead amounted to the formidable total of some 6 million, of whom only about one-tenth were killed in action. French losses were about 600,000 and British 350,000.³

The survivors of this appalling conflict held on as best they could among the wreckage of the continent. Industrial production was small, and in some cases non-existent. Agriculture could not feed the people, and food rations, even when they existed, were disastrously low. Most notoriously, the German-occupied Netherlands were in a state of famine in the last winter of the war. The situation was made disastrously worse by immense movements of people. Somewhere between 10 and 12 million Germans fled or were driven from lands where they or their families had sometimes lived for generations. To the east of the new Polish border, along the Oder–Neisse Line and in the reconstituted Czechoslovakia, only small German-speaking populations remained.⁴

It was across this devastated and chaotic continent that the two great victorious powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, met in April 1945. Both these states were partly but not fully European in their history and culture, but they would now dominate European affairs. It remained to be seen what they would make of the extraordinary state of affairs.

The war in the Pacific and East Asia

On the other side of the world, the war in the Pacific Ocean and East Asia

followed a pattern similar to that in Europe. The conflict began with a phase of Japanese victories and conquest. Between 1937 and 1939 the Japanese occupied north-east China, together with the main ports in the rest of the country, though without actually finishing off the Chinese government and its armies. In 1939–41 Japan occupied French Indo-China, without having to fire a shot. Then in December 1941 and early 1942 they struck a series of devastating blows. They almost destroyed the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. They captured Singapore from the British in February 1942, and conquered the Dutch East Indies in March and April. They drove the British out of Burma and the Americans out of the Philippines. The psychological effects of these victories were even more far-reaching than the material. The European and American control over South-East Asia had long depended on prestige and reputation. When the Japanese destroyed prestige, it could not be fully restored. The Japanese slogan was ‘Asia for the Asians’. It was true that in practice some Asians were more equal than others, but in the long run this mattered little, and the Japanese successes had effects which could not be undone.

The Japanese strategic aim was to secure a defensive perimeter far from their home islands, in the firm belief that their enemies would be unable to recover their lost territories. Not least, the Japanese were convinced that the Americans would not accept the heavy casualties which would be involved in a long war. In the event these assumptions proved ill-founded. The Americans had an immense advantage, in that their war production far outstripped that of Japan. As early as 1942 the Americans manufactured nearly 48,000 aircraft and 1,854 major warships, as against 9,000 aircraft and 68 warships for Japan. In 1944, American production was over 96,000 aircraft and 2,247 warships, against 28,000 planes and 248 warships by Japan.⁵ It was of course true that the Americans were facing two major opponents (Germany as well as Japan), but their margin of superiority was amply sufficient to fight two wars.

With these immense resources at their disposal, the Americans carried out two vast offensive operations: one northward from Australia to the Philippines; and the other westward across the Pacific towards the Japanese home islands. In this latter offensive, the Americans fought some of the fiercest battles of the war: Iwo Jima (from February to March 1945) and Okinawa (from April to June 1945). The capture of Okinawa alone (an island only 60 miles long) took eighty-two days and cost 12,500 lives. The Japanese for their part committed 77,000 troops, of whom only 7,400 survived.⁶ These figures made the prospect of an invasion of Japan a formidable proposition.

In this way, the Japanese victories of 1941–2 destroyed the authority of the colonial powers in South-East Asia, and then the American victories of 1943–5 established American predominance in the whole of the Pacific Ocean. A whole new pattern of power in the Pacific took shape.

The politics of the Grand Alliance

The ‘Grand Alliance’ was Churchill’s name for the coalition between Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union which fought and won the war against Germany, Italy and Japan. It was an uneasy and difficult alliance, but it worked well enough to achieve its major objective, which was victory; and also to establish a framework for the post-war world. The ‘Big Three’ – Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill – set the stage for international relations, and require our attention.

President Roosevelt represented a puzzling mixture of idealism and ruthless power politics. He revived a cause professed by Woodrow Wilson in the First World War, and proposed a new international organization (the United Nations). Like Wilson, he was a staunch advocate of the right of peoples to choose their own government. But at the same time he set out to buy the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan by paying Stalin in the hard coin of territorial gains, without reference to the wishes of the peoples concerned. The mixture could perhaps not have stood up to open scrutiny by the press or Congress, but in the secrecy of wartime it achieved the president’s aims.

Stalin too had different aspects to his policies. He worked primarily in terms of territory. In December 1941, when the German armies were within a few miles of Moscow, Stalin calmly presented Anthony Eden, the British foreign secretary, with a list of Soviet territorial requirements in Eastern Europe when the war was over. These amounted to nothing less than the Soviet frontiers of June 1941, including the Soviet annexations of the Baltic states and a large part of pre-war Poland. Later in the war, at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Stalin explicitly stated that he intended to recover territory lost by Tsarist Russia in the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905; and with the assistance of Roosevelt, that is what he achieved. In Stalin’s conduct of diplomacy, these territorial ambitions went alongside ideological aims, each reinforcing the other. In April 1945 Stalin explained to Milovan Djilas, a Yugoslav communist leader: ‘This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army has power to

do so. It cannot be otherwise.’⁷ This remark had the virtues of simplicity and accuracy, as was demonstrated at the end of the war, when the communist system – political, social and economic – followed in the baggage-train of the Red Army.

Churchill, the British prime minister, was in some respects very much a man of the Victorian era, an old-fashioned imperialist who had served as a regular soldier in India and fought at the Battle of Omdurman in the Sudan. He made no secret of his views, declaring in a public speech in 1942: ‘I have not become the King’s First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.’⁸ These sentiments were completely opposed to those of Roosevelt, who was firmly anti-imperialist – though his anti-imperialism was selective and did not apply, for example, to the American spheres of influence in the Caribbean and Central America. Stalin, for his part, was not perturbed by Churchill’s imperialism and found no difficulty in reaching an agreement with the prime minister on spheres of influence in the Balkans – the so-called ‘percentages agreement’ concluded in Moscow in October 1944. The two hard-headed realists understood one another well enough, even though one was a conservative and the other a communist.

After the war, and in the perspectives created by the Cold War, it was natural for politicians and historians to see the politics of the Grand Alliance as a two-sided affair, with the Americans and the British lined together against the Soviet Union. This was a mistaken view. In fact, relations between the Big Three and their respective countries took the shape of a cat’s cradle of criss-cross lines, sometimes bringing two of the three allies together against the third, and more often linking all three together in the pursuit of victory. This common interest was still strong when the Big Three met in conference at Yalta, a former holiday resort in the Crimea, in February 1945.

The Yalta Conference, 4–11 February 1945

Myths cling to the Yalta Conference like barnacles to a wreck. One of the most powerful and long-lived myths is that at Yalta the Big Three agreed to partition Europe, or even the world. A musical play, staged at Zagreb in the early 1970s and entitled *Yalta! Yalta!*, opened with the words: ‘In February 1945 the leaders of the three great powers met at Yalta to divide the world.’⁹ A musical may be allowed a dash of fiction; but the same idea may be found in serious

interpretations of the conference. It is almost in vain that historians have pointed out that Yalta divided neither Europe nor the world; but it is still worth asking what actually happened there.

The first point to be recalled about Yalta was obvious at the time, but often forgotten since: when the conference met, the war was far from over. The German armies were fighting hard, and Hitler still hoped that the ‘unnatural coalition’ ranged against him would break up. In the Pacific theatre, Japan held vast territories, and the Japanese forces were if anything even harder to defeat than the Germans. The allies who met at Yalta could not afford to relax their military efforts, or to allow cracks to develop in their political unity.

Always alert to this military situation, the Big Three approached the great issues of the conference with a determination to succeed. These issues were: (1) To reach an agreement on the framework of a new world organization, the United Nations; (2) to work out a policy towards Germany, notably on occupation zones and reparation payments; (3) to tackle the Polish question; and (4) to decide whether, and on what terms, the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan – which was by no means certain.



PHOTO 2 *On the grounds of the Livadia Palace, Yalta, during the Three-Power Conference: the British*

wartime prime minister, Sir Winston Churchill; the thirty-second president of the United States of America, Franklin Delano Roosevelt; and the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin (Getty Images. Credit: Keystone).

Agreement on the main lines of the United Nations Organization (UN) was of crucial importance to President Roosevelt, who saw this as the key to the whole post-war settlement. The main problems still outstanding were: the question of what states were to be members of the UN and the establishment of a system of voting in the Security Council, which was to be the main directing body in the new organization. As to membership, the United States had proposed to nominate the original signatories of the declaration on the UN in 1942, plus eight others, of which six were in Latin America, and assumed (rightly or wrongly) to be under American influence. Moscow had countered this gambit by proposing membership for the Soviet Union, plus all fifteen of the individual Soviet republics, which were in theory independent states but in practice under the control of Moscow. Agreement on this potentially difficult issue came at an early stage at the Yalta Conference, when Molotov, the foreign minister, who often acted as Stalin's 'Mr. No', declared unexpectedly that the Soviet request for sixteen members was to be reduced to three – the Soviet Union, Ukraine and Belorussia. On the system of voting in the Security Council, the Soviet Union agreed that on matters of procedure the permanent members of the Council (the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, China and France) should not exercise a power of veto; but on matters requiring action the permanent members should possess a veto, and hence be entitled to prevent any action if they so wished. On both these matters, therefore, the Soviet Union readily agreed to arrangements that Roosevelt favoured. Stalin for his part gave up nothing of any importance to the Soviet Union, and the conference got off to a positive and encouraging start.

On the German question, some matters had been settled before the Yalta Conference met. At the Casablanca Conference (January 1943), Roosevelt and Churchill had announced a policy of 'unconditional surrender' – that Germany, Italy and Japan must accept total defeat, and not negotiate terms on which they would capitulate, thus avoiding the difficulties which had arisen in 1918 as to the terms of the German surrender. Stalin agreed at once. In 1944, the three Allies agreed that the defeated Germany should be divided into three occupation zones, American, British and Soviet, with Berlin also being split into three zones. The issue of German frontiers was left open, though at the Tehran Conference in 1943 it was agreed that the Soviet Union should annex the northern part of East Prussia. At Yalta, Churchill proposed a significant new departure: that France should become one of the occupying powers. Somewhat reluctantly, Roosevelt

and Stalin agreed, though Stalin insisted that the French occupation zone must be carved out of the British and American zones, leaving the Soviet zone unchanged. The question of German frontiers was taken a step further, with Poland to annex German territory in the east, up to the line of the River Oder. German borders were thus being settled piecemeal, and primarily following Soviet wishes.

As to reparations to be paid by Germany, the Soviet Union had the strongest claim, on the grounds of the death and destruction wrought by Germany on the Eastern front. Stalin opened by proposing that Germany should pay reparations in kind (e.g. in manufacturing industry and agricultural produce) to a total of \$20 billion. Britain and the United States demurred, and it was agreed that a Reparations Commission should meet in Moscow to discuss the question, taking the figure of \$20 billion, with half to go to the Soviet Union, as the basis of their consideration. This was in practice a long step towards meeting the Soviet demands.

As to Poland, two key issues were open: the frontiers of a restored Poland, and the make-up of its government. On frontiers, the Big Three agreed that the Polish eastern frontier (mostly with the Soviet Union) should broadly follow a line originally proposed in 1919 by the then British foreign minister, George Curzon. The western frontier, with Germany, should follow the line of the River Oder, and then along either the western or eastern branch of the River Neisse. Stalin favoured the western Neisse, which allotted more territory to Poland, while Roosevelt and Churchill preferred the eastern Neisse. This question was left over and was later settled in practice at the Potsdam Conference, along the line of the western Neisse.

The question of the composition of the Polish government was one of acute difficulty. When the Yalta Conference began, two Polish governments were in existence: the government in exile in London, which was directly descended from the government of 1939; and a pro-Soviet government in the eastern town of Lublin. Britain and the United States recognized the London government, while the Soviet Union recognized the Lublin government. Stalin had always maintained that the Soviet Union must have a 'friendly' government in Poland; whereas the London government, for the most solid of reasons, could not by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as 'friendly' to a country which had colluded with the Nazis to invade Poland in September 1939 and had then deported and massacred large numbers of Poles. On the question, neither Stalin nor the Polish government in London could compromise, and Stalin held two

immense advantages: first, in January 1945, the Red Army already occupied nearly all pre-war Poland; and second, Britain and the United States were acutely conscious that they relied on the Soviet Union to secure a successful outcome to the war. It was therefore not surprising that the Big Three agreed at Yalta that ‘the Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland [i.e. the Lublin Government] should ... be reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad. This new government should then be called the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity.’ The new government was to hold ‘free and unfettered elections as soon as possible’.¹⁰ This wording accepted the Lublin government as the basis for a new Polish government and so gave Stalin the essence of what he required. He would certainly not have settled for less. The London government was not even mentioned by name; and the reference to free elections was to prove no more than a pious gesture. The leader of the London Poles, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, did subsequently agree, however, to head the new government.

The conference also adopted a ‘Declaration on Liberated Europe’, proposed by the Americans, by which the three Allied governments agreed to assist all liberated countries to hold free elections. Stalin accepted this without demur, and when Molotov grumbled that the Americans were getting too much of their own way, Stalin calmed him down, saying: ‘We can deal with it in our, own way later. The point is the correlation of forces.’¹¹

Roosevelt had another vital objective at Yalta: to make sure of Soviet entry into the war against Japan, which at that time still seemed certain to be long and costly. To gain his objective he had to abandon any high-flown talk of free elections or governments being responsive to the will of the people, and to meet Stalin on his own terms. Stalin insisted on recovering ‘the former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904’. Specifically this meant: the return of South Sakhalin; the acceptance of Port Arthur as a Soviet naval base, along with the recognition of rights in the commercial port of Dairen; and the restoration of Soviet rights in the South Manchurian Railway and the Chinese Eastern Railway. In addition, the Soviet Union was to annex the Kuril Islands from Japan; and Outer Mongolia was to be accepted as a Soviet sphere of influence. In return, Stalin undertook to enter the war against Japan three months after the end of the war in Europe – a promise that he kept. This was a ruthless piece of power politics, which Roosevelt accepted as a necessity, even though a part of the price he paid to Stalin was at the expense of China, theoretically his

ally.



MAP 2 *Poland at the end of the Second World War.*

At the end of the Yalta Conference all the participants could claim to have attained their main objectives. Churchill secured an occupation zone in Germany for France, which was a step towards the British aim of restoring France as a major power in Europe. Roosevelt cleared the way for the creation of the UN, and gained from Stalin a firm undertaking to enter the war against Japan. Stalin secured the acceptance of the Lublin government as the basis for the new government of Poland; advanced the Soviet claims for reparation; and gained a good price for entering the war against Japan. Last, but by no means least, all three Allied leaders achieved their common purpose of keeping their alliance together, which was far from being a certainty when the conference began.

Yalta did not partition the world. It did not even divide up Europe, though it did potentially put Poland firmly in the Soviet sphere of influence – or rather, domination. It did not reveal any deep division between the Soviet Union and the Western powers to foreshadow the Cold War line-up. On the contrary, it cleared the way towards winning the war, and setting up a framework for the post-war world, based on a working combination of idealism and power politics. All

alliances must work by compromise, and the Yalta Conference was no exception. When it ended, a cautious optimism was still in order.

The Second World War and the shaking of the European empires

For many years, and in some cases for centuries before the Second World War, European powers controlled vast empires in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Their grip on these territories was shaken, in different ways and degrees, by the impact of the war.

North Africa

The Second World War transformed the situation in French North Africa (Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco). The crushing French defeat in 1940 dealt a damaging blow to French prestige throughout the area, though the effects did not become clear until late in 1942. In November 1942 American and British forces invaded Morocco and Algeria, drawing the Germans into Tunisia to resist them. Fighting continued until the Germans surrendered in May 1943, with the French acting almost as bystanders in the territories which they nominally controlled. Later in 1943 the situation changed again when General de Gaulle's Free French movement established its seat of government in Algiers, which for some time became the capital of all French territories at war with Germany.

Tunisia was not a French colony, but a protectorate under the largely nominal rule of the local bey, or king. Six months of German occupation, and conflict with the British and Americans, broke the continuity of French authority, giving Bey Muhammed al-Munsif the opportunity to appoint his own ministers and take partial control of the country. In 1943 the French returned and imposed direct rule, but were confronted by a growing nationalist resistance. The Germans had released Habib Bourguiba, the leader of the Neodestour nationalist party, from prison in France. Bourguiba returned to Tunisia, where he tried without success to reach an agreement with the French. He then took refuge in Egypt, where he lived in exile for four years. The cumulative effect of these events was to disrupt the working of the French protectorate and to give a new impulse to Tunisian nationalism.

Morocco was also a French protectorate, not a colony. American troops were stationed in parts of the country from the end of 1942, and sometimes worked

place demonstrations and an armed uprising against the French at Sétif, in the Constantine district. This insurrection was crushed with great severity, with casualties that the French put at 6,000 and the Algerians at 45,000. After this, there were no further disturbances for another nine years; but what was to become the Algerian War of Independence had begun.

The Middle East

Before the Second World War, the whole area of the Middle East from Egypt to Iraq was under European (British and French) control or influence. Syria and Lebanon were French mandates under the League of Nations, and they were effectively treated as French colonies. Palestine was a British mandate, and it was in the throes of a tangled three-cornered struggle between Arabs, Zionists and the British. Egypt was an independent state, but it was bound by a treaty with Britain (concluded in 1936) to accept British bases in the Suez Canal Zone and Alexandria. Iraq was in much the same position – independent, but accepting British military bases. Transjordan was under British influence, and its army (the Arab Legion) was commanded by a British officer.

The war transformed this situation. In Syria and Lebanon, French authority was shaken by the defeat of 1940 and later undermined by a long dispute between de Gaulle and the British over the future of the two nations. After a long struggle, French forces exited the two countries in 1947, leaving behind a bitter legacy of enmity between France and Britain. In some respects the British fared better in maintaining their position of predominance. Nevertheless, it proved impossible for the British to encourage nationalist movements in Syria and Lebanon without arousing similar enmity against themselves in Egypt and Iraq, where their prestige had anyway been badly shaken by their wartime defeats.

The British actually encouraged cooperation among Arab states, in the hope of directing Arab nationalism for their own purposes. In 1944 and 1945, on British initiative, Egypt held two conferences which set up an Arab League comprising seven members: Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan and Yemen. A representative of the Palestinian Arabs also attended the conferences, though without becoming a member of the League. The purpose of this new body was to act together in matters of common concern, and the Palestine question was mentioned as an example.

Palestine was indeed becoming the most difficult problem in the Middle East. Britain was still the mandatory power, and since 1920 the British had been trying to govern the territory under the ambiguous terms of the Balfour Declaration of

1917, which undertook to create a 'national home' for the Jewish people in Palestine, without prejudice to the civil and religious rights of the other inhabitants of the territory. This was an impossible task, and the British found themselves trapped between the opposing claims and aspirations of both Zionists and Arabs.

In 1939, the British government, against the strong opposition of Winston Churchill, set out a plan (or 'White Paper') by which Palestine was to achieve independence in 1949, with Jewish immigration to be so limited as to ensure an Arab majority. This conciliated Arab opinion enough to allow Britain to wage a war against Germany with a minimum of Arab opposition. But it confronted the principal Zionist organization, the Jewish Agency, with a cruel dilemma. On the one hand, for Nazi Germany to win the war which broke out in 1939 would be a disaster for the Jewish people; but on the other hand, the British policy was designed to deprive the Zionists of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Jewish Agency therefore settled down to an apparently impossible task: to fight the war as if there were no White Paper and to fight the White Paper as if there were no war – an astonishing attempt to face both ways that in fact achieved a remarkable degree of success. A Jewish Brigade, which became a valuable military arm for the Jewish Agency, fought alongside the British Army after 1944. But the White Paper of 1939 remained Britain's long-term objective, and at war's end, the British Navy turned back shiploads of Jewish refugees from Europe.

By 1945 it was the British who faced an impossible dilemma. On the one hand, they had to conciliate Arab opinion in order to maintain their own position in the Middle East. But on the other hand, it became practically difficult and morally indefensible to restrict Jewish immigration into Palestine just when the fate of the European Jews in the Nazi death camps was becoming widely known. By 1947 Britain could no longer carry this double burden. The Labour government announced that Britain was leaving the problem of Palestine to the newly constituted UN thus setting the stage for one of the most intractable and bitter conflicts of the post-war world.

All the way across North Africa and the Middle East a similar pattern of events took shape. The crushing defeat of France in 1940 weakened French prestige and authority. The British, by contrast, emerged from the war victorious, but events thrust them into concessions to nationalist movements, and in Palestine their position became more difficult as the war went on. Across the board, the two colonial powers faced changes which proved irreversible.

East and South-East Asia

In Asia, profound changes were already under way before the Second World War, and all the colonial powers were facing opposition to their predominance. In China, a nationalist government challenged the unequal treaties imposed in the nineteenth century. In India, Gandhi and the Congress Party organized opposition to British rule. In the Dutch East Indies and French Indo-China, nationalist movements were increasing in strength. From the beginning of the twentieth century, Japan had emerged as a great Asian power, well able to beat Europeans in war and commerce. It was therefore upon an area already in transition that the Second World War struck with sudden and devastating force.

In a few months at the end of 1941 and early in 1942, Japanese forces swept aside British, Dutch and American resistance and occupied Malaya, Singapore, Burma, the East Indies and the Philippines (from 1940 to 1941, they had occupied French Indo-China without firing a shot). The colonial powers could only partially recover from these crushing defeats, despite their victories in the latter part of the war. They returned to their former possessions in 1945, but their prestige had been seriously weakened and their authority was on borrowed time.

The Japanese encouraged nationalist movements all over South-East Asia. If the Japanese had won the war, there might have been difficulties in this situation, as nationalists came to resent exchanging old masters for new. But as events turned out, the nationalist movements were able to gain what they could from the Japanese victories, and then grasped further advantages from the Japanese defeats, which in most cases left a gap in the exercise of power between the defeat of Japan and the return of the colonial powers. For example, in the East Indies the Indonesian nationalists led by Ahmed Sukarno were able to declare independence in August 1945, before the Dutch could return and reassert their authority – a task which eventually proved beyond either their strength or their willpower.

The consequences of these events varied widely, and took very different lengths of time to reach a conclusion. The British left India in 1947, but remained in Hong Kong as a colonial power until 1997. The Dutch fought for four years to regain control of the East Indies, before they gave up the struggle and accepted Indonesian independence in 1949. The French held on to Indo-China for nearly ten years before they acknowledged defeat. But sooner or later the effects of the Second World War worked themselves out. The colonial regimes in East and South-East Asia came to an end quickly in some cases and

slowly in others; but either way, one of the Second World War's principal consequences was the withdrawal of Europe from the Asian continent.

Long-term consequences of the war

In the long term, three consequences of the Second World War came to dominate international relations for the half-century after 1945. First, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as two superpowers, meeting face to face in Europe and in East Asia. Exactly how that encounter would play out was not clear in 1945, but within a few years it was to develop into the confrontation which we call the Cold War. Second, the European overseas empires in Africa, the Middle East and Asia were so badly shaken that their disintegration became inevitable. How this came about, and how they were replaced, became a theme of the post-1945 age. (The land empire of the Soviet Union lasted much longer, while the United States became an unusual sort of imperial power.) Third, the two atomic bombs which exploded over Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought a vital new element to international affairs: the prospect of instant and widespread destruction. This was one of the consequences of the Americans' use of the atomic bombs which is often overlooked. No demonstration against some deserted island could have had the same psychological effect.

These three sets of events formed the framework of the new world order which took shape after 1945.

Notes

- 1 J. A. S. Grenville, *History of the World in the Twentieth Century* (London, revised ed., 1998), p. 284. Grenville observes that historians cannot be sure of the figure *to the nearest million*, which in itself is a formidable comment. See also the article by Martin Gilbert on 'The Final Solution', in I. C. B. Dear and M. R. D. Foot, eds, *The Oxford Companion to the Second World War* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 364–71.
- 2 Figures in *ibid.*, p. 1060.
- 3 Figures in *ibid.*, p. 290. For an authoritative assessment of Polish war dead, see Halik Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (London, 2012), p. 532.
- 4 Henry Ashby Turner, Jr, *Germany from Partition to Unification* (New Haven, 1992), p. 6.
- 5 Dear and Foot, *Second World War*, p. 1060.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 603–4, 836–7.
- 7 Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (London, Pelican ed., 1969), p. 90.
- 8 Martin Gilbert, *Road to Victory: Winston S. Churchill, 1941–1945* (London, 1986), p. 254.
- 9 Timothy Garton Ash, 'A Lesson to Learn from Yalta', *The Times* (London), 11 February 1995.

- 10 US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington DC, 1955), pp. 971–5.
- 11 Vyacheslav Molotov, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev*, ed. Albert Resis (Chicago, 1993), p. 51.

2

The beginnings of the post-war world

*Victors and vanquished – The post-war state system – The United Nations –
Other international organizations – Economic organization.*

Victors and vanquished

The most obvious division in the world in 1945 was not between the East and the West, or between capitalism and communism, or between imperial powers and colonial peoples, between victors and vanquished. For a short time the victors had the opportunity to remake the world. It was no easy task. Much of the world was littered with the ruins of war, and even countries untouched physically by the conflict were still affected by it. Moreover, history does not come to an end, even at a turning point like that of 1945, and all kinds of issues going back years or sometimes centuries were bound to reappear. But for a while the board of world affairs was as clear as it was ever likely to be. It was a time of hope and opportunity, as well as of ruin and despair. Who were the victors, and what did they try to do with their victory?

The victors

The greatest victor of the Second World War was the United States of America. The United States had been far away from the theatres of war. Japanese bombs fell on Hawaii and German U-boats played havoc for a time off the Atlantic coast, but mainland America was unscathed. American casualties in the war amounted to 274,000 dead – little more than one-fifth of 1 per cent of the population. The country's economic strength was enormous. Its gold reserves stood at \$220 billion, approximately two-thirds of the world's total. The country

as a whole had grown wealthier during the war, and the average standard of living of individual Americans was high. The war effort had mobilized this economic strength into military power. There were some 14,800,000 men and women in the armed forces at the end of 1944. A vast fleet, with nearly 68,000 vessels of all types, was complemented by an air force that included 3,000 heavy bombers. Moreover, the United States was the only country to have manufactured and used atomic bombs.¹

For Americans this was a new situation, and their attitudes towards it varied widely. The country's wartime leaders were mostly determined that the United States should now act as a world power and not withdraw into the isolation and neutrality that had been attempted in the 1920s and 1930s. They expected to bring their troops home from Europe, but they also intended to maintain bases in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The United States would play a leading part in the United Nations. They would pursue American economic interests, to make sure that wartime prosperity was not lost in the peace. At the same time, the idealism which was so deeply rooted in the American mindset was still strong. In 1961, Henry Kissinger (later to become secretary of state) asked Harry S. Truman (who replaced Roosevelt in April 1945) which foreign policy decision he would most wish to be remembered for. His reply was: 'We completely defeated our enemies [in the Second World War] and made them surrender. And then we helped them to recover, to become democratic, and to rejoin the community of nations. Only America could have done that.' This combination of pride in American strength and faith in American virtue was characteristic not only of Truman, but of most of his fellow countrymen.²

There was another strand in American thought and sentiment. Isolationism, though rejected by most American leaders, was very much alive, especially in the Midwest. It was also somewhat confused in nature because there were some who wished to be free from entanglements in Europe but were keenly interested in the Pacific and China. In sum, the United States was broadly conscious that it had a new world role, but was by no means sure what it was to be.

The second power among the victors was the Soviet Union. At the end of 1944 the strength of the Soviet armed forces stood at a total of 11,200,000. The Red Army was equipped with 11,000 tanks and self-propelled guns; and the air force comprised 14,500 combat aircraft. These forces had played by far the largest part in the defeat of Germany. Soviet power and prestige stood at a pinnacle. But the cost had been enormous. Authoritative figures published in 1990 gave a total of 8,668,000 military dead. As we have seen, estimates for military and civilian

casualties together reached a total of some 26–28 million dead.³ The comparison with the 274,000 fatalities suffered by the United States is sobering – American losses were barely one-hundredth that of the Soviet. To the loss of life was added the immense destruction wrought during the campaigns on the Eastern front. The Soviet Union thus displayed the extraordinary spectacle of vast military strength combined with immense human and material losses.

The Soviet Union was geographically the heir to the old Russian Empire, stretching all the way from eastern Europe to eastern Asia. Its population was varied, multinational and at different stages of economic development. Stalin saw himself as the successor of the Tsars in his foreign policy – for example, he set out deliberately to recover territory lost in the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905 and at the end of the Great War; and from 1945 to 1946 he was pursuing a long-standing aim of Russian policy, a base on the straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. But he was also the leader of the world's first socialist state, and his concerns were ideological as well as territorial. As two contemporary Russian historians sum the matter up, he pursued 'the promise of Communist revolutionary universalism combined with the necessities of survival for the Soviet Union, the first and unique "Socialist" empire'.⁴ The Soviet Union thus combined great military power with the aspirations and attractions of the socialist ideal.

In 1945, however, Stalin was primarily concerned with the security of the state. He imposed the severest possible control over Soviet territories recovered from the Germans. Prisoners of war released from German captivity were often sent straight to the Gulag (the Soviet slave labour camps) for fear that they had somehow been contaminated by foreign ideas. But this was usually hidden from the outside world, where Stalin appeared as a benevolent patriarch, the hero who had won the war and saved his country and a world statesman of the first rank.

At the end of the Second World War there was no certainty that the United States and the Soviet Union would swiftly become enemies. It appears that Stalin regarded Truman as inexperienced (which he was) and weak (which he was not) and thought that he would not last long. There was a brush between Truman and Molotov on 23 April 1945, when the new president lectured the Soviet foreign minister about the necessity of keeping agreements. This episode was later seized upon by some writers as the beginning of the Cold War, but at the time Molotov and Stalin agreed to keep quiet about it, and Molotov merely recalled many years afterwards that Truman had been 'a bit half-witted'.⁵

Truman, for his part, was not enamoured of the Soviet Union. When Germany

attacked the Soviet Union in 1941 he had candidly (if rashly) remarked that the two sides should be encouraged to kill one another as far as possible – though he did not want to see Hitler win under any circumstances. But when he became president he continued to follow Roosevelt's line of cultivating good relations with Stalin, and he speedily recognized that the Americans needed Soviet military support against Japan. He sent Harry Hopkins (Roosevelt's old confidant) to visit Stalin at the beginning of June 1945, with reassuring messages. When Stalin nominated a new Polish government, the United States recognized it quickly (on 5 July 1945), though there had been no free elections and none were in the offing. There were difficulties between the two great powers, but that is the story of all alliances at the end of a war.

Next among the victors stood Great Britain. The British had fought the war from start to finish. They had stood almost alone in 1940, and in 1945 they were still one of the Big Three in world politics. Their casualties (350,000 dead, including civilians) had not been heavy when compared with those between 1914 and 1918.⁶ But the country was gravely weakened. People were weary after six years of war. Industrial production had concentrated on the war effort. Reserves of gold and foreign currency had been run down, and Britain now depended on loans to pay for imports. When American Lend-Lease aid ended with the end of the war, Britain had to request a large loan (\$3.75 billion) from the United States. Despite these difficulties, in 1946, the British still expected to overcome their problems and maintain their position as a world power.

France too was among the victors – an occupying power in Germany and Austria, and a permanent member of the Security Council of the UN. But this status masked serious weaknesses. The defeat of 1940 had been a crushing blow, and the long period of German occupation had left deep divisions. Casualties had been heavy – about 600,000 dead, military and civilian included.⁷ The economy was dislocated; industrial production was low; food was scarce; and reserves of gold and foreign currency were almost exhausted, so that France too had to ask for US loans in 1946. Despite these difficulties, General de Gaulle, the premier of France at the end of the war, was determined that his country should regain the greatness of its international position; and his successors remained committed to that lofty aim.

During the war, President Roosevelt referred to the 'Four Policemen' who would keep the peace in the post-war world. The fourth power he had in mind, along with the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain, was China; but in fact China was in no position to play such a role. Casualties had been heavy –

perhaps 13 million Chinese died during the war years. The country was plagued by civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government and the communists, led by Mao Zedong. The whole country was devastated by the long years of war against Japan. China was treated by courtesy (especially courtesy towards Roosevelt) as a great power and was granted permanent membership of the Security Council; but this was merely a façade. In practice, China was too weak and divided to play an active part in world affairs until its own problems had been resolved.

As the Second World War came to an end, the principal victors met in conference at Potsdam (from 17 July to 2 August 1945). Stalin, Truman and Churchill (who was replaced by Clement Attlee when the Labour Party won the British general election on 26 July) grappled with a massive agenda, much of which they dealt with by postponement rather than action. One issue which they could not delay was that of terms for a Japanese surrender. At the time, the United States and Britain were at war with Japan, but the Soviet Union was not, and the Japanese were trying to invoke Soviet mediation to bring hostilities to an end. The three powers agreed on the Potsdam Declaration of 26 July 1945, which called on Japan to accept unconditional surrender. The Declaration also asserted that Japan must give up all territories acquired since 1914. War criminals were to be brought to justice, and Japanese government was to be democratized, with security for freedom of speech and fundamental human rights. More to the point in military terms, President Truman told Stalin on 24 July that the United States had developed a weapon of 'unusual destructive force' – meaning the atomic bomb. Stalin was already aware of this from his own sources, notably Klaus Fuchs, a Soviet agent in the British team of atomic scientists; but he gave no sign that he was aware, and merely replied, 'I hope you will use it on the Japanese.'⁸

The conference spent much time on Germany, to which we will turn later, and on Poland. On the question of Poland's western frontier, which had been left over at Yalta, the Big Three agreed to treat the line of the rivers Oder and Western Neisse as the administrative boundary between Poland and Germany. This meant in practice that the Poles took over all the territory up to that line; but the question of de jure sovereignty was left to a future peace conference. On the question of the make-up of a Polish government, there was no agreement in principle between the Soviet Union on the one hand and the United States and Britain on the other; but in practice Moscow was determined to control the government set up after Yalta.

The three powers agreed to set up a Council of Foreign Ministers, in which France was to take part, to deal with the defeated European countries (Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania and Finland) and to prepare peace treaties. This allowed various contentious issues to be postponed and ensured that the Potsdam Conference reached a reasonably successful conclusion. The code name for the conference was 'Terminal', and if not exactly a happy ending for the wartime alliance, it was at least a tolerable one. Yet at the same time there was a sense of unease, at any rate among the British and American delegations. When Truman left Potsdam, he remarked with feeling that 'he never wanted to live in Europe, and never wanted to go back'.⁹

The vanquished

The principal defeated powers were crushed to an extent unprecedented in modern times. 'Unconditional Surrender' was the doctrine proclaimed by Roosevelt at Casablanca in 1943, and against Germany it was rigorously imposed. The German armed forces capitulated – or were wiped out. Allied armies occupied the whole country. No German government remained. The only effective currency was cigarettes. A modern state had simply ceased to exist.

Germany had temporarily disappeared, but the German Question remained, in various forms. Was Germany to be united or divided? Where were its frontiers to lie? What sort of political system and social organization should be imposed upon it? What scale of reparations should be exacted from Germany, and how were they to be paid? These questions, fudged at Yalta, were only partially answered at the Potsdam Conference. The Allied powers agreed that Germany should be administered as a whole, by an Allied Control Council meeting in Berlin, and should be treated as an economic whole. However, each occupying power was to carry out the supposedly joint policies in its own zone, which was bound to leave scope for differences of practice. Acceptance of the Oder–Neisse line as the Polish administrative border provided a practical, though not a legal answer to the main frontier question. There was agreement that Germany was to be de-Nazified, though not on exactly how this was to be accomplished; it was agreed, too, that new political institutions were to be introduced slowly, starting with municipalities and local government.

In Japan, the state was not utterly dissolved as it was in Germany, in that the emperor remained, forming a symbol of continuity with the past. Moreover, some sections within the Japanese government had begun to think the

unthinkable, and to make preparations for defeat even before the war ended. Even so, Japan was in a calamitous condition. Casualties had been severe – somewhere between 2,350,000 and 2,700,000 killed, including 350,000–393,000 civilians (about 210,000 of them by the two atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki).¹⁰ About a million Japanese troops were scattered over the former theatres of war and were shipped back to the home islands, where food was already scarce. The Americans occupied the Japanese mainland, but no one knew how they would use their authority.

One distinctive feature of the treatment of Germany and Japan at the end of the Second World War was the holding of trials for war crimes. This was not completely new, because after the First World War there had been a low-key trial of a dozen Germans, before a German court. But the trials in 1945 and 1946 were a very different matter. On 8 August 1945 the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France agreed to set up an International Military Tribunal for the trial of the major German war criminals. The indictment, published on 6 October 1945, was drawn up under four main headings: (1) the formulation of a common plan or conspiracy to commit crimes; (2) crimes against peace: the planning, preparation, initiation and waging of wars of aggression; (3) war crimes: violations of the laws and customs of war, including the murder and deportation of civilians and the wanton destruction of towns or villages; (4) crimes against humanity: the extermination, enslavement or deportation of civilian populations, and persecution on political, racial or religious grounds, whether or not such persecution was in violation of the domestic law of the country where it had taken place. There were difficulties under all these headings. It was not easy to establish what constituted a conspiracy. Most countries made plans for war involving attacks on others – it is the job of military staffs to prepare for war. The Allied bombing offensive had destroyed a number of cities. The Soviet Union (though not on trial) was certainly guilty of exterminating and deporting peoples on a large scale. The trial was held at Nuremberg, in Germany, from October 1945 to October 1946. Of the twenty-two accused (one of them, Martin Bormann, in his absence), three were acquitted; seven were sentenced to imprisonment for various terms – Hess and Raeder for life; and twelve were sentenced to death. Of these twelve, ten were hanged and Goering committed suicide. Bormann in fact had died in Berlin in 1945.¹¹

The war crimes trial held in Tokyo from May 1946 to November 1948 proved more difficult and controversial. Twenty-eight Japanese leaders were charged

with war crimes, crimes against peace and crimes against humanity. The emperor of Japan, Hirohito, was exempted from trial on the express instruction of General MacArthur, the Allied supreme commander and virtual ruler of Japan. The judges failed to achieve unanimity in their verdicts – those from France and the Netherlands recorded dissenting judgements on certain points, while an Indian judge found all the defendants not guilty. As a result of these problems, and also because the sessions went on for a long time while the world changed around them, the Tokyo war crimes trials made less impact than those at Nuremberg.

The impact upon the public mind of these trials, and especially those at Nuremberg, nevertheless had a lasting effect on attitudes towards international affairs. The emphasis on crimes against humanity engendered a new sensitivity towards human rights and an increased concern with events inside other countries, as distinct from the long-standing tradition of minding one's own business. This was also influenced by the role of publicity in international affairs. The reporting, particularly by photographs and newsreel film, of the opening of the German concentration camps in 1945, left a lasting mark on the public mind. The combination of publicity and human rights came to form a new element in world affairs.

International organizations of states

For two centuries up to the end of the First World War, European states had dominated world politics, evolving a system of conducting international affairs by means of the balance of power and a series of great treaties which established a European and world order: Utrecht (1713), Vienna (1815) and Versailles (1919).

In 1919 this era was already coming to an end, with the United States playing a powerful role at the Paris Peace Conference. By 1945 it had definitively ended. There were no longer five or six European great powers, similar in weight and authority, able to balance one another and to control the continent and most of the world. Instead, two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, dominated the scene. Of the two, the United States was much the stronger; but both stood head and shoulders above the rest. Neither was fully European. The United States had a population largely of European extraction, but was far removed from the old continent both geographically and in spirit. The Soviet Union was the successor of one of the old European states, Russia, but it had

always been doubtful how far Russia was European, either geographically or in spirit. The indisputably European states – Britain, France, Germany and Italy – were in decline or were being eclipsed.

The old European state system could no longer regulate its own continent, still less the world. What was to replace it? During the Second World War, President Roosevelt threw his energy and prestige into creating a new world organization to succeed the old League of Nations; and his influence and determination prevailed. On 1 January 1942, in Washington, Roosevelt, Churchill and the ambassadors of the Soviet Union and China signed the United Nations Declaration, pledging its signatories to employ all their resources to secure total victory and not to make a separate peace. This document also created the basis for a new world organization, and gave it a name. Roosevelt introduced the term ‘United Nations’ instead of ‘Associated Powers’; and Churchill approved, with a literary touch in a quotation from Byron’s ‘Childe Harold’: ‘Here, where the sword United Nations drew.’¹² The plan was elaborated at a Conference of Foreign Ministers (Soviet, American, British and Chinese) in October 1943, and at the three-power summit conference at Tehran in November 1943. A conference at Dumbarton Oaks in New Hampshire from September to October 1944 prepared the main outlines of the new organization; and, as we have seen, the Yalta Conference in February 1945 resolved crucial questions relating to its membership and constitution. The San Francisco Conference (from April to June 1945) produced the final draft of the United Nations Charter, which was signed on 26 June by the representatives of fifty-one states. The fact that this conference began while the war was still in progress in both Europe and the Pacific showed the urgency with which the task was undertaken. At the end of the First World War, the creation of the League of Nations had been part of the peace settlement; but in 1945 the UN was set up before the war was over. If its founders had waited for the peace settlement, the delay would have been lengthy and perhaps fatal.

The purposes of the UN were threefold. The first was to prevent war by means of collective security – an aim which the League had failed to achieve. If conflicts could not be prevented, the UN would have the lesser but useful task of containing or resolving them. Second, the UN was to promote peace by promoting international cooperation in economic and social affairs, in culture and in thought. This arose from a widespread belief that the Second World War had arisen partly from economic causes and partly from perverted ideas which had taken root in the minds of men. Third, under Article 56 of the Charter, the

member states of the UN were to promote respect for human rights and universal freedoms for all – this too looked back to the 1930s, in a belief that the internal tyranny of Nazi Germany had given rise to its aggressive foreign policy. To achieve these purposes, the UN was comprised of three main bodies: the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretariat. The General Assembly consisted of representatives of all the member states, on a footing of equality (one country, one vote), and was to meet annually. The Security Council was made up of five permanent members (the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France and China) and six temporary members, elected for two-year terms by a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly, although the number of temporary members was subsequently increased to ten in 1966. The Security Council was to remain in permanent session. On all substantive matters, requiring action, the permanent members could exercise a veto, that is, a single negative vote by a permanent member was sufficient to reject a resolution. The Secretariat was the administrative body of the UN, headed by a secretary-general, appointed by the General Assembly for a five-year term.

The Charter of the United Nations included two articles which were difficult to reconcile with one another, with consequences that were to raise intractable problems. Article 2 (7) laid down that the UN was not authorized to intervene in ‘matters which are essentially within the sovereign jurisdiction of any state’. Article 56, on the other hand, specified that member states of the UN were to promote respect for human rights, which might well be regarded as falling within the sovereign jurisdiction of particular states. Article 2 (7) might also impede the discussion of wars or violence *within* states, unless the situation was clearly ‘international’.

A case in point arose as early as 1947, when a dispute occurred between India and Pakistan over the territory of Kashmir. India claimed that the Kashmir dispute was an internal matter, to be dealt with by the Indian government, because Kashmir was a province of India. Pakistan, on the contrary, argued that the dispute was an international one, between the two sovereign states of India and Pakistan, and therefore a proper matter for discussion by the UN. The new Indian premier, Jawaharlal Nehru, received an early lesson in power politics over the Kashmir question: the Americans, he complained, made ‘no bones’ about their sympathy for Pakistan and used the UN to promote Pakistan’s cause.¹³ A similar dispute arose in relation to the Algerian War from 1954 to 1962. France claimed that the war in Algeria was an internal matter, because Algeria was in law a part of France, and the conflict was in fact a rebellion

against legitimate French authority. The Algerian nationalist movement, the National Liberation Front (FLN), maintained that the war was one of national independence and was therefore an international matter in which the UN could properly intervene.

In later years, new states which had used the UN to help in their struggles for independence from colonial powers took advantage of Article 2 (7) to prevent intervention in what they now claimed had become their internal affairs. For example, the General Assembly from time to time made general declarations denouncing racism and genocide. On the one hand, the UN took no action against the government of Idi Amin in Uganda (from 1971 to 1979), which expelled Asians from the country and slaughtered thousands of people within it. On the other hand, the government of South Africa claimed that its policy of apartheid was a matter for its own domestic jurisdiction; but the UN argued that apartheid was a danger to peace and was therefore a proper concern of the organization and imposed economic sanctions against South Africa accordingly.

A simpler matter arose from Article 51 of the UN Charter, which maintained the inherent right of individual states of self-defence against armed attack, or collective self-defence against attack. Similarly, Article 52 permitted the formation of regional arrangements for the maintenance of international peace and security. Between them, these provisions gave ample scope for the formation of alliances (the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 was an obvious example) which sometimes proved more effective instruments of collective security than the more generic provisions of the UN Charter.

In subsequent years, the deficiencies and failures of the UN became sadly plain. The organization was intended to prevent war, but the years since its foundation have been marked by almost incessant conflict in different parts of the world. The UN's cultural and economic organizations fell far short of success: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) absorbed large funds for small results, while the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) proved unable either to predict famines or to cope with them when they occurred. Neither made any significant contribution to the peace of the world.¹⁴

Yet the UN survived and achieved some solid if unspectacular successes, largely by accepting the facts of international life. The power of veto exercised by the permanent members of the Security Council was simply an acknowledgement that if one of these powers, and especially one of the two superpowers, was opposed to some policy or action, it would not work. Indeed,

without the acceptance of the veto, Stalin would not have permitted the United Nations to come into existence at all; and the United States had no intention of allowing its vital interests to be endangered by a majority vote – though in 1945 American leaders did not find it necessary to say so. Similarly, the contradiction between the assertion of human rights on the one hand and the rights of states to control their own affairs on the other was another necessary compromise. States would never have accepted an organization with unlimited rights to intervene in their internal affairs.

In the event, the UN took on a number of significant roles in international affairs. First, the Security Council provided a centre for diplomatic activity, sometimes public and confrontational, but often secret and conciliatory. In some of the more glacial periods of the Cold War, the Security Council was one of the rare places where American and Soviet representatives could meet frequently and discreetly. Second, the General Assembly became a forum for the expression of views on world affairs, not usually leading to any immediate or practical results, but gradually introducing new climates of opinion, for example, on colonialism and international trade. Third, the UN undertook peacekeeping operations, the first of which, the UN Truce Supervision Organization, was set up as early as June 1948 to oversee the ceasefire in Palestine between Israel and its opponents. Next was the UN Military Observer Group, created in January 1949 to supervise a ceasefire between India and Pakistan in Kashmir. Both of these bodies were still in existence half a century later, bearing strange testimony to their success as well as their failure. Ceasefires, by definition, are not peace; but they are in many respects better than war; and these early UN contributions to international relations were to have many successors. A fourth area where the UN made a definite impact was that of human rights. In December 1948 the General Assembly adopted a Declaration on Human Rights. This was passed without a contrary vote, but there were a number of abstentions, by the Soviet bloc, Saudi Arabia and South Africa – an interesting and disparate group. The communist governments argued that they held their own view of human rights, which was different in principle from that of bourgeois states. (In practice, their regimes continued to be characterized by one-party rule, political purges and labour camps.) Saudi Arabia reserved the right to practise Islamic law. South Africa pursued its own policy of apartheid and racial discrimination. It may well be that other countries had reservations about human rights, but preferred not to express them. In any case a new and dynamic element was introduced into international relations, with consequences that increased with the passage of

time.

These functions taken up by the UN were less dramatic than some of its founders hoped for when the organization was founded in 1945: the UN did not become the 'parliament of Man' envisaged by the poet Tennyson.¹⁵ Its achievements were nevertheless solid and in some respects far-reaching. The UN carved out a life of its own and exercised a fitful but vital influence in world affairs.

In the immediate post-war period, a number of existing international organizations changed their character, and some new ones were created, in a movement which involved several different areas. One was the Commonwealth (until 1949 still called the British Commonwealth), which in 1945 consisted of Great Britain, Australia, Canada, Newfoundland (which narrowly voted to join the Canadian federation in 1948), New Zealand and South Africa. These were all independent states, but they were united by common allegiance to the British crown and by long habits of cooperation.

In 1950 the Commonwealth took a decisive step in adaptation to a changing world, when India (independent since 1947) chose to remain in it when it became a republic, using the device of recognizing the British monarch as head of the Commonwealth. This apparently formal arrangement in fact opened the way for any former British colony to join the Commonwealth on attaining independence. Nearly all chose to do so. By 1966, when African decolonization had been largely completed, membership had expanded to twenty-three, with Barbados, Cyprus, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and Zambia joining the original members.¹⁶ One original member, racist South Africa, left the organization in 1961 and rejoined only after the fall of the apartheid regime in the early 1990s. British governments valued the Commonwealth for reasons of prestige and as a means of exercising informal influence; and all the members found enough advantage to keep it in being.

One of the advantages of the Commonwealth was that it was global in membership. Other international organizations were regional in their scope. In the Middle East, the Arab League was founded at a conference in Cairo on 22 March 1945. Its members were Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan (later Jordan) and Yemen. Representatives of the Palestinian Arabs attended as observers. The main purposes of the League were to represent the Arab world at the UN (whose founding conference was about to meet in San Francisco); to promote cultural and economic links between its members; and to

act together on the question of Palestine – which meant opposing a Jewish state. The League’s headquarters were established in Cairo, with the League Council meeting twice a year at different capitals. The League has proved long-lived, though Egypt was suspended from membership in 1979, when it concluded a peace treaty with Israel; and the headquarters was moved to Tunis until Egypt rejoined in 1989.

In the American hemisphere, the International Union of American Republics had been set up as long ago as 1890, changing its name to the Pan-American Union in 1910. In April 1948 this body was renamed the Organization of American States (OAS). It now included Canada as well as the United States and most of the Latin American states, with the lofty aims of advancing peace, justice and hemisphere cooperation, as well as the more precise object of defending the sovereignty, integrity and independence of member states. The headquarters of the OAS was to be in Washington, and the secretary-general was to be from Latin America. The OAS set up new structures: a General Assembly to meet annually, a Permanent Council and a Conference of Foreign Ministers to meet in case of need. Over time, the OAS became the scene of a constant tug of war between the United States, which used the organization to exert its own influence, and the Latin American states, which sought to oppose that influence.

Europe, meanwhile, was the scene for a number of new organizations between states. In May 1948, a Congress of Europe, with representatives from twenty-four European countries, met at the Hague to discuss various projects for European unity, ranging from simple cooperation to federal union. This led to the creation of the Council of Europe (1949), with a Parliamentary Assembly and a Committee of Ministers. A series of moves towards West European integration followed, notably the Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and, eventually, the European Economic Community (EEC), which in time proved the most successful of West European organizations. The Soviet bloc mirrored these developments by creating its own trade organization, Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), in 1949. It was flanked by the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), a body designed to coordinate the ideological outlook of the Soviet bloc states, which was founded in September 1947.

Economic organization: The Bretton Woods Conference, July 1944

During the Second World War the American government, and especially the secretary of state, Cordell Hull, believed firmly that the war had largely been caused by the economic conflicts arising from the great depression of the 1930s and subsequent attempts at self-sufficiency and currency control. The United States therefore set out to create a new world trade system, with lower tariffs and convertible currencies. This policy was motivated by a genuine desire to set the world to rights and by an immense confidence that the United States could do so. It would also advance America's economic interests because lower tariffs would favour the most efficient producers (mostly American) and open up markets for American exporters. Washington assumed a happy coincidence between the improvement of the world and the advance of American commerce. Others looked on this assumption with a more jaundiced eye.

The Bretton Woods Conference in July 1944 prepared the framework for the economic organization of the post-war world. It was attended by forty-four states, with the Soviet Union attending while refusing to be bound by its conclusions (Haiti, Liberia and New Zealand took up the same position). The conference launched two new organizations: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the 'World Bank'). The IMF was designed to prevent the pre-war problem of countries running balance of payment deficits, which were followed by runs on their reserves of gold or foreign currency. Each member of the IMF was to pay a subscription according to his or her economic ability, one-quarter in gold and three-quarters in currency. The IMF would then, from these reserves, grant governments credits to meet deficits in their balance of payments. The World Bank was founded in order to finance post-war reconstruction. Its funds were to be raised from capital subscribed by member states, and later by its own earnings. As the requirements of post-war reconstruction diminished, the World Bank extended its activities to providing loans for capital investment, and funds to assist economic development in poorer countries. The headquarters of both the World Bank and the IMF were situated in Washington. The managing director of the IMF was invariably European; all the early presidents of the World Bank were Americans.

The Bretton Woods Conference also agreed to establish stable exchange rates, by what amounted to a return to the gold exchange standard for all the participant countries. Each signatory to this agreement undertook to maintain a stable exchange rate for its currency, using the measurement of either gold or a convertible currency, which was in practice the US dollar, with a fixed rate of

one ounce of gold to \$35. The United States held the greater part of the world's gold reserves and was therefore the only state capable of assuring the convertibility of its currency into gold.

This new monetary system gave considerable advantages to the United States. The US dollar had the privileged status of being the equivalent of gold (indeed, better, since one could earn interest on dollar holdings) and was both a national and an international currency. It was convertible anywhere, allowing Americans to purchase goods, services or property with their own currency. No other currency in the world at that time had such power. But the advantages did not accrue solely to the United States. Stable exchange rates were considered to be a common interest, much preferable to the monetary confusion of the 1930s. The United States provided stable exchange rates, and other countries on the whole benefited from them. When in 1971 the United States had to abandon the gold standard and allow the dollar to float, the consequences were mixed and not always to the advantage of those who had grumbled at American domination.

The Bretton Woods Conference also proposed to set up an International Trade Organization, but this scheme was not accepted by the US Congress. However, in October 1947, a conference held at Geneva reached a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which proposed to introduce systematic tariff reductions by all the members of the conference. GATT became established as an organization, not simply as an agreement. Its headquarters were set up in Geneva, with a director general and a secretariat; and its members met once a year, and also in special conferences, to pursue the slow and difficult task of translating an agreement on the principle of tariff reduction into actual changes.

As statesmen looked around in 1945 and the following four or five years, they could find solid cause for satisfaction. The wartime alliance, despite some friction, was still in working order and held out the possibility of forming the basis for a new power system. A new world organization (the UN) had come into being on the initiative of one of the superpowers, the United States, and with the agreement of the other, the Soviet Union. There was a strong and encouraging trend towards regional cooperation. Vital steps had been taken to establish a new world economy, with provisions to finance reconstruction and stabilize exchange rates. The 'only' problem was that in the meantime the Cold War had begun. Many of the moves towards greater international economic and political organization were by-products of this new conflict, which would dominate world politics until 1991.

Notes

- 1 I. C. B. Dear and M. R. D. Foot, eds, *The Oxford Companion to the Second World War* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 290, 1060, 1199; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London, 1989), pp. 460–1.
- 2 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London, 1995), p. 425.
- 3 Dear and Foot, *Second World War*, pp. 1060, 1231–2, 1235; Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (London, 1997), pp. 286, 295. Figures for civilian casualties vary widely.
- 4 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), p. 12.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- 6 Dear and Foot, *Second World War*, p. 290.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life* (London, 1994), p. 210.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- 10 John Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Essays in History, Culture and Race* (London, 1996), p. 121; Dear and Foot, *Second World War*, p. 290, gives lower estimates.
- 11 Table in Dear and Foot, *Second World War*, p. 826.
- 12 W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. III: *The Grand Alliance* (London, 1950), p. 605.
- 13 For Nehru's complaint, see Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (London, 2007), p. 73.
- 14 Rosemary Righter, *Utopia Lost: The United Nations and World Order* (London, 1995), pp. 46, 327 for FAO, *passim* for UNESCO.
- 15 For the early years of the UN, see Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The United Nations and the Quest for World Government* (London, 2006).
- 16 For dates of Commonwealth membership, see <http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/commonwealth/>.

PART ONE

The Cold War, 1945–62



PHOTO 3 *Crises point in the Cold War: an American supply plane lands in West Berlin during the Soviet Blockade of 1948–9. The city was supplied by air; the Soviets buzzed American aircraft but did no more. The Cold War remained cold (Getty Images. Credit: Walter Sanders).*

3

The antagonists

*Power, ideology and proximity – National ambitions – Perceptions of the world
– Superpower rivalry.*

The Soviet Union and the United States at the end of the Second World War

In October 1944 President Roosevelt declared that ‘in this global war there is literally no question, political or military, in which the United States is not interested’. In 1946, Foreign Minister Molotov asserted that ‘the USSR is now one of the mightiest countries of the world. One cannot decide now *any* serious problems of international relations without the USSR.’ In these circumstances, the interests of the two states would be almost certain to conflict at some point and at some time.¹ The histories of Athens and Sparta in Ancient Greece, Rome and Carthage during the Punic Wars, Habsburg and Valois in the sixteenth century, Britain and France in the eighteenth century – all showed that it was virtually impossible for two great powers to come into close contact with one another without also coming into conflict. There would have to be some powerful reason if the United States and Soviet Union were to be different. Moreover, it is almost a commonplace that alliances break down when wars come to an end and common enemies are defeated. This had happened to the British, French and Americans after the defeat of Germany in 1918. It was almost certain to happen again in the case of the Grand Alliance in 1945, when victory was achieved and ideological differences, suppressed or ignored while the war continued, rose to the surface.

Indeed, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were made

more difficult because each embodied a creed. The United States was the standard-bearer of democracy, individual liberty and capitalism. The Soviet Union was the world's first and greatest socialist state, committed to building communism at home and displaying the beacon-light of the Workers' Fatherland to communists and sympathizers all over the world.

The two elements of power and ideology were so closely intertwined that it is very difficult to decide which was more important. On the one hand, if communism had been embodied only in some small state (e.g. Albania), the United States would scarcely have been perturbed; so from the American point of view it was communism *plus* power which produced conflict. On the other hand, the Soviet Union was hostile to Switzerland, a small country which offered no threat to its security but epitomized bourgeois values and success; so in this case, power was unimportant and ideology was crucial. Between these two extremes there were many variations, and the two elements of power and ideology went together in different proportions.

To the problems arising from power and ideology was added at the end of the Second World War the new fact of *proximity*. The United States and the Soviet Union had lived in the same world for a quarter of a century without being more than distantly hostile to one another, because they were geographically far apart. Their nearest point of contact was at the Bering Straits, where the western tip of Alaska is only 80 miles from the easternmost cape of Siberia; but there was no acute confrontation across those icy waters. It was when the Americans and Soviets met in the middle of Europe that they looked at one another with different eyes and their troubles began.

These three factors of power, ideology and proximity, taken together, made conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States at least probable and perhaps inevitable. But before going on to examine how the long and complicated struggle which we call the Cold War actually came about, let us pause to look briefly at the two superpowers as they stood between 1945 and 1946.

The Soviet Union

In June 1943 the Soviet Union adopted a new national anthem, which opened thus:

An indestructible union of free republics
Has forever been welded by Russia the Great.

Long live the land created by the will of the peoples:
The united, powerful Soviet Union!

It went on to proclaim that ‘Stalin brought us up’.² The new anthem thus linked together three great defining features of the state: Russia the Great, the heir of the Tsarist Empire; the Soviet Union, the product of the Bolshevik Revolution; and Stalin, who presented the formidable visage of a Red Tsar.

The mixture was a complicated one, and the inheritance of the country’s foreign policy was equally complex, made up of an uneasy combination of expansionist drive and deep-seated insecurity. For centuries Moscow had claimed to be the ‘Third Rome’ (after Rome itself and Byzantium), with a mission to safeguard the Russian Orthodox religion and the Slav peoples in other countries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Russia had pushed southwards into the Caucasus and Central Asia, and eastwards through Siberia to the Pacific. Russian armies had imposed order in Budapest in 1849 on behalf of the Habsburgs, and crushed risings in Poland in 1830 and 1863 on their own account. In theory, the communist regime discarded much of this inheritance, rejecting religion altogether and claiming to rise above race or nationality. But in practice, the drive for expansion continued and retained many of its old features. During the Second World War, Stalin deliberately set out to recover lost Tsarist territory in Poland and in the Far East. After the war, the Soviet Army was again to crush national aspirations in Budapest in 1956 and to suppress Polish independence.

At the same time, and under both Tsarist and Soviet regimes, insecurity and fear of invasion remained endemic. These fears went far back to the irruption of the Mongols in the thirteenth century (vividly evoked by Eisenstein in the opening scenes of *Alexander Nevsky*), followed by the invasions by Charles XII of Sweden in 1709, Napoleon in 1812 and the Germans from 1917 to 1918. Allied intervention against the Bolsheviks between 1918 and 1920 gave these apprehensions a new, ideological twist. Finally the German assault in 1941 and the great struggle which followed confirmed all these obsessions about foreign invasion and the absolute necessity of security. Soviet foreign policy thus had deep roots in both a tradition of expansion and a chronic sense of insecurity. It was a difficult combination for the Soviets themselves to manage and for outsiders to understand.

The nature of the Soviet state which lay behind this foreign policy has been crisply defined thus: ‘The USSR was a highly centralized, one-party

dictatorship. It enforced a single official ideology; imposed severe restrictions on national, religious and cultural self-expression. Its economy was predominantly state-owned.’³ All these aspects of the Soviet system had their impact on relations with other countries; but in 1945 the great problem was that the system itself was in disarray. The war had left a trail of material destruction and administrative confusion. Armed opposition to Soviet authority was active in eastern Poland, in the Baltic states (annexed between 1939 and 1940) and in the Ukraine, where guerrilla bands held out until the middle of the 1950s. Stalin’s answer was severe and large-scale repression. Dissident populations in the Baltic states and Chechnya were deported in large numbers. Party control over literature, science and the arts was tightened. Ideological orthodoxy, which had been somewhat relaxed during the war in order to appeal to Russian patriotism, was sternly reimposed to ensure internal unity and to eliminate all external influences.

As the head of the state, Stalin emerged from the Second World War with his authority over his own country and the international communist movement virtually absolute. (There were some doubts and discontents in Tito’s Yugoslavia, but these were not yet significant.) The triumphs of 1945 allowed him to shrug off the disasters of 1941, and in the years to come he was untouchable in a way that none of his successors had been. In this position of supreme authority, he contrived to pursue two purposes: the security of the Soviet state, which he saw largely in territorial terms; and the defence and advancement of socialism. There is no sign that he saw any contradiction between the two. In the pursuit of security, he was prepared to do business with any and every specimen of humanity. In 1939 he had met Ribbentrop and made a deal with Hitler. During the war he was on good terms with Churchill and Roosevelt. After the war he maintained good relations with Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Nationalists before, in 1950, welcoming Mao Zedong to Moscow and signing a treaty of alliance with the new Chinese communist government. In these contacts he did not allow considerations of ideology to interfere with the pursuit of the interests of the Soviet state, as these were interpreted from time to time. In the years immediately following the war, he made some public moves away from the revolutionary inheritance of Bolshevism – the title of commissar for foreign affairs was changed to that of foreign minister, and even the famous Red Army was renamed the Soviet Army. Yet the Soviet Union still embodied the Bolshevik Revolution, and in 1945 it was still the only socialist state in the world. Its interests were therefore by definition the same as those of international

communism, and there was no distinction between them. As two recent historians of Soviet foreign policy concluded, Stalin was motivated by twin and inseparable purposes: 'the promise of Communist revolutionary universalism combined with the necessities of survival for the Soviet Union, the first and unique "Socialist" empire'.⁴

On 9 February 1946, Stalin struck a confident note in a speech at the Bolshoi Theatre, in which he claimed that the Second World War had been 'a kind of examination for our Soviet order, for our state, for our Communist Party'. They had passed the test, and victory had demonstrated the superiority of the Soviet order. Yet at the same time the Soviet Union must still press on to produce 50 million tons of iron, 60 million tons of steel, 60 million tons of petroleum, and only thus would the country be safe against all contingencies. He also stressed the importance of science, declaring that Soviet scientists would be able to overtake the achievements of science elsewhere.⁵ His thoughts doubtless dwelt at that point on the atomic bomb. Stalin had been well informed about the progress of the American atomic project and received news of an imminent test just before he set off to the Potsdam Conference. Even so, he was badly shaken by the actual explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and in August 1945 he threw everything into building a Soviet atomic bomb. He put Lavrenti Beria (the head of the secret police) in charge of a vast project, which moved at headlong speed, so that a bomb was tested as early as 1949. But for the time being, the Soviet Union was behind the United States in a vital area of power and prestige. Stalin put a brave face on it, claiming that the bomb was only intended to frighten those with weak nerves; but in practice his caution, always a marked characteristic of his foreign policy, was reinforced.

Stalin's right-hand man in foreign policy was Vyacheslav Molotov, foreign minister from 1939 to 1949. Molotov was an old Bolshevik who never lost his original convictions – 'a man morally committed to the Revolution'.⁶ Even when Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev had him expelled from the Communist Party, he insisted on going personally to the bank every month to pay his party dues, until after twenty-three years he had the satisfaction of seeing his membership formally restored. He took a straightforward view of his work as foreign minister. Reflecting in 1974, he remarked: 'My task as minister of foreign affairs was to expand the borders of our Fatherland. And it seems that Stalin and I coped with this task quite well.' And again: 'Stalin often said that Russia wins wars but doesn't know how to avail itself of the fruits of victory. ... But we did well after this war [the Second World War] because we strengthened

the Soviet state. It was my main task as minister of foreign affairs to see that we would not be cheated.’⁷ On relations with the United States, his views were brisk and matter of fact.

The cold war – I don’t like the expression. It sounds like Khrushchev’s. ... But what does the ‘cold war’ mean? Strained relations. It was entirely their doing or because we were on the offensive. They certainly hardened their line against us, but we had to consolidate our conquests. ... To squeeze out the capitalist order. This was the cold war. Of course, you had to know when and where to stop. I believe in this respect Stalin kept well within the limits.⁸

There was no rancour in this, and no sense of lost opportunities to maintain good relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviet purpose was ‘to squeeze out the capitalist order’; and the Western powers ‘behaved the only way they could – as enemies of the Soviet Union and the Socialist way of life’.⁹ Molotov made no particular distinction between ideology and power politics, both of which worked in the same direction.

By September 1946 he had taken stock of the situation, in consultation with the Soviet ambassador in Washington, and reached some general conclusions about relations with the United States. The Americans had abandoned isolation and were set on achieving world supremacy. They would seek to limit or dislodge Soviet influence in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and to establish new bases on the periphery of the Soviet Union. To counter these policies, the best strategy was to exploit contradictions between the imperialist powers, especially the Americans and the British, whose interests were bound to clash in the Middle East, as the Americans sought to increase their control over the oilfields.¹⁰ At the time these were cautious and not unreasonable calculations, and their conclusions were far from apocalyptic.

Stalin and Molotov were hardened by years of war and political struggle, and they were far more experienced than any Western statesmen following Roosevelt’s death and Churchill’s electoral defeat in 1945. Truman especially seemed to them a beginner in international affairs – Stalin called him a ‘petty shopkeeper’.¹¹ They were not afraid of their American opponents and were unlikely to be perturbed by difficult negotiations or verbal confrontations. Their approach was prudent and calculating – as Molotov said, ‘You had to know when and where to stop.’ The United States was their enemy; but it was an enmity which might last a long time. There was no need to hurry.

The United States

The American political system and tradition were very different from those of the Soviet Union. The United States was founded on the principles of individual liberty and democratic elections for all kinds of office, from the presidency to the local school board. Its vast area was held together by a flexible form of federal government which retained important powers for the individual states of the Union. The American economic system was based on free enterprise, vigorous capitalism and the free market, tempered by limited government intervention and the recent New Deal radicalism of Franklin Roosevelt's presidency. The broad though not unmixed success of this form of government and economics had given the great majority of the American people an enormous confidence in their own country and way of life, recently reinforced by victory in war over Germany and Japan.

The foreign policy of this comparatively new state (just under 170 years old in 1945) comprised different and sometimes contradictory strands. The United States had been created by a long westward expansion from the original thirteen states on the Atlantic coast. This expansion had involved movements of population and settlement on a vast scale. It had also included small wars against the Indians, or Native Americans, and a big war against Mexico in 1846–8, which bore some resemblance to the Russian conflicts with the khanates of Central Asia and the Turks. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there had been no firm idea of where this expansion should stop. In 1898, in the Spanish–American War, the United States annexed Hawaii in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and the Philippines on the far side of it. By 1945 the Philippines were on the way to independence, but in 1959 Hawaii became a fully fledged state of the Union. The tradition of expansion, justified by the claim to be working out the 'manifest destiny' of the American people, was very strong.

Yet this expansion was accompanied by an equally powerful tradition of opposition to colonialism as practised by other countries. The United States had come into existence by breaking free from the British Empire and regarded itself as the natural leader for other peoples rightly struggling to be free. There was also a strong current of even higher idealism, claiming for the United States the role of leading the world to a better form of political and international organization. During the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson embodied this idealism and tried to put it into practice by proclaiming new principles of international conduct and creating the League of Nations to put them into practice.

At that stage he was decisively repudiated by the United States Congress and public opinion, then under the powerful influence of so-called isolationism, which formed yet another strand in the American outlook on foreign affairs. Thomas Jefferson, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, had warned his fellow countrymen against the dangers of 'entangling alliances', and his words had made a lasting impression. In the nineteenth century, most immigrants to the United States from Europe wished to leave Europe and its troubles behind them. At the end of the First World War isolationism prevailed over Wilson's internationalist idealism, and at the end of the Second World War there was still, at the very least, a strong instinct to 'bring the boys home'.

All these instincts were real and deep-rooted. They were tempered by a strand of realpolitik and power politics, personified about the turn of the century by Theodore Roosevelt but practised by many of his predecessors and successors. The United States treated the Caribbean as its own sphere of predominance; installed an American zone to ensure control of the Panama Canal; and extended its economic influence over much of Central and South America. By the end of the Second World War this predominance in the Western hemisphere was accompanied by the new strategic interests of a superpower, with large armed forces, bases stretched across the Pacific and the sole possession of the atomic bomb.

Foreign policy was also influenced by the interests of a vast capitalist and free-market economy. As the Second World War ended, the American economy was thriving, stimulated by the almost unlimited demands of war. Yet many Americans were afraid that the wartime boom would collapse into depression, and therefore they sought to promote their continued prosperity by securing markets for their exports, raw materials for their industries and access to oil to meet the growing demand for fuel.

American foreign policy was also subject to the influence of an active and alert public opinion. It was true that the main body of the American public took little or no interest in foreign affairs, except in wartime; but there was a substantial minority that did. Readers of the serious press, especially on the east coast; pressure groups associated with foreign causes such as Zionism or missionary enterprises in China; and the various groups of 'hyphenated Americans' (Polish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Irish-Americans) – all made their presence felt. Newspaper editors and columnists and radio commentators could be highly influential. One example was Walter Lippmann, an outstanding newspaper columnist who became something of an oracle for the American political elite.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee often focused on the opinions of these different groups and itself brought pressure to bear on the government. The upshot was a complicated mixture of opinions and pressure groups, which no president or secretary of state could afford to ignore. It was a situation completely unknown in the Soviet Union and was frequently baffling to Soviet leaders and officials who were accustomed to a very different system of conducting foreign policy. (Indeed, it could sometimes be equally difficult and disconcerting for America's allies.) Between 1945 and 1946 American public opinion was highly diverse and certainly not settled in an anti-Soviet stance. The East Coast press and New Deal activists of the Roosevelt era were still radical in their outlook, and the wartime enthusiasm for the Soviet Union continued well into 1946. It was symptomatic that when Churchill made his famous speech at Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946, denouncing the iron curtain which had fallen across Europe and appealing for a renewed Anglo-American alliance, he evoked as much hostility as support in the American press and public opinion.

The presence of these different elements – idealism, power politics, economic interests and the various currents of public opinion – meant that American foreign policy was sometimes uncertain, or even erratic. One set of views or interests could pull against another. For example, American economic interests required sterling to become freely convertible into dollars after the war, to the advantage of American exporters; but when the British introduced convertibility in 1947, its effects were so damaging to the British economy that the United States speedily agreed to the abandonment of the attempt. The value of Britain as an ally outweighed the advantages of convertibility for American economic interests. Again, in 1945, American idealism in its anti-imperialist mode led the United States to oppose the return of French forces to Indo-China; but by 1950, the influence of power politics and the new idealism of the Cold War brought the Americans to aid the French in their struggle against Vietnamese nationalist and communist forces. The very nature of American politics meant that there were always tensions and disagreements about foreign policy; which made it all the more remarkable when the United States set out to pursue a long-term policy and stuck to it, as it did – despite many ups and downs – during the Cold War.

The head of the US government from 1945 to 1953 was President Harry Truman, the former vice president, who suddenly acceded to the highest post after the death of Roosevelt in April 1945. He was not a commanding figure in the United States and was virtually unknown in the rest of the world. He was almost totally inexperienced in foreign policy. But he had learnt about life and

politics in two hard schools: he served as an artillery officer in France in 1918, and he made his way as a politician in the tough world of Kansas City politics, which was run (as was the whole state of Missouri) by the local political boss, Tom Pendergast. It was said that Truman once remarked that Stalin's methods were similar to Pendergast's, which was certainly unfair to Pendergast, but showed that Truman recognized when he had come up against a tough character. In 1945 Truman was feeling his way, but he soon showed remarkable strength of character and powers of decision.¹²

Condemned to enmity?

Was it inevitable that these two superpowers, with their different interests and outlooks, would become opponents? The weight of historical precedent, and the pressures created by rivalries of power, interest and ideology and the problems of proximity, all indicated the likelihood of conflict. Yet in 1945 there were significant pointers in the opposite direction.

When Truman became president of the United States, and was finding his bearings in his new responsibilities, he was anxious to follow the lines laid down by Roosevelt in dealing with Stalin and to pursue his predecessor's vision of a new world order. As we have seen, he had previously expressed some hostility to communism, but he held no fixed view that the Soviet Union was an enemy and was perfectly willing to meet Stalin and get on with him. There were signs that Stalin too wished to avoid direct confrontation with his wartime allies. In Europe, some communist leaders complained that Stalin was keener on reaching agreements with the 'imperialists' than on supporting them. For example, Tito felt he received insufficient support for his territorial demands in Trieste; while in France and Italy fleeting communist ideas of seizing power were firmly checked by Moscow. In the Pacific, a significant issue arose concerning the arrangements for the surrender of Japanese forces in the home islands of Japan. On 16 August Stalin wrote to Truman proposing that Soviet forces accept the surrender of Japanese troops in northern Hokkaido, the part of Japan nearest to Soviet territory. Truman refused, insisting that Japanese forces on all the home islands surrender to the Americans. Stalin at first responded by ordering his troops to occupy Hokkaido; but he then countermanded the order on 22 August to avoid trouble with the Americans.

Above all, the Potsdam Conference of July 1945 was at least a partial success, if only because the three participants were determined that it should not fail.

They still had to finish the war against Japan; they agreed on the outlines of a German policy; and the Americans and British accepted what amounted to a Soviet solution to the Polish question. They agreed to carry forward their cooperation by means of the Council of Foreign Ministers (American, British, French and Soviet), which was to pursue the work begun at Potsdam and prepare peace treaties. All was not well in the wartime alliance, but in many respects it continued to work. In the autumn of 1945, the two superpowers had not yet become antagonists.

In 1945 there was no certainty as to how events would turn out. We now know that the next forty-five years were to be dominated by the struggle between the superpowers which we call the Cold War. A string of questions arises in relation to that development. What was the Cold War, and how did it earn that striking but imprecise designation? How and why did the Cold War come about? Do we know who started it – indeed, does such a question have much meaning in the context of these complicated events? We will examine these questions in the next four chapters.

Notes

- 1 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London, paperback ed., 1989), p. 470, juxtaposes the two quotations and argues that a clash of interests was inevitable.
- 2 Quoted in Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (London, 1997), pp. 282, 315.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. xxi.
- 4 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), p. 12.
- 5 David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy* (London, 1994), pp. 148–9.
- 6 Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 82.
- 7 Vyacheslav Molotov, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev*, ed. Albert Resis (Chicago, 1993), pp. 8, 53.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- 9 Quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 89.
- 10 Memorandum by Novikov, ambassador in Washington, as amended by Molotov, 27 September 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 101–3.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 95.
- 12 See Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life* (London, 1994), chapters 4 and 7.

4

The beginning of the Cold War: From Potsdam to the Marshall Plan, 1945–7

Conferences and peace treaties – Germany and the German Question – The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – Turkey and Greece – Kennan’s ‘long telegram’ and Churchill’s Fulton speech – The Truman Doctrine – The Marshall Plan – The concept of containment.

In the period that elapsed between the Potsdam Conference in July–August 1945 and the summer of 1947, relations between the antagonists broke down. In Western Europe, the communists moved into bitter opposition to the democratic governments of the region. Subsequently, the North Atlantic Treaty (April 1949) bound together the United States, Canada and ten European countries in alliance against the Soviet Union. In Eastern Europe, Stalinist regimes were imposed almost everywhere. Europe was divided by an ‘iron curtain’ of barbed wire, minefields and machine guns. Across this great divide, the two sides tried to undermine one another by propaganda, espionage and covert operations.

Yet they went no further. American and Soviet tanks confronted one another on occasion. Soviet fighters buzzed American transport aircraft. But the fateful shots were never fired. It was the Cold War, not a third world war, which began between 1945 and 1949.

These events raise two crucial questions. First, how and why did the superpowers and the European countries move from the position in 1945 to that of 1949? Second, why did hostilities remain ‘cold’, rather than resulting in the

actual fighting which sometimes seemed so close? Discussion of these questions has been much influenced by debates as to who started the Cold War, or who was responsible for it. Schools of thought have arisen among historians, especially in the United States (orthodox, revisionist, neo-revisionist, post-revisionist), holding that the Soviets were to blame, or the Americans, or both at once, or neither.¹ These debates have done much to stimulate research, but here it is best to start by trying to explain what happened rather than ascribe responsibility. Let us begin by clarifying the course of events, in two stages: first, from the Potsdam Conference to the Marshall Plan (from 1945 to 1947), and then in the next chapter from the Czechoslovakian crisis of February 1948 to the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949.

The Council of Foreign Ministers, 1945–7

At the beginning – though this is often forgotten – real progress was made towards a peace settlement in Europe after the Second World War. As we have seen, at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, the victorious powers made arrangements for the administration of Germany, and fixed a de facto frontier between Poland and Germany. It was assumed that peace treaties would be drawn up, as was customary at the end of wars; and the conference agreed to set up a Council of Foreign Ministers to prepare peace settlements with the various former enemy powers: first with Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland; and later with Austria and Germany. The Council was to consist formally of the representatives of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China; but China played little part, and it was understood that France was to be concerned only with the treaties involving Italy and Germany.

There ensued a series of meetings and conferences between 1945 and 1946, as follows:

- Council of Foreign Ministers, London, from September to October 1945
- Foreign Ministers' Meeting (USA, USSR, Britain), Moscow, December 1945
- Council of Foreign Ministers, Paris, from April to May 1946
- Council of Foreign Ministers, Paris, from June to July 1946
- Paris Peace Conference (twenty-one countries), from 29 July to 15 October 1946
- Council of Foreign Ministers, New York, from November to December

1946

- Council of Foreign Ministers, Moscow, from March to April 1947
- Council of Foreign Ministers, London, from November to December 1947

The result was a series of five peace treaties, with Italy, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Finland, all prepared at the Paris Peace Conference which formally concluded on 10 February 1947. Peace treaties with Austria and Germany were discussed at the Council of Foreign Ministers in Moscow, between March and April 1947, but without reaching agreement.

Despite these later failures, the peace treaties signed in February 1947 represented a considerable achievement by the victorious powers and demonstrated that they could still attain a measure of agreement and compromise. They deserve careful attention.

The treaty with Italy included some complicated territorial arrangements. Italy lost the Dodecanese Islands to Greece, and Albanian independence was restored after its annexation by Italy in 1939. Italy also lost territory to Yugoslavia; and the port of Trieste had to be left in dispute, with the United States and Britain supporting the Italian claim to retain it, while the Soviet Union supported the Yugoslav attempt to annex it. A compromise based on zones of administration was reached; but it was not until 1954 that a final solution had been reached by which Trieste itself was retained by Italy and the hinterland passed on to Yugoslavia.

In Africa, Italy had held colonies in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Italian Somaliland and Libya. Ethiopia had already resumed its independence, which was confirmed by the treaty. But the other three territories presented problems. In 1946, the Soviet Union claimed a mandate over Libya under the aegis of the United Nations (UN), which would have established a Soviet foothold in the central Mediterranean. Britain opposed this, and countered by proposing independence for all three colonies. A decision was postponed, using a formula by which if the four victorious powers (USA, USSR, Britain and France) failed to reach agreement within a year of the Italian peace treaty coming into force, the matter was to be referred to the General Assembly of the UN – an early example of the use of the UN as an escape route from a diplomatic impasse. In the event the four powers did not agree, and the UN made a series of rulings by which Italian Somaliland became a UN trust territory in 1950; Libya became independent in 1951; and Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia in 1952 – an arrangement which was later bitterly disputed by Eritrean separatists.

The treaty also imposed restrictions on Italian internal affairs, by which the

Italian government undertook not to allow the resurgence of Fascist organizations; to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms; and to limit the size of its armed forces. Italy was to pay reparations to Yugoslavia, Greece, the Soviet Union, Ethiopia and Albania, in descending order of magnitude. Overall, the treaty was greeted with dismay in Italy. Italians regarded themselves as being among the victims of Fascism and considered that they had redeemed themselves by switching sides in September 1943 and by fighting a sometimes heroic war of popular resistance against the German army of occupation. On 10 February 1947, *Il Popolo*, the newspaper of the ruling Christian Democracy party, proclaimed that 'Rome is united in dignified protest while at Paris Italy is being mutilated'.²

The other peace treaties imposed a number of territorial changes. Romania lost Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union, which had annexed these provinces in 1940. Bulgaria retained the southern Dobrudja, even though it had been gained from Romania under a German-imposed treaty in 1940, but returned some Serbian territory to Yugoslavia and Western Thrace to Greece. Hungary returned to the frontiers of 1920, losing (or returning) Transylvania to Romania and southern Slovakia to Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union obtained the right to maintain troops in Hungary and Romania, in order to safeguard communications with its occupation forces in Austria. Finland ceded to the Soviet Union three pieces of territory previously lost in 1940: the port and province of Petsamo in the north; an area in the centre of the border with the Soviet Union; and the Karelian isthmus in the south east. The Soviet Union secured a lease of the Porkkala–Udd area as a naval base for fifty years – though in fact they were to give it up in 1955. All five countries were to pay reparations of varying amounts to their different enemies (although only Finland did pay its reparations bill in full).

These were important treaties, dealing with some difficult issues, and implying serious consequences for the countries directly concerned. It is true that they were of lesser importance for the superpowers, but they still showed what could be achieved by patient negotiation between the victors. Germany presented much more serious problems.

Germany and the German Question

Much of European international politics in the first part of the twentieth century had been dominated by the German Question: what role was this comparatively

new, prosperous and powerful country to play in Europe? Twice, in 1914–18 and 1939–45, Germany had fought great wars to establish its hegemony, and in 1945 there was widespread fear that it might try again. The question of how to prevent such an attempt was crucial, especially to the Soviet Union and France, which had been invaded by Germany, and only marginally less so to Britain. The United States, safe across the Atlantic, took a more relaxed view.

As well as these vital but rather general questions, there were a number of specific matters to be resolved in 1945. Where were the German borders to be fixed? In the west, France claimed that the Saarland should be detached from Germany, preferably to the benefit of France. In the east, the Oder–Neisse line settled at Potsdam was only an administrative device, and a recognized frontier between Germany and Poland remained to be agreed by treaty.

Behind the question of frontiers lay another issue: Was Germany to be kept in one piece or not? At Yalta, the establishment of four occupation zones (Soviet, American, British and French) had been agreed on, with a corresponding division of Berlin into four zones, but the issue of breaking Germany up permanently had been postponed. At Potsdam, the Big Three decided to keep Germany in one piece (though diminished in size by loss of territory in the east) and to administer the country as a whole. The four commanders-in-chief of the occupation forces would constitute a Control Council, in which each power would possess a veto, so that decisions could only be reached unanimously. Similarly, Berlin was to have its central authority, subject to the Control Council.

In principle, the joint administration of occupied Germany required agreement between the occupying powers on the aims which they were to pursue. In practice, this proved to be impossible. The Soviets, seeking both revenge and to make up some of their immense material losses, made the exaction of reparations their first objective, removing equipment, machinery and even whole factories when they could be found from their own occupation zone, and whenever possible from the other zones as well. One historian says, ‘The Russian appetite for German factories and goods was insatiable.’³ The Soviet occupiers also took reparations from current production, both industrial and agricultural, in their own zone.

The Americans and the British took a very different view. Their occupation zones were densely populated and mainly industrial and required imports of food and raw materials. They therefore argued that current industrial production should pay for imports, and that some of the agricultural production of the Soviet

zone should feed the population of the Western zones. In fact, the Americans fed the population of their zone at their own expense; and in July 1946 the British government introduced bread rationing at home (a measure never found necessary during the war) in order to export wheat to the British zone in Germany.

In these circumstances, the Americans and the British ceased to treat Germany as an economic whole. As early as May 1946 General Clay, the commander-in-chief of the American occupation zone, stopped the transfer of reparations from the American to the Soviet zone. In July, the American and British zones were merged, for administrative purposes, into the clumsily named 'Bizonia'. These changes arose from the practical necessity of feeding the German population, but the Americans quickly pressed the more general issue of promoting German economic recovery. In a speech at Stuttgart on 6 September 1946, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes declared that the economic recovery of the continent as a whole would slow down if Germany was turned into a poorhouse. Instead, Germany must be allowed to export enough goods to pay her own way. This was a sensible course of action; but it was not the policy that had been agreed by the Allies in 1945. In their zone, the Soviets continued to exact reparations rather than restore the economy; and the French too stood out of Bizonia and continued to take reparations out of current production until 1947. The economic division of Germany had begun.

The political division of Germany also began in 1946. Early that year the Soviet occupation authorities permitted the resumption of political activities within their zone, but insisted on the amalgamation of the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party into the Socialist Unity Party, which was simply a front for communist control. In the other zones, political activity also resumed; and the British and the Americans, in different ways, encouraged the development of political pluralism. The Communist Party attempted amalgamation with the Social Democrats, as in the east, but the latter firmly refused, recognizing a takeover when they saw one. In Berlin, the Social Democratic Party and the Socialist Unity Party existed side by side, and their relative popularity was tested in elections for local government and a mayor in October 1946. The result was a substantial victory for the Social Democrats, who were supported by both the British and the American occupation authorities. A crucial political division of Germany thus began, with the Soviets insisting on the hegemony of the Socialist Unity Party in their zone, and the Americans and the British developing a multiparty system based on their own

form of representative democracy. The French, for their part, were more reluctant than any of the other occupying powers to entrust the Germans with political responsibilities, arguing that caution should prevail.

By the beginning of 1947, the Allied policy towards Germany that had been sketched out at Potsdam had broken down, and the economic and political division of the country was under way. It remained to be seen whether the occupying powers could agree on a new policy. From 10 March to 24 April 1947, the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain and France met in conference in Moscow to discuss the preparation of peace treaties with Germany and Austria. They held no fewer than forty-three sessions, mainly on reparations and economic questions, but failed to reach agreement on any substantial matter. The participants agreed that there should be a peace conference to draw up a German peace treaty, but not on which countries should be invited – for example, the Soviets proposed to leave out the British Commonwealth states (which had fought throughout the war) and various Latin American countries (which had entered the conflict late in the day). The British and the Americans wanted to include both groups. The Soviets insisted on the sum of \$10 billion in reparations to be paid in part from current production in the whole of Germany, as had been agreed at Potsdam. The Americans and the British were opposed to the Soviets taking reparations from current production in their united zones. However, on this question, the Soviets were adamant – as Stalin told Secretary of State George C. Marshall on his face, the Americans and the British could afford to be generous on reparations, but the Soviet Union could not. On the question of the future government of Germany, the Soviets favoured a centralized government and claimed a share in the control of the Ruhr. The Americans and the British proposed a strong form of federal government, while the French argued for a weak form. In the course of the meetings, the French were forced into what was for them an unwelcome choice. At the start of the conference, the French had hoped to cooperate with the Soviet Union on reparations, on which they held similar views, in return for Soviet support on French claims in the Saarland; but Molotov refused even to discuss the Saarland, and the French foreign minister, Georges Bidault, concluded that France would have to work with the Americans and the British, join Bizonia and relax its reparations policy. This change, which was implemented by June 1947, established the division of Germany on an East–West basis, which it thereafter retained. It also meant that France had effectively joined the western camp in the developing Cold War.

The Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers thus failed to make any progress towards a German peace treaty and confirmed the division of Germany which had been under way for over a year. This division, which was of crucial significance in the whole of post-war international relations, did not come about by agreement between the superpowers, but when it came they acquiesced in it. This created a paradoxical state of affairs which was to persist until 1990. The Soviets and the Americans both insisted that it was desirable to reunite Germany and to end the unnatural division of the German people. The British and the French occasionally echoed these sentiments, with varying degrees of conviction. Yet every practical step taken by these various governments confirmed the status quo. The superpowers spoke of a united Germany; but by their actions they made sure that it remained divided.

A divided Germany was the most obvious, and in many ways the most perilous, element in the Cold War, raising from time to time the imminent danger of war. Yet what also emerged in Germany was a tacit willingness on both sides to maintain the status quo. The German Question threatened war, and yet it also held the secret of stability and safety.

The division of Germany was the most important event in Europe between 1945 and early 1947, and played the greatest role in the deterioration of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. But there were two lesser developments which also had their effects, in one case chronic and insidious, in the other acute and incisive. The first was the establishment of a Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe; the second was the situation in Greece and Turkey.

The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

It was Stalin's intention throughout the Second World War to establish a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, to ensure the security of the Soviet Union and to extend the area of communist control. In 1945–6 this sphere was firmly established. Its core consisted of the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, which in 1949 became the German Democratic Republic, and five central and East European states: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. At this stage, there were considerable differences between the regimes operating in these countries. In Poland, the government formed in June 1945 was predominantly communist. Elections held in January 1947 were accompanied by intimidation and fraud, and the misnamed 'Democratic Bloc' led by the communists grabbed 80 per cent of the votes. Mikołajczyk, the leader of the

Peasant Party and the prime minister, was forced to flee the country. In Hungary, the Smallholders' Party won 57 per cent of the vote, and the Communist Party only 17 per cent in the November 1945 elections; but the coalition government which followed allowed the communists to control the Ministry of the Interior, and so the security police. In Bulgaria, where there was more sympathy for Russia than elsewhere, a new constitution along Soviet lines was introduced in 1947, which effectively gave power to the communists under the name of the Fatherland Front. In Romania, the Soviets intervened to nominate a government as early as February 1945, but coalition governments survived and the monarchy remained until King Michael was forced to abdicate in December 1947.

Czechoslovakia held a key position, because it was a country with a strong parliamentary tradition, and with a president (Edouard Benes) who was determined to cooperate with the Soviet Union on a friendly basis, balancing between east and west. In the first post-war elections, the Communist Party emerged as the strongest single party, with 38 per cent of the vote, which was far from overwhelming. In a coalition government, the prime minister, Klement Gottwald, was a communist, but the foreign minister was Jan Masaryk, the son of the founder of the Czechoslovakian state and a figure much respected throughout Western Europe. As in Hungary, the communists controlled internal security and also the radio.

Throughout Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union was militarily predominant. Soviet troops were stationed from 1945 onwards in Poland, Romania and Hungary. Czechoslovakia had no Soviet garrison, but was almost entirely surrounded by Soviet-occupied territory. There were other important forces tending to communist control. Over much of Eastern Europe, socialism seemed to offer the best way forward – other economic and social systems had been tried and failed, and conservatism had often been discredited by association with fascism. More sinister links were also established. In each country, a secret police force was set up on the pattern of the NKVD and under the command of Soviet officers. Communist leaders in the various countries became dependent on the Soviet Union, which kept them in positions of power, privilege and financial advantage. In April 1947, Matyas Rakosi, the Hungarian communist leader, visited Molotov and asked him how long Soviet troops were going to stay in Hungary – not because he wanted them to leave, but because he was anxious for them to remain.

On the edges of this Soviet sphere of predominance there lay debatable lands. In the north, Finland escaped Soviet occupation and gradually evolved a

successful compromise between acceptance of Soviet control in foreign affairs and a full measure of internal freedom. To the south, Tito's government in Yugoslavia could claim to have liberated the country largely by its own efforts between 1944 and 1945; and the Yugoslavs were closely attached to the Soviet sphere between 1945 and 1947 without entirely falling within it. For example, Tito used his own initiative to try to set up a form of confederation between Yugoslavia and other Balkan states during 1946–7, and he provided support for the Greek communists when Stalin did not. In June 1948 these differences were to develop into a fatal split between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. These two exceptions to the rule of Soviet predominance were to prove of considerable importance in the long run; but between 1946 and 1947 it was the mass of the Soviet bloc which loomed large.

In some ways, there was no great reason for the establishment of this bloc to impinge on Soviet–American relations. The United States had no immediate interests in Eastern Europe (though the Polish-American population counted for something in American public opinion). It soon became clear that while the Americans might grumble about Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, they were not prepared to take serious action to disrupt it, and certainly not to risk war. Even so, the Soviet Union was a presence looming over the rest of Europe. Its armed forces were far stronger than any that could be deployed by any other European power, and greater in numbers than anything the Americans could deploy. In 1947, it was natural to ask where the advance of Soviet power was going to stop, and to be alarmed about the possible answers. By the end of that year, the image of the Soviet Union in the West was changing rapidly, from the much-admired wartime ally and the benevolent 'Uncle Joe' to something much more threatening.



MAP 4 *Central Europe and the Iron Curtain.*

The United States reacts, 1946–7

From 1945 to 1946 there was a continuous state of tension, a sort of grumbling appendix of a crisis, in Turkey and Greece. In June 1945, Foreign Minister Molotov asked the Turkish government for the lease of a base on the straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean – a long-standing Russian aim going back to the time of the Tsars. The Turks refused. In August 1946 the Soviets renewed their request for a base, coupled with a demand for a revision of the rules governing the passage of warships through the straits, laid down by the Montreux Convention of 1936. Again the Turks refused. On this occasion, the United States thought that a Soviet attack on Turkey was likely, and prepared a war plan which included the possibility of using atomic weapons. In the event, Moscow did not press its demands. At the same time a civil war was continuing in Greece between the government, supported by the British, and communist guerrillas, supported by Yugoslavia (though not by the Soviet Union – Stalin stood by his agreement made with Churchill in October 1944).

So far, these events were not of decisive importance. The appendix grumbled on, geographically on the margins of Europe and apparently on the margins of everyone's concerns. Yet in 1947 this area was to produce a decisive development in the shape of the Truman Doctrine of March 1947. To grasp why,

we must go back a little in time.

The ‘long telegram’ and the Fulton speech, 1946

At the beginning of 1946 American policy towards the Soviet Union was becoming uncertain. Meetings of foreign ministers were growing increasingly difficult. Truman felt that Roosevelt’s hope of building a *rapprochement* with Stalin and bringing the Soviets into the international club was failing. On 5 January 1946, the president expostulated to James F. Byrnes that he was ‘tired of babying the Soviets’.⁴ But no new policy was in prospect.

Early in 1946 two interventions, one private, the other highly public, brought new influences to bear on American policy: George Kennan’s ‘long telegram’ from Moscow (22 February 1946) and Churchill’s speech at Fulton, Missouri, on 5 March.

Kennan was a senior diplomat, temporarily in charge of the American Embassy in Moscow. In February 1946 he received a routine enquiry from the State Department about a particular aspect of Soviet activity. In reply, he analysed the roots and nature of Soviet foreign policy, in a telegram of some 8,000 words, ‘all neatly divided’ (in Kennan’s characteristic description), ‘like an eighteenth-century Protestant sermon, into five separate parts’. Kennan wrote from a long experience of Soviet affairs (he had first been posted to Moscow in the 1930s, at the height of Stalin’s purges) and a deep knowledge of the Russian language, literature and history. As early as September 1944 he had pointed out in a memorandum to Washington that the Russians would establish their own sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and in parts of Asia, and argued that the United States should draw a line beyond which they would not allow Soviet power to operate unchallenged.

In the ‘long telegram’, Kennan explained that the Soviet leaders worked on the fixed assumption that they were surrounded by capitalist enemies, whom one day they would have to fight (though fortunately the capitalists were also hostile to one another, and their disputes could be exploited). In this hostile world, the security of the Soviet Union could only be achieved by ‘a patient but deadly struggle for the total destruction of their rivals’. This belief was dogmatic (and Kennan urged his readers not to underrate the importance of dogma); but it was also deeply rooted in geography and history, which had left the Russian people with a profound sense of insecurity. Kennan concluded: ‘Here we have a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with the United States

there can be no permanent *modus vivendi*, that it is necessary and desirable that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state broken, if Soviet power is to be secure.' Coping with this challenge was 'undoubtedly the greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably the greatest which it will ever have to face'.

Kennan's specific recommendations at the end of this formidable assessment were slender. He suggested that the American public should be educated in the realities of the situation, and that the United States should put forward a positive and constructive picture of the world which it would like to see; this amounted to little more than an exercise in propaganda. There were no recommendations for economic or military aid to other countries, nor did Kennan use on this occasion the word 'containment' to describe the nature of his policy.⁵

Truman seemingly did not read Kennan's long telegram; but it made a great impact in the State Department, where opinion was uncertain as to how to respond to Soviet policy. One official wrote later that 'there was a universal feeling that "this was it"'.⁶ In April 1946, Kennan was appointed to the National War College, where he explained his views to influential audiences. Later, he became head of the Policy Planning Staff in the State Department. Kennan's achievement was to present, at a crucial psychological moment, a coherent interpretation of Soviet policy, grounded in experience and history. Such an analysis had been lacking before. Its consequences took effect over time.

Truman may not have read the long telegram, but he certainly heard Winston Churchill's speech at Fulton, Missouri, on 5 March 1946 – indeed he discussed it with the British statesman in advance. At the time, Churchill was admirably placed to make the maximum impact without making any formal commitment. He was out of office, and therefore did not speak for the British government, never mind the American; but he still bore all the immense prestige of his wartime leadership. In his speech, Churchill set out his interpretation of the current situation in Europe in words which instantly became famous: 'From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.' To the east of that line lay the Soviet sphere, subject to an increasing measure of control from Moscow, and where communist parties had attained a power far beyond their numerical strength in the countries concerned. Churchill was careful to say, 'I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines.' This presented a danger that could not be removed by a policy of

‘wait and see’ or by appeasement. The Russians admired strength and had no respect for weakness. Churchill referred to his own warnings about Germany in the 1930s, when war ‘could have been prevented in my belief without the firing of a single shot’. The solution was to achieve ‘a good understanding on all points with Russia under the general authority of the United Nations Organization ... supported by the whole strength of the English-speaking world and all its connections’. Here lay the core of Churchill’s thought: that America, Britain and all the English-speaking peoples of the Commonwealth should combine ‘in fraternal association’ to create a secure peace.⁷

Three points stand out from the whole speech. First, the striking image of ‘the iron curtain’ was to be part of the common parlance of the next forty years and more and encapsulated a vital part of the Cold War. Second, the proposal for an association between the United States and Great Britain to oppose Soviet power and doctrine was the basis for a future Western alliance. And third, often missed by immediate commentators, was the call for a settlement with the Russians. The Fulton speech was the recognition of a threat, a summons to stand up to it and a proposal to remove it by agreement.

The reception of this speech in the United States was mixed, with hostility probably prevailing over cordiality. Even Truman cautiously distanced himself by claiming (falsely) that he did not know what Churchill was going to say. Even so, Kennan’s long telegram in private and Churchill’s Fulton speech in public together did much to change the way in which American official and public opinion thought about relations with the Soviet Union and about foreign policy in general.

Another event, much less conspicuous in the history books, showed that the American government was ready for a change in policy. Towards the end of February 1946 the Turkish ambassador to the United States died in post, and Truman decided to send his coffin home in an American battleship, the USS *Missouri*, accompanied by two aircraft carriers and several other warships. This ostentatious display of naval power, far beyond anything required by diplomatic courtesy, was a gesture of support for Turkey against Soviet pressure for a base on the Turkish Straits. Truman, the man from Missouri, was ready to look tough and had found an appropriately named battleship to make his point.

The Truman Doctrine

In the autumn of 1946 Truman was reflecting on his problems with the Soviet

Union. On 21 September he wrote privately, 'We are not going to have any shooting trouble with them [the Russians] but they are tough bargainers and always ask for the whole earth, expecting maybe to get an acre.' At the beginning of 1947, while still in the New Year mood, the president made a list of things he had to do, ending with an exhortation to himself: 'Make it plain that we have no territorial ambitions. That we only want peace, but we'll fight for it!' He was determined that the United States would not be bulldozed and thought that he could impress this on the Russians, who were bullies who would cave in if you stood up to them.⁸ Tough bargaining and refusal to be bulldozed amounted to an attitude, but not yet a policy.

The decisive change came at the end of February 1947. During that month, the British government, in the grip of an acute economic crisis, decided to reduce its overseas expenditure. On 24 February Britain informed the United States that it would withdraw its troops from Greece. Truman decided at once that the United States must step in to replace Britain and that aid should also be extended to Turkey. On 27 February he invited leading members of the Congress to the White House, where George Marshall, the secretary of state, expounded the situation thus:

If Greece should dissolve into civil war it is altogether probable that it would emerge as a communist state under Soviet control. Turkey would be surrounded and the Turkish situation ... would in turn become still more critical. Soviet domination might thus extend over the entire Middle East to the borders of India. The effect of this upon Hungary, Austria, Italy and France cannot be overestimated. It is not alarmist to say that we are faced with the first crisis of a series which might extend Soviet domination to Europe, the Middle East and Asia.⁹

This was an early statement of what became known as the 'domino theory', on the analogy of a line of dominoes so placed that if the first were knocked over, the rest would follow. Greece and Turkey were the first dominoes. But it was unlikely that such considerations would carry much weight with the remaining isolationists in Congress, to whom Greece and Turkey seemed a very long way off. Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, an influential Republican and a former isolationist, bluntly advised Truman that the best way to persuade Congress to provide the necessary money was to 'scare hell out of the country'.¹⁰

Truman absorbed this advice, and when he addressed Congress on 12 March, he specifically requested a bill to provide aid to Greece and Turkey, but he based

his appeal on much wider grounds. He declared that a worldwide struggle was in progress between two ways of life, one based on free institutions and representative government, the other on terror, oppression and the suppression of personal freedoms. He then moved to the heart of his address: 'I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.' This support should primarily take the form of economic and financial aid, because 'the seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want'.¹¹

Truman's proposal (which at once became known as the Truman Doctrine) came under fire from two directions. In Congress, opponents of the bill to provide aid to Greece and Turkey pointed out that the Greek government was corrupt and that Turkey was by no means a democracy; and it was wrong for the United States to protect countries which were morally unworthy. (The bill passed the Senate by 67 votes to 23, and the House of Representatives by 287 to 107 – large majorities, but far from unanimity.) On the other hand, Kennan in the State Department criticized the proclamation of an apparently universal commitment to 'free peoples' when all that was actually required was limited support to two particular countries.

In practice, the Truman Doctrine proved to be flexible in its application. In the House of Representatives, one member pointed out that nothing was being done for China, where (as in Greece) the government was waging a civil war against communists. Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, speaking for the administration, replied that China, by virtue of its size, was a different case and that the president had not laid down that the United States must act in the same way in all circumstances. Moreover, Truman had referred in his speech to totalitarian, not communist, regimes, which left some leeway in action. The next year, in 1948, the American government was to extend economic aid to Yugoslavia when it broke away from the Soviet bloc, even though it remained a communist regime, on the grounds that it was in American interests to support Tito and weaken the Soviet Union. But despite this flexibility, it remained true that the criticism levelled at the Truman Doctrine from two very different angles presented a problem from which American policy could never escape. An important section of American opinion demanded strict morality in foreign policy; and yet American interests frequently required support for dubious (or even wicked) regimes.

The Truman Doctrine marked a crucial departure in American policy. Aid to Greece and Turkey brought a clear but limited American commitment in the

Mediterranean, while the proclamation of support for free peoples, however open to interpretation in practice, was bound to be far-reaching in its implications. Curiously, it did not bring about any immediate change in American relations with the Soviet Union. It elicited no particular response from Stalin, who had never been particularly interested in Greece. He seemed to have regarded Truman's speech largely as a reaction to his own earlier demands on Turkey for a base on the Turkish Straits, which in any case he was not prepared to press. The assumption must be that the Truman Doctrine posed no threat to vital Soviet interests. Stalin was to respond very differently to another American intervention later in 1947: the Marshall Plan.

The Marshall Plan, 1947

On 15 April 1947, during the long drawn-out Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, the American secretary of state George Marshall met Stalin. In the course of their conversation, and apparently in a genuine attempt to cheer Marshall up, Stalin remarked that the interminable discussions at the conference were only the first skirmishes – 'It was necessary to have patience and not become depressed.' Far from being comforted, Marshall was dismayed, and concluded that Stalin intended to let matters drift until Europe disintegrated, and to advance Soviet interests in the resulting chaos. Speaking on the radio after his return to the United States, Marshall said: 'The patient is sinking while the doctors deliberate. So I believe that action cannot await compromise through exhaustion.'¹²

The 'patient' was Western Europe, which in the spring of 1947 faced a severe economic and psychological crisis. The winter between 1946 and 1947 had been exceptionally severe, and the harvests for 1947 promised to be poor. In France, the daily bread ration was reduced on 1 May from 300 to 250 grams, a grim measure for a people dependent on their bread. Food rationing in Britain was more stringent than in wartime. Everyone suffered from the so-called dollar gap – the inability of Britain, France and other European countries to pay (in dollars or in exports) for their imports from the United States. Psychologically, the crisis was one of exhaustion after six years of war and two of post-war struggle, with no end in sight. In Britain, Attlee's Labour government was stable, but France and Italy were in the grip of deep uncertainty, with weak governments, the break-up of post-war coalitions and growing communist parties. In large parts of Europe, economic hardship was already severe, and political upheaval seemed

likely to follow.

The sense of crisis was strong, and even before Marshall's return from Moscow with his doleful message that the patient was sinking the American administration was considering ways of meeting it. A joint committee of the State, War and Navy Departments concluded on 21 April that substantial economic aid to Europe was in American interests, and that it would be best arranged through the coordination or integration of the different European economies. In May, Marshall set Kennan's newly established Policy Planning Staff to work on the problem, and by 23 May they had produced three key principles for an aid policy. First, the proposal should not be directed against communism as such, but against economic disaster, which would make Europe vulnerable to totalitarian movements generally. Second, a detailed plan for assistance must not come from the United States, but from a number of European states acting jointly. Third, an offer of aid should be open to the countries of Eastern Europe and to the Soviet Union, though it should be so formulated that the Soviet satellites could join only by accepting a large measure of economic coordination with others. This principle of coordination was of crucial importance to the Americans, partly on grounds of efficiency, to prevent a series of competing national demands, and also because it would appeal to public and Congressional opinion.¹³

It so happened that Marshall was to attend the degree ceremonies at Harvard University on 5 June to receive an honorary degree. He informed the president of the university that he proposed to make a few remarks, and perhaps 'a little more', to mark the occasion.¹⁴ In the event, it proved to be surely the most momentous address ever given on a degree day.

In his speech, Marshall referred to the European economic crisis and pointed out that 'the consequences to the economy of the United States should be apparent to all'. He went on:

It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace. Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist. Such assistance, I am convinced, must not be on a piecemeal basis as various crises develop. Any assistance that this Government

may render in the future should provide a cure rather than a mere palliative.

Any government willing to assist could expect cooperation from the United States; any government which manœuvred to block recovery could expect no help.¹⁵

Kennan himself described the purposes of Marshall's proposal as being to save European countries from economic disaster and to enable them to live in the future without 'outside charity: (a) So that they can buy from us; (b) So that they will have enough self-confidence to withstand outside pressures'.¹⁶ These objectives have been much scrutinized. Alan Milward argued, with the benefit of hindsight, that there was in fact no severe economic crisis in Western Europe early in 1947, except in the form of a shortage of foreign exchange, which arose from an *increase* in investment and production.¹⁷ This argument would have cut little ice at the time, though it may well be that the crisis was as much psychological as economic. Others have claimed that the real crisis lay within the American economy, which needed European recovery for its own purposes. There is little point in enquiring whether American motives were self-interested or for the benefit of others, when in practice they were both at once. It was a simple fact that European states could not 'buy American', and so benefit American producers, unless they had enough dollars or unless their own currencies could be made strong enough to be convertible with the dollar. Equally, American security depended on saving western European countries from political collapse, possible communist insurrection or perhaps even Soviet invasion. The European countries themselves would benefit from American economic aid and from greater stability. The United States thus pursued its own interests in ways which worked to the advantage of others.

In his speech at Harvard, Marshall launched an idea, not a plan. Everything depended on the reactions to it. The key lay with Britain and France in Western Europe, and the Soviet Union in the East. Ernest Bevin and Georges Bidault, the British and French foreign ministers, respectively, met on 17 June and agreed that Marshall's suggestion should be taken up at once, but differed on the thorny question of whether to invite the Soviet Union to join them. Bidault, for internal French political reasons, wished to bring the Soviet Union in at an early stage. He suggested that France, Britain and the Soviet Union should meet and then jointly invite other governments to a conference on the American initiative. Bevin was reluctant to bring in the Soviets, believing that they would only create difficulties; but after some demur he agreed to the French idea. Bevin and

Bidault together invited Molotov to meet them, and a meeting of the three foreign ministers was arranged in Paris on 27 June.

Would the Soviets agree? Indeed, had Marshall been serious in offering aid to the whole of Europe, east as well as west, or did he always expect that Moscow would refuse? It was almost certain that Congress would not vote to provide aid to the Soviet Union. But equally Kennan assured Marshall that the Soviets would not agree to take part in the scheme. The crux lay in the American insistence on economic coordination, which effectively presented the Soviets with the choice of either accepting the aid and giving up the exclusive control of their own economy, or refusing economic coordination and thus excluding themselves from aid. As Charles Bohlen, a State Department official, said later: 'We gambled that the Soviets could not come in'; so the Americans could make the offer and let Moscow bear the onus of refusing.¹⁸

At this early stage, the Soviets temporized. They considered allowing all the East European states to attend the conference, but then dispute its conclusions and withdraw, trying to take some of the West European governments with them. Bevin and Bidault stuck together, rejected Molotov's proposals and insisted that Marshall's scheme be discussed as it stood. Above all, they held fast to the idea of a coordinated programme for aid.

Molotov could not agree to this. On 2 July he declared that the Anglo-French proposals for a coordinated programme would lead to a loss of economic independence and were incompatible with national sovereignty. He left the conference and returned to Moscow. Bevin and Bidault were on the whole relieved by his departure and went ahead on their own. They sent out joint invitations to a general conference on Marshall's proposals, to be held in Paris on 12 July. Twenty-two European governments were invited (excluding the Soviet Union and Spain, which under Franco was still ostracized from international society).

For a time there was doubt as to the responses of the East European states. Czechoslovakia and Poland initially accepted. The Hungarian press agency reported that its government would take part. This state of affairs did not last long. The Soviet government intervened to make the East European states fall into line. Between 9 and 11 July, the governments of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Albania and Finland all declined to attend the conference.

Stalin's reasoning appears to have been simple, and from his own point of view well founded. If the countries of Eastern Europe had attended the conference and

accepted Marshall Aid, they would have had to accept coordination in economic planning, and thus been opened to Western economic influence, with inevitable political consequences. The Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, built up since 1945, would have been endangered, and probably crumbled away. Moreover, Stalin regarded Marshall's proposals as an attempt to revive German power and direct it against the Soviet Union, which, whatever Marshall's intentions in 1947, was eventually what happened. Looking back long afterwards, Molotov commented that 'if Western writers believe we were wrong to refuse the Marshall Plan, we must have done the right thing. ... The imperialists were drawing us into their company, but as subordinates. We would have been absolutely dependent on them without getting anything useful in return.'¹⁹

Sixteen states attended the conference which opened in Paris on 12 July 1947: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Bevin was elected chairman, and Britain and France took the lead in the conference's proceedings, which were remarkably rapid. In just five days the conference set up a Committee for European Economic Co-operation, which in two months prepared a joint plan to submit to the United States. Under this plan, an Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was to be set up in order to administer Marshall Aid, and also to coordinate the assistance given by member states to one another, with the object of restoring the European economy by the end of 1951. The details were worked out during the winter of 1947–8, and the OEEC was formally set up on 16 April 1948, with its headquarters in Paris.

Meanwhile, Truman and Marshall tackled the problem of convincing Congress of the necessity for giving away large sums of American money. Fortunately for them, the Soviets played into their hands. In February 1948, before Congress voted on the legislation for the Marshall Plan, the communists seized power in Czechoslovakia, sending shivers through all of Western Europe and across the Atlantic. The Senate approved the European Recovery Programme on 31 March by a vote of 69–17, and the House of Representatives followed on 2 April by 329–74.

In the event, Marshall Aid continued until 1953, and amounted to a total of nearly \$13 billion. It comprised four crucial elements. First, the aid was to be provided mainly in kind, not in cash. Second, there must be coordination and self-help among the recipients – the Americans refused to accept piecemeal requests, or applications for help which the Europeans could provide for

themselves. Third, the United States was to decide on the commodities which were to be sent free of charge, and also on their use. This was essential to satisfy Congress, which was afraid of waste and fraud. Fourth, the term of the plan was limited to four years, which allowed the Americans to see a limit to their efforts and the Europeans an end to the controls they were accepting.

The chief beneficiaries of aid and the amounts involved were as follows:²⁰

	Amount of aid (\$ million)	Amount in gifts
Total	12,992.5	9,290
France	2,629 (20.3% of total)	
Italy	1,434.6 (11%)	
Low Countries	1,078.7 (8.3%)	
West Germany	1,317.3 (10.1%)	
United Kingdom	3,165.8 (24.4%)	

Marshall Aid did not bring immediate results. In France, unemployment almost doubled between 1948 and 1950, rising from 78,000 to 153,000. In Italy, the unemployment figures went down slightly, from 1,742,000 in 1948 to 1,615,000 in 1950.²¹ The powerful communist parties in France and Italy, which campaigned violently against Marshall Aid, maintained their support among voters. But gradually the programme took effect, especially on the balance of payments problem. To take France as a crucial example, in 1948, Marshall Aid financed 30.1 per cent of French imports; and over the whole period of the aid programme, it financed the equivalent of 69.5 per cent of the total deficit in the French balance of payments.²² France was thus able to carry out a substantial programme of reconstruction and investment without reducing standards of living, even when gold and foreign currency reserves were virtually exhausted.

In return for Marshall Aid, the recipient countries had to make certain concessions to American economic policy. They had to adhere to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), signed on 30 October 1947, and thus accept some lowering of tariffs and phasing out of quotas, which the French in particular found difficult (and to some degree managed to evade). The recipients of Marshall Aid usually had to accept certain types of American exports, whether they wanted them or not, which led to much grumbling, especially in France, about 'chewing-gum imperialism'. It was in the nature of things impossible for aid on this scale to be given without arousing resentment as well

as gratitude among those being helped.

In general the Marshall Plan was a success story, and it has remained a model for all such projects – though one more often aspired to than achieved. Its final success was probably even more psychological than economic. Participating countries came to *believe* that there was a way through their difficulties. In July 1947 Kennan wrote that the plan was necessary ‘so that they [the European countries] will have enough self-confidence to withstand outside pressures’.²³ That self-confidence had been achieved, in full measure, by the time Marshall Aid came to an end.

The concept of containment

In July 1947, a month after Marshall’s speech at Harvard which launched the Marshall Plan, the influential American periodical *Foreign Affairs* published an article (signed only ‘X’) entitled ‘The Sources of Soviet Conduct’.²⁴ The author was in fact George Kennan, and the article was a reworking, after a year and a half and for a different readership, of the ideas set out in his ‘long telegram’. His basic theme remained that the Soviet Union, for its own political and ideological reasons, was implacably hostile to the outside world. The aim of its policy was ‘to make sure that it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power. But if it finds unassailable barriers in its path, it accepts these philosophically and accommodates itself to them.’ It followed therefore that ‘the main element of any United States policy towards the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.’ The Russians must be confronted with ‘unalterable counter-force at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world’.

Kennan went on to evoke a remarkable vision of the future. At some point there might occur a crisis within the Soviet system, in which leaders tried to win active participation from supporters who had been schooled only in obedience. This would ‘disrupt the unity and efficacy of the Party as a political instrument’, and as a result ‘Soviet Russia might be changed overnight from one of the strongest to one of the weakest and most pitiable of national societies’. Something like this was actually to happen in the late 1980s, when Gorbachev tried to reform the Soviet system, and instead brought about its demise. But in 1947 it seemed a distant, and most likely a vain, hope; and meanwhile Kennan offered only a task with no end in sight, demanding a patience, endurance and

flexibility which would test the will and capacity of the American people to the utmost.

In his memoirs, Kennan complained that the word ‘containment’ had been turned into the basis of ‘one of those indestructible myths that are the bane of the historian’.²⁵ There was some truth in this, in that the concept of containment was used to attribute coherence to policies which were often improvised rather than systematic. Yet Henry Kissinger was surely right to argue that ‘all the various strands of American post-war thought were brought together’ in Kennan’s article, which for over a generation served as ‘the bible of the containment policy’.²⁶ There are times when an author catches ‘a tide in the affairs of men’ in a way almost independent of his own intentions. Kennan struck such a time with his ‘X’ article in July 1947.

The concept of containment was to become the staple of American foreign policy and proved in the end to be a remarkable success. But almost from the start it came under fire from widely different angles. Some critics argued that ‘containment’ would draw the United States into excessive commitments to countries of dubious moral standing, and so into positions which would prove untenable. (Vietnam was later to prove a case in point.) Others claimed that the United States should aim not merely at containment but at actively liberating countries under Soviet control. There were sceptics who held that containment was mistaken because there was nothing to contain – Soviet policy was supposedly motivated by fear, not expansionism. All these viewpoints won support from different sections of American opinion, producing a sustained debate on the conduct of foreign policy. Yet throughout the discussions, the basic idea of containment held fast and elicited a remarkably tenacious response from the American people.

In 1947 the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan marked important practical departures in American foreign policy, and Kennan’s ‘X’ article was published at the precise moment to give these changes a theoretical basis. American policy was assuming a new shape. The latter part of 1947 and 1948 were to see Stalin’s response.

Notes

- 1 Michael J. Hogan, ed., *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941* (Cambridge, 1995) provides an excellent guide.
- 2 Quoted, Sara Lorenzini, *L’Italia e il trattato di pace* (Bologna, Italy, 2007), p. 107.

- 3 Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), p. 169.
- 4 Harry S. Truman, *Year of Decisions* (London, 1955), p. 492.
- 5 George F. Kennan, *Memoirs*, Vol. I: 1925–1950 (London, 1967), p. 293. Long excerpts from the telegram are printed, *ibid.*, pp. 547–59.
- 6 Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life* (London, 1994), p. 248; Louis Halle, *The Cold War as History* (New York, 1967), p. 105.
- 7 For the Fulton speech, see Martin Gilbert, *Never Despair: Winston S. Churchill, 1945–1965* (London, 1988), pp. 192–206; for the New York speech, see *ibid.*, pp. 215–17.
- 8 Ferrell, *Truman*, pp. 249–51.
- 9 Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall*, Vol. IV: *Statesman, 1945–1959* (New York, 1987), p. 164.
- 10 Ferrell, *Truman*, p. 251.
- 11 Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Documents on International Affairs, 1947–1948* (London, 1952), pp. 2–7.
- 12 Pogue, *Marshall*, Vol. IV, pp. 191 (Stalin’s remarks) and 200 (Marshall’s broadcast).
- 13 *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, Vol. III, pp. 223–9.
- 14 Pogue, *Marshall*, Vol. IV, pp. 209–10.
- 15 Text of Marshall’s speech, RIIA, *Documents*, pp. 23–6.
- 16 Kennan memorandum, 23 July 1947, quoted in Wilson D. Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, 1992), p. 60; Richard J. Barnet, *Allies: America, Europe, Japan since the War* (London, 1984), pp. 113–14.
- 17 Alan Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe* (London, 1987), pp. 1–17.
- 18 Quoted in Diane B. Kunz, *Butter and Guns: America’s Cold War Economic Diplomacy* (New York, 1997), p. 34.
- 19 Vyacheslav Molotov, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev*, ed. Albert Resis (Chicago, 1993), p. 62.
- 20 Maurice Vaisse, *Les relations internationales depuis 1945* (Paris, 3rd ed., 1994), p. 19.
- 21 B. R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics, 1750–1970* (London, abridged ed., 1978), pp. 67–8.
- 22 Hubert Bonin, *Histoire économique de la IV^e République* (Paris, 1987), p. 153.
- 23 Quoted in Barnet, *Allies*, p. 114.
- 24 ‘X’ (George F. Kennan), ‘The Sources of Soviet Conduct’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4, July 1947, pp. 169–82.
- 25 Kennan, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 356, where he also records that Marshall was shocked by the publication of the article. ‘Planners don’t talk’ was his soldierly comment.
- 26 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London, 1994), p. 454.

5

From the Prague coup to the North Atlantic Treaty, 1948–9

Cominform and Czechoslovakia – The Berlin blockade – The Brussels and North Atlantic Treaties – The two Germanies and the Soviet–Yugoslav split – Reflections on the beginnings of the Cold War.

In the latter part of 1947 and the first half of 1948, Stalin developed his response to the American policy initiatives outlined in the previous chapter. The Soviet leader intensified ideological orthodoxy, eliminated the remnants of political pluralism in the so-called People's Democracies of Eastern Europe, excommunicated Tito's Yugoslavia and heightened tensions in Germany by blockading the western zones of Berlin. The West's response, in line with Kennan's precepts, was to hold firm and 'contain' Stalin's moves.

Cominform and Czechoslovakia, 1947–8

The disarray among the Eastern European governments on whether or not to attend the Paris conference on Marshall Aid in July 1947 brought Stalin to the point where he could no longer tolerate divergences within the Soviet bloc. He imposed order through the familiar instruments of ideology and party discipline. He summoned a conference of Communist Party leaders at Szklarska Poreba, Poland, from 22 to 27 September 1947, under the chairmanship of Andrei Zhdanov, the ideological spokesman of the Soviet government. As well as the Soviet Union, there were delegations from the communist Parties of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia and from the

French and Italian parties. Zhdanov's keynote speech set out the dogmatic thesis that the world was divided between the imperialist and capitalist camp, led by the United States, and the socialist camp, led by the Soviet Union. In this context, the Marshall Plan was interpreted as a programme for the enslavement of Europe and not for its reconstruction. The conference set up the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), with the ostensible purpose of promoting unity and cooperation between the member parties by exchanging information, and in practice to ensure uniformity under Stalin's control. Its headquarters were to be established in Belgrade.

At that stage, it appeared that Czechoslovakia represented the weakest link in the chain of Soviet control. The Czech representatives at the Szklarska Poreba conference, along with the Italian and French leaders, were criticized for their shortcomings in advancing communism. Indeed Czechoslovakia differed markedly from other Eastern European countries. There was no Soviet garrison. There was a strong tradition of parliamentary democracy. The president, Eduard Benes, was committed to a pro-Soviet foreign policy, while trying to maintain his country as a bridge between East and West, combining some of the elements of each in its political and economic systems. Czechoslovakia, like Finland, thus lay within the Soviet sphere but was not fully integrated into it – a balance which was important for the country itself and for international relations in Europe as a whole. By the beginning of 1948, this sort of balance was no longer acceptable to the Soviet Union.

During 1947 there had been signs that the communists were losing ground in Czechoslovakia, and a public opinion poll in January 1948 put their support at only 25 per cent. The Communist Party reacted by sending, on 20 February 1948, a 'People's Militia', some 15,000 strong, to exert pressure on the streets. On the same day, twelve ministers (out of a total of twenty-six) resigned from the government, hoping to force Benes to form a new administration without the Communist Party and to call elections, which would reveal the weakness of the Communist Party in the country. The communist premier, Klement Gottwald, was in constant touch with the Soviet ambassador; and the Soviet deputy foreign minister, Zorin, on a visit to Prague, promised that the Soviet Union would not allow Western intervention. The Soviet Army moved some of its troops in Poland to the Czech border. Benes at first resisted this communist pressure, but on 25 February he appointed a new government, nominated by Gottwald and consisting of a majority of communist ministers, with a few socialists, and with Jan Masaryk remaining as foreign minister. On 10 March, however, Masaryk's

body was found beneath a window of the Foreign Ministry building – whether his death was the result of murder or suicide remained unclear.

In these political changes, the constitutional forms were observed: Gottwald's government won the approval of a majority of deputies in parliament. But these forms did not last long. The former Social Democratic Party was soon absorbed into the Communist Party, and other political parties were placed under communist control. In May 1948 elections produced a communist-dominated legislature, which introduced a new constitution on the Soviet model. Benes resigned as president on 7 June and died soon afterwards. Czechoslovakia came firmly within the Soviet sphere.

The impact of these events in the West was immense. Stalin may well have thought that he was simply consolidating his grip on his sphere of influence, and in some sense this was true. But in Western eyes Czechoslovakia was different from the rest of the Soviet bloc. Britain and France were sharply aware of accusations that they had let Czechoslovakia down in the Munich crisis in 1938; and in March 1939 the German 'coup of Prague' had been the prologue to war in September.

Events in Czechoslovakia thus touched a sensitive nerve. Léon Blum, the veteran French socialist leader, asked how it came about that the socialist and other democratic parties in Prague had melted away so swiftly; and many pointed out in reply that collaboration with the communists was a one-way street, ending in a takeover. The death of Jan Masaryk shocked Western opinion. If it was suicide, then Masaryk had despaired of his country under the new regime; if it was murder, it showed how far the communists would go. Either way, the prospects were gloomy. In Western Europe, the danger of internal subversion and perhaps war suddenly loomed large. The West responded by drawing together in the Treaty of Brussels, which we will consider later in this chapter. But soon after the Czechoslovakian coup a new and more dangerous crisis arose over Berlin.

The Berlin blockade, 1948–9

In 1946 the Americans and British had united their occupation zones in Germany into the Bizone; and in 1947 it was decided that all the Western zones (but not the Eastern) were to receive Marshall Aid. The division of Germany was well under way. Berlin, on the other hand, though divided into occupation zones, was still being administered jointly by the four occupying powers: the Soviet Union,

the United States, Britain and France. Berlin was thus in a different situation from the rest of Germany, and presented an opportunity to Soviet policy.

It appears that at the end of 1947 Stalin decided to squeeze the Western powers out of Berlin. On 20 March 1948, at what was expected to be a regular meeting of the Allied Control Council in Berlin, Marshal Sokolovsky (the commander-in-chief of the Soviet zone) read at high speed a list of accusations against the Western occupying powers, and then left. This proved to be the last full meeting of the council, though the Western commanders continued to meet in the absence of the Soviet representative. On 1 April 1948 Soviet troops stopped the regular American, British and French trains on their way to Berlin, just inside the Soviet zone, pushed them into sidings and left them there for over twelve hours before sending them back where they had come from. This was the beginning of a campaign of harassment and delays to Western traffic, amounting to a form of limited blockade, which caused inconvenience and irritation, but at that stage not much more.

Meanwhile, the Western powers were proceeding with plans to form a new state in West Germany, based upon the three Western occupation zones. In June 1948, the United States, Britain and France agreed to unify their zones of occupation, and announced that they were to arrange elections for a constituent assembly, which would then prepare a constitution for a new West German state. They also made secret preparations for the introduction of a new currency, the Deutschmark, in the Western zones and in Berlin. These were two crucial steps. The creation of a West German state would signify the formal division of Germany; and the introduction of the Deutschmark led to an immediate conflict with the Soviet Union.

The new currency was introduced in the Western zones on 20 June 1948. On 23 June, the Soviets introduced their own currency reform in their occupation zone, and declared that it applied to the whole of Berlin. The Western powers introduced the Deutschmark in Berlin on the same day; and it was at once clear that the Western currency commanded public confidence and the Eastern did not. This proved to be the trigger for drastic Soviet action. On 24 June the Soviet occupation forces halted all rail, road and water traffic between the three Western zones and Berlin. Postal services ceased to operate. Electricity supplies to West Berlin from outside were cut off. The blockade of West Berlin had begun.

The introduction of the Deutschmark was the immediate cause of the blockade, because if the new currency were allowed to circulate freely throughout Berlin it

would undermine the value of the East German currency and the stability of the Soviet zone. But Stalin's underlying intentions in imposing the blockade remain unclear. He had been thinking for some time of squeezing the Western powers out of Berlin – perhaps to consolidate the Soviet zone, perhaps to block the creation of a new state in West Germany, perhaps to force a negotiation on a complete German settlement in his own favour. For any of these purposes, a blockade of Berlin presumably seemed a safe bet: the Western powers 'would have to give up either Berlin or their German policy'.¹

The result was a crisis of a kind not seen since the end of the Second World War. The government of the United States was convinced that if they gave up West Berlin they would not be able to hold on anywhere else in Europe, if only because no one would *believe* that they would. In any domino theory, West Berlin was a crucial domino, and if it fell the rest of Western Europe would fall with it. There was no halfway house.

Truman reacted to this crisis with both determination and caution. He told one adviser on 28 June that 'we were going to stay – period', but added the next day that he intended to stay 'as long as possible', by which he meant 'short of war'.² How could this be done? In principle, there was a way open. In the muddled (and supposedly temporary) agreement achieved at the Potsdam Conference in 1945, there had been no written provision for access to Berlin by the Western powers by rail, road or water; but by a curious quirk there was a written agreement on access by three designated air corridors. On 25 June, General Clay, the American commander-in-chief, began, with Truman's support, to send supplies to Berlin by air along these air corridors. But at the time no one considered that this could be anything more than a temporary expedient. The Americans considered sending a convoy of lorries down one of the roads to Berlin, with an escort of troops and tanks; but they shrank from such a potentially provocative step. Instead, the airlift was developed into a regular means of supply. The Americans brought aircraft from all over the world; the Royal Air Force made its contribution; a completely new airfield was built in the French sector of Berlin, bringing the number of landing-grounds up to three. The momentum was kept up even during the difficult winter months. In one extraordinary period of twenty-four hours on 15 and 16 April 1949, aircraft landed in Berlin at the rate of almost one a minute, keeping troops in the Soviet garrison awake with the roar of their engines. In the whole period of the blockade, 277,804 flights delivered 2,325,809 tons of cargo.³ The Berliners suffered a hard winter, with barely adequate supplies of coal and long electricity

cuts. Food rations were actually increased in the course of the blockade, but remained very tight. All the time, the Soviets watched the aircraft coming in, sometimes 'buzzed' them at close range, but never took the final step of shooting one down.

This was the most acute form of 'Cold War'. The Soviet Union and the United States confronted one another on an issue of the utmost importance to them both. They came to the verge of war, but did not cross over. The Americans did not try to force a land passage; the Soviets did not attempt to close the air routes. It was a psychological test of will rather than a direct trial of strength.

The contest went on for ten and a half months and then ended suddenly, in complete defeat for the Soviet Union. Stalin lifted the blockade on 12 May 1949 without any conditions and without achieving any of his objectives. The Western powers remained in Berlin, which was now divided in two. Progress towards a new West German state continued at a steady pace. Indeed, a new solidarity emerged between the West Berliners and their former enemies. The American and British air forces which only recently had strained every nerve to bomb Berlin now worked round the clock to bring supplies to that same city – sometimes it was even the same airmen who were involved. Germans who had survived the air raids now welcomed their former attackers and endured hardships with a stoicism which commanded admiration among their former enemies: a change without which the new West German state, and later the new Western Europe, could never have been achieved.

The significance of the Berlin crisis of 1948–9 cannot be overstated. It was a true crisis, in both senses of that sometimes overused word: it was a time of acute danger, and it was a turning point in international affairs. The United States displayed immense material strength, technical proficiency and powers of endurance, all deployed in the service of a remarkably sure-footed statesmanship. Britain took its full share, and France, though previously separated from the Americans and British on the question of Germany, rallied to their support. The psychological foundations of a Western alliance were laid in this time of trial as they could not otherwise have been. Stalin, for his part, completely miscalculated the reactions of his opponent, and made an immense effort without achieving any result whatsoever – indeed by the end of the blockade his position was actually worse than at the beginning. It was a sign of the extraordinary strength of his position in the Soviet Union and the world in general that he survived this defeat without the slightest loss of prestige or power.

The Czechoslovakian coup of February 1948 and the Berlin blockade of 1948–9 set alarm bells ringing throughout Western Europe and the United States. Memories of the 1930s, when Hitler had picked off his enemies one by one until it was almost too late to resist him, were still fresh in everyone's minds. In face of the advance of Soviet power in Czechoslovakia and the tremendous trial of the Berlin blockade, the Western powers produced a determined response.

The Brussels and North Atlantic Treaties, 1948–9

From November to December 1947 the Council of Foreign Ministers of the four former wartime allies met in London for what proved to be the last time. The conference ended in failure on 15 December, marking the end of the mechanism which the Big Three had set up at Potsdam in 1945 to continue their wartime cooperation. For some time there were no more great-power conferences, and the two superpowers virtually ceased to communicate with one another.

The Foreign Ministers' meeting collapsed at a time when communist opposition to the Marshall Plan was at its height, especially in France and Italy. In both countries there was extreme tension. In these circumstances, Ernest Bevin, the British foreign secretary, believed that Western Europe faced an imminent danger of internal communist subversion or external Soviet invasion, or possibly both at once; and he sought for some means to counter the threat. He cloaked his thoughts in obscure phraseology, speaking sometimes of a federation of Western Europe, sometimes of a 'spiritual federation of the West'; but his underlying message was plain. The West European states must act quickly to support one another, and they must bring in the Americans, who alone had the military strength to resist the Soviets if it came to the use of force.⁴

The response to Bevin's ideas was at first uncertain. France in particular, with its large Communist Party and a difficult domestic situation, wanted to avoid offending the Soviet Union, and if possible to prevent the final division of Europe into hostile camps. Negotiations to form an alliance between Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (the Benelux countries) began in February 1948, but made little progress until the bombshell of the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia at the end of that month. This caused such alarm that a five-power conference of Britain, France and the Benelux countries met at Brussels and on 17 March 1948 concluded the Treaty of Brussels, which bound all the participants to come to the help of the others in the event that any one of them was attacked in Europe. The preamble made a token

reference to preventing a renewal of German aggression, but the unnamed aggressor envisaged in the treaty was plainly the Soviet Union.

The Brussels Treaty was a gesture rather than a practical step towards security. In military terms, the five treaty powers could not defend Western Europe against a Soviet attack. The British and the French, who would provide most of the military strength, knew they would have to bring in the Americans. The initiative for what emerged as the North Atlantic Treaty thus came from Western Europe.

The Americans were already anxious about Europe. To Washington, Italy seemed the point of greatest danger. Elections were due in April 1948, with the communists and socialists cooperating in a 'Popular Front'. In the elections of June 1946, these two pro-Moscow parties together had polled about a million more votes than the conservative Christian Democrats, and it seemed likely that they might win in 1948. The State Department was nervous about the election results, and an academic expert on international relations told the Policy Planning Staff on 1 March that 'if Italy goes Red, Communism cannot be stopped in Europe'.⁵ The Americans therefore made every effort to ensure that Alcide De Gasperi, the leader of Christian Democracy, won the elections. They delivered wheat to prevent a reduction in the bread ration; they encouraged Italian-Americans to write to their relations in Italy and urged them to vote Christian Democrat; they supplied money through the Central Intelligence Agency to the Italian centre parties. The elections took place on 18 and 19 April 1948, and in the event the Christian Democrats won by a wide margin, gaining 307 seats against 182 for the left-wing parties.⁶ Yet for some time the sense of crisis had been sharp, and anxiety (in Italy and in the State Department) had been keen.

This sort of anxiety, and clandestine intervention, did not mean that the American government, or the Congress, was eager for a military alliance to protect Western Europe. The American response to the British and French approaches for an alliance was initially cautious. Secret talks between the Americans, the British and the Canadians began in Washington on 22 March and produced a proposal for a North Atlantic Defence Treaty by 1 April. (The 'secrecy' of these talks was badly undermined by the fact that Donald Maclean, a Soviet agent, was a member of the British delegation. Stalin was thus well informed about the negotiations, though it is hard to tell what effect this knowledge had on his policy.)

The discussions on a treaty then stalled. Both Marshall, the secretary of state,

and President Truman were uncertain as to the best course to adopt. One difficulty was the likelihood of opposition from Congress, but in June this was diminished by the advocacy of Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, who was a Republican and former isolationist. By 1948 Vandenberg had become committed to devising a bipartisan policy towards Europe. He put before the Senate a resolution which recalled the right of collective self-defence enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and affirmed the desirability of American association with arrangements for such self-defence. His carefully worded resolution, which made no mention of a treaty, an alliance or Europe, was accepted by the Senate on 11 June by 64 votes to 16. But there remained a wide gap between this and something more precise.⁷

The start of the Berlin blockade brought some sense of crisis, but still no great haste. Talks on a security treaty involving the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg began on 6 July, but they moved with painful slowness. The Americans delayed because the next presidential election was due in November, with campaigning taking up the summer and autumn – not the best time to undertake novel and far-reaching commitments. They also insisted that the Congress's constitutional right to declare war must be preserved, so that a treaty should not include any automatic obligation to go to war. The French took an assertive position, demanding that Italy be included among the participants in a treaty, to protect the Mediterranean, and also that the treaty should specifically cover Algeria, which was then legally part of France.

The re-election of Truman in November cleared away domestic difficulties and bolstered the cause of an Atlantic security pact. In a series of meetings in Washington from 14 January to 15 March 1949, agreement on a final draft text was reached. The various governments involved gave their approval, and the North Atlantic Treaty was signed on 4 April 1949. No one could say that the Americans had forced the pace, or leapt hastily to the defence (or the domination) of Europe. But when they did eventually make up their minds, the consequences were far-reaching.

The North Atlantic Treaty was to remain a predominant feature of the international landscape for decades to come, and continued to function despite the demise of its opponent, the Soviet Union. What did the treaty provide for, and what was its significance? The twelve states which signed the treaty in April 1949 were: the United States and Canada in North America; Iceland in the North Atlantic; and Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands,

Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom in Europe. The key article of the treaty was Article 5, which stated that an armed attack against one or more of these states would be considered ‘an attack upon them all’. The other member states would then take forthwith such action as *each* deemed necessary, including the use of armed force. This preserved the rights of the Senate, while creating an expectation that in practice an attack on one signatory would result in war against the entire alliance. Article 6 defined the territories which were covered by the treaty: the territories of the signatories in Europe and North America; the Algerian departments of France; islands north of the Tropic of Cancer (in effect, the Portuguese islands of Madeira and the Azores). This article also extended to any attack on the occupation forces of any of the signatories in Europe, thus covering West Germany and West Berlin, and the western zones in Austria and Vienna. The Senate ratified the treaty on 21 July 1949, after twelve days of debate, by 82 votes to 13.⁸

For the United States the treaty was a remarkable departure – the first peacetime alliance in American history. Yet it was not presented as such. Henry Kissinger commented much later that ‘America would do anything for the Atlantic Alliance except call it an alliance’.⁹ A State Department memorandum carefully examined various other alliances to show how the North Atlantic Treaty differed from them. The government claimed that it was not a military alliance, but an alliance against war itself. This had the strange consequence that an alliance to preserve the balance of power and the security of Western Europe was justified primarily in moral terms. In one sense it was an evasion of the issues; yet in a deeper sense it was vital. The North Atlantic Treaty committed the United States to what proved to be a long haul of forty years, a burden that could not have been sustained without a strong sense of moral certainty. For the European members, the treaty represented an insurance policy which added a military element to the economic support provided by Marshall Aid.

The North Atlantic Treaty said nothing about a North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Not until December 1950 (after the outbreak of the Korean War) did the signatories of the treaty agree to set up an integrated defence organization, with a command system modelled on the Anglo-American joint commands during the Second World War. The first supreme commander was General Eisenhower, who had commanded the Allied Armies in Western Europe in 1944–5. This command structure, always headed by an American general, and the presence of American troops on the ground confirmed the practical expectation that the United States would be involved in any war from the

beginning. Thus the North Atlantic Treaty evolved into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, whose initials, NATO, have entered everyday speech.

NATO faced notable difficulties. It was a military organization without many troops, and without a convincing strategy, because in 1950, before the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons, no one really knew how Western Europe could be defended against an all-out Soviet attack. Could a Soviet offensive be stopped in the middle of Germany, or on the Rhine; or could the generals only plan for a more orderly repetition of the Dunkirk evacuation of 1940? In the event, this was not put to the test. No Soviet invasion was launched, and it appears that none was seriously contemplated.

The true importance of the North Atlantic Treaty was political, and above all psychological. NATO developed into a flexible and durable political instrument, involving the United States in European affairs in a way which ensured stability without complete American predominance. Under the cover of the NATO shield, however inadequate in military terms, the states of Western Europe recovered their nerve. Even at the worst of times, there were to be no more alarms like those of 1947 and 1948, when it appeared that everything might dissolve into chaos, and so invite a Soviet attack even if none was actually planned. These advantages were purchased at a certain price in diplomatic rigidity, in that the creation of NATO meant the institutionalizing of the Cold War; but this was a price which proved well worth paying.

The two Germanies and the Soviet–Yugoslav split

Between 1948 and 1949 there were two other developments of long-term significance for Europe and for the Cold War. First, the division of Germany was finally sealed by the establishment of two German states, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the west and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the east. In 1948, a long conference in London between the three Western occupying powers agreed to convoke a constituent assembly to prepare a constitution for a federal and parliamentary West German state. The assembly met in 1948, and formulated a Basic Law for the new state, which formally came into existence in May 1949, with Konrad Adenauer being elected as its first chancellor in September of that year. West Germany was not yet fully sovereign, because an Allied High Commission exercised wide control over economic and foreign policy, and it was to remain entirely demilitarized, without armed forces. In the next few years, the FRG in fact moved rapidly towards control of its own

economic affairs, but only slowly towards rearmament, which was a highly sensitive issue internally as well as abroad. In the Soviet occupation zone, the creation of an East German state followed some distance behind these developments in the West. The constitution of the GDR was enacted in October 1949. In contrast to the federal and parliamentary structure of West Germany, the GDR was a centralized socialist state, firmly under the control of the Socialist Unity Party, which was itself tightly monitored by the Soviet Union. The two Germanies did not officially recognize one another's existence. Their separation was total and was marked on the ground, on the eastern side of the boundary, by the physical barrier of the 'iron curtain', a line of barbed wire, minefields and machine guns. It was a striking fact that the machine guns did not point outwards, to deter attack, but inwards to prevent the GDR's citizens' escape.

As Germany and Europe separated into two halves, the eastern half showed its first crack. When the Soviet Union set up the Cominform in 1947, the headquarters of the new organization had been established in Belgrade. But in 1948 there occurred a bitter conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia was in a different position from the other East European countries, in that Tito's partisans had largely liberated the country themselves, with more help from the British than from the Soviets. Tito was in a strong position and a strong character who tended to take his own line in both internal matters and foreign policy. This was unwelcome to Stalin, who in 1948 put heavy pressure on him to conform. He accused the Yugoslav Communist Party of deviations from Marxist-Leninist doctrine, and of pursuing a course unfriendly to the Soviet Union. On 28 June 1948 the Cominform, meeting in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, ordered the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the organization; *Pravda* described Tito as 'the fascist hireling of the USA'.¹⁰ Soviet advisers left the country, economic assistance was cut off and brutal purges of so-called Titoist spies began in the rest of Eastern Europe. The whole panoply of Soviet propaganda was directed against Yugoslavia. Yet though the trumpets sounded, the walls did not tumble down. Tito defied his new enemies, formerly his friends, and survived. He declared that Yugoslavia would fight if attacked, and threatened to drench the country's soil in blood. Stalin did not attack, though it appears that an invasion plan, including Soviet, Hungarian, Romanian and Bulgarian forces, was prepared in the summer of 1950. Yugoslavia was thus expelled from the Soviet bloc, and lived to tell the tale.

The United States, faced with this new situation, showed remarkable flexibility.

The Americans tried to persuade Tito to join NATO, but he preferred not to take the risk. Instead he negotiated military agreements with Greece and Turkey (February 1953), and accepted arms, along with the assistance of US advisers. In these unexpected circumstances, the American government adopted a policy of cautious encouragement to Tito, notably in economic relations. Tito, for his part – though without making any specific bargain – closed the Yugoslav border with Greece and ceased to send help to the Greek communists. The Soviet bloc had developed a serious split. The Americans were therefore willing to blur the lines of their opposition to communism. The Cold War was going to be a complicated affair.

Reflections on the beginnings of the Cold War

In the years we have just examined, from 1945 to 1949, the wartime alliance between the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain broke down. The two superpowers entered a period of strained relations so severe that they ceased to practise all but the most formal diplomatic relations. Most of Europe was sharply divided. The Soviet Union imposed an iron control on most of Eastern Europe. The United States, through Marshall Aid and the North Atlantic alliance, established its own sphere of economic and military influence on Western Europe. Yet the two sides in this great divide stopped there. They did not go to war. This was the state of affairs which became known as the ‘Cold War’: war insofar as there was a condition of intense hostility, but cold in that there was no actual fighting.

The exact nature of this phenomenon of the Cold War will be examined later. Let us look now at the more limited question of how the division of Europe came about, and review the chronological pattern of events.

First, in 1946, the division of Germany began, with the Soviet Union taking the initiative in political affairs by imposing its social model in the east, and the Americans taking the lead in the economic division of the country. Second, there was a period from February to July 1947 in which the United States formulated a new policy and took the initiative. This was the time of the Truman Doctrine, the launching of the Marshall Plan and the crystallization of the concept of containment in Kennan’s ‘X’ article. Third, there followed a period in which the Soviet Union imposed rigid control on its sphere in Eastern Europe, established Cominform and launched the communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia and the imposition of the Berlin blockade. Fourth, the Czech crisis and the

Berlin blockade brought a reaction from the Western powers in the form of the Brussels Treaty of 1948 and the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949. The chronological pattern, therefore, was not one in which one side alone took the initiative and set events in motion, but of each side moving at different times, in a form of alternation.

There were two other aspects to these events. First, the division of Europe was not total. There were a number of intermediate countries, not fully within either of the two blocs or spheres of influence. In the north, Finland remained a multiparty liberal democracy and was free from Soviet occupation; however, it accepted that its foreign policy must not be anti-Soviet. The Finnish government declined to attend the Paris conference on Marshall Aid. A Treaty of Friendship between Finland and the Soviet Union (6 April 1948) expressed in its preamble the Finnish desire to stand aside from the competing interests of the great powers, and Article 3 confirmed that neither state would join a coalition directed against the other.¹¹ In the elections of July 1948 not a single communist member was returned, and the Finnish Communist Party ceased to take part in government. The Soviet government expressed its concern, but took no action. Neighbouring Sweden accepted Marshall Aid, but remained neutral in its foreign policy and did not join the North Atlantic Alliance. In the centre of Europe, Switzerland took part in the Marshall Plan but retained its traditional neutrality. Austria was split into four occupation zones, but the division was much less rigid and severe than that imposed in Germany. In the Balkans, Yugoslavia broke from the Soviet bloc without joining the Western bloc, and accepted American economic aid while remaining firmly communist. The point about these countries was that none was of sufficient weight to tilt the balance of power, and most were not in a geographically crucial position.

The second point was that the division of Germany and Europe was accepted by the two superpowers, without war and in the course of time by a form of tacit consent. This was a time not only of Cold War but of Cold Peace, which in Europe was to become, by historical standards, a very long period of peace indeed. Between 1945 and 1949, this came about without the mutual deterrence of atomic or nuclear weapons which later became so important. There was indeed a military balance, in that the United States possessed atomic bombs but did not use them, and the Soviet Union possessed very large land forces and equally did not use them. But it was probably more important that the two superpowers actually *preferred* the division of Europe, and especially of Germany, to any available alternative. The 'German Question', which had

plagued Europe since before 1914 and produced two great wars which had involved both the United States and Russia, was resolved – crudely and harshly, but effectively. The division of Germany and of Europe brought a form of stability which was fundamentally acceptable to the two superpowers.

It is thus possible to trace how the Cold War in Europe came about, and draw up a chronology in which the two superpowers alternated in taking decisions which ended by 1949 in the division of the continent. There is a natural, and almost irresistible, desire to go on from there to discuss responsibility for these events, and there has in fact been a long-running debate over the responsibility for the Cold War – a new ‘war guilt’ question. It is vital to remember, however (though it is very rarely done), that we must also assess where the credit lies for the establishment of the Cold Peace.¹²

Notes

- 1 J. A. S. Grenville, *History of the World in the Twentieth Century* (London, revised ed., 1998), p. 389.
- 2 Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life* (London, 1994), p. 258.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 259.
- 4 Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, Vol. III: *Foreign Secretary* (Oxford, paperback ed., 1985), pp. 498–500.
- 5 Arnold Wolfers, quoted in Wilson D. Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, 1992), p. 104.
- 6 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1948, p. 9529.
- 7 Miscamble, *Kennan*, pp. 163–4.
- 8 Text of the North Atlantic Treaty in J. A. S. Grenville, *The Major International Treaties, 1914–1973: A History and Guide With Texts* (London, 1974), pp. 335–7; see also pp. 337, 383–4; Senate vote, D. Cook, *Forging the Alliance: NATO, 1945–1950* (London, 1989), p. 227.
- 9 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London, 1994), pp. 460, 462.
- 10 Quoted in Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (London, 1997), p. 310.
- 11 Text of treaty in H. M. Tillotson, *Finland at Peace and War* (London, revised ed., 1996), pp. 322–3; see also pp. 246–8.
- 12 See John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Enquiries into the History of the Cold War* (Oxford, 1987) for a full exposition of this idea.

6

From Korea to Hungary, 1949–56

Situation at the end of 1949 – The Korean War, 1950–3 – Western Europe and the German Question – Eisenhower becomes president – The death of Stalin and crisis in East Germany – Germany and Austria, 1954–7 – Khrushchev, de-Stalinization and the Hungarian rising, 1956.

In the second half of 1949 two events took place which transformed the Cold War and shifted the balance of power. On 29 August the Soviets exploded an atomic bomb. American intelligence knew of this test almost at once, and Truman announced the news publicly on 23 September. Then on 1 October Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The communists had won the long civil war in China against the Kuomintang, and this enormous country (with a population estimated at about 550 million) had joined the communist camp. Communism was not so much on the march as advancing like an express train.

These events shook the Americans badly. They had expected their monopoly of atomic weapons to last longer than four years. They had regarded China as their special protégé in Asia. Roosevelt had promoted China as one of the 'four policemen' who would control the world after the Second World War. American companies and churches had invested material and spiritual capital in the country. Now the United States had 'lost China' – or so it was alleged. American public opinion set out to look for those who had misled – or worse, betrayed – the country. In the next few years, it was impossible for any American political leader to appear to be 'soft on communism', and thus repeat the mistakes allegedly made in China.

This mood would probably have taken root in American public opinion in any

case, but the situation was emphasized and probably prolonged by the intervention of Joseph McCarthy, Republican senator for Wisconsin. McCarthy seized on the so-called loss of China to make sensational accusations about communist agents in the State Department and communist influence throughout the country – in Hollywood, the trade unions, the teaching profession and elsewhere. McCarthy's principal weapon was accusation, with or without evidence, followed by an assumption of 'guilt by association'. He was willing to risk attacking the highest in the land and even those with the highest credentials of patriotism and loyalty – at one point he called for the impeachment of Harry Truman, and even attacked George C. Marshall, whose record of service to his country was unrivalled. Yet for a few years he released fears which in turn grew because he fed them. President Eisenhower himself preferred not to confront him openly. McCarthy's influence in the Senate and in the country increased until 1954, when he was finally censured by the Senate itself. The phenomenon of McCarthyism was a measure of the shock delivered to the American nervous system by the 'loss' of China.

In the face of the Soviet atomic bomb and the Chinese revolution, the National Security Council – the adviser on strategic issues to the president – undertook a review of American interests, dangers and options and produced a long memorandum (NSC-68, dated 14 April 1950).¹ The council took the sweeping view that 'a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere', and illustrated its case by reference to the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948. In itself, Czechoslovakia was of small material importance to the United States; equally, the Soviet Union gained no resources which it did not effectively control before the coup. Even so, 'in the intangible scale of values' the Czechoslovakian coup counted as a loss to the United States. It was by maintaining 'essential values', at home and abroad, that the United States would preserve its integrity and frustrate 'the Kremlin design' to preserve absolute power within the Soviet Union and eliminate all opposition outside it. The authors followed George F. Kennan's earlier papers on containment in assuming that one important purpose of American policy was 'to foster a fundamental change in the nature of the Soviet system'; but meanwhile there would have to be a great military as well as moral effort. The memorandum therefore recommended large increases in American military strength. At the time, however, it was by no means clear how these were to be paid for. President Truman deferred approval of the document until September 1950, by which time events in Korea had given it a new significance.

For Stalin, too, the Soviet atomic bomb and the Chinese revolution transformed the situation. He had always put a brave face on the American possession of the bomb, claiming that there was no need to be afraid of it; but he could now look the United States in the face as an equal. As for China, his relations with the Chinese communists had often been poor, but he appreciated the potential weight of China in world affairs. In 1948 he said: 'If socialism is victorious in China and our countries follow a single path, then the victory of socialism in the world will be virtually guaranteed. Nothing will threaten us.'² By the end of 1949 that position had been reached. Stalin's assessment was optimistic, but he undoubtedly had good grounds for confidence.

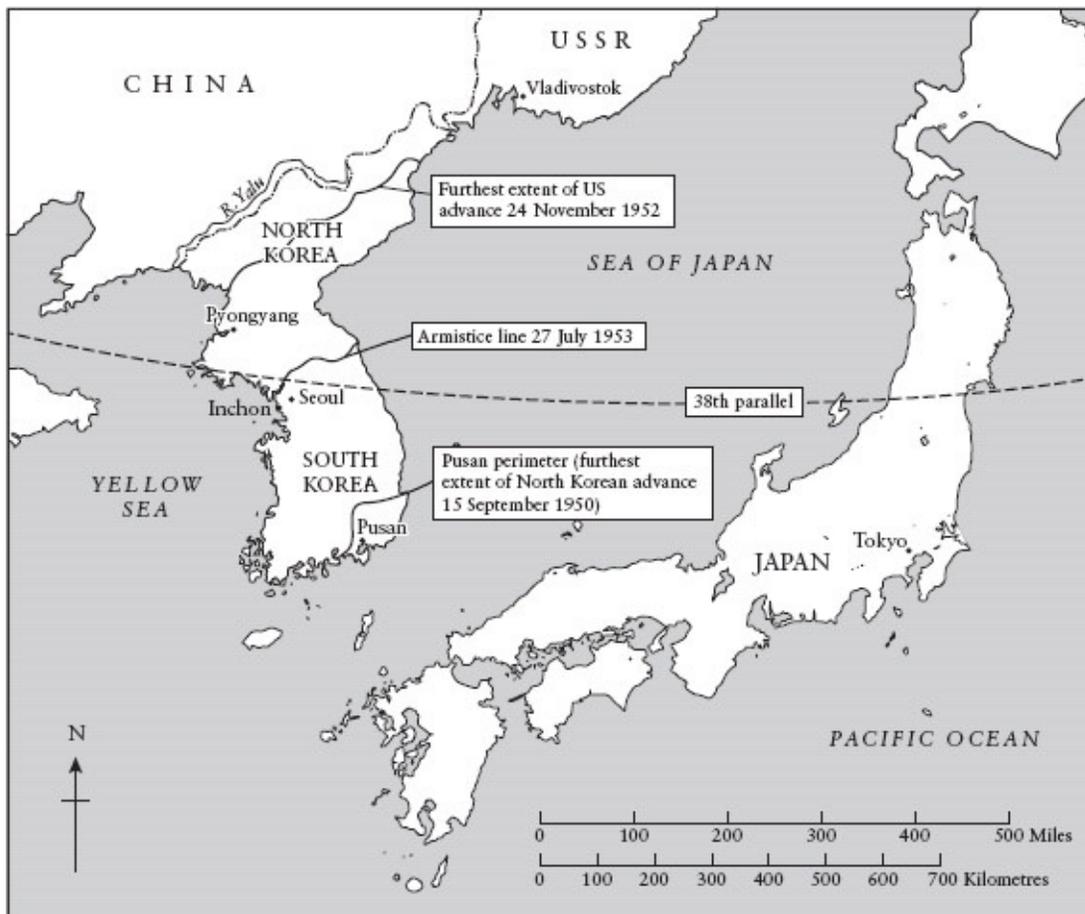
Between 1945 and 1949 the centre of the Cold War and of Soviet–American relations was in Europe, and the sharpest crisis arose over Berlin. In 1950 the focus of attention abruptly shifted to Korea, which to most people in America and the Soviet Union was a remote and unknown country.

The Korean War, 1950–3

Japan had annexed Korea in 1910. During the Second World War, at the Cairo conference (December 1943), President Roosevelt and Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek had declared that the country should be independent when the war was won. As hostilities actually came to an end in the Far East in 1945, much had to be improvised. After the Soviet Union declared war on Japan on 8 August 1945 its troops began to enter Korea from the north. American troops did not land in the south until 8 September; in the meantime the Americans had instructed the Japanese Army, which had been ordered to surrender by Emperor Hirohito on 15 August, to maintain order until their arrival. The Americans and Soviets had agreed, for practical purposes, to divide Korea along the 38th Parallel of latitude, with the Americans occupying the south and the Soviets the north. In July 1948 the Republic of Korea was set up in the South, with Syngman Rhee as president; and in the same month the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was created in the North under the leadership of Kim Il Sung. Both Kim and Rhee were intense nationalists, anxious to unite the country, and willing to use force to do so if the opportunity offered. Both laid claim to the whole of Korea as their territory. Soviet troops withdrew from North Korea in December 1948, and American forces from the South in June 1949; both left behind military missions and advisers. The two rival Koreas then confronted one another, in a state of profound hostility.

On 25 June 1950 North Korean forces crossed the 38th Parallel and advanced rapidly southwards, carrying all before them in pursuit of what seemed likely to be an instant victory. How did this assault come about?

The plan for an attack on South Korea appears to have originated with Kim Il Sung, who put the idea to Stalin in 1949 and asked for his support. Stalin did not take up the proposal at that stage, but he received Kim again in April 1950. This time, Stalin agreed to support a North Korean attack on the South, on certain conditions: the North must be sure of quick success; there must be no likelihood of American intervention; and no escalation into world war. The Soviet Union provided military equipment, and Soviet generals drew up a plan for the offensive, assuming a rapid advance and complete victory in three to four weeks. The date of the attack was set for 25 June in order to finish the campaign before the start of the rainy season.



MAP 5 Korea, to illustrate the Korean War.

Thus Kim Il Sung proposed, but Stalin decided. Why did Stalin take up the idea in 1950 when he had left it alone in 1949? The emergence of communist

China clearly changed the situation, in at least two ways. First, Stalin did not wish to appear to be holding back the cause of revolution in Asia by restraining Kim Il Sung, especially when Mao might intervene and take the lead; and second, the Chinese could now be brought in to share the risk of starting a war in Korea (Stalin in fact insisted that Kim should only attack South Korea after securing Mao's agreement in person, which he duly did). The successful Soviet atomic test may also have instilled an extra degree of confidence into Stalin's usually cautious approach.

In any case, the risks did not seem great. There was ample reason for Stalin to believe that the Americans would not intervene. In March 1949 General MacArthur, the American commander in Japan, had stated publicly that the American defensive perimeter in the Pacific ran along a string of islands from the Philippines to the Aleutians, excluding Korea. The policy was confirmed by the secretary of state Dean Acheson on 12 January 1950 in a speech at the National Press Club in New York.³

However, the United States abandoned all these statements and intervened in Korea almost at once. On 25 June, the day of the North Korean attack, the Americans put a resolution to the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) calling for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of North Korean forces behind the 38th Parallel. The resolution was passed by 9 votes to nil, with Yugoslavia abstaining. The Soviet Union, which could have vetoed the resolution, was absent, boycotting meetings of the Security Council in protest against the Council's refusal to allow communist China to take over China's permanent seat, which was retained even after defeat by Chiang Kai-shek. That same evening, Truman ordered American air drops of supplies to the South Koreans, the Seventh Fleet took up station in the Taiwan Straits to prevent a Chinese attack upon Taiwan and on 29 June MacArthur was instructed to send air and naval forces to take part in the fighting. Once these troops had been committed, it was impossible to leave them without reinforcements, and the die was cast.⁴

The Americans thus found themselves committed to a large-scale war which, as events turned out, was to last for three years. How did this come about? By instinct, Truman was a fighter, determined not to be pushed around. He also felt strongly that in the 1930s Germany and Japan had been allowed to get away with a series of aggressions which had finally resulted in all-out war. That must not be repeated: there must be no more appeasement. There was also a swift reassessment of the strategic assumptions which had placed Korea outside the American defensive perimeter. The question of whether Japan could be held in

face of a hostile Korea was suddenly faced with a new urgency, and answered in the negative. This conclusion was made clearer by the general American belief that North Korea was simply a Soviet puppet, and that they faced aggression by a single, monolithic communist bloc. Domestic politics and the state of public opinion also played a part: the Truman administration already stood accused of having 'lost China', and could not afford to lose Korea as well. All these motives came together and inspired Truman to decisive action.

The president was also encouraged by a wide measure of international support. The American intervention went forward as a UN operation. British troops arrived quickly in Korea and were soon followed by Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians, forming for the first (and doubtless the only) time in history a Commonwealth division. France and Turkey provided contingents, and in all a sixteen-member 'coalition of the willing' provided forces of various types and sizes. The presence of these allies on the battlefield was of great political significance.⁵

In July and August, the South Koreans and Americans clung to a defensive line round Pusan, which seemed likely to be broken at any moment. Then on 15 September MacArthur launched an audacious landing from the sea at Inchon, halfway up the west coast of Korea, threatening to cut off the invading forces in the south. The North Koreans retreated in disorder to avoid encirclement; the South Korean capital, Seoul, was liberated; and the Americans were faced with another crucial decision. Truman's orders to MacArthur at the start of the campaign had been to assist South Korean forces south of the 38th Parallel. The question now arose of whether to cross that line.

In part this was a practical matter. On the ground, a parallel of latitude has no topographical significance, and troops in close pursuit of a retreating enemy were bound to cross such an artificial boundary. But local crossings for tactical purposes and a decision to advance far to the north, with the object of occupying the whole of Korea, were two very different issues. The American government and high command finally decided to go ahead. The clinching political argument was a moral one – that to halt on or near the 38th Parallel would check aggression but impose no penalty or punishment upon it. Moreover, the American instinct at that time was that wars were to be won, not drawn. Finally, the striking success of the Inchon landings induced a heady sense of optimism which helped to carry the day. On 27 September Truman gave permission to MacArthur's forces to cross the parallel, unless there was evidence that this would bring about substantial Soviet or Chinese intervention. This risk was

judged to be slight. South Korean forces, and then on 8 October American troops, crossed the line and occupied the Northern capital, Pyongyang, before heading full tilt towards the Chinese border on the Yalu River. On 7 October the UN General Assembly passed a resolution proposing to establish 'a unified, independent and democratic government' for the whole of Korea; and on 17 October Truman publicly repeated those exact words.⁶ This proved to be a decision even more fateful than the original intervention at the end of June.

For some time the consequences of the American advance remained uncertain. The troops fanned out over the wide spaces of North Korea, their supply lines lengthening and their caution diminishing. On 1 October Kim Il Sung appealed to Stalin for help. Stalin was anxious to keep a low profile, and declined to commit Soviet troops. Instead, the communist leader asked Mao to send Chinese divisions in the guise of 'volunteers'. Mao demurred, arguing that such a force would be enough to provoke the Americans but not enough to stop them; and the result might be an American declaration of war on China, which would bring in the Soviets as well. Stalin replied (5 October) predicting that the Americans would back down in the face of Chinese intervention; but if not, and it came to war, the Soviet Union and China were stronger than their enemies. 'If war is inevitable, let it happen now, and not in a few years.'⁷ Mao agreed to send nine Chinese divisions, though he asked for Soviet equipment and air cover. But the die was not yet cast. On 12 October Stalin advised Kim Il Sung to get his remaining forces out of Korea to Chinese or Soviet territory; which amounted to telling him to accept defeat. Then, the very next day, Stalin changed his mind, apparently in the certainty that the Chinese were going to fight. Thus up to 12 October the Soviets and Chinese were hesitant and uncertain, and the American estimate that the risk of intervention was slight seemed justified.

Events proved otherwise. Mao was determined not to see the Americans on the Yalu, with their aircraft ranging freely into Chinese airspace. The People's Republic was barely a year old and could not take such a risk, either materially or in terms of prestige (the Americans were not the only ones to fear the domino effect of their enemies' victories). On 19 October 1950 Chinese forces poured south across the Yalu River in large numbers, fighting with astonishing dash and ferocity. They took the UN forces completely by surprise, and drove them back southwards in disorder. They crossed the 38th Parallel yet again, and the South Korean capital, Seoul, changed hands for the third time in six months. It was not until January 1951 that the Americans and their allies stabilized the front, some 100 kilometres south of the 38th Parallel.

The Chinese intervention demanded further decisions from the Americans. MacArthur claimed that they must now carry the war to China, by aerial bombardment and naval blockade, and took his arguments to the press and members of the Congress. Truman and the chiefs of staff disagreed, and on 11 April 1951 the president dismissed MacArthur from his command – a courageous act, even in a career notable for its courage. This action ensured that on the American side the war remained limited. The Chinese and the Soviets tacitly accepted the same principle. The result was an extraordinary situation. Within Korea the war was fought with the greatest intensity and ferocity. But the fighting was geographically limited to the peninsula itself, with Manchuria remaining a safe haven for the Chinese and Japan for the Americans. Each side foreswore complete victory – effectively settling for stalemate. Each side accepted a limitation in weapons, in that neither used the atomic bomb – though Truman publicly referred to it in November 1950, and Eisenhower later hastened the achievement of an armistice by hinting at its use in 1953.

Within these limits, however, neither side gave way. On a number of occasions from July 1951 onwards, Kim Il Sung asked Stalin to make peace, because North Korea was suffering heavily from American air bombardment, but Stalin insisted on holding on, keeping the Americans tied down in Korea and believing that they could not endure the trials of a long and fruitless war. In the United States, the people indeed grew war-weary, but on this occasion they stood firm. Twenty years later Vietnam was to impose a longer and a sterner test.

On the ground, the situation changed yet again in 1951. MacArthur's successor, General Ridgway, undertook a new offensive, recaptured Seoul (which thus changed hands for the fourth time) and pushed the front back northwards to a line running diagonally across the peninsula, mostly just to the north of the 38th Parallel. There it was to remain, though at a continuing cost to both sides.

In July 1951 negotiations for an armistice began, but remained stalled for two years, largely as a result of differences on the fate of the prisoners taken by the two sides. The Americans insisted that no prisoners of war, on either side, should be repatriated against their will. The Chinese, supported by Stalin, required that all Chinese and North Korean prisoners must be returned. What was at stake on each side was a Cold War propaganda point. The Americans wanted to demonstrate that some of the enemy prisoners did not wish to return to their 'socialist fatherlands'; the Chinese and North Koreans could not risk any such result. Propaganda was not restricted to the issue of prisoners: communist

accusations that the Americans were using germ warfare achieved such notoriety that when General Ridgway was appointed as supreme commander for NATO in 1952 he was greeted in Paris by vast crowds shouting '*Ridgway la Peste*' ('Ridgway the Plague'). On military terms alone the war could almost certainly have been concluded in 1951; but ideological point-scoring kept it going until 1953, with heavy loss of life and widespread destruction.

The election of General Eisenhower in November 1952, with his immense prestige as a soldier, brought a new impetus to the negotiations. Eisenhower was willing to be tough with Syngman Rhee in South Korea, and with Republican congressmen who opposed an armistice. There was first an exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war, and finally an agreement that prisoners who did not wish to return to their own countries should present their cases to a Repatriation Commission, made up of representatives of Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Czechoslovakia and India.

An armistice was finally signed on 27 July 1953, at the village of Panmunjom. There was to be a ceasefire along the lines held by the opposing armies on that date, with a narrow demilitarized zone between the two forces. The level of armaments on each side was to be stabilized (a provision which was often disregarded). Nearly 23,000 Chinese and North Korean prisoners in UN hands were handed over to the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission; only 137 agreed to repatriation to their own countries, and all the rest chose to go to South Korea or Taiwan. Three hundred and forty-nine prisoners in Chinese or North Korean hands refused to return to their own countries; these included 325 Koreans, 21 Americans and 1 Briton.⁸ A conference was to meet to work out a lasting settlement. This conference never met. The ceasefire line remained in place, with representatives of the two sides meeting every week to exchange salutes and information (or accusations) about the armistice arrangements. This strange ritual thus came to embalm an aspect of the Cold War at its most rigid.

Casualties in the war were heavy – 33,699 Americans were killed and a further 107,755 were wounded; 415,000 South Koreans were killed and 429,000 were wounded; 1,263 Commonwealth forces were killed and 4,817 were wounded. The Chinese and the North Korean losses together were estimated to have been around 1,500,000, with this figure including both the killed and the wounded.⁹ In Korea, the physical damage was severe, especially in the north, which was heavily bombed. At the end of everything, Korea remained divided along a line not far removed from the original border along the 38th Parallel. Without a permanent settlement, the peninsula remained a potential point of conflict, either

between the two Koreas or between the United States and China. In the event, there was some friction but no further conflict. Not for the first time, the supposedly temporary proved remarkably stable.

Of the great powers engaged in the war, China emerged greatly strengthened in prestige. The Chinese had taken on the US Army in battle, and won. They had saved North Korea and emerged as the leading communist power in Asia. The Soviet Union lost ground during the war, with its influence in North Korea largely supplanted by that of China. But though the Chinese emerged strengthened from the war, they also learnt caution. Victory over the Americans had been costly and far from complete. They fought no more battles against the United States in the years to come, though sometimes they had the opportunity to do so, for example, over the islands of Quemoy and Matsu.

The war had profound effects on the United States. Korea was a success for containment, but at a great cost in military and economic terms. Yet the effort in Korea itself was only part of the story. American defence expenditure rose from \$14.5 billion in 1950 to \$49.6 billion in 1953. Between 1951 and 1953 the number of men in the American armed forces doubled. The United States pressed on with research on a hydrogen bomb, strengthened the bomber fleet and built nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. Despite being technically at peace the country embarked on military preparations comparable to those undertaken during the Second World War.¹⁰

The effects of the Korean War were also felt on the other side of the world. There seemed an obvious analogy between a divided Korea and a divided Germany, and fears sprang up of a sudden attack across the iron curtain. After its signature in 1949 the North Atlantic Treaty had remained essentially a notional deterrent, with little military reality on the ground. When the Korean War began, this no longer seemed adequate, and the United States began to look for soldiers to man the defences of Western Europe. With Britain and France already fully stretched, the only source of new manpower was the former enemy, West Germany. At a NATO meeting on 15 September 1950 Dean Acheson proposed to end the policy of demilitarizing Germany and to establish West German forces under NATO command. Yesterday's enemies were to become allies. The same was to some degree true of Japan, which during the Korean War became a major source of supplies for the Americans.

In all these ways, the Korean War was a turning point. It extended the Cold War to Asia, and demonstrated how it could unexpectedly explode into actual fighting. Indeed, the Korean battles represented the Cold War at its most

ferocious, though without direct Soviet–American conflict. Its effects rebounded back onto the other half of the globe. The transformation of Western Europe, already under way with Marshall Aid, entered a new phase.

Western Europe and the German Question, 1948–53

One of the most remarkable events of the decade following 1948 was the recovery of Western Europe. With help from Marshall Aid, the West European countries achieved substantial economic growth. At the same time, they developed welfare states and mixed economies which permitted private capitalism and state control to work side by side, creating a political and social stability which had often been absent in the 1930s. Moreover, there was a new spirit abroad, giving a fresh impulse to the ancient desire to create some form of political union to match Europe’s historical and cultural identity.

THE DIVISION OF GERMANY: KEY DATES

FEBRUARY 1944

YALTA CONFERENCE: Agreed to divide Germany into four occupation zones – Soviet, American, British and French.

FEBRUARY 1948

US and British zones united in BIZONIA.

JUNE 1948

Soviet Union imposed blockade on routes into West Berlin. Western powers responded by AIR-LIFT.

1949

12 May, End of Berlin blockade.

23 May, Establishment of Federal Republic of Germany (WEST GERMANY). ADENAUER as chancellor.

7 October, Establishment of German Democratic Republic (EAST GERMANY). ULBRICHT as leader of Socialist Unity Party.

MAY 1955

WEST GERMANY joins NATO.

For a time, this movement towards unity was widespread. Churchill spoke in Zurich (19 September 1946) of establishing 'a kind of United States of Europe',¹¹ and he later accepted the honorary presidency of the Congress of Europe which met at the Hague in May 1948 to act as a forum for many different brands of the 'European ideal'. In May 1950 the French foreign minister Robert Schuman gave the concept a firmer shape. He proposed to end the age-old conflict between France and Germany, and at the same time to take the first step towards a European federation, by creating a Coal and Steel Community, which would place responsibility for the coal and steel industries of member states under a single 'High Authority'.

The 'Schuman Plan' was a strikingly bold move. It represented a significant 'pooling' of sovereignty between the member countries. Six West European states (France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) agreed, after lengthy negotiations, to form this new community. Britain, whose coal and steel industries would have been opened to competition, objected to the cession of national sovereignty implied by Schuman's scheme and stayed out: many have since argued that by so doing Britain 'missed the bus', and abdicated the leadership of Western Europe to France.

In practice, the Coal and Steel Community (which began to operate in 1952) had only limited success in freeing trade in coal and steel, and in rationalizing the industries of its member states, but its significance lay not in the details but in the wider consequences. A Franco-German collaboration was begun which was to flourish over the next half-century; and the institutions created for the Coal and Steel Community formed the framework for the European Economic Community (EEC) which followed in 1957. Between them, these two developments were a significant innovation in the history of Western Europe.

The immediate next step after the creation of the Coal and Steel Community was an attempt by the same six countries to form a European Defence Community (EDC). When the Americans proposed West German rearmament in September 1950, the French were naturally dismayed. They had seen enough of German armies during the previous forty years (a sentiment in which they were not alone); and yet they could not oppose the American demand outright – they were receiving Marshall Aid and needed the United States to fund their colonial war in Indo-China. They therefore emphasized that they would allow the reconstitution of German military forces only as part of a wider European Army. After lengthy negotiations, a treaty to set up the EDC was signed, on 27 May 1952, by the six countries that already made up the Coal and Steel Community

(Britain again stood out). West Germany was to provide twelve divisions to the common defence, which was to be coordinated by the Supreme NATO commander in Europe. It was also to regain its sovereign status once the new Community began to function. On Italian insistence, the EDC treaty indicated that the Community was intended as a prelude to a wider 'Political Community' of the six member states: a West European federation.

The EDC scheme aroused extraordinary levels of rhetoric on both sides of the iron curtain – a fact that illustrated how delicate the question of West Germany's rebirth as a fully independent nation was. Yet the idea, despite its origin as a French scheme, was never fully accepted inside France. On 30 August 1954 the French National Assembly, with many powerful evocations of French nationalism, killed the project by failing to ratify the treaty. It was a thoroughly confused and ultimately fruitless exercise, which seemed for a time to have deprived the European idea of its momentum. But throughout these tortuous events the idea of German rearmament slowly advanced and became acceptable; and all the time the institutions of the Coal and Steel Community settled down and assumed permanence.

In all these developments, the first chancellor of the new West German state, Konrad Adenauer, played a vital role. Adenauer was seventy-three when he became chancellor, yet he was the very opposite of an old man in a hurry. He had seen two world wars, two German defeats and two occupations, and he had learnt the value of patience. 'I think patience is the sharpest weapon of the defeated. I can wait.'¹² He worked closely with the Americans, without becoming their puppet. He won the confidence of French politicians. He advanced the cause of West German independence, while being prepared to sacrifice a part of that independence to the progress of European integration. By following a policy of Westpolitik, he went far towards providing an answer to the 'German Question' – what was Germany's role in international affairs to be?

To Stalin these events in Western Europe appeared full of danger. He was strongly opposed to the emergence of an independent and armed West Germany. On 10 March 1952 he suddenly proposed to revive negotiations for a German peace treaty. The essential stages were to be: first, the creation of a unified Germany, committed to a status of neutrality in its foreign relations; second, the holding of free elections in the new state; finally, this united, neutral Germany would be permitted to maintain its own armed forces. All foreign troops were to withdraw from its territory within a year of its creation.

It is not clear whether this was a serious attempt to resolve the German

problem, or only a tactical move to forestall West German rearmament and stop the progressive absorption of West Germany into Western European institutions. In any case, the Western powers regarded Stalin's move with deep suspicion. The United States, Britain and France replied quickly (25 March), agreeing to German unification but rejecting neutrality, maintaining that a united Germany should be free to make its own alliances – meaning that it could join NATO. They accepted the idea of free elections, but only on condition that the rights of free speech and assembly should be granted at once in the whole country. There followed an exchange of notes, in which Stalin gradually moved towards the Western position; but the affair petered out by the end of 1952. The Cold War pattern was too firmly set to be broken. West Germany was already in existence and was being integrated with other West European countries through the Schuman Plan. Adenauer was not prepared to throw these advantages into the melting pot.

For the United States, NATO had achieved stability in Europe, which needed to be reinforced by West German rearmament. A united, armed yet neutral Germany would introduce a new and uncertain element – after all, Germany had been united and armed before 1939, and neutrality could be quickly abandoned. Moreover, could Stalin be trusted? Since the Czechoslovakian coup in 1948 most people in the West had concluded that deals with Stalin tended to be one-way traffic. Soviet conceptions of 'free elections' were certainly different from those in the West. Recent Stalinist purges in Eastern Europe offered a discouraging prospect. So it came about that Stalin's proposals, which might have led somewhere if made in 1947, merely ran into the sand in 1952. The Cold War had its own momentum, and it created situations that were difficult to change. Indeed, both sides had come to prefer the stability they knew to the potential risks of movement.

Yet events were not completely frozen. American presidential elections came round inexorably every four years, and even Stalin was mortal. In January 1953 General Eisenhower took office as president of the United States. In March 1953 Stalin died. Together, these two events brought a new aspect to international affairs.

The opening of the Eisenhower presidency

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who assumed office in January 1953, had made his reputation first as an Allied supreme commander during the Second World

War, and later as the first supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe. He had an amiable grin, an easy-going public manner and an attractive nickname – ‘I like Ike’ was one of the simplest and most appealing slogans ever devised for a presidential election campaign.

A man so apparently open and uncomplicated, who yet achieved such remarkable success in military affairs and later in politics, has left historians baffled. Certainly his outward simplicity was misleading. Richard Nixon, who served as his vice president, described him as ‘complex and devious’. Henry Kissinger, who knew a thing or two about complexity, observed of Eisenhower (along with Reagan) that ‘presidents who appear to be the most guileless often turn out to be the most complex’.¹³

Eisenhower cultivated a relaxed style, but appearances were deceptive. He worked hard and kept the key decisions on foreign and military policy in his own hands. He was a soldier who had seen enough of war and wanted to avoid it in future. Like Truman, he was convinced that the policy of appeasement in the 1930s had led to war and must on no account be repeated. He did not invent the ‘domino theory’, which had been expounded by Marshall (though without the name) in 1947, but he took it over and attached it firmly to Indo-China, with far-reaching consequences. On 4 April 1954 he wrote to Churchill, back in power after 1951, that if the French failed in their attempt to retain Vietnam ‘the consequent shift in the power ratio throughout Asia and the Pacific could be disastrous. ... It is difficult to see how Thailand, Burma and Indonesia could be kept out of Communist hands. This we cannot afford. The threat to Malaya, Australia and New Zealand would be direct.’¹⁴ In practice, his policy was usually more flexible than this might imply; at bottom, he believed that relations with the Soviets were a problem to be managed rather than a crusade against evil. For Eisenhower, managing the problem meant holding the balance between military expenditure and government solvency and holding this balance over a long period. In the long term, Eisenhower believed that American assets – moral and political as well as military – were superior to those of the Soviet bloc. History was on the side of the United States.¹⁵

In this fundamental optimism he differed markedly from his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. A lawyer by training and a presbyterian by upbringing, Dulles thought that communism was a form of sin with which there could be no compromise. He talked about ‘rolling back’ communism and liberating countries trapped in the Soviet bloc – in such a view, containment was not enough. Yet together he and the president made a strong team. Eisenhower could let Dulles

take the brunt of criticism so that he could appear as the ‘reasonable man’ in the fray. Yet he also benefited from the respect which Dulles could inspire even in his opponents – as Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs, ‘Dulles knew how far he could push us, and never pushed us too far.’¹⁶ In practice, Eisenhower was prepared to be flexible in his methods in foreign policy; and for all its rhetoric the new administration aimed more at the consolidation than the extension of American commitments.

The death of Stalin and crisis in East Germany

On 5 March 1953, Stalin died. For a quarter of a century he had dominated (and terrorized) the Soviet Union and the international communist movement. Since the end of the Second World War his prestige had been immense throughout the world, and within the Soviet bloc unassailable. His death opened a new and uncertain era.

On 1 December 1952 Stalin had told a meeting of his immediate entourage: ‘When I die, the imperialists will strangle all of you like a litter of kittens.’¹⁷ There was alarm in Moscow that the Americans had elected a general in order to wage war, and when Stalin died his successors feared a surprise attack. The Soviet Union was in serious difficulties. Agriculture was failing to meet its targets. The non-Russian nationalities were still refractory. There was unrest even in the camps of the Gulag, which contained 5.5 million prisoners.¹⁸ Stalin’s successors were deeply divided among themselves. None had the grasp of all aspects of policy which Stalin had maintained.

It was the situation in East Germany that brought the divisions within the leadership to a head. In 1952 Stalin had laid down that the East German communist regime should proceed with the ‘construction of socialism’ (the collectivization of agriculture and Soviet-style control of all industry), with disastrous results. Production of all kinds fell, and there was a stream of refugees to West Berlin. Even the East German communist leader Walter Ulbricht warned of the dangers of building socialism without laying proper foundations. In May 1953 the Soviet leaders were divided as to what to do. Molotov, who had returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was willing to relinquish the policy of ‘forced socialism’ in East Germany. Lavrenti Beria, the head of the secret police, was prepared to go further and accept a policy of abandoning socialism itself. Molotov recalled him as saying: ‘Why should socialism be built in the

GDR? Let it just be a peaceful country. That is sufficient for our purposes.’¹⁹ Gromyko (later Soviet foreign minister) reported Beria as describing East Germany as ‘not even a real state. It is only kept in being by Soviet troops.’²⁰ Georgy Malenkov, the premier, supported Beria, but Molotov would have none of it. For him, East Germany had to be a socialist state, partly as a matter of principle, and partly because he did not believe that a bourgeois Germany would remain peaceful. Nikita Khrushchev, the party boss who would soon emerge as the most powerful figure in the new leadership, supported Molotov, and Beria gave way.

In East Germany itself the situation grew worse. On 17 June 1953 the industrial workers of East Germany, whom the communist regime was supposed to represent, mounted a widespread strike. Soviet tanks were used to quell the workers’ protests and to sustain Ulbricht’s government, which would have fallen. In the short run, the Soviet Union set out to consolidate the East German state. In 1954 the Soviet government agreed to renounce reparations payments from East Germany (which had still been exacted up to that time), and to write off East German debts to the Soviet Union. The economy began to pull round, and the state itself began to settle down. The country’s new status was recognized in 1955, when East Germany became an ally of the Soviet Union and one of the founding members of the Warsaw Pact.

By that time Lavrenti Beria was dead. He was arrested on 26 June 1953 in a daring coup by his rivals in the Soviet leadership and was executed the following December. Malenkov was forced to give up the post of premier in January 1955. Khrushchev emerged as the dominant figure in the Soviet government, with far-reaching results.

It is not clear if the death of Stalin and the uncertainties of his successors offered a serious opportunity to the United States, whether for military action or for some diplomatic initiative. There is no sign that the Americans ever contemplated an attack on the Soviet Union, and in any case they were still tied down in Korea. As for diplomacy, when Stalin died Eisenhower had been president for only two months, and little had been done to prepare for the event. Eisenhower remarked indeed that the result of seven years’ talk about what would happen when Stalin died was zero.²¹ The president did make a speech on 16 April 1953, hoping for a new start in Soviet–American relations, and outlining the sort of changes he was looking for – an end to the Korean War, some liberalization in Eastern Europe and a settlement in Austria. The Soviet reply, delivered through the press, was non-committal.

Germany and Austria, 1954–7

In 1954 an attempt was made to deal with the German Question. In February the foreign ministers of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France met in Berlin to discuss the possibility of German reunification. It was the first such meeting since December 1947, and therefore a remarkable event in itself, and a sign of a thaw in the most severe diplomatic frosts of the Cold War. But though the ministers met and talked, and so restored some of the civilities to international relations, they reached no agreement. In 1952 the Western powers had obstructed Stalin's proposals for reunification, and by 1954 it appears that Stalin's successors had decided that they preferred the division of Germany to the likelihood that a united Germany would turn decisively to the West. The disturbances in East Germany in 1953 had cleared the minds of the Soviet leaders on this issue. So the Berlin conference dispersed without agreement on its main subject, though the ministers agreed to call another conference, in Geneva, on the very different topic of Indo-China, this time with the participation of communist China – a sign that they were determined to go on talking about *something*, even if Germany had proved a fruitless subject.

In fact, in 1954, the division of Germany was being more firmly sealed by the integration of West Germany into the West European defence arrangements. The EDC had collapsed in August 1954, but the fundamental problem remained. The North Atlantic alliance did not have enough troops on the ground. British MP Fitzroy Maclean remarked in the House of Commons in May 1952 that NATO was 'like the Venus de Milo, plenty of SHAPE but no arms'.²² In 1954, NATO disposed of only twenty divisions (five of them American) in the crucial Central European sector, rather than the thirty which were thought necessary (although the American units were armed from 1954 with tactical nuclear weapons that would have been able to destroy any advancing Soviet army, albeit at colossal cost to the civilian population). When the European Army project failed, it was the British foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, who produced a solution.

Eden arranged a conference in London (from 28 September to 3 October) attended by Britain, the six Coal and Steel Community countries, the United States and Canada. The problem was still how to meet the American insistence on German rearmament while allaying the widespread fears of German military resurgence. Eden's solution was to use the existing machinery of the Brussels and North Atlantic Treaties. He proposed that West Germany should be admitted to the Brussels Treaty (along with Italy) and to NATO. It should then form its

own army, to be placed in its entirety under an integrated NATO command (the French, British and other armies only placed a part of their forces under NATO command). Eden also undertook to maintain a force of four British divisions on the continent of Europe, which were not to be withdrawn without the agreement of a majority of the states belonging to the Brussels Treaty. These proposals found wide agreement, and a further conference in Paris (23 October 1954) agreed to remove the remaining restrictions on West German sovereignty. West Germany was to establish an army of up to twelve divisions, and to be admitted to NATO on a footing of equality with the other members of the treaty.

In the end, the deed was done with surprising ease. The prolonged and obscure wrangling over the EDC had accustomed public opinion to the basic idea of West German rearmament, and diverted attention to the secondary question of how it was to be achieved. When the final agreement was reached, it seemed to be refreshingly simple. Moreover, when it came to the point, the West Germans proved less than enthusiastic about actually forming an army. There was a strong pacifist movement among the younger generation. When conscription was introduced in 1956, the period of service was set at only one year. By 1960 there were only seven West German divisions available for NATO, and the twelve divisions envisaged in 1954 were not attained until 1963.

The long-term significance of Eden's plan proved to be political rather than military. West Germany advanced to full sovereignty, began to conduct its own foreign policy and became a full member of NATO. East Germany became a member of the Warsaw Pact when it was formed in 1955. The German Question was being steadily resolved by the consolidation of the status quo, which meant the acceptance of partition.

In 1955 a number of events brought a further relaxation in the tension of the Cold War in Europe. On 15 May 1955 the Austrian State Treaty was signed in Vienna by the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France. (It was a 'State Treaty' because Article 1 recognized the re-establishment of Austria as a sovereign state; and it was not strictly speaking a peace treaty, because the former wartime allies had agreed that Austria was not to be regarded as an enemy but as one of Hitler's victims.) The background to this agreement was essentially a bargain by which the Soviet Union secured Austrian neutrality in return for a withdrawal of all occupation forces from the country. Under the treaty, Austria resumed its independent existence within the boundaries on 1 January 1938 (i.e. before the *Anschluss* with Germany) and renounced political or economic union with Germany. All occupation forces were to leave the

country before the end of the year. Neutrality was not comprised in the treaty, but was laid down in a constitutional law passed by the Austrian Parliament on 26 October 1955, declaring Austria's perpetual neutrality and prohibiting any military alliance or the establishment of any foreign bases on Austrian territory. These arrangements brought about the first troop withdrawals in Central Europe since 1945, including the first retirement by Soviet forces from territory they had occupied. It was true that Austria was a small country, much less important than Germany, where division still prevailed; but even so, the State Treaty of 1955 was a remarkable and encouraging event. The new Austrian status of neutrality was one to which others could aspire, as the Hungarians were to do in 1956.

Paradoxically, one of the immediate consequences of the Austrian treaty was to draw the lines of European alliances more firmly. Until the treaty was concluded, Soviet forces had been stationed in Hungary and Romania, under the terms of the peace treaties of 1947, in order to secure communications with the Soviet occupation troops in Austria. With the end of the Austrian occupation, this technical basis for the presence of the troops in Hungary and Romania came to an end; but the Soviets had no intention of removing their forces. The previous arrangements were therefore replaced by the creation of a new military alliance. On 14 May 1955 the Soviet Union and seven other communist states (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania) signed the Warsaw Pact for collective defence. They undertook to consult together on all international questions involving their common interests and to set up a unified military command, with its headquarters in Moscow. Two formal alliances – NATO and the Warsaw Pact – now confronted one another in Europe.

Yet, almost immediately after the formation of the Warsaw Pact, there took place at Geneva (from 18 to 23 July 1955) the first post-war conference of heads of government of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France. On paper, the major issues of the Cold War in Europe (the German Question, European security and disarmament, the restoration of East–West contacts) were on the agenda. In practice little was done about any of them. President Eisenhower made a spectacular move with his 'open skies' proposal for free aerial reconnaissance over the territories of each power bloc; but this was mere window dressing, and even those who devised it did not expect it to be accepted. There was a complete lack of substantial progress, and yet Western politicians and public opinion claimed to regard the Geneva Conference as a striking success. 'The spirit of Geneva' became the catchword of the time, and even

Dulles, that stern enemy of communism, was prepared to say that Soviet policy was now based on tolerance. On the Soviet side, Khrushchev was convinced that Eisenhower (whom he treated as a war veteran like himself) would not permit any serious military conflict to come about – a marked change from the fears which were aroused by Eisenhower's election at the end of 1952. These beliefs, though exaggerated in some respects, had solid foundations. Psychologically, the Geneva Conference was important as a break in the tension of the Cold War. The deep diplomatic frost of the Cold War was thawing after some six or seven years. The four foreign ministers had last met in London in December 1947; they met again in Berlin in February 1954; and then the heads of government met at Geneva in July 1955, to general satisfaction. The way ahead was open, and the start made at Geneva led eventually to Khrushchev's visit to the United States in 1959.

It was significant that the Geneva Conference attempted nothing serious on Germany. German reunification had temporarily disappeared from the diplomatic scene. The Soviets tacitly accepted West German rearmament and membership of NATO. Khrushchev, on his way home from Geneva, paused in East Germany and formally recognized the sovereignty of East Germany. A few weeks later, from 9 to 13 September, he received Chancellor Adenauer on a visit to Moscow, and established diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and West Germany. The German Question, though no one liked to say so, was being settled along the lines of partition and the acceptance of two separate German states.

Of those two states, East Germany was fully absorbed into the Soviet bloc, by the formal machinery of the Warsaw Pact and the powerful presence of a Soviet garrison, while West Germany was becoming steadily more involved in the integration of Western Europe. In 1955 the six member states of the Coal and Steel Community resumed their movement towards integration. A conference of the six at Messina from 1 to 2 June 1955 agreed to set up a Customs Union and a community for the development of atomic energy. Within a year these proposals were elaborated in detail and, after further negotiations between the member states, embodied in two Treaties of Rome, signed on 25 March 1957, setting up the EEC and Euratom. It was plain throughout these negotiations that Chancellor Adenauer was determined to bind the Federal Republic of Germany firmly into the new organization of Western Europe. With every step towards West European integration, the barrier between West and East Germany grew higher, and the division of Germany more pronounced. The construction of the EEC was

an important step in the Cold War for this reason. The economic pact reinforced the military–political normalization of West Germany constructed in the previous years.

Khrushchev, the ‘Secret Speech’ and the Hungarian rising, 1956

On 25 February 1956, the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union met in closed session to hear a remarkable speech by Nikita Khrushchev, the general secretary of the party – the post from which Stalin had ruled the Soviet Union for so long. Now, not quite three years after Stalin’s death, Khrushchev launched an astonishing attack on his predecessor. He denounced the great purges of 1937 and 1938 (at least in part), criticized Stalin’s failure to foresee the German assault in 1941, revealed something of the deportations carried out within the Soviet Union during the war and even attacked some of the post-war purges. He traced the root of all these evils to Stalin’s ‘cult of personality’, an act of scapegoating which allowed Khrushchev to pass over his own part in the pre-war purges, and to exempt the present leadership from blame. (He also played down the vast scale of the purges by concentrating on the murder of thousands of party officials rather than on the millions of ordinary citizens who suffered death or imprisonment in the Gulag.) Khrushchev sought to reassure the Party Congress that criticism of Stalin did not mean an attack on the system. The heritage of Lenin, he declared, remained intact, and the dictatorship of the Communist Party would continue – as indeed it did for another thirty-five years. But the communist system had been so bound up with Stalin that in the long run these assurances proved empty. Khrushchev had begun a change which no one knew how to stop.

The Secret Speech – which was soon widely distributed in the West – was the key moment of the so-called thaw. In May 1955 Khrushchev had already repaired relations with Yugoslavia and had put a new emphasis on the concept of ‘peaceful coexistence’ with the United States. War between the communist and capitalist camps was no longer inevitable, the Soviet leader believed, partly because nuclear weapons would destroy all parties to a conflict, and partly because there were now social and political forces at work in the new states of Asia and Africa which would deter the imperialists from war.²³

Khrushchev’s speech also opened up new vistas for relations between the

Soviet Union and the states of Eastern Europe. In April 1956 Khrushchev announced the dissolution of Cominform, as a practical demonstration of the fact that 'different roads to socialism' were open. It remained to be seen who would first try to find a route without Moscow's permission. Not surprisingly, it was the Poles who made a start. Poland was in ferment in the summer of 1956. Its intellectuals were demanding a more humane form of socialism and in June 1956 workers in Poznan, Poland's fourth-largest city, mounted mass protests against the regime, marching under banners that proclaimed 'We want God', 'Down with Red Bourgeoisie' and 'We want UN-supervised elections'.²⁴ Troops commanded by Marshall Konstantin Rokossovsky, a Russian citizen of Polish origin, suppressed the protests with savage brutality.

The only way to restore the party's authority was the return of a prodigal son. In October 1956 Wladyslaw Gomulka, who had been purged from the Polish Communist Party in 1951, returned as party leader. Gomulka was very much his own man – he had been one of the few communist leaders willing to argue with Stalin. His readmission to the party leadership prompted the Soviet government to make ostentatious preparations for military intervention. On 19 October Khrushchev flew to Warsaw, together with a powerful team from the Soviet leadership, intent on berating the Poles into submission. The Poles refused to be browbeaten. Gomulka insisted that Rokossovsky, who had been forced out, could not be reinstated. He guaranteed that the Polish party would maintain socialism and Polish membership of the Warsaw Pact – a vital reassurance that Poland would not attempt to become neutral. But it would do it in its own way. Khrushchev, faced with the certainty of Polish military resistance if he tried intervention, backed off from confrontation.

These dramatic events were closely followed in Hungary. In recent years the Soviets had intervened repeatedly and arbitrarily in Hungarian affairs. In 1953, after Stalin's death, they dismissed Matyas Rakosi (the principal architect of the policy of terror since 1948) as head of the Communist Party, and replaced him by Imre Nagy, a reformist. In 1955 the Soviets reversed themselves, dismissing Nagy and restoring Rakosi. In July 1956, as the turmoil in Poland mounted, Rakosi was replaced by Erno Gero, another hardliner. These frequent interventions aroused much resentment and made nonsense of any idea of a 'Hungarian road to socialism'. Even the partial success of Gomulka in Poland thus appeared all the more significant and attractive, especially for Hungary's large class of talented intellectuals.

Prodded by the intellectuals, public opinion in Hungary began to stir. On 23

October, a demonstration by students and others in Budapest demanded the return of Nagy, the trial of Rakosi and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. This proved to be the start of what soon became an insurrection. On 24 October, Soviet tanks were attacked in the streets of Budapest. Nagy became prime minister, intending only to reform the communist system, but he quickly found himself carried away by events and by the demands of the crowds in Budapest. On 30 October Nagy took the drastic step of abandoning one-party rule by forming a new government that included the Smallholders' Party, which had gained a majority of votes in the elections of November 1945. Even so, on the same day, the Soviet government declared publicly that all socialist states should be equal. Soviet troops withdrew from Budapest. For a moment it appeared that a compromise was possible.

The Hungarian government then took a fatal step. On 31 October Nagy declared that Hungary was to become neutral (on the model provided by Austria in 1955) and was to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. He also requested the UN to recognize Hungary's new status as a neutral state. This brought the Soviet government to the point of decision. Moscow could not possibly accept Hungary's neutrality in foreign policy, and political pluralism in domestic politics, without risking the break-up of the pact and of the whole Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe. During the night between 3 and 4 November the Soviet Army returned to Budapest in irresistible force, crushing all opposition. Serious fighting went on until 14 November, and sporadic resistance until the end of the month. Casualties have been estimated at 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Soviet troops killed.²⁵ Hundreds of thousands of Hungarians fled to nearby Austria. The Soviets imposed Janos Kádár as the head of a new government. A savage clampdown on political unorthodoxy began. Nagy, who had taken refuge in the Yugoslavian Embassy, was arrested, imprisoned in Romania and, in 1958, executed along with other key members of his government. The Hungarian attempt to break free from the Soviet bloc was over – but in 1989 the memory of Nagy and his comrades was remembered and rightly honoured.

What was the significance of these tragic events? The Hungarian rising was a spontaneous movement, inspired by patriotism and resentment at constant Soviet interference in Hungarian affairs, which drew together groups and individuals of widely different characters and aims. It owed something, but not much, to encouragement from Radio Free Europe, the American radio station which at the time conveyed the impression that the United States would support a rising. In fact, as an American historian of Hungarian origin has written, it was very much

‘a *Hungarian Revolution*’, making ‘impulsive, at times heroic and even unrealistic demands’.²⁶ It swept along those supposed to be in charge of events by its emotional force and exhilarating optimism. Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, though the dawn proved short-lived, and was followed not by the day but by the dark – or at best twilight.

The Hungarian rising of 1956 was a grave blow to the Soviet Union. The Soviet government first failed to prevent an open insurrection; it then hesitated; and finally demonstrated, with a heavy hand, the limits to the freedom allowed to its satellites, even after the Khrushchev speech. In the short term, the lesson was well learnt. There was no further trouble in the Soviet bloc until 1968. But in the long run, the consequences of the Hungarian rising were to prove damaging, perhaps even fatal, to the Soviet system. More obviously than in East Germany in 1953, Soviet predominance was shown to depend solely on force, with corrosive effects within the Soviet bloc and among progressives in the West, some of whom came to realize (though often with painful slowness) that the Workers’ Fatherland was a tyranny.

The Hungarian rising was thus a crisis for the Soviet Union and for communism. Its impact on international affairs was less significant. There was no likelihood of American armed intervention, and thus of general war. On 25 October 1956 Dulles instructed the American ambassador in Moscow, Charles Bohlen, to assure the Soviet government that the United States had no vital interests in Central Europe. On 31 October Eisenhower said publicly that while the United States was ready to give economic help to new and independent governments in Eastern Europe, it did not regard them as potential allies. As a one-time director of the CIA has said: ‘President Eisenhower decided that it was tough on the Hungarians, but they weren’t worth World War Three.’²⁷ The United States was not going to challenge Soviet predominance in Eastern Europe – certainly not by going to war, and in the event not even by economic or diplomatic means. The Soviet government appeared to understand this perfectly well; and the acceptance of the status quo by both sides was a confirmation of the division of Europe and a sign that the international system there had attained a high degree of stability.

This American passivity in face of what was at least an opportunity to embarrass the Soviet Union arose partly from the fact that a presidential election was taking place in November 1956, and Eisenhower was seeking re-election as a man of peace. It also owed something to the simultaneous crisis over the Suez Canal – Soviet troops re-entered Budapest on 4 November, and British and

French paratroops dropped at the northern end of the Canal on 5 November. The Suez crisis distracted much of the world's attention from Hungary; and the United States and the Soviet Union even found themselves on the same side in opposing the Anglo-French action against Egypt. But it seems certain that, even without Suez, the Americans would have done nothing to save Hungary. On the most basic assessments of risk, the unwritten rules of the nuclear age meant that the Soviets could do as they wished in their own zone.

In the simultaneous crises over Hungary and Suez, it was striking that Asian and African opinion was far more critical of Britain and France over Suez than of the Soviet Union over Hungary. An attack by European imperialists on Egypt was regarded as far worse than an attack by one set of Europeans on another. The Soviet Union gained much credit for its support for Egypt, and this sudden popularity in the Third World contributed to the mood of self-confidence, verging on euphoria, which seems to have gripped Khrushchev towards the end of 1956. At a reception in the Polish Embassy in Moscow on 18 November 1956, Khrushchev said to his Western guests: 'If you don't like us, don't accept our invitations and don't invite us to come and see you! Whether you like it or not, history is on our side; we will bury you!' The British ambassador, who was present, thought that the gist of the remark was 'We shall be at your funeral' rather than 'We shall dig your grave'; but whatever the correct translation, Khrushchev certainly meant that the Soviets were going to win the struggle between capitalism and communism.²⁸ It was in this mood that Khrushchev embarked upon a course which led to crises in Berlin and Cuba and largely decided the nature of the next phase of the Cold War.

Notes

- 1 For the text of NSC-68, US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950*, Vol. I, pp. 237–79.
- 2 Quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997), p. 66.
- 3 See Peter Lowe, *The Origins of the Korean War* (London, revised ed., 1997), pp. 181–2; Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp. 54–5, 62–4.
- 4 Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life* (London, 1994), pp. 318–19.
- 5 Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (London, 1987), pp. 443–4, puts the strength of the outside contingents in January 1952 at: Australia, two battalions; Belgium, one battalion; Canada, a brigade group; Ethiopia, one thousand; France, one battalion; Netherlands, one battalion; New Zealand, one battalion; Philippines, five thousand; Thailand, four thousand; Turkey, six thousand; United Kingdom, two

brigades.

- 6 *Keessing's Contemporary Archives*, 1950, pp. 10,996, 11,021.
- 7 Quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 67; see generally pp. 65–9.
- 8 Hastings, *Korean War*, pp. 405–6.
- 9 Casualty figures in *ibid.*, p. 407.
- 10 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London, 1989), p. 495.
- 11 Martin Gilbert, *Never Despair: Winston S. Churchill, 1945–1965* (London, 1988), pp. 265–6.
- 12 Quoted in Richard J. Barnet, *Allies: America, Europe, Japan since the War* (London, 1984), p. 55.
- 13 Quoted in Paul Johnson, *A History of the Modern World from 1917 to the 1980s* (London, 1984), p. 461; Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London 1994), p. 631.
- 14 Peter G. Boyle, ed., *The Churchill–Eisenhower Correspondence, 1953–1955* (London, 1990), p. 136.
- 15 R. A. Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (Oxford, 1981), p. 11.
- 16 *Khrushchev Remembers*; with Introduction, commentary and notes by Edward Crankshaw (Boston, 1970), p. 398; cf. John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York, 1982), p. 162.
- 17 Quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 145.
- 18 Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (London, 1997), pp. 329, 335.
- 19 Vyacheslav Molotov, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev*, ed. Albert Resis (Chicago, 1993), p. 334.
- 20 Quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 161.
- 21 Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, Vol. II: *The President* (London, 1984), p. 67.
- 22 Quoted in David Reynolds, ed., *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe* (London, 1994), p. 16. SHAPE was the acronym for Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe.
- 23 For Khrushchev's speech, *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 559–618.
- 24 Quoted in Pawel Machcewicz, 'Intellectuals and Mass Movements: The Study of Political Dissent in Poland in 1956', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 6, 1997, p. 363.
- 25 David Miller, *The Cold War: A Military History* (London, 1998), p. 59.
- 26 John Lukacs, *A New History of the Cold War* (New York, 1966), p. 357.
- 27 William Colby, quoted in Gabriel Partos, *The World That Came in from the Cold* (London, 1993), p. 108.
- 28 Khrushchev's remark quoted in Lukacs, *Cold War*, p. 151; cf. Partos, *The World That Came*, p. 119.

7

The Berlin and Cuba crises, 1957–62

Khrushchev and Soviet foreign policy – Berlin crisis and the U-2 plane – Kennedy and Khrushchev – Cuba and the Vienna Summit – The Berlin Wall – Cuban missile crisis – State of the Cold War at the end of 1962.

Nikita Khrushchev was an enthusiastic traveller. In 1954 he visited China. In 1955 he went to Belgrade, and then to Burma, India and Afghanistan. In 1956 he went to England (where he stayed at Claridge's, London's most luxurious hotel, and went on a tourist trip to Oxford). In 1959 he became the first Soviet leader to visit the United States, where he conferred with Eisenhower at Camp David and met a farmer in Iowa. Summit conferences took him to Paris and Vienna, and he addressed the United Nations in New York. These were travels which Stalin would never have contemplated, and they displayed a new awareness of the outside world. Khrushchev set in train crises over Berlin (as Stalin had done in 1948) and Cuba (which Stalin would surely have regarded as far too distant to meddle with). He took an ardent interest in the new states of Asia and Africa, believing that the new world could be called into action to upset the balance of the old.

What lay behind this almost frantic activity? What were Khrushchev's ideas on foreign policy? He cut a strange figure – erratic, impulsive and sometimes self-contradictory. At home, he launched a grandiose scheme to plough virgin lands in Kazakhstan, putting vast areas under cereal cultivation, only to turn much of the territory into a dustbowl and finish with an output lower in 1963 than in 1958.¹ He was self-confident to the point of brashness – on one famous occasion he took off his shoe and banged it on the desk at the General Assembly of the UN. At the same time he was nagged by fears of falling short of Stalin's

immense authority (during the Hungarian rising in 1956, he imagined people saying that in the old days everyone had obeyed Stalin, but now ‘these bastards’ had lost Hungary – which therefore he could on no account afford to do).² He genuinely wanted to improve relations with the United States, and yet he plunged into a challenge to the Americans in the Caribbean.

Among these contradictions, three themes remained constant. First, Khrushchev took his faith seriously and believed that communism would triumph, not just in the Soviet Union but in the world at large. He was convinced that the revolutionary potential of the Third World would tilt the balance of power in favour of the Soviet Union. He confidently planned to overhaul the Americans in milk, butter and meat production between 1961 and 1962, and in industrial output between 1970 and 1975. It seems that he did not really believe in the reality of American prosperity. On one occasion he met Vice President Nixon for a debate in a model American kitchen, and refused to believe that such kitchens were commonplace in the United States – it must be a put-up job, a sort of Potemkin kitchen. Second, Khrushchev understood that in the age of nuclear weapons the Soviet Union and the United States could destroy each another and must therefore act with appropriate caution. The safety of his country, and of the revolutionary ideal which he cherished, depended on the two superpowers attaining a level of agreement sufficient to avoid a nuclear war. Third, Khrushchev was increasingly conscious of the dangers arising from the dispute between the Soviet Union and China, which developed from 1956 onwards, introducing a new complication in Soviet foreign policy and in the socialist camp. For all his impulsiveness, Khrushchev’s policy rested firmly on these perceptions.

Khrushchev also introduced an improved system for securing information and advice on foreign policy through various research institutes dealing with the United States and Canada, the world economy and international affairs, Africa and the Far East. These bodies provided reports for the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, headed by Boris Ponomarev, which dealt with policy towards all non-communist states. In 1957, Foreign Minister Molotov conspired to remove Khrushchev from power, but failed and was himself dismissed. (It was a sign of change in the Soviet Union that he survived and lived quietly in retirement.) Khrushchev appointed Andrei Gromyko, an experienced diplomat who had been successively ambassador to the United States, chief permanent delegate to the UN and ambassador to the United Kingdom, as the new foreign minister. Khrushchev valued his steadfast

obedience (he once remarked that Gromyko would ‘sit on a block of ice if I tell him to’), but even more his skill and persistence in negotiation.³ Gromyko’s impassivity made an excellent foil to Khrushchev’s ebullience, and he was to remain Soviet foreign minister from 1957 to 1985, ensuring a long continuity of direction in foreign policy.

Berlin crisis, first phase: 1958–60

In 1957 the Soviet Union launched its first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), and in October 1957 put a satellite (the Sputnik) into orbit round the earth. Khrushchev attended the second ICBM launch in person, and boasted publicly that the Soviet Union would turn out missiles like sausages. This was bluff. Two years later, when Khrushchev announced the formation of ‘Rocket Strategic Forces’, there were only four missiles of the relevant type ready for use. But the confidence behind the bluff was real. Khrushchev believed firmly that the Soviet Union was drawing ahead of the United States in missile technology; and he frightened many Americans into thinking the same thing. The idea of a ‘missile gap’, to the advantage of the Soviets, took root.

Encouraged by these events, Khrushchev reopened the question of Berlin, which had slumbered uneasily since the end of the Berlin blockade in 1949. His basic motive was simple. He remarked on one occasion: ‘What would you do if you had an aching tooth? You’d have it out.’ That was what he felt about Berlin – it was an aching tooth.⁴ There were more sophisticated calculations. The lack of a German peace settlement left European affairs in a constant state of instability, which could be ended to Soviet advantage by a new and permanent arrangement in Berlin. Ulbricht, the communist leader of East Germany, feared West Berlin’s display of capitalist prosperity and wanted to get rid of it. Khrushchev was willing to help him, and so promote the cause of a socialist East Germany. The technical opportunity was always present, because the arrangements for Western access to Berlin by land had remained doubtful ever since 1945, and could be called into question at any time. Above all, Khrushchev was convinced that the Americans would not fight over Berlin. He could therefore act boldly yet safely.

On 10 November 1958 Khrushchev demanded an end to Berlin’s status as a city occupied by the four powers, and announced his intention to hand control over access to East Berlin to the German Democratic Republic (GDR). On 27 November he followed this up with notes to the United States, British and

French governments, declaring the existing four-power agreements on Berlin as null and void and demanding that all occupation troops leave the city within six months. If they did not, the Soviet Union would unilaterally conclude a peace treaty with the East German government and hand over control of all movements in and out of East Berlin to the East German authorities. On 10 January 1959 he presented the Western powers with a draft treaty setting out a new status for Berlin.

The six-month deadline for the withdrawal of occupation forces from Berlin was a form of ultimatum, with an implied danger of war if the Western powers continued to enforce their rights of access on Berlin when the six months were up. The Western powers differed markedly in their responses. The Americans had no wish to go to war over Berlin and were prepared to try to find a compromise on the question of access. Secretary of State Dulles suggested on 26 November 1958 that the East Germans could be regarded as agents of the Soviet Union, which would sidestep the issue of principle involved in East German control of access to Berlin. He was also willing to consider treating Berlin as a 'free city', without occupation forces; though he insisted that the existing rights of the occupying powers should be maintained while negotiations went on. Macmillan, the British prime minister, wanted the Western powers to accept East German control over the lines of communication, rather than risk using force to maintain their rights of access. He virtually invited himself to Moscow in February 1959 to seek a solution by personal contact with Khrushchev, but without success. In France, de Gaulle had recently become president of the new Fifth Republic. He took a strong line on Berlin, partly because he refused to be bullied, but even more because he was determined to stand by West Germany. He was building a close relationship with Adenauer, who was convinced that Khrushchev's Berlin policy was ultimately designed to force West Germany out of NATO and its role in West European integration. De Gaulle therefore assured Adenauer that France would stand firm about Berlin, if necessary at the risk of war. He snubbed American and British suggestions for 'exploratory talks' with the Soviets, remarking that there was nothing to explore – only rights to be maintained.

Strangely, Khrushchev made little attempt to exploit these differences between the Western powers. He agreed to a meeting of foreign ministers, which convened at Geneva only a fortnight before the six-month deadline was due to expire. The ministers reached no agreement, the deadline arrived and nothing happened. The Soviets continued to control the access routes to Berlin, and

traffic passed as usual. The foreign ministers went on talking until August, and then parted without agreement.

The crisis was not resolved. Khrushchev simply seemed to lose interest in it for a time. Arrangements were now well under way for Khrushchev to visit the United States – an unprecedented journey for a Soviet leader, and one to which he was keenly looking forward. For a time, the Berlin question was put on one side.

Khrushchev's visit to the United States took place from 15 to 27 September 1959. He made it a family affair, being accompanied by his wife, son and two daughters, as well as by a party of about a hundred. His talks with Eisenhower were inconclusive, because neither was prepared to move from his existing position on disarmament, Berlin or the Middle East; but they got quite far enough on the simple central point that neither of them wanted a war. Most of the visit was public in nature. Khrushchev visited Washington, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Des Moines and Pittsburgh. He spent a day with Roswell Garst, a farmer in Iowa who had made a name for himself by arranging exchange visits between American and Soviet farmers and had already met Khrushchev in the Soviet Union. The Soviet leader was greeted almost everywhere by large crowds, sometimes enthusiastic and sometimes merely curious. He became involved in heated discussions about the speech in which he had said 'We will bury you,' and explained that it was not a matter of physically burying anyone, but of the historical development of society. Still, he insisted that 'capitalism will be buried and will change to communism' – which doubtless did not comfort his American audience.⁵ The visit produced little substantial result, but it was remarkable that it took place at all.

In the wake of this visit, Soviet–American relations appeared to improve for a time. Two further meetings were agreed on: a four-power summit in Paris in May 1960, to discuss Berlin; and later a journey by Eisenhower to Moscow to repay Khrushchev's visit. But suddenly everything collapsed. On the eve of the Paris summit, the Soviet government released the news that on 1 May they had shot down an American U-2 photographic reconnaissance aircraft in the region of Sverdlovsk, about 1,500 kilometres east of Moscow. Such flights had been going on since 1955. In June 1956 Khrushchev had personally told the American chief of air staff, General Twining, to stop sending planes into Soviet air space – 'We will shoot down all uninvited guests'; and in fact the Soviets had made some interceptions.⁶

There was therefore nothing new about this flight, which could have been dealt

with behind the scenes if Khrushchev had so wished. Instead, he chose to make the incident public in the most dramatic way possible. Tactically, he played the game with great skill. Soviet officials announced the shooting down of the U-2 on 5 May. The Americans claimed that the aircraft had been engaged in weather reconnaissance and had gone off course. Then on 7 May the Soviets produced the pilot, Gary Powers, with his films, a flight plan and a 'confession'. The Americans were forced to own up. Secretary of State Christian Herter admitted the facts; and on 11 May President Eisenhower confirmed in public that such flights were made and maintained firmly that they were necessary for American security. Khrushchev, who had by then arrived in Paris for the summit, made his participation in the conference conditional upon an American apology for the operation, the punishment of those involved and an undertaking not to make any further flights.

Khrushchev thus chose to make a crisis out of an episode which could easily have been resolved quietly. Why was this? The answer may lie partly in impulse – Powers's flight took place on May Day, a high point in the Soviet calendar, which Khrushchev took to be a deliberate insult. Tactically, it may be that Khrushchev expected Eisenhower to disown the flight, and so begin the Paris Conference at a moral and diplomatic disadvantage. On the other hand, he may have foreseen that his demands about Berlin were not going to succeed and so chose to break off the conference on grounds of his own choosing. He was at any rate able to demonstrate that he had not gone 'soft on capitalism' after his visit to the United States in 1959.

In the event, Eisenhower (supported by de Gaulle) refused Khrushchev's demands for an apology, and the Paris Conference collapsed before it began. Yet this proved a strangely hollow crisis, with only limited consequences. On the one hand, Khrushchev scored a propaganda victory, wrong-footing the Americans and damaging their prestige. On the other hand, Eisenhower's frankness in taking responsibility for the flights and his insistence that they were necessary won him respect among those who responded in strategic rather than emotional terms. The steadfast support of de Gaulle, who was far from being an automatic supporter of the United States, was particularly significant. Meanwhile, the Berlin question, which was to have been discussed in Paris, remained unresolved.

Khrushchev and Kennedy, 1960–1: The Bay of Pigs and the Vienna summit

THE COLD WAR SUMMIT

In November 1960 John F. Kennedy was elected president of the United States, defeating Richard Nixon by a very narrow margin in the popular vote. The incoming president was young (only forty-three), wealthy and largely without experience in world affairs. During his election campaign he had played up the 'missile gap', and in general espoused 'hawkish' views on the Cold War. Kennedy made sure that no one could say he was soft on communism by declaring that 'the enemy is the Communist system itself – implacable, insatiable, unceasing in its drive for world domination ... a godless tyranny'.⁷ Yet at the same time he also insisted on the need for negotiation with the Soviet Union. Kennedy was an unknown quantity – which in a curious way he has remained, suspended between the early adulation of the 'Camelot' era and the later criticisms of poor judgement and lack of real achievement.

Khrushchev was privately pleased by Kennedy's victory. In public, the two men opened a long-range verbal bombardment against one another. On 6 January 1961 Khrushchev made a speech predicting that the victory of communism would come, not through nuclear or conventional war, but through wars of national liberation in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Kennedy took this as a direct challenge and replied in the course of his inaugural address as president, declaring that freedom faced an 'hour of maximum danger', which he assumed the duty of confronting. 'I do not shrink from this responsibility. I welcome it.' America, he proclaimed, would 'pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to ensure the survival and the success of liberty'.⁸ It was an extraordinary commitment, which eventually proved impossible to fulfil. The price of an immense defence budget and the burdens of the Vietnam War proved to be more than the United States was willing to bear. But meanwhile Khrushchev's challenge had been taken up in no uncertain terms.

Behind the scenes there was another story. The Soviet experts estimated that Kennedy would be pragmatic in foreign policy and would be in favour of talks with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev made a point of consulting the American ambassador in Moscow frequently, and also opened a new confidential channel to the White House, bypassing the Soviet ambassador in Washington, by using Georgi Bolshakov, nominally the head of the TASS press agency and in fact a colonel in Soviet military intelligence. Bolshakov made contacts with Robert Kennedy, the president's brother (and also the attorney general), and with Pierre Salinger, the president's press secretary, so that there were secret

communications behind the scenes in marked contrast to the public sparring.

The state of American–Soviet relations thus remained uncertain, when suddenly they were tested at an unexpected point – Cuba. Since becoming independent from Spain in 1898, Cuba had remained very much under the influence of the United States, which took most of its exports and dominated its economy. In the 1950s the country was run by a dictator, Fulgencio Batista; while in the hills and forests of the interior a young rebel, Fidel Castro, led a resistance movement. In 1958 the United States suspended arms supplies to the dictator, destabilizing his regime. In January 1959 Batista gave up the struggle and fled. Castro and his band of bearded guerrillas came down from the hills and set up a new government in Havana. Among them was the Argentine Ernesto (Che) Guevara, who was proven to be one of the most magnetic figures of Third World mythology.

Castro was strongly anti-American, and it may well be that at that stage he took to communism more as a function of his anti-Americanism than out of conviction. (He maintained diplomatic relations with Franco's government in Spain, which was anathema to most true left-wingers; and in return Spain took no part in the later American-led economic sanctions against Cuba.) In Moscow, there was some reluctance to believe that Castro and Guevara were true Marxists. Curiously (and as it proved disastrously) the Americans deliberately pushed the Castro regime into close relations with the Soviet Union, in the belief that this would render it unpopular at home and so bring about its fall. For example, the American government preferred Cuba to buy jet fighters from the Soviet Union rather than from Britain, in order to demonstrate Cuban dependence on Moscow. This elaborate policy failed completely in its main objective. Castro established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union on 7 May 1960, and he remained solidly in power. In Moscow Khrushchev came to regard Castro and Guevara as heroes, who were bearing the flame of revolution in the centre of the Caribbean. When Khrushchev addressed the UN General Assembly in 1960, he deliberately sought out Castro and hugged him in a demonstration of friendship and support.

The Americans then tried a new tack by imposing a general economic embargo on Cuba. At one time, these measures would have been fatal; but Castro could now play the Soviet card. The Soviet Union supplied him with arms, of which the first shipment arrived in September 1960. In November Guevara visited Moscow to sell sugar to the Soviets. Khrushchev welcomed him warmly; invited him to stand with the Soviet leaders at the great parade on the anniversary of the

Bolshevik Revolution; he also made sure that the Soviet Union and its East European satellites took all Cuba's sugar exports. For Khrushchev, Castro's success in Cuba came as confirmation of his belief that imperialism would be defeated by revolution in the Third World. If revolution could succeed in America's backyard, its victory was certain.

Thus by the end of 1960 Cuba had been drawn into the Soviet camp. In dismay, the Americans looked for other means of overthrowing Castro. There was no shortage of Cuban opponents of the Castro regime, some in Florida and others in military-style camps in Guatemala. The CIA recruited a force of these exiles to land in Cuba and lead a revolt. When Kennedy took office at the beginning of 1961 this plan was already well advanced. The new president might have dropped it or strengthened it, but in fact he did neither; and as a result he fell between two stools. The so-called Cuban Brigade, operating from Guatemala, landed some 1,400 men at the Bay of Pigs on the south coast of Cuba on 17 April 1961. American aircraft with Cuban markings and flown by Cuban exiles made ineffectual bombing attacks on Cuban airfields. No rebellion broke out to support the invaders. The landing force suffered over a hundred fatal casualties, and most were taken prisoner, to be displayed for photographers and film crews. American participation had been clear enough to attract attention, but utterly insufficient to ensure success. The result was a foreign policy humiliation.

In Cuba, Castro's authority was consolidated. His prestige was at its height, and he seized the opportunity to crush internal opposition and round up CIA agents. On May Day 1961 he publicly proclaimed that Cuba was a socialist state and announced that there was no need to hold any elections, since there was in effect a plebiscite every day in favour of the regime. The Americans in their dismay conceived a series of operations to overthrow or assassinate Castro – including an extraordinary scheme to poison some of his cigars. More seriously, they also attempted sabotage of the Cuban sugar crop and copper mines. (These plans were collectively code-named MONGOOSE, presumably after Kipling's short story in which a brave and tenacious mongoose kills a cobra; but the Americans failed to live up to this example.)

Cuba was now firmly established in the Soviet camp, as much by American errors as by Castro's own policies. The regime became the standard-bearer for socialism in Latin America; and Cuba attained the status of an ally, rather than a mere satellite, of the Soviet Union.

It so happened that on 12 April 1961, a few days before the landing at the Bay

of Pigs, the Soviet Union had put the first man into space. Yuri Gagarin became an instant hero, circling the earth under the sign of the hammer and sickle. Khrushchev was thus full of confidence at the time of the American disaster. He had known of the American plan in advance, but kept his own counsel until the day after the attack, when he wrote to Kennedy to declare that the American action threatened the peace of the world, and that Cuba would receive 'all necessary assistance' in repelling the attack. Moreover, he warned that if the conflict continued in Cuba there might be a new conflagration elsewhere – meaning Berlin.⁹ When the Americans did nothing to follow up the landing, Khrushchev had every reason to think that his threats had taken effect.

Contemporaneously with events in Cuba, the Soviet and American leaders were in contact by secret channels to prepare for a summit. Khrushchev, buoyed by successes in space and in the Caribbean, was eager for a meeting, and was sure that he faced a weak president whom he could put under pressure. Kennedy, more vaguely, wanted to meet Khrushchev and size him up.

The two leaders encountered each other at Vienna from 3 to 4 June 1961. Khrushchev was ebullient and pleased at being the old hand facing the 'new boy' on the international scene. He lectured the president on the history of the Cold War, and dug into the past to recall the fate of the Holy Alliance, which had failed to hold back revolution in the 1820s. He talked a good deal about the Bay of Pigs, rubbing salt into the wound of the American failure. Kennedy, by contrast, was uncertain and defensive, and failed to impose himself on the discussions. After the meetings, James Reston of the *New York Times* asked Kennedy if they had been pretty rough, and the president replied, 'Roughest thing in my life ... he just beat hell out of me.'¹⁰ Khrushchev came away convinced that Kennedy was weak. Kennedy concluded that Khrushchev was in a mood to take risks. In the course of the meeting, Khrushchev yet again set a six-month deadline on his demands relating to Berlin; and it seemed that this time he meant business.

There was a strange sequel to these events. Kennedy was so dismayed by the almost simultaneous setbacks of the Bay of Pigs and the Soviets putting the first man into space that he sought for some spectacular success to redress the balance. He found the answer in space, and authorized the Apollo moon programme, designed to restore American prestige by landing men on the moon. Some eight years later, on 20 July 1969, the Apollo 11 spacecraft came down on the moon, and men took their first lunar walk. It was indeed a remarkable feat; but by that time the situation on earth had changed completely, and the danger to

American prestige came from quite a different quarter, in Vietnam.

The Berlin Wall and the end of the Berlin crisis, 1961– **2**

In 1958 Khrushchev had put the Western powers under pressure by provoking a crisis over access to Berlin. But by 1961 it was the Soviet Union and East Germany that were under pressure over Berlin. The East German population, especially the educated young, was draining away to the West through the city, most of them bound for West Berlin. From 1957 to 1961 the outflow was as follows:¹¹

1957	261,622
1958	204,092
1959	143,917
1960	199,188
1961 (to 30 June)	103,159

Both the Soviets and East Germans were alarmed at this migration. Ulbricht, the head of the East German government, asked Khrushchev for aid – food, hard currency and even Soviet ‘guest workers’. Khrushchev declined to send workers and was reluctant to take the drastic step of closing the door, which would be tantamount to admitting that the only way to keep the people of the GDR in their own country was to fence them in.

By July 1961 time was running out. Ulbricht warned the Soviets that if the border in Berlin was kept open, the collapse of the GDR was inevitable – literally driving the Moscow leadership up the wall.¹² They were prepared to risk the blow to their prestige; and they did not expect any serious reaction from the Americans. The head of the KGB, Alexander Shelepin, put various measures in hand to tie the Americans down elsewhere by inciting trouble in Central America and Africa; spreading rumours of moves to ‘liberate’ South Korea, Taiwan and South Vietnam; and exaggerating the scale of Soviet nuclear armaments.¹³

When they reached their decision, the Soviets moved swiftly. Overnight, between 12 and 13 August 1961, East Berlin was cut off from West Berlin by a barrier of barbed wire. Over the next few months this barrier was built up into the Berlin Wall, an ugly obstacle of concrete blocks, some 4 metres high, and

with 300 watchtowers along its 111-kilometre length.

At first, the Americans offered no reaction – it was two days before they even lodged a protest. Eventually, under pressure from Willy Brandt, the mayor of West Berlin, they sent a symbolic detachment of 1,500 troops (accompanied by Vice President Lyndon Johnson and General Lucius Clay, who had been the American commander-in-chief in Germany at the time of the Berlin blockade) along the *Autobahn* to West Berlin, thus asserting their right of access. At bottom, Kennedy was relieved by the severance of the two Berlins, which offered a way out of the Berlin problem without war. It is also hard to see what else he could have done. As it was, the situation looked quite dangerous enough. On 22 October 1961 East German police tried to stop the American deputy commandant from entering East Berlin, causing a tense incident. On 27 October American and Soviet tanks took up station at ‘Check-Point Charlie’, the authorized crossing-point between the two halves of the city; the American tanks were carrying equipment suitable for knocking down a wall. The two forces stared at one another for two days, during which time the good sense of those on the spot and intensive diplomacy behind the scenes took the sting out of the situation. In 1962 the Americans were still looking for a compromise on access to West Berlin.

Such a compromise proved to be unnecessary. In January 1963 Khrushchev himself announced that the success of the Berlin Wall made a new settlement about Berlin unnecessary; and he was right. The Wall ended, at one and the same time, the haemorrhage of people from East to West Germany and the Soviet attempt to drive the Western powers out of Berlin. It was a grave and self-inflicted blow to Soviet prestige, and a propaganda gift to the West, because nothing could conceal the simple fact that the Wall was built to confine the East Germans in their own country. The Wall nevertheless achieved what Khrushchev and Ulbricht hoped: it stabilized the East German state, which began an economic recovery that improved living standards – not up to West German levels, but much higher than they had been before.

The Berlin Wall closed the German Question for many years to come, setting in concrete the division between the two Germanies and the two halves of Berlin until all was changed in 1989. The Wall was a remarkable symbol of the Cold War. It was ugly, brutal and inhuman, cutting a city in two and separating families and friends. It caused grief and hardship; yet compared to a shooting war it cost few lives. In political terms it represented a crude form of stability.

Yet the Cold War was never stable. When it settled down in one place it broke

out in another; and in 1962 the Cuban missile crisis brought the world to the verge of actual war.

The Cuban missile crisis, 1962

In July 1962 Raoul Castro, Fidel Castro's brother and defence minister of Cuba, visited Moscow to initiate a secret agreement providing for the stationing of Soviet missiles in Cuba. In late September and early October 1962 some 85 Soviet vessels sailed to Cuba carrying 42 intermediate-range missiles with 164 nuclear warheads, and 42,000 Soviet troops to guard them. The missiles were to be kept under Soviet control, and the installations which would render them operational were to be completed between 25 and 27 October.¹⁴

Why did Khrushchev make this daring move? Its strategic value was doubtful, and at best temporary. Soviet long-range missiles were already capable of reaching targets in the United States; and fairly soon the Soviets would have submarine-launched missiles which would be safer from attack than land-based rockets in Cuba. In terms of foreign policy it might have been a bargaining move, enabling Khrushchev to demand concessions elsewhere. Given Khrushchev's mood at the time, it may well have been inspired by genuine commitment to Castro and his revolutionary regime – Cuba had become to the Soviet Union what Berlin was to the United States, a symbol of its ideology and prestige. Indeed, it may be that prestige was the key to the operation, in that Khrushchev may have been aiming to compel the United States to accept the Soviet Union as an equal – specifically, since the United States had stationed missiles in Turkey, next door to the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union could station them in Cuba. Among all these explanations, it is not surprising to see Kennedy giving up in despair – 'Well, it's a goddam mystery to me.'¹⁵

The Soviets made little attempt at concealment; and indeed the voyages of so many ships and the landing of their cargoes was almost bound to be observed. But for various reasons, including bad weather over Cuba, it was not until 16 October that President Kennedy learnt that the Soviet Union was not only building bases in Cuba (which had been known for some time) but was also installing sites for medium-range missiles. This was rapidly confirmed by photographs taken by U-2 reconnaissance planes. How would the Americans react?

In principle, they had several courses open to them. They might accept the fait accompli, do nothing and await the outcome. In practice, this was virtually

impossible, because no president could show such weakness on a crisis so close to America's shores. They might negotiate, perhaps through the UN, or through established confidential channels. This would have the advantage of avoiding an immediate confrontation, but would present the Soviets with the opportunity of spinning out the negotiations until their position in Cuba had become impregnable. On the other hand, the Americans might use force, in different forms. They could bomb the missile sites; but they could not be sure of destroying them all, and it would be dangerous to miss even one or two. They could launch a full-scale invasion, after the style of Normandy in 1944; and in fact the Americans moved large amphibious forces to Florida. But such an operation would involve delay; it would mean direct conflict with Soviet forces, which had always been avoided hitherto; and it might have involved heavy casualties.

In these circumstances, a naval blockade offered an attractive alternative. A blockade would do nothing about the missiles and troops already in Cuba, but would prevent their reinforcement. It would exploit American superiority at sea, where the Soviets were at their weakest; it would gain a little time while making a show of strength; and it would not rule out any of the more drastic options – preparations for invasion or air strikes could still go forward. The Americans opted for a blockade. On 22 October 1962, in a television broadcast, Kennedy announced the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, together with the 42,000 troops. As a countermeasure, he declared that 'a strict quarantine' would be established around Cuba: with effect from 24 October, 'all ships of any kind bound for Cuba from whatever nation or port will, if found to contain cargoes of offensive weapons, be turned back'.¹⁶ The use of the word 'quarantine' instead of 'blockade' sidestepped questions as to whether a blockade could be established except in time of war, or whether a blockade might in itself be an act of war. It was a subtle choice of word; but the practical consequences were the same. American warships were ordered to take station some 1,300 kilometres from the eastern tip of Cuba – a distance later changed to 800 kilometres, at British suggestion, allowing the Soviet government an extra day to decide on its response. On 23 October Kennedy signed an order putting the 'quarantine' in place with effect from 2.00 pm GMT on 24 October (10.00 am in Washington, and 6.00 pm in Moscow).

The American warships took up their positions. During the morning of 24 October a number of Soviet vessels were heading for Cuba. The American 'Crisis Committee' which was watching the situation from Washington expected

an encounter somewhere between 10.30 and 11.00 am. In this respect it was an extraordinarily public crisis. American television showed a Soviet tanker, the *Bucharest*, approaching the 'quarantine' line, with American warships close by. Along with much of the American population, the staff of the Soviet Embassy in Washington gathered round TV sets to watch. The world held its breath. The tanker passed unimpeded, to sighs of relief. But the *Bucharest* carried no missiles. Two other Soviet vessels, the *Gagarin* and the *Komiles*, were nearing the American line. At 10.25 am Washington time these ships were reported to have stopped; by 10.30 am there were reports that six ships in all had stopped or turned back.¹⁷ The Soviets chose to avoid the confrontation, and sea power had begun its work without a shot being fired. Dean Rusk, the secretary of state, felt the tension slacken: 'We're eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked.'¹⁸

This was only a temporary respite, however. The basic situation remained unchanged. The Soviet missiles in Cuba were still there, and their installation was still going ahead. Even so, a psychological turning point had been passed, and an opportunity opened for negotiation. The secretary-general of the UN, the Burmese U Thant, tried to find a compromise in the afternoon of 24 October, sending identical messages to Moscow and Washington, proposing that the Soviet government should cease to send weapons to Cuba and that the United States should lift its quarantine. On 25 October Khrushchev agreed to his part of the bargain (after all, his ships had already turned round); but Kennedy declined (the quarantine was doing its work). Khrushchev then proposed a summit meeting with Kennedy, but the president made no reply.

During the night between 25 and 26 October, Khrushchev received an erroneous report that the Americans were about to invade Cuba, and began to display an anxiety which by some accounts verged on panic. It is striking that throughout this crisis Khrushchev sought to avoid direct confrontation with American forces; he ordered the ships to turn back, and he did not want the troops in Cuba to face an invasion. Meanwhile, the Americans kept the pressure on. American warships and aircraft ostentatiously increased their surveillance of Soviet submarines in the North Atlantic. Reconnaissance aircraft made low-level flights over Cuba. On 27 October an American U-2 plane was shot down by anti-aircraft fire. The Cubans publicly took the responsibility, but the Soviet forces in the island were put on high alert. Khrushchev sent their commander an order forbidding any use of nuclear weapons. The risk of war was acute.

Despite this extreme tension, or perhaps because of it, the outline of a solution

began to emerge. Khrushchev raised the idea that the Americans should remove their missiles from Turkey to balance the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. He also sought an assurance from the United States that there would be no invasion of Cuba. On 26 October, the Americans maintained in public that they would not negotiate unless the Soviet missiles were previously withdrawn from Cuba; but they indicated in private that they would not invade Cuba if the missiles were removed, and that American missiles would be withdrawn from Turkey after a suitable delay.

These confidential exchanges led Khrushchev to broadcast at 5.00 pm Moscow time on 27 October that he would withdraw the Soviet missiles from Cuba in return for undertakings that the United States would not invade the island and that they would remove their own missiles from Turkey. Kennedy made his reply public: he accepted that Khrushchev was to remove the missiles from Cuba; and agreed that the United States would remove the 'quarantine' measures promptly, and would give assurances that there would be no invasion of Cuba. In private, Robert Kennedy assured the Soviet ambassador that the United States would remove its missiles from Turkey, but he could not make this concession public.

The worst phase of the crisis thus came to an end. On 20 November Kennedy ordered the lifting of the 'quarantine' (though of course the US Navy could reimpose it at any time). The Soviet forces in Cuba dismantled the missile sites. The Soviet missiles, tactical bombers and land forces (except for a single brigade) left Cuba by March 1963. The withdrawal of the aircraft and land forces had not formed part of the original bargain and represented an additional concession by Khrushchev.

This settlement appeared balanced, but was in practice in favour of the United States. Khrushchev withdrew the missiles from Cuba, and so abandoned a position which he had very publicly taken up. The Americans, however, had had no intention of invading Cuba except to destroy the Soviet missiles; so when the missiles went they were only giving up something which they did not propose to do anyway. As for the Jupiter missiles in Turkey, these could be withdrawn without significant strategic effect. Khrushchev thus gave up a prominent venture, to which he had pinned his prestige. The Americans gave up two points which were largely hollow.

The Cuban missile crisis was for a short time intensely dangerous. When Soviet cargo ships approached the American quarantine line no one knew what would happen if an American warship fired on a Soviet vessel, or attempted to

put a search party on board against resistance. Again, when the American reconnaissance plane was shot down over Cuba, the Soviets feared some form of retaliation. The two superpowers came near to the brink of war; and they drew back. Nuclear deterrence worked, helped on the American side by the strength and flexibility of sea power.

The shock of these events produced widely different effects on the relations between the superpowers. On the one hand, the American and Soviet leaders were so shaken by their near-disaster that they agreed to improve the speed and reliability of their communications with one another. They installed a so-called hot line (in fact a teletype) between the two capitals to allow them to communicate directly, securely and almost instantaneously. This proved to be a psychological gesture rather than a practical measure – the ‘hot line’ was not used for another five years (during the Middle East crisis of 1967), and then to only modest effect. But after the intensity of the missile crisis, even a psychological gesture had its value. The superpowers also began to move towards a treaty to limit the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, in which they were joined by Britain but not by France. The Americans and Soviets thus took deliberate steps towards détente – the lessening of tension in the Cold War. On the other hand, the Cuban missile crisis led to an intensification of the arms race. Both superpowers increased their production of nuclear weapons; and the Soviets, conscious that they had been thwarted by American sea power, set out to build an ocean-going fleet. Thus while moving delicately towards détente the rivals trod heavily towards greater armaments.

In the Cuban missile crisis, the two superpowers confronted one another and negotiated with one another virtually alone. The Americans communicated to some extent with their principal NATO allies; Macmillan in Britain and de Gaulle in France tried to influence American policy; but at the height of the crisis there could be no doubt that this was an American affair. Similarly Khrushchev virtually disregarded the Chinese, who were furious at the compromise settlement, which they regarded as surrender. He also ignored Castro, agreeing to withdraw the missiles and troops without consultation with the Cubans. (Castro, though, struck a blow for self-respect by refusing to allow American inspectors to verify the withdrawal on the ground.)

Of the two, in their lonely eminence, the United States emerged the stronger. Kennedy gained personal prestige through his handling of the crisis. He showed firmness in imposing the naval blockade, subtlety in calling it a ‘quarantine’ and flexibility in seeking a successful compromise – a remarkable performance.

Khrushchev, however, had been rash in taking up a position in Cuba which he could not sustain, and had suffered a public defeat when Soviet ships turned back rather than test the American blockade. In the personal rivalry with Kennedy, in which Khrushchev had seemed so superior at Vienna in 1961, he was now very much the also-ran. It was not long before he paid the price, being deposed from power in 1964.

But the American success was by no means complete. Cuba remained defiant, a resolute and vigorous enemy of the Americans, a beacon for revolution and left-wing aspirations in Latin America and a lively critic of American policy at all kinds of international gatherings. In the 1970s Cuban expeditionary forces were to intervene in Africa, providing the Soviet Union with an acceptable 'Third World' military arm in countries where Soviet forces would have been less welcome. Castro remained a thorn in the American flesh, defying the might of the United States from a mere 150 kilometres across the sea. There were only two superpowers, and the United States was the stronger of the two; but a tiny enemy could still flourish in the Americans' own backyard. The facts of power were more complicated than might appear on the surface.

The Cold War at the end of 1962

The Cuban missile crisis showed the two superpowers standing alone, with greater military and nuclear strength than they had ever previously possessed. Yet in many ways their power and prestige were lower than they had been just after the Second World War. In Latin America, American influence was unchallenged at the end of the war, but was successfully defied by Cuba between 1961 and 1962. In 1947 the United States was the saviour of Western Europe through the Marshall Plan. By 1962 Western Europe was organized in the EEC, though its most prominent figure, General de Gaulle, hoped to detach it from the American sphere of influence (although he would swiftly be disappointed). At the end of the Second World War, the Americans could play the card of being the liberator of colonial peoples; but by 1962 most of the new countries which had emerged from the ruins of the European empires were fiercely anti-American – and the United States was being depicted as a 'neo-colonial' power.

As for the Soviet Union, between 1947 and 1948, its power was supreme in Eastern Europe. But its control had been challenged in East Germany in 1953 and in Poland and Hungary in 1956. In 1961 it had been compelled to admit that the people of the GDR could only be kept in their own country by the Berlin

Wall. Yugoslavia had successfully defied even Stalin, and still pursued an independent course. China had become openly hostile to the Soviet Union, creating a rift in the communist world more dangerous and damaging than anything which confronted the United States in Western Europe (see [Chapter 9](#)). Even though the Soviet Union enjoyed the admiration of most of the former colonial states, it could prove an expensive and often unrewarding activity to support them.

Each of the superpowers had grown in military strength and possessed in its nuclear arsenal the means to destroy its opponent beyond hope of recovery. Yet this immense power could not be used, for fear of mutual annihilation, and thus existed in a curious vacuum. In these circumstances, a state of de facto stability was established between the two great rivals. They continued to be ideological opponents, conducting a constant propaganda conflict against one another. They were engaged in clandestine combat by espionage and subversion. They pursued arms races of immense complexity and exorbitant expense. Yet they had become, in Raymond Aron's telling phrase, *frères-ennemis* – brothers as well as enemies. They confronted one another, yet they negotiated with one another; and they were prepared to settle down and live with one another, even if it was only on a temporary basis. The Cold War had reached a sort of stalemate. It is time to look back and examine the nature of this strange conflict.

Notes

- 1 Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (London, 1997), pp. 350–2.
- 2 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), p. 184.
- 3 Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York, 1995), pp. 32–3, 574–5.
- 4 Sir Frank Roberts, quoted in Gabriel Partos, *The World That Came in from the Cold* (London, 1990), pp. 39–40.
- 5 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1959, pp. 17,079–85.
- 6 Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 159. According to Soviet sources, the Americans lost 130 pilots on reconnaissance over the Soviet Union in the 1950s.
- 7 Speech by Kennedy at the Mormon Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, quoted in Michael R. Beschloss, *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev, 1960-1963* (London, 1991), p. 25. The parallel with President Reagan's speech referring to the 'evil empire' are close; yet Kennedy's remarks have gone largely unnoticed.
- 8 Quoted in Thomas C. Reeves, *A Question of Character: A Life of John F. Kennedy* (London, 1991), p. 253.

- 9 Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 242.
- 10 Beschloss, *The Crisis Years*, pp. 224–5.
- 11 David Miller, *The Cold War: A Military History* (London, 1998), p. 342.
- 12 See Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet–East German Relations, 1953–1961* (Princeton, 2003) for Ulbricht's role.
- 13 Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, pp. 253–5. The Central American countries named were Nicaragua, San Salvador and Guatemala; the African countries were Kenya, Rhodesia and Portuguese Guinea.
- 14 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 73; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 265.
- 15 A phrase used by President Kennedy on 16 October during discussions with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara and others. Kennedy secretly recorded his conversations; they have been published in Ernest R. May and Philip Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes* (Boston MA, 1997).
- 16 Quoted in Beschloss, *The Crisis Years*, p. 484.
- 17 Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (London, 1995), p. 296.
- 18 Quoted in James Hershberg, 'The Cuban Missile Crisis', in *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. II (Cambridge, 2010), p. 67.

Reflection

The Cold War in its early phases

The Cuban missile crisis revealed the two superpowers standing alone, with greater military strength than they had ever previously possessed. Each held in its nuclear arsenal the means to destroy its opponent beyond hope of recovery. Yet this immense military power could not be used, because war meant instant mutual annihilation. They confronted one another, but they had to live with one another, even if only on a temporary basis. The Cold War had reached a condition of stalemate, and this offers us an opportunity to examine the nature of this strange dispute.

What's in a name? In this case rather a lot. The term 'Cold War' is at once useful and misleading. It is useful because it reminds us that we are dealing with a conflict which was not a war in the usual sense of the term. It involved no direct fighting between the principal antagonists, but instead drew them into various other forms of dispute, for example, arms races and ideological conflicts. This was an unusual sort of conflict, which required a special name. As early as October 1945, George Orwell, in prophetic moods, foresaw the coming of 'a peace that is no peace', in which a great power would live in a permanent state of 'cold war' with its neighbours. The phrase came into general circulation in 1947, when Walter Lippmann, an influential American journalist and newspaper columnist, used it as the title of a widely read book.¹

Since then the phrase has become an indispensable part of our vocabulary, so that it is almost impossible to describe the second half of the twentieth century without using it. Once used, it leads to other questions. When did the Cold War start? What was it all about? Where was its centre? Such questions may appear simple, but they are by no means easy to answer.

When did the Cold War start? Some historians have no hesitation in choosing

1917, the date of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which brought into being a socialist state which by its very nature was in conflict with bourgeois and capitalist states.² Other writers argue that the wartime alliance between Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union was based on the realities of strategy and power politics, which might well have continued as the fighting came to an end. In this scenario, the start of the Cold War may be placed somewhere between the three-power conference in February 1945 and the formation of hostile blocs in Europe between 1947 and 1949.³

The view of the Cold War as primarily an ideological dispute is strengthened by two constant elements. First, Soviet leaders assumed that ‘all other political life-forms were inherently and immutably hostile’ – an assumption which was as true for Switzerland, which could present no material threat to the Soviet Union, as it was for the United States, with all its immense power. Second, the Cold War was a conflict within countries as well as between them. For communists, fellow travellers and other left-wingers, the constant enemy was American imperialism. For example, ideologically motivated traitors like the so-called Cambridge Comintern betrayed their country, not for material gain but for their beliefs.⁴ Sympathy for the Soviet Union ran wide and deep, drawing strength from many currents of opinion – anti-fascism, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, anti-Americanism. The same was true of the opposite camp. Opposition to communism ran deep in much of Eastern Europe, especially in the countryside, and there was a suppressed desire among both the intelligentsia and factory workers for greater freedom. At the same time, the belief in the moral superiority of socialism over capitalism ran deep.

This general outline of the origins of the Cold War may be filled in by examining the period of 1945–62 in some detail. It is best looked at under the headings of ‘diplomacy’ and ‘arms races’. The years between 1945 and the end of 1947 formed a period in which the wartime alliance continued to function, though under increasingly difficult circumstances. The foreign ministers of the United States, Soviet Union, Britain and France continued to meet, until their session in Moscow, during November–December 1947, proved to be the end of the road, breaking up without even setting a date for the next meeting. Then for a period of six years, until the death of Stalin, there was a period in which the United States and Soviet Union maintained only the most formal relations. It was inconceivable that the leaders of the superpowers should dine together to do business informally. This was the time when the Cold War was at its chilliest.

Yet in the event, this period of deep frost lasted only six years. As early as

January 1954 the four foreign ministers (Soviet, American, British and French) met to discuss the German Question. They made no progress, because the underlying difficulties had not changed; but instead of giving up, they agreed to switch their attention to East Asia. They agreed to meet again to talk about Korea and Indo-China; and they moved their meeting place to the neutral ground of Geneva and included the Chinese foreign minister in their deliberations – despite the fact that the United States and communist China still did not recognize one another. In July 1955 the first post-war meeting of heads of government took place at Geneva – Khrushchev for the Soviet Union, Eisenhower for the United States, Eden for Britain and Mendès-France for France. Practical results were slight, but all were agreed that a marked change in the international climate had occurred. ‘The spirit of Geneva’ thawed the frost of the Cold War.

The new spirit was most obvious in a willingness to travel and make personal contacts. In 1956 Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin, prime minister of the Soviet Union, visited Britain, including a social trip to Oxford; and in February 1959 Macmillan, the British prime minister, almost invited himself to Moscow in return. Then in September 1959 what would have been the unthinkable came about. Khrushchev paid a visit to the United States in which the formal aspects were accompanied by a visit to Eisenhower’s country retreat at Camp David, and ‘the spirit of Geneva’ was followed by the ‘spirit of Camp David’, with encouraging effects.

The next two summit meetings dampened these hopes and showed that the Cold War was still alive. A four-power meeting in Paris in May 1960 broke up before it began over the U-2 spy plane incident, even though either the Soviets or the Americans could have salvaged it if they had really wished to do so. About a year later a meeting between Khrushchev and President Kennedy foundered amid harsh words on both sides. Then in 1962 the Cuba crisis brought both the Soviets and the Americans to look over the brink of war and awaken to the full horror of what lay over there. Both superpowers showed a renewed determination to keep in touch and forestall crises at an early stage. The ‘secret channel’ between the two governments, through the Soviet Embassy in Washington, was formalized, and in 1963 a so-called hot line between the White House and the Kremlin was installed. Personal visits resumed. In 1967 Kosygin (Khrushchev’s successor) took the initiative by going to the United States, and by the early 1970s summit meetings between the leaders of the two superpowers had become annual events.

So it came about that the deepest frost of the Cold War did not last long – 1948–53 covered the worst of it. But there were other aspects of the Cold War which comprised different dates. In the 1950s the two superpowers were engaged in three different arms races: in nuclear weapons, in conventional land forces and in maritime forces.

The most dangerous of these competitions was the one in nuclear weapons. The Americans held an early lead, but this changed when the Soviet Union fired its first successful intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in August 1957, followed by the Americans in December of the same year. There followed a period of intense development by both countries. The Americans brought Titan and Atlas ICBMs into service in 1959, and then built Polaris submarines capable of launching missiles from under water. At the same time, the Soviet Union held a series of nuclear tests, culminating in 1961 with the explosion of powerful hydrogen bombs. In 1963 the improvement in diplomatic relations following the Cuban crisis showed results in limiting the nuclear competition. The Soviet Union, United States and Britain concluded a test-ban treaty ending nuclear explosions in the atmosphere (but not underground) on 5 August 1963. This treaty did not put an end to nuclear competition, which continued in the development of antiballistic missiles, and of rockets which could carry several warheads on one missile – multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles (MIRVs). Even so, the test-ban treaty was an important symbol of cooperation rather than competition.

Nuclear weapons and rockets represented the most modern aspects of the arms races between the superpowers. Competition in conventional land forces – tanks, guns and infantry – was mostly a one-horse race. The NATO powers, meaning for the most part the United States, made no serious effort to match the Warsaw Pact forces soldier for soldier or tank for tank. Instead the Americans developed so-called tactical atomic weapons to counter Soviet superiority on the ground, offering a choice of weaponry which neither side chose to use – fortunately, since NATO wargames gave a bleak portrayal of the massive destruction that tactical weapons would have vested upon Central Europe, had they ever been employed in battle.

Naval rivalry between the superpowers began only late in the post-war period. From 1945 to about 1960 the United States possessed overwhelming strength at sea, and Moscow made no serious attempt to compete. This changed in 1961, when the Soviet Union began to build an ocean-going fleet. This was partly to counter the American Polaris submarines and partly to support Soviet policy in

the Third World, to show the Red Flag. It so happened that a new naval rivalry got under way just at the time when diplomatic relations between the superpowers were improving.

The term 'Cold War, is a necessity – we cannot do without it. Yet it is misleading, because it gives the impression of a single entity, solid and congealed like an iceberg. The best we can do is to remember that the phrase has different meanings in different circumstances. We must also remember that the Cold War produced positive effects as well as risks and waste. Notably it settled, even if it did not solve, the German Question, which had played havoc in European politics since 1870. The Franco-German dispute, which had brought about three great wars (the Franco-Prussian War and the two World Wars), came to an end, partly because France and West Germany themselves, led by de Gaulle and Adenauer, embarked on the path of reconciliation; but also because the United States, in the context of the Cold War, insisted that the former antagonists must work together. In East Asia, Japan, whose incessant conquests had brought years of conflict, was firmly brought into the American sphere of influence in the Cold War. The Japanese allowed the Americans to defend them, and directed their energies towards industry and commerce. It so happened that Germany and Japan, the aggressor states of the 1930s, settled down to cultivate their gardens and thrived within the framework of the Cold War.

In a similar way, the Cold War offered opportunities for newly independent countries to play on the rivalries of the superpowers to secure economic and military advantages for themselves. It is true that the Cold War caused unnecessary damage in the Third World, but it also brought advantages to countries which were able to exploit them.

Above, all, the antagonists in the Cold War recognized their own limits. In the Berlin blockade, the Soviets allowed the airlift to get through. In the Korean War, the Americans preferred to turn a blind eye to the missions flown by Soviet aircraft. The fear of mutual destruction prevented the superpowers from taking the fatal step into war. But there was more at work than fear. Both sides were satisfied with the status quo, especially in Europe. Western Europe enjoyed rapidly increasing prosperity, accompanied by a high degree of political stability. The people of Eastern Europe were not content with the status quo, as was shown by revolts in 1953 and 1956, yet in some countries at least they attained a degree of political stability and of crude economic growth that at least promised hope for the future. Indeed, while the Cold War was not the Golden Age that had been promised by propagandists on both sides of the Iron Curtain, it was better

than the terrible decades that people had endured since the century began.

Notes

- 1 Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in US Foreign Policy* (New York, 1947).
- 2 See, for example, André Fontaine, *Histoire de la guerre froide* (Paris, 1956 and 1967); D. F. Fleming, *The Cold War and Its Origins, 1917–1960* (New York, 1961).
- 3 For the interpretations referred to here, see, for example: Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Policy, 1943–1945* (New York, 1968), who identifies 1943 as the start; Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Co-existence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–1973* (New York, 1974), who opts for 1943–5; Daniel Colard, *Les relations internationales de 1945 a nos jours* (6th ed., Paris, 1996), p. 195, opts for Yalta; two Russian writers, Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), argue for 1946. Most scholars identify 1947 as being crucial; see especially John Lukacs, *A New History of the Cold War* (New York, 1996). The quotation putting the start of the Cold War in 1948 is from Lawrence Aronson and Martin Kitchen, *The Origins of the Cold War in Historical Perspective* (London, 1988), p. 211.
- 4 This is a reference to Robert Cecil, 'The Cambridge Comintern', in *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Christopher Andrew and David Dilks (London, 1984), pp. 169–98.

PART TWO

Decolonization and Wars of Succession, 1945–62



PHOTO 4 Zhou Enlai, the first premier of the People's Republic of China, addresses the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian states in April 1955 (Getty Images. Credit: Keystone-France).

While the Cold War was developing, another fundamental change in international relations took place. Most of the European empires that had controlled Africa and much of Asia in the first half of the twentieth century came to an end. This process was ragged and hardly uniform. Sometimes the imperial powers fought long and hard before withdrawing, as the French did in Indo-China and Algeria. In other cases, the powers set their own deadlines for departure, and left in haste, as the British did in India, Palestine and much of Africa. Some countries did not give up their empires until much later. Portugal, to all appearances the weakest of the colonial powers, held on to its African colonies with remarkable tenacity. The Soviet Union, which had inherited the Tsarist conquests in the Caucasus and Central Asia, made no retreat from empire at all and held on until the collapse of the Soviet state itself in 1991.

The process of European expansion, extending over four and a half centuries from about 1500 onwards, had been complicated. The European powers imposed direct or indirect political control over their colonial territories. They promoted trade and investment. They sometimes brought about large-scale European

settlement (e.g. by the French in Algeria, and the Dutch and British in South Africa). Almost always empire brought the extension of European culture, education and medicine – but usually only for a small proportion of the subjected peoples. It was often accompanied by egregious economic and racial injustice: the case of the Congo is a paradigmatic example of the violence and exploitation that Europeans employed in Africa. The end of empire proved equally messy. Political control was lost or handed over, but economic and military influence often remained, as did important legacies in law, culture and religion. The presence of European settlers produced a series of situations – war in Algeria, apartheid in South Africa, torture and massacre against the Kikuyu people in Kenya – that had serious repercussions on domestic politics in Europe.

‘Decolonization’ is a shorthand term covering all these changes. Like many shorthand terms it is misleading but indispensable: misleading because it lumps together all kinds of different events and movements; indispensable because it would be impossibly clumsy to refer to these differences whenever we mention the process as a whole.

Decolonization had profound effects on international relations. The former imperial powers had to change their policies to adapt to the new circumstances. The British, for example, sought a substitute for the empire in the Commonwealth. The French turned to European integration as a new enterprise to replace the distinctly anachronistic-sounding ‘civilizing mission’ of French imperialism – though they also contrived to retain a substantial influence in many of their former French colonies. In general, all the former colonial powers were weakened, to the advantage of the superpowers.

On the other side, the newly independent states had to make their way in the world. Almost at once they sought some form of cooperation with their fellows. The Arabs talked of pan-Arab unity and formed the Arab League. The new African governments set up the Organization of African Unity in 1963. The Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian states in 1955 aspired to bring together countries across two continents, whether former colonies or not. Yet at the same time the new states often came into conflict with one another, in wars of succession to decide who should inherit the old imperial domains. India and Pakistan, the successor states of British India, embarked on war with each other as soon as they became independent, and have continued the struggle from time to time ever since. In the Middle East, Israel and its Arab neighbours fought bitter wars of succession over the old British mandate in Palestine. In Africa there were frequent civil wars to decide who should replace the imperial powers;

one of the first was in the former Belgian Congo in 1960–2.

The complicated process of decolonization also became a theatre of conflict in the Cold War. In part this was because the superpowers tried to win supporters among the new states, and in part because the newly independent governments themselves joined one or other of the opposing camps, whether out of conviction or in pursuit of gain. The new states all joined the United Nations where the former colonial countries rapidly attained a majority in the General Assembly, transforming its character and role in world politics.

These vast changes, with their widespread consequences for international affairs, began at the end of the Second World War and reached a climax in the early 1960s, when many African colonies attained independence and the long war in Algeria came to an end. The following chapters look at various aspects of decolonization and wars of succession in the Middle East, in Asia and in Africa during that period; and also at the emergence of the Afro-Asian movement and the Third World, which changed the nature and conduct of world affairs.

8

The Middle East, 1945–62

The Middle East at the end of the Second World War – The end of the Palestine mandate: Israel and the Arabs, 1947–9 – The Arab states and Arab nationalism – The Suez crisis, 1956 – The Middle East after the Suez crisis.

The term ‘Middle East’ requires definition. In the first part of the twentieth century, it was used in Britain and in France to denote a broad area between the Near East and the Far East – which allowed a good deal of latitude, but at least explained the use of the word ‘Middle’. ‘Near East’ has now largely fallen out of use; and in common usage the Middle East comprises the south-east Mediterranean countries, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt; then Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Yemen; and finally the Persian Gulf states of Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Iran.¹

The Middle East is inhabited by peoples who are mostly Arabic-speaking in language and Islamic in religion. Language and religion do not necessarily coincide, however. Iran is Islamic in religion, but Persian in language. There are other, quite different elements. Lebanon comprises a mixture of Muslims and Christians, speaking both Arabic and French. Israel has a mixed population of Jews and Arabs; and in the early years of its existence the Jewish element was very largely made up of European immigrants. The Kurds are mainly Muslim, having their own language; they do not possess their own state, but many aspire to create one.

In these varied circumstances, the term ‘nationalism’, which dominates much political discussion, is usually difficult to define. Nationalism based on language (often used as the basic criterion for nationality) would imply an Arab nation covering most of the Middle East and perhaps extending along the whole North

African coast as far as Morocco. There has indeed been much talk of Arab unity and pan-Arab nationalism; but in practice individual Arab countries have maintained their own identity and developed a national consciousness based on the unity of the state. Attempts to break away from this pattern – for example, the formation of a union between Egypt and Syria (the United Arab Republic) – have proved short-lived.

The states of the Middle East are recent in their formation, mostly dating back to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. (Iran, with its continuous independent existence, forms an important exception.) On the other hand, the Middle Eastern peoples have a long history. The area was the home of ancient civilizations along the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates, at a time when Europe was the home of primitive cultures. It was the birthplace of the great monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam; and the city of Jerusalem is in different ways sacred to all three faiths. In an important sense, the origins of the state of Israel can be traced back to the promise made to Abraham in the Book of Genesis, which is a far cry from modern notions of national self-determination.² The Middle East is an area where the present can never be separated from the past.

The Middle East has long exercised a magnetic effect on outside peoples and states, partly for religious reasons, partly as a result of geography, strategy and economics. Geographically, the area is a crossroads, the meeting point of Europe, Asia and Africa. In the nineteenth century, the Suez Canal made Egypt a nodal point in the maritime communications of the world, and particularly for the British Empire. Early in the twentieth century, oil was discovered in Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia; the Middle East thus became vital to a civilization increasingly dependent on petroleum and its products.

For all these reasons, outside powers have repeatedly intervened in the Middle East. Between the two world wars, Britain and France effectively dominated the area. Britain controlled Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan (later Jordan), and Iraq and exercised considerable influence in Iran; France ruled Syria and Lebanon. During the Second World War the French occupation of Syria and Lebanon came to an end. Britain and the Soviet Union jointly occupied Iran. American oil companies, with support from the US government, moved into Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Middle East was no longer a European preserve, and the pattern of outside intervention was changed. At the same time, the question of creating a Jewish state in Palestine acquired a new urgency and an intense emotional impetus from the Nazi death camps and the massacre of European Jews in

German-occupied Europe.

At the end of the Second World War, there were three issues of immediate international importance in the Middle East. First, the British were determined to maintain their influence in the area, and to develop a new framework to protect long-standing interests. Second, there was a difficult problem in Iran, where Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union were in contention. Third, there was an explosive situation in Palestine, which was predominantly Arab in population but where the surviving European Jews now looked for their salvation. The first two issues should be examined now; Palestine requires separate treatment later.

Britain was determined to maintain its influence in the Middle East, for a combination of strategic and economic reasons. The Suez Canal was still the lifeline of the Empire, and cheap oil which could be paid for in sterling was a vital economic asset. The British therefore set out to retain their military presence in the area, under the cover of new diplomatic arrangements. In March 1945 the British helped to set up the Arab League, hoping to guide Arab nationalist sentiment towards Arab unity for their own purposes. They maintained their military base in the Suez Canal Zone in Egypt and concluded a new treaty with Transjordan (March 1948) permitting British bases to be maintained there. For a time these arrangements worked reasonably well; but they came under increasing pressure from nationalist forces throughout the Middle East.

In Iran three outside powers – Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States – were involved in a muted power struggle that combined British–Russian rivalries going back to the nineteenth century with early exchanges in the Cold War. During the Second World War, the British and the Soviets had installed a new shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, in 1941. The Americans later set up a large-scale supply organization in Iran to send war material to the Soviet Union; and Roosevelt also wanted to demonstrate his anti-imperialism by saving Iran from what he regarded as British exploitation. Iran itself was weak and divided. The new shah was only twenty-one when he took the throne. There was a strong Islamic fundamentalist movement that opposed all foreign influences. There was also a sizeable pro-Soviet Communist party, the Tudeh Party. Popular sentiment was anti-foreign and particularly hostile to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, even though in practice a proportion of the company's profits were being returned to Iran in royalties.³

In January 1946 there was a trial of strength between the three outside powers

when the Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and two Northern provinces of Iran declared independence, and the Soviet Union took them under its protection. The British, as old hands in the area, were willing to negotiate a deal with the Soviets on the basis of spheres of influence for each country, but the Americans rejected such a compromise and demanded (6 March 1946) the immediate withdrawal of Soviet forces from Iran. In April 1946 Stalin agreed to withdraw his forces by May. But at the same time he sought to maintain influence by setting up a joint Soviet–Iranian oil company, with a 51 per cent Soviet holding. Iranian premier Ahmad Qavam also agreed to appoint three members of the Tudeh Party as ministers in his government. This arrangement did not last. By the end of 1946 the Tudeh ministers had been dismissed; and in 1947 the Majlis, the Iranian parliament, rejected the agreement for a Soviet–Iranian oil company. Surprisingly, Stalin accepted this setback without demur. This left the Americans, and to a lesser extent the British, temporarily victorious in Iran; but for the British it was to be a dangerous victory. If Iran could defy the Soviet Union and reject a Soviet–Iranian oil company, then the obvious next step was to challenge the British and attack the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company – which was in fact what happened in the next few years.

The situation was very much a mixture of past and present, as the British tried to maintain the position they had held since the nineteenth century, and the Americans and Soviets played out moves in the nascent Cold War. In the next ten years, from 1946 to 1956, the international situation in the Middle East was to be drastically transformed, as old influences rapidly gave place to new and as the Middle East’s significance increased in tandem with its growing share of world oil output.

Oil in the Middle East, 1946–56

The Second World War and the following years saw an immense rise in world oil production to meet increasing demand; and the share of the Middle East in this production rose dramatically. Production figures, in millions of tonnes, are given below:⁴

	1940	1950	1960
World production	293.2	525.2	1055.9
Middle East production	13.6	87.9	554.0

By 1960 the Middle East share thus rose to over a half of the total world production.

About 1950, Middle East oil production was in the hands of American and British oil companies. The Americans operated in Saudi Arabia (Aramco), Kuwait (Gulf Oil) and Iraq (Mobil and Exxon). The British operated in Iran, through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. These oil interests were of great importance to both countries. The American oil companies made profits, and the US government gained tax revenues and political influence. The British paid for Iranian oil at an advantageous price in *sterling* – a crucial matter when dollars were still scarce. Both countries wanted to keep Middle East oil out of Soviet control. The Americans and the British both had much at stake, and they both had their problems.

The Americans had to conduct a delicate balancing act between their support for Israel, which offended the Arab states, and their oil interests, which required good relations with a number of Arab countries, notably Saudi Arabia. As early as 1948 King Ibn Saud warned the United States that he might cancel the Aramco concession unless the Americans reduced their support for Israel. The threat proved hollow, because Ibn Saud had no intention of cutting off his own major source of income. Even so, the Americans were wary, and felt it necessary to reassure the king. In 1950 President Truman wrote to Ibn Saud to assure him that ‘no threat to your kingdom could occur which would not be a matter of immediate concern to the United States’.⁵ Though phrased in cautious diplomatic language, this was a far-reaching undertaking to support Saudi Arabia. The Americans were thus committed to a double policy in the Middle East, one pro-Israeli, the other pro-Saudi.

In 1950 the Americans found an ingenious method of increasing the oil revenues of the Saudi government while not diminishing Aramco’s profits. On 30 December 1950 Aramco signed an agreement with the Saudi Arabian government, providing for a 50–50 division of profits between the two. At the same time, the US government agreed to treat Aramco’s payments to Saudi Arabia as a tax, which could be set against tax liabilities in the United States. The US government thus accepted a reduction in its tax revenues in order to provide the Saudi government with a larger share of Aramco’s profits; and the American taxpayer subsidized both Aramco and indirectly the Saudi government in order to promote the United States’ influence in the Middle East. Similar deals followed for the governments of Kuwait (1951) and Iraq (1952).⁶

In Iran events followed a very different course. In 1949 the Anglo-Iranian Oil

Company agreed to pay higher royalties to the government; the Iranians regarded the British offer as inadequate, however. In Saudi Arabia there was no parliament, and effectively no public opinion, to obstruct deals of this kind. In Iran nationalist feeling ran high, and the new agreement had to be submitted to the Majlis, and first to its Oil Committee, under the chairmanship of Mohammed Mossadeq. The committee rejected the agreement and demanded instead the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

At that stage, the Iranians were divided among themselves. The premier, General Razmara, was in negotiation with Anglo-Iranian for a 50–50 agreement on the same lines as that between Aramco and Saudi Arabia. But the national mood was against him. On 7 March 1951 Razmara was assassinated four days after he spoke in the Majlis against nationalization. The shah was compelled to accept Mossadeq as his successor. Mossadeq was a striking figure – theatrical, flamboyant and with an immense popular following. He combined the social standing of being a member of an ancient landed family, claiming descent from a former shah, with the intellectual kudos of having been a professor of political science at Tehran University; and unlike most professors of political science he was also a formidable politician. He took office on 28 April 1951, and at once introduced a law nationalizing all the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's property and assets in Iran, coming into effect on 1 May.

The British government and Anglo-Iranian countered by organizing an international embargo on the purchase of Iranian oil, and Anglo-Iranian brought legal actions against other companies which accepted Iranian oil (which was described as 'stolen') for refinement. The boycott proved a great success. Sales of Iranian oil fell drastically, and production dropped from over 30 million tonnes in 1950 to a mere 1,360,000 tonnes in 1952. There was at this stage no solidarity among the oil-producing countries against the oil companies, and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had no hesitation in increasing their own production to fill the gap.

Despite the success of the embargo, British prestige was badly shaken by Mossadeq's defiance. Moreover, while the American oil majors supported the embargo, the US government continued its economic assistance to Iran and tried to mediate in the dispute. In July 1951 the United States sent Averell Harriman, a distinguished political figure and former ambassador in Moscow, to Tehran to explore terms for an agreement; he stayed for two months, without result. The British too sent an emissary to Iran to get a deal for Anglo-Iranian, without success. They ran up against a brick wall, because Mossadeq was determined to

eliminate the Anglo-Iranian Company, not do a deal with it. Instead of negotiating, Mossadeq, on 25 September 1951, gave the last remaining British staff in the Abadan oilfields a week to pack their bags and go. They complied, leaving what remained of British prestige in ruins.

The result was stalemate. The Iranians had nationalized their oil but could not sell it. The British had blocked Iranian oil exports, but had lost all Anglo-Iranian's assets in Iran. This situation persisted until 1953, when the American government, pressed by the British, lost patience. On instructions from President Eisenhower, the Central Intelligence Agency (with cooperation with the British intelligence services) organized a coup ('Operation Ajax') to overthrow Mossadeq, restore the authority of the shah and install a new premier. The first attempt proved a failure, and the shah had to leave the country; but then the tables were turned, street demonstrations were organized in favour of the shah and Mossadeq in turn took to flight.

This drastic intervention could not restore the status quo; and indeed that was not the American objective. Instead, the Americans arranged a new oil settlement in 1954, by which the principle of nationalization was maintained and the National Iranian Oil Company retained ownership of the oilfields and the Abadan refineries. The purchasing and marketing of the oil, however, was placed in the hands of a new international consortium, in which Anglo-Iranian (renamed British Petroleum) took 40 per cent of the holdings, five American companies shared another 40 per cent, Shell had 14 per cent and the Compagnie Française des Pétroles 6 per cent.⁷ The newly named British Petroleum Company received compensation for its losses, paid not by Iran but by the other companies in the consortium.

The immediate results of this deal were advantageous to the Americans. American oil companies took a large share of the Iranian oil market. Washington became politically predominant in Iran. In November 1955 Iran joined the Baghdad Pact, the Middle East alliance directed against the Soviet Union. The Americans provided supplies of arms, and the shah became to a large degree an American protégé. The United States thus took advantage of what had begun as a British-Iranian crisis. But the foundations of this success proved shaky. Hitherto, the Middle East oil producers had been divided, with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait working against the Iranians. What would happen if they began to work together? On 12 November 1953, the American ambassador in Tehran, Loy Henderson, wrote that 'it seems almost inevitable that at some time in the future ... the Middle Eastern countries ... will come together and decide upon unified

policies which might have disastrous effects upon the operations of the companies'.⁸ It was a prophetic observation. Only seven years later, in September 1960, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed. Thirteen years later again, in 1973, OPEC was to shake the world.

The end of the Palestine mandate: Israel and the Arabs, 1947–9

At the end of the Second World War, the British government still held the mandate for Palestine, which they had accepted from the League of Nations in 1920. The circumstances under which the mandate had to be exercised had been utterly transformed by the massacre of European Jews by Nazi Germany, which generated a renewed and intense determination by the Zionists to achieve a Jewish state. Moreover, there was now a wave of sympathy for the Zionist cause throughout the Western world, and particularly in the United States. The British thus came under increasing pressure to permit more Jewish immigration into Palestine and to advance the creation of a Jewish state. But at the same time Arab opposition to Zionism was stiffening. Arab nationalism had been stimulated by the Second World War, and Arab leaders saw no reason why Western sympathy for the Jews (or guilt for not saving them from the death camps) should be assuaged at Arab expense.

The British thus found themselves in an impossible position, caught between Jews and Arabs on the ground in Palestine and assailed by international (especially American) opinion from the outside. Failing to find any policy which would reconcile these conflicting pressures, and wearying of its thankless, costly and bloody task, the British government decided in February 1947 that it would hand the problem over to the United Nations, and leave Palestine in May 1948.

The UN appointed a Special Committee on Palestine (known by its initials as UNSCOP), which reported in August 1947 in favour of the partition of Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab, within a joint framework that would maintain their economic unity. The United States and the Soviet Union both supported these proposals, and on 29 November 1947 the General Assembly of the UN passed Resolution 181 proposing partition.

The Jewish Agency (the coordinating body of the Jews in Palestine), on behalf of the Zionist movement, accepted the proposal, believing that any Jewish state was better than none. The Arab states, and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem

speaking for the Palestinians, rejected the partition plan outright, refusing to accept any Jewish state, however small. On this fundamental issue of whether a Jewish state should exist or not there was no room for compromise. All attempts at diplomacy had now failed, and this basic question was to be decided by battle.

Fighting began in Palestine before the mandate came formally to an end and the last British forces withdrew – or ‘scuttled’. Arab forces, organized from outside by the countries of the Arab League, tried to cut Jerusalem off from other areas of Jewish settlement. The Zionists prepared to set up their state and took control of as much territory as they could. The British mandate ended at midnight on 13–14 May 1948. On 14 May David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the state of Israel. The following day troops from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Iraq advanced into Palestine, ostensibly to protect the Palestinian state as set out in the UN resolution of November 1947, but in fact to destroy the state of Israel before it could be properly established. War had begun.

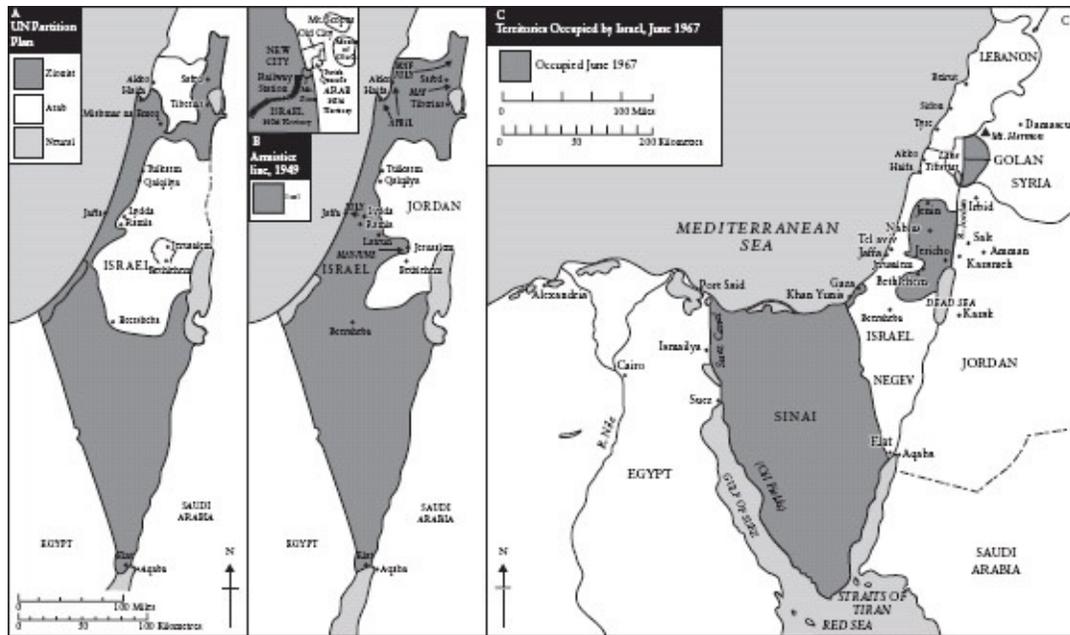
On paper, the odds were stacked against Israel. Five established Arab countries with a combined population of some 40,000,000 were ranged against about 600,000 Israelis and a state which had only just been set up. In practice, the Israelis had a number of advantages. The Jewish Agency had long exercised the functions of a state in embryo. The Haganah (Jewish Defence Force) was some 60,000 strong, well organized and including many soldiers with battle experience in the Second World War. They were short of heavy weapons, and at first had no aircraft at all; but they had plenty of small arms and had recently received supplies of weapons by air from Czechoslovakia – with Stalin’s assent. The Israeli forces operated under a single command, and above all they fought with intense spirit and determination. They were assisted by the Irgun, a guerrilla force some 2,000 strong, not under Haganah command but prepared to act alongside it.

The armies of the five Arab states, on the other hand, failed to coordinate their operations. The Arab governments all pursued their own objectives. Most wanted to destroy Israel; but King Abdullah of Transjordan, whose army (the Arab Legion) was easily the most efficient fighting force on the Arab side, was willing to accept a Jewish state in return for territorial gains on the west bank of the River Jordan and had actually negotiated a deal with the Jewish Agency to that effect before the war began. The Arab states were thus divided and proved unable to exploit their numerical superiority. The Palestinians themselves were mostly passive, and the militants were ill-organized and split into different

factions.

In the fighting from 15 May onwards, the Israelis held off Syrian and Lebanese attacks in the north, checked the Egyptians a few kilometres from the new capital at Tel Aviv, and held on to part of Jerusalem against the attacks of Transjordan and Egypt. The UN arranged a ceasefire on 11 June, which both sides used as an opportunity to regroup and strengthen their positions. The Israelis received their first fighter aircraft from France. Fighting broke out again on 8 July, and another ceasefire on 18 July was largely ineffective. In October 1948 the Israelis resumed full-scale operations against Egyptian forces in the south, and gained important victories. In December King Abdullah of Transjordan made a separate truce with the Israelis.

Between February and July 1949, UN mediator Ralph Bunche (an American of immense patience and courage) arranged a series of armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan (Iraq held out, but was not in direct geographical contact with Israel). Ceasefire lines were fixed according to the territories held by the various belligerents at the time of the agreements; and these lines became the de facto frontiers of the new state of Israel. The successive stages of the fighting had seen a steady growth in the territory occupied by the Israelis. The UN plan of November 1947 had proposed an awkwardly shaped Jewish state in three separate pieces, linked only by narrow junctions at the corners. The armistices of 1949 produced a yet larger territory, although one with a wasp-waist in the centre, where the boundary with Jordan was only twenty-five kilometres from the Mediterranean. The Arabs had appealed to decision by battle and lost. Instead of the tiny, and possibly unworkable, Jewish state which they had rejected in 1947, they now faced a larger country and a people inspired by the confidence of victory and a sense of achievement. Yet nothing was settled. No peace treaties followed the armistices. The Arab states did not recognize the existence of Israel. The war begun in 1948 was not over.



MAP 6 *Palestine and Israel.*

In the course of these campaigns, a large number of Arab refugees (figures vary widely – perhaps 700,000) left the territories now controlled by Israel. This was partly a simple flight from the war zone; but it was also brought about by terror tactics on the part of the Irgun, operating outside the command of the Haganah. During the night of 9–10 April 1948 a force from the Irgun surrounded the village of Deir Yassin and slaughtered many of its inhabitants, including women and children.⁹ It was an event that assumed symbolic significance in the Arab–Israeli conflict. More refugees fled, congregating in the Gaza strip, on the west bank of the Jordan and in Lebanon and Syria to the north. The fate of these refugees, often packed into camps close to the lands from which they had fled, was a grim and constant reminder of the human cost of the Arab–Israeli conflict. The camps formed a natural recruiting ground for the militant Palestinian movements which emerged during the 1960s and developed thereafter into the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which assumed many of the aspects of a state in embryo, following with an uncanny similarity the path trodden earlier by the Jewish Agency towards the creation of the state of Israel.

The two superpowers played limited but vital roles in the creation of Israel. The United States and the Soviet Union cooperated to secure the passage of the UN resolution on partition. American motives were a mixture of genuine Zionist sympathy and electoral calculation: the votes of American Jews were potentially important in the 1948 presidential election. Stalin for his part appears to have

regarded support for the Zionists as a means of attacking British imperialism. At any rate, the Americans and Soviets acted, if not together, at least in parallel. Truman granted de facto recognition to Israel on the same day that the new state was proclaimed. The US government provided some financial assistance, and private citizens poured in much more. The Soviet Union went further in technical diplomatic terms, according de jure recognition on 18 May, only four days after the proclamation of the state of Israel. The Soviets also permitted the migration of Jews to Israel from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and continued the supply of arms from Czechoslovakia up to the end of 1948.

The Arab–Israeli conflict assumed from the start a twofold aspect. It was a conflict between the newly established state of Israel and the surrounding Arab states; and it was also a conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, two peoples claiming one territory. The two aspects overlapped, because the Arab states claimed to be the protectors of the rights of the Palestinians, and especially of the Palestinian refugees, most of whom lived in their territories. But they remained separate. The Arab states were by no means totally committed to the cause of the Palestinians. If the Arab armies had won the war of 1948–9, it was unlikely that their leaders would have set up a Palestinian state in its place. Instead, they would probably have divided the territory among themselves and fallen out over the spoils. Later, the Arab governments were willing to do enough for the refugees to keep the question alive as a propaganda weapon against Israel, but not much more than that. As time went on, some Arab leaders moved towards accepting Israel’s existence as a fact, however unwelcome, thus breaking away from the Palestinians, who could accept no such compromise.

At this stage, the Arab–Israeli conflict was not an issue in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Americans and the Soviets were both quick to recognize the new state of Israel and both gave it practical assistance. Later, the Soviet Union was to take up the Arab cause, and the United States was to commit itself fully to Israel; but American–Soviet antagonism played no part in the origins of the dispute and was never an essential part of it.

After the armistices of 1949, the Arab–Israeli conflict settled down to a period of low-intensity warfare. There were border raids against the Israelis from the refugee camps along the borders; and the Israelis launched their own raids or air strikes in reprisal. There was a continuous propaganda battle in the press and on the airwaves. Arab radio stations, especially in Cairo and Damascus, poured out a constant stream of denunciation against Israel. The Israelis, in a more subtle manner, secured a generally favourable presentation of their country in the mass

media of the Western countries. At the UN, the emerging nations of the 'Third World' were usually sympathetic to the Arab cause, and slowly tilted the balance against Israel. The Arab states themselves nursed their wounds and their hurt pride in a state of angry impotence, until a revolution in Egypt in 1952 announced a new radicalism in the Arab camp and brought Egypt to a position of leadership among the Arab states.

The Arab states and Arab nationalism

The Arab states of the Middle East had much in common: the Arabic language, Islam and a shared history. They aspired to political cooperation through the Arab League; and in principle they were united in opposition to Israel. In practice their divisions were often more important than their unity. Islam was divided between modernizers, who sought to compromise with Western or Marxist ideas, and conservatives (notably the Muslim Brotherhood), who rejected the modern world and held on to the ancient faith. Arab nationalism was ambiguous in its appeal, meaning on the one hand national independence for separate Arab states, and on the other hand the unity of all Arabs irrespective of state boundaries. Some Arab states were ruled by conservative monarchies; others in the course of the 1950s were taken over by radical regimes advocating modernization, rapid economic development and often some kind of socialism. The Arabs of the desert (some of whom were rapidly becoming the Arabs of the oilfields) stood in sharp contrast to the Arabs of the coastal cities.

The populations of some of the Middle Eastern states were rising rapidly. The population of Egypt rose from about 16 million in 1937 to 26 million by 1960; that of Syria from 2.5 million in 1940 to 4.5 million in 1960; that of Iraq from 3.5 million in 1940 to 7 million in 1960. The age structure was changing, so that by 1960 in most Arab countries over half the population was under twenty years old.¹⁰ There was large-scale migration from the countryside to the cities, producing large new urban populations. Governments were thus presented with new problems and sought answers in improved agriculture to feed growing populations; large irrigation projects (e.g. the Aswan dam in Egypt) to provide water; and state direction of industry to bring work to the cities. All this needed external investment. The World Bank agreed to provide finance for the Aswan dam on condition that the United States and Britain also contributed – which they agreed to do in December 1955. The Soviet Union began making loans to Egypt and Syria in the mid-1950s. This largesse built up further tensions in the

Arab states, because it emphasized their economic dependence at the very time when they were claiming political independence.

In the 1950s Egypt took the lead in finding political solutions to its economic problems. In July 1952 a group of military radicals, calling themselves the Free Officers, overthrew the government of King Farouk, abolished the monarchy and set up a 'Revolutionary Command Council' to rule the country. General Muhammed Neguib headed the council, and became both president and prime minister; but the dominant figure in the background was Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, who in 1954 replaced Neguib in power. Nasser proclaimed his modernizing ideas in a book, *The Philosophy of the Revolution* (1954). He appealed to a wide range of opinion by proclaiming an Arab form of socialism, asserting Arab unity against foreign influence and invoking the support of Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood was not convinced of his sincerity, claiming that Nasser merely used the language of Islam as camouflage for a programme of secularization. In 1954 the Brotherhood tried to assassinate Nasser, but failed; in retaliation, Nasser suppressed the Brotherhood but failed to destroy it.

In foreign policy, Nasser secured the departure of all British forces from the Suez Canal Zone, by means of an agreement which allowed the British to maintain the facilities of their base, and to reactivate the base in the event of an outside attack on any Arab state or on Turkey. Egypt and Britain had already agreed in February 1953 that Sudan should be granted immediate autonomy and achieve self-determination within three years. The Egyptian government hoped that Sudan then would opt for union with Egypt, while the British hoped that it would retain links with Britain. In the event, Sudanese rejected union with Egypt, and opted for independence from both outside powers. Sudanese independence was proclaimed on 1 January 1956. The outstanding problems in Anglo-Egyptian relations were thus resolved, at least on paper.

At the same time Nasser undertook to undermine the wider British position in the Middle East, and especially to break up the Baghdad Pact, a defence agreement against the Soviet Union originally concluded in 1955 by Turkey and Iraq and later joined by Britain, Pakistan and Iran. Nasser also struck out beyond Middle East politics and established himself on the world stage, taking a leading part in the Conference of Afro-Asian states at Bandung in April 1955.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, radicalism gained ground. In Syria the newly formed Ba'ath Socialist Party (an amalgamation of the Ba'ath Party founded in 1910 and the more recent Syrian Socialist Party) took power in 1952. Jordan remained a monarchy, and maintained its military treaty with Britain; the Arab

Legion was still commanded by a British officer, Sir John Glubb. But since the Arab–Israeli war of 1948–9 the country had given shelter to Palestinian refugees roughly twice as numerous as the original Jordanian population and (alone among Arab countries) had offered them full citizenship. This changed the character of the country and introduced a new and radical political element. In 1951 King Abdullah was assassinated by a Palestinian youth. His successor, Tallal, abdicated in 1952 in favour of his son, Hussein, who reigned with remarkable tenacity until his death in 1998. Iraq too remained a monarchy, with the pro-British Nuri es-Said as prime minister. The regime remained conservative and formed the cornerstone of British strategic policy in the area. But opinion in the country was increasingly radical and anti-British, and Nuri's control was shakier than appeared on the surface. In all three countries, President Nasser of Egypt attracted a large and ardent following.

Outside powers and the Middle East

The interests of outside powers in the Middle East were so salient that they require separate analysis, even though we have already anticipated some instances of outside intervention in earlier sections of this chapter. France, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union all intervened in the area, often with decisive effect.

France was drawn into the Middle East by its support for Israel and also through the side effects of the Algerian War. French commitment to the Israeli cause sprang largely from emotional and intellectual origins – the psychological effects of the death camps during the Second World War and left-wing sympathy with Israel's socialist experiment in the early years of the *kibbutzim* or cooperative farm communities. It is also true that these concerns ran alongside the material interests of the French arms industry. The French supplied Israel with fighter planes as early as 1948; and by 1955–6 were exporting tanks and aircraft of advanced design (notably the *Mystère* IVA fighter, the key to air superiority over the Egyptians). As for Algeria, the French were involved from 1954 onwards in a war against Algerian nationalists, and they were convinced that their enemies derived crucial support from Egypt. This drew France into even closer cooperation with Israel, in hostility to a common enemy, and was to be a vital element in the Suez crisis of 1956.

British interests in the Middle East were threefold, concerned with strategy, oil and prestige. Strategically, the Suez Canal remained the main artery of British

maritime communications to the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Far East. The Middle East also provided both a defensive screen against Soviet expansion and a base for air attacks on Soviet oilfields round Baku in the event of war. Oil was vital for the British economy, and Middle East oil had the immense advantage of being paid for in sterling, not dollars. As for prestige, British predominance in the Middle East was generally accepted as being the key to the country's role as a world power, which all British governments (whatever their political complexion) sought to maintain. The equation appeared to be simple: as long as Britain retained her influence in the Middle East through a system of bases and alliances, she was an effective world power; if that influence collapsed, so would the world role. Thus the British bases in Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq, and the diplomatic structure of the Baghdad Pact, assumed a symbolic significance which exceeded their practical effects.

American interests in the Middle East were complicated and extensive, even though the area was geographically remote from the United States. As we have seen, American oil companies were much involved in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iran after 1954. At the same time the United States was a strong supporter of Israel, which was sustained from the start by American diplomatic recognition, government aid and the gifts of American Jews. Behind this lay an emotional commitment to Zionism on the part of a number of American leaders, and also the calculations of American electoral politics, according to which the Jewish-American vote could decide election results in the crucial states of New York, Pennsylvania and Illinois. As the Cold War developed, the Americans also became determined to keep Soviet influence out of the Middle East. The United States joined the Baghdad Pact in 1958. In 1959 the pact was renamed the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), partly for the practical reason that Iraq was no longer a member and so Baghdad had ceased to be its centre, but also to emphasize the treaty's affinity with NATO. In principle, NATO and CENTO formed a continuous line from Norway to Pakistan, thereby 'containing' Soviet power.

These various American interests and commitments produced some awkward combinations. The Americans supported Israel but also made alliances with some of Israel's enemies. They worked with Britain to oppose the Soviet Union but did not wish to be associated with British imperialism, which they thought to be morally wrong and politically damaging. The United States thus became involved in a series of balancing acts, supporting Israel but cultivating relations with Saudi Arabia, working with the British but also trying to edge them out.

Towards the end of 1955 the Americans were at work, in cooperation with the British, on the highly secret 'Project Alpha', a plan to negotiate a compromise settlement of the frontier between Egypt and Israel. If successful, this might have begun to resolve the Arab–Israeli dispute and so diminished some of the American problems in trying to befriend both sides. Like so many subsequent Middle East peace plans, it came to nothing.

For the Soviet Union, the 'Middle East' was geographically the South – the frontiers with Turkey and Iran, which had been strategically important to Russia under the Tsars and remained so to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union kept a wary eye on developments in Islam, because the Soviet republics in Central Asia were largely Muslim in population, despite long years of anti-religious propaganda. Apart from this, Stalin appears to have taken no ideological interest in the area. As to oil, the Soviet Union and Romania together produced enough for all the needs of the Soviet bloc, and thus this vital issue for other countries was of only marginal interest to Moscow. For these various reasons, the Soviet Union under Stalin did little to develop a systematic Middle East policy.

After Stalin's death in 1953 his successors became aware of the opportunities to be exploited in the Middle Eastern countries, even if they did not belong to the socialist camp. In September 1955 Czechoslovakia concluded an agreement (under Soviet auspices) to supply large quantities of armaments to Egypt. The Soviets themselves sold arms to Syria under an agreement of 1954; and they instructed the Syrian Communist Party to cooperate with the Ba'ath Socialist Party, despite their ideological differences. The Soviet Union thus counteracted American and British influence in the Middle East and infiltrated through the barrier of containment to establish their own links with Egypt and Syria.

In 1956 these different strands in Middle East international politics – oil, the Arab–Israeli conflict, the politics of the Arab states, the interests of outside powers – all came together in the Suez crisis.

The Suez crisis, 1956

The principal origins of the Suez crisis lay in pressures within Egypt: a rising population to be fed, and the demand for economic as well as political independence. President Nasser set out to build the Aswan dam to control the flow of the Nile and to improve irrigation and also as a prestige project of a spectacular kind. The dam was begun with the promise of financial support from the World Bank, the United States and Britain; but on 20 July 1956 the

Americans and British abruptly withdrew their financial support since Egypt was becoming too closely involved with the Soviet Union. Neither the United States nor Britain appears to have anticipated retaliation from Egypt, or indeed serious consequences of any kind. In the event, Nasser reacted quickly and drastically. On 26 July he announced in a radio broadcast that he was forthwith nationalizing the Suez Canal Company and would use its revenues to finance the building of the dam, though he was careful to offer compensation to shareholders for their losses.

This was a direct challenge to France and Britain. The Suez Canal had been built by Ferdinand de Lesseps, a French engineer, and the headquarters of the Canal Company were in Paris. More important, the French government saw an opportunity to attack Nasser and cut off the aid he was giving to the rebels in Algeria. The British government was the majority shareholder in the Canal Company; about one-third of the ships using the Canal were British; and a large proportion of British oil imports came through the Canal. Moreover, there was a strong sense that the whole prestige of Britain as a great power was at stake. Britain had lost face in the Iranian oil nationalization crisis of 1951. On 1 March 1956 King Hussein of Jordan had dismissed Sir John Glubb, the embodiment of British influence in the country – an action which the British blamed on the malign influence of Nasser. The nationalization of the Canal Company seemed to be the last straw. Harold Macmillan, the chancellor of the exchequer in Eden's government, wrote in his diary: 'If Nasser "gets away with it", we are done for. The whole Arab world will despise us. ... It may well be the end of British influence and strength for ever.'¹¹ Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, the top British foreign policy adviser, minuted that 'if we sit back while Nasser ... gradually gains control of the oil-bearing countries, he can wreck us'.¹² Such sentiments were common, and a sense of desperation quite disproportionate to the actual dangers involved came to dominate British policy.

Both the French and the British compared Nasser to Mussolini or Hitler, and drew parallels with the situation in the 1930s, when appeasement of dictators had proved disastrous. Anthony Eden and Guy Mollet, the British and French prime ministers, respectively, both referred routinely to this comparison; a powerful emotional current from the pre-war period thus influenced the policy of both governments.

France and Britain therefore reacted strongly to the nationalization of the Canal Company. In France, Guy Mollet's government decided at once to seize the opportunity to overthrow Nasser. This would have to be done by force, but they

recognized that France was not strong enough to act alone and would have to work with Britain. The British government was equally determined to overthrow Nasser, by force if necessary, but was uncertain as to how force was to be justified to the British people and to world opinion – a question which scarcely bothered the French at all.

The British and French went ahead with military plans for an attack on Egypt, though they constantly had to postpone the target date. At the same time, efforts were made to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis. A conference of maritime states met in London (from 16 to 23 August) and agreed that the prime minister of Australia, Robert Menzies, should visit Cairo to persuade Nasser to accept some sort of international body to run the Canal. Menzies arrived in Egypt on 2 September, and negotiated fruitlessly for a week. Secretary of State Dulles then proposed the formation of a Suez Canal Users' Association (SCUA) to manage the Canal and receive its revenues, of which only a proportion would go to Egypt. Eden accepted this proposal rather than break with the Americans; Mollet accepted it, with great reluctance, rather than break with the British. Finally, on 14 September, both the British and French governments agreed to refer the whole question to the Security Council of the UN, which began to debate the issues on 5 October.

The French were dismayed by these prolonged delays, and what they regarded as the Hamlet-like hesitations of the British. What they wanted was a bold attack on Egypt; and they turned increasingly towards the Israelis, as allies who were not afraid of daring action. In mid-October the French and Israelis conceived a plan by which Israel would attack Egypt across the Sinai Peninsula, and France and Britain would then intervene, ostensibly to restore peace but in fact to seize control of the Suez Canal. They drew the British in, and three-power conferences between France, Britain and Israel took place at Sèvres, just outside Paris, on 22 and 24 October.

According to the secret Sèvres Protocol of 24 October, Israel was to attack across the Sinai Peninsula on 29 October. On 30 October, the British and French governments would appeal for a ceasefire and request the Egyptians and Israelis to withdraw sixteen kilometres west and east of the Canal respectively. It was assumed that the Israelis would accept, and the Egyptians would refuse (after all, they were being asked to give up their own territory and surrender control of the Canal, which they had just seized). The British and French would then launch their own military operation on 31 October, supposedly to separate the combatants, but actually to occupy the Canal Zone. This agreement has been

defined by one historian as a ‘monument to French opportunism, the duplicity of Eden, and Ben Gurion’s paranoia’.¹³ The French also concluded another agreement, not mentioned to the British, by which French fighters would defend Israel against air attack and French warships would protect the Israeli coast, and gained promises of French help for its nascent nuclear programme.

Eden was desperately anxious to conceal these arrangements, clinging to the justification of military action on the plea of ‘separating the combatants’. The French and Israelis, on the other hand, made little attempt at concealment. French warships put into Haifa harbour in full public view; and the French foreign minister (Christian Pineau) actually told the American ambassador in Paris about the Sèvres agreements on 30 October.

On the evening of 29 October the Israelis launched lightning attacks across the Sinai desert. On 30 October the British and French presented their ultimatum that the two sides should withdraw sixteen kilometres east and west of the Canal. As expected, the Israelis accepted and the Egyptians refused. British and French air attacks on Egyptian airfields began on the evening of 31 October. After a long delay, British and French paratroops dropped at Port Said and Port Fuad, at the northern end of the Suez Canal, on 5 November, and landing forces went ashore on 6 November. They secured the beaches and were soon ready to move south along the Canal.

This military success proved short-lived, because the diplomatic balance swung rapidly and decisively against the intervening powers. As early as 31 October the United States and the Soviet Union both presented resolutions to the Security Council of the UN, calling on Israel to withdraw from the Sinai and requesting all states to refrain from the threat or use of force. On 5 November Moscow ominously reminded Britain and France of the strength of the Soviet Union’s nuclear forces, and Israel with the vague menace of calling the existence of the state into question. In Washington, Eisenhower had always opposed the use of force, and he was furious with the British and French for launching their attack – partly because it came on the eve of the presidential election, but mainly because he believed the operation would prove disastrous. He was in a powerful position. The British were already looking for a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to support the pound and found that the condition for American agreement was an immediate ceasefire in Egypt. At the same time, Eisenhower threatened to cut off American supplies of oil to Britain and France, which had lost most of their Middle East imports because the Suez Canal was closed.

Under these pressures the British quickly gave way, and the French reluctantly

followed. The two governments declared a ceasefire, to take effect at 2.00 am (local Egyptian time) on 7 November. The British and French troops halted where they stood that night. Later on the same day, under the most severe pressure from the United States, Israel unwillingly agreed to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula, surrendering the gains made during their brilliant campaign. The brief but spectacular Suez War of 1956 was over.

The events were fleeting, but their consequences were momentous. The Suez crisis involved several different aspects. It was part of the widespread decolonization struggle in Asia and Africa. Egypt strove to make good its independence; Britain tried to reassert its predominance in the Middle East; and France sought to win the Algerian War at one remove. In these circumstances, Nasser was able to count on the vigorous support of Third World leaders. This was ultimately the main reason for America's refusal to support its European allies. Eisenhower wrote that since 'the Africans and Asians almost unanimously hate one of the three nations, Britain, France, and Israel, the Soviets need only propose severe and immediate punishment of these three to have the whole of two continents on their side'.¹⁴ Suez also provoked a sharp crisis between the Western powers, as the United States in the last resort brutally imposed its will on Britain and France. They reacted in very different ways. The British government drew the conclusion that it must never again go against the fundamental wishes of the United States. When Macmillan took over from Eden as prime minister in January 1957, he set himself the task of restoring good relations with the Americans, with considerable success but at the cost of a subordination to American policy which was to last for many years. The French reacted very differently. They blamed the Americans for precipitating the crisis in the first place and then refusing to support their allies at the crunch. They reacted by pressing ahead with European integration and by building an independent French nuclear weapon.

In the Middle East, Suez was a crisis within the already existing Arab–Israeli conflict. The Israelis were at first euphoric over their triumph in the Sinai campaign and then dumbfounded at being compelled to give up their gains. They nursed the hope of a second round, which they would not lose. The Egyptians, however, conjured a spectacular political success out of military defeat. Nasser emerged as the hero of the Arab world, and Egypt too hoped for another round against the Israelis which would reverse the military verdict of 1956. In this way, the Suez War of 1956 sowed the seeds for the later Middle East war in 1967.

What the Suez War proved *not* to be, to any significant extent, was a crisis in

the Cold War. It is true that the Soviet threat that it could, if it wished, attack Britain and France with rockets gave an appearance of East–West confrontation; but this was superficial. The first Soviet reaction to the attacks on Egypt by Israel, Britain and France was to move forty-five Ilyushin bombers from northern to southern Egypt, out of harm's way, and then to fly them to Syria, completely out of the war zone. At the same time, Soviet and Czech military advisers were moved out of Egypt to the Sudan. On 2 November, the Soviet Foreign Ministry told the Egyptian ambassador in Moscow that the Soviet Union would mobilize world opinion on Egypt's behalf, but would not provide any military assistance. The Soviets thus took care to keep out of the fighting; and even their threat of rocket attacks on Britain and France was almost certainly bluff because the Soviet rockets of that time had a range of only 700 kilometres or so and could not reach London or Paris from Soviet territory.¹⁵ At the time the Soviets were heavily preoccupied with the Hungarian rising, which coincided with the attack on Egypt, but they also wanted to make sure that there was no danger of a clash with the Americans. In practice, the two superpowers worked, if not directly with one another, at any rate on the same lines, putting similar resolutions to the Security Council on 31 October.

The Suez crisis revealed much about the new pattern of power and influence in the Middle East. The minor powers, Egypt and Israel, had shown that they could take crucial initiatives, Egypt by nationalizing the Canal Company and Israel by launching the attack in Sinai. But they could not follow them through. Egypt had to be rescued by the United States from invasion by the Israelis, British and French. The Israelis had to yield to American pressure and withdraw from their conquests. The medium-sized powers, Britain and France, proved to have less freedom of action than they had at first believed – though they still had more than the British concluded in the immediate aftermath of the crisis. The coincidence of the Suez crisis and the Hungarian rising showed that opinion in the Asian and African states was more anti-American than anti-Soviet. For the Afro-Asian governments, the attack by the British and French on Egypt was a worse offence than the assault by the Soviets on the Hungarians. On 16 November 1956, Nehru (the Indian prime minister) explained to the parliament in Delhi that India had not supported a UN resolution critical of Soviet action in Hungary because the facts were obscure, and to request free elections supervised by the UN would be a violation of Hungarian sovereignty. The fact that Hungarian sovereignty had already been violated with the utmost brutality by the Soviet Army apparently made no impression upon him. Equally, the American

support for Egypt and insistence on Israeli withdrawal from Sinai made little impression on Afro-Asian opinion. It was the Soviets who were regarded as the defenders of Egypt, though in practice they had done very little by way of defence.

It was an odd state of affairs. The United States had acted decisively in the crisis, rescuing Egypt, coercing the British and French and forcing the Israelis into retreat; and yet for a time they seemed the losers, harried by Third World opinion, denounced by the French and drawn increasingly into the treacherous terrain of Middle East politics. Khrushchev, on the other hand, appeared as the victor, advancing Soviet influence in Egypt and the Middle East without undue exertion.

There were two other long-term consequences of the Suez crisis. First, the UN, with the United States and the Soviet Union in broad agreement, took effective action. A UN force was sent to the Canal Zone to supervise the British and French withdrawal and remained to oversee the ceasefire line between Egypt and Israel. Second, the Suez crisis sent a shock through all those countries dependent on Middle East oil supplies. During the crisis the Suez Canal was closed; the Syrians, moreover, shut off the Iraq Petroleum Company's pipeline to the Mediterranean thus ensuring that all supplies from the Middle East were cut off. The Americans and Western Europeans responded by organizing an 'oil lift', bringing oil to Europe from the United States and Venezuela instead of from the Middle East. In the long term, Japanese shipyards set about the task of building a new generation of supertankers, capable of moving vast quantities of oil, not through the Suez Canal or through the Mediterranean at all, but round the Cape of Good Hope. At the time few people thought that such supertankers could be built and hence in the long run it meant that the Suez crisis diminished the importance of the Suez Canal, the very asset that the Egyptians had seized at the start of the crisis.

The Middle East after the Suez crisis, 1957–62

After the Suez crisis, the Americans increasingly moved into the Middle East to replace the British, whose influence was now much diminished. In January 1957 President Eisenhower proposed to provide military and economic assistance to Middle Eastern countries threatened by communism, whether externally or internally. This plan (the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine) was approved by Congress in March, with a vote of \$200 million and authorization for the

president to use armed force in case of need.

In the Arab world, Nasser's prestige was at its height. He was the hero of Arab nationalism and could advance towards Arab unity. On 1 February 1958 Egypt and Syria proclaimed a union between the two countries, setting up a single state, the United Arab Republic, 'as a preliminary step toward the realization of Arab unity'.¹⁶ But this move was unwelcome to other Arab states which were linked to the West in their foreign policy, depended on oil sales to Western countries for their revenues and distrusted Nasser's radical politics. In Saudi Arabia, King Ibn Saud had no sympathy for Nasser's nationalist socialism, and maintained close relations with the United States. In Iraq, Nuri es-Said held firmly to his British connections, and the country remained central to the Baghdad Pact. In Jordan, King Hussein survived an attempted coup d'état in 1957 and continued to hold the balance successfully in a state divided between the Jordanian and Palestinian sections in the population. On 14 February 1958, Iraq and Jordan proclaimed their own union, in direct opposition to the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria.

This union was soon broken. On 14 July there was a revolt led by army officers against the monarchy. The king and Nuri es-Said were killed, and Iraq swung abruptly from a conservative and pro-Western stance to radical nationalism and to a greater role for the Iraqi Communist party. This tore a hole in the middle of the Baghdad Pact and thus of the American security arrangements for the Middle East; and it did much to explain American intervention in an almost simultaneous crisis in Lebanon.

In May 1958 President Camille Chamoun of Lebanon (a Maronite Christian) proposed amending the Lebanese constitution so as to allow him to serve a second term, a move that endangered the delicate balance of power in Lebanon between Christians and Muslims. There were widespread strikes and rioting in Beirut and Tripoli. On 22 May Lebanon appealed to the Security Council of the UN, on the ground that armed bands were entering its territory from Syria and that nationals of the United Arab Republic were carrying out terrorist attacks. Chamoun also appealed to the United States, France and Britain for help, without response. After the coup in Iraq, he repeated his appeal to the Americans, who this time responded at once. On 15 July 1958 some 5,000 US Marines landed on the beaches near Beirut (under the interested gaze of holidaymakers who continued to sunbathe and swim among the landing craft); another 5,000 followed later. Almost simultaneously King Hussein of Jordan, afraid of internal unrest and a Ba'athist coup inspired by Syria, appealed to

Britain for help; and 2,500 British parachute troops were at once dispatched to Amman.

These military interventions provoked hostile demonstrations in many Arab countries; but no military reaction from the Moscow. The Soviet Union was giving Nasser a good deal of support – a loan of \$175 million in January 1958, plus another \$100 million for the Aswan dam and large supplies of Soviet arms.¹⁷ But Moscow was prepared to let Lebanon and Jordan alone. After much diplomatic activity, on 21 August 1958, the General Assembly of the UN adopted a resolution proposed by a number of Arab governments, piously affirming that the Middle East should be kept out of disputes between the superpowers and calling for the withdrawal of all foreign troops. The Lebanese internal crisis was temporarily settled at the end of September, when a new president took office. He claimed to be neutral between Christians and Muslims. The American forces withdrew from Lebanon by 25 October, and the British troops left Jordan on 2 November.

This slightly mysterious crisis thus came to an end. It was not clear whether Lebanon or Jordan had been in serious danger of internal revolt or external intervention, but at any rate the American and British forces temporarily stabilized these two states. The union between Egypt and Syria was repudiated in September 1961 by a new military government that restored Syrian independence. Nasser's influence, which had briefly seemed virtually unstoppable, receded.

The Middle East settled down to an uneasy calm. The Arab–Israeli conflict continued, at the level of border raids and reprisals. The Arab states refused to recognize the existence of Israel but made no great effort to eliminate it. The Arabs themselves remained divided between the radical nationalist countries, headed by Nasser's Egypt and receiving support from the Soviet Union, and others supported by the United States and the British. The superpowers remained active but cautious. In 1961, under the new leadership of President Kennedy, the Americans set out to improve relations with Egypt, with some modest success; but they could not pursue this policy far without causing problems in their relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia. The Soviet Union, which had always been uneasy about the union between Egypt and Syria, improved relations with both countries after the union broke up.

Notes

- 1 See the discussion of the history of the term 'Middle East' in Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (London, 1991), pp. 1–2.
- 2 Genesis, Chapter 13, verses 14–17.
- 3 Between 1945 and 1950 the Company declared profits of some £250,000,000, of which about £90,000,000 was paid to the Iranian government. Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (London, 1991), pp. 451–2.
- 4 Fiona Venn, *Oil Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1986), p. 193, n. 3, and the tables on pp. 171–2.
- 5 Quoted in Yergin, *The Prize*, p. 428; see generally pp. 425–8.
- 6 For details of the 50–50 agreements, see Venn, *Oil Diplomacy*, p. 113; and Yergin, *The Prize*, pp. 445–8. A precedent for such a deal, based on US tax concessions, was set in Venezuela in 1948.
- 7 For these arrangements, see Venn, *Oil Diplomacy*, p. 116.
- 8 Quoted in Yergin, *The Prize*, p. 447.
- 9 On Deir Yassin, see, for example, David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (London, 1977), pp. 123–9, with evidence that Irgun acted in cooperation with Haganah; Michael Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (London, 1998), p. 169; and Joseph Heller, *The Stern Gang: Ideology, Politics and Terror* (London, 1993), pp. 207–11, which emphasize the condemnation of the massacre by Ben-Gurion and the Jewish Agency.
- 10 Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London, 1991), p. 373.
- 11 Quoted in Alistair Home, *Macmillan*, Vol. II: 1957–1986 (London, 1991), p. 408.
- 12 Quoted in Keith Kyle, 'Britain and the Crisis, 1955–1956', in *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (Oxford, 1991), p. 123.
- 13 Avi Schlaim, 'Anatomy of a War Plot', *International Affairs*, Vol. 73, 1997, p. 530.
- 14 Quoted in Robert R. Bowie, 'Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Suez Crisis', in Louis and Owen, *Suez 1956*, p. 210.
- 15 Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East: From World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 49–51.
- 16 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1958, p. 16,005.
- 17 Golan, *Soviet Policies*, p. 54.

9

Transformation in Asia, 1945–62

*The Chinese Revolution and the Sino-Soviet alliance – The Sino-Soviet dispute –
The recovery of Japan – India and Pakistan – Indo-China, the French and the
Americans – South-East Asia.*

At the end of the Second World War, Eastern and Southern Asia were in the midst of immense changes. In China, two great conflicts had long been in progress: a war against the Japanese; and a civil war between the Kuomintang (Nationalist) government, under Chiang Kai-shek, and the communists, led by Mao Zedong. In 1945 the Japanese were defeated, but the civil war resumed with new intensity. Japan, which had long dominated much of Asia, lay defeated and in ruins. Its future was to be decided by the victors – in practice, by the United States.

Elsewhere in Asia, the position of the European colonial powers had been undermined. In India, it was clear that British rule would end, but no one knew what would follow it. The Philippines, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and Indo-China had all been occupied by the Japanese, and nationalist movements had grown stronger. The colonial powers (the United States, Britain, the Netherlands and France) all returned to their former territories, but found it impossible to restore the status quo. Asia was in a state of uncertainty and turmoil.

The Chinese revolution and its consequences

China was heir to an ancient civilization. When the Chinese referred to their country as 'The Middle Kingdom', they did not mean that it lay between other lands but that it stood between earth and heaven, on a higher plane than that of

the barbarians around it. In the nineteenth century they had been plunged from this charmed and elevated position into defeat and humiliation at the hands of the Europeans, the Japanese and the Americans and had learnt to their cost that a superior civilization offered no protection against better military technology. China was forced to submit to a series of unequal treaties, imposing onerous territorial and commercial demands. By 1945 all Chinese leaders – irrespective of political ideology – were determined to resume control of their own affairs.

On other matters they were bitterly divided. The civil war between the Nationalists and the communists, which resumed in 1945, lasted for another four years, despite the best efforts of George C. Marshall to mediate between the two sides and achieve a government of national unity. The tide turned decisively in 1948, when the communists won overwhelming victories. Support for the Kuomintang collapsed, and their troops often deserted or changed sides. By October 1949 the communists controlled the whole of mainland China, and Mao proclaimed the People's Republic of China on 1 October. Chiang Kai-shek held only the island of Taiwan (Formosa), to which the last Kuomintang forces withdrew in December 1949.

The new regime was headed by one of the most formidable figures of recent history. Mao Zedong had been a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921; made a reputation for endurance by leading the 'Long March' of the communist army from southern China to the north-west between 1934 and 1935; and then proved his military and political ability by winning the long – and unimaginably brutal – civil war. At the end of 1949 he became the undisputed dictator of China.

Mao plunged China into a series of headlong changes. The collectivization of agriculture and nationalization of all industry and commerce (from 1951 to 1955) was followed by a period of apparent liberalization, when Mao declared 'let a hundred flowers bloom' (from 1956 to 1957). He then proclaimed the 'Great Leap Forward', by which China was to advance to communism in one giant stride, by eliminating private agriculture and by taking industrial production, especially of iron and steel, to the countryside. The ensuing famine (and the appalling political terror that accompanied it) is arguably the worst human-provoked calamity of the twentieth century. The latest research suggests that there were, *at minimum*, 45 million premature deaths in China between 1958 and 1962, including tens of millions of victims of starvation.¹ Soviet advisers in China reported with dismay on the disaster; but in much of the world Mao's terrible experiment was regarded with admiration. Maoism replaced Stalinism as

the ideology of choice for certain Western bien pensants; the Chinese model was also attractive to some politicians in the Third World.

China thus struck out on new ideological paths; but it also inherited a number of foreign policy issues from the past. In the nineteenth century, foreign powers had imposed their will on China, by a combination of force and diplomatic settlements which the Chinese referred to as 'unequal treaties'. By such means, Britain had annexed Hong Kong; Russia had taken over the vast territories between Lake Baikal and Vladivostok; and the Western powers in general had laid down their own terms for trade with China. The Chinese (communist and non-communist alike) were determined to restore the rights, dignity and prestige of their country. They also faced a difficult situation along most of their borders. In 1949 China had more contiguous neighbours than any other country in the world, and it was involved in frontier disputes with most of them – notably the Soviet Union and India, where the border conflicts were to lead to serious problems.²

The new China was an enemy of the United States. The Americans had been Chiang's greatest supporter. To the Chinese communists the United States was the principal imperialist power, which by definition could only be hostile. There was a fleeting chance of better relations at the end of 1949, when the Chinese premier, Zhou Enlai, approached the Americans with a request for recognition and support for China's admission to the United Nations (UN) and membership of the Security Council. This might have offered an opportunity that the Americans failed to grasp; but the Chinese offered little on their side, and were probably only trying to gain time for the new regime to establish itself. In any case, American public opinion would almost certainly have ruled out any agreement. The China lobby, representing important commercial and religious groups which had suffered great losses in China, was strongly opposed to recognizing the new regime. Many American conservatives also felt, vaguely but strongly, that the United States had 'lost China' to communism, probably as a result of treachery, and that it would be wrong to deal with the new regime.

If the United States was an enemy, was the Soviet Union a friend? Relations between the Chinese communists and Moscow had been poor (and sometimes dismal) in the 1920s; and in the 1930s the Soviet Union had given more help to the Kuomintang than to Mao. As recently as February 1949 Stalin had advised Mao to settle for something less than complete victory in the civil war – perhaps the formation of a coalition with the Kuomintang, or a partition of China into two halves. On the other hand, Stalin had sometimes recognized the importance

of China, saying that if the two countries followed the same path the victory of socialism in the world would be certain. When he received a Chinese communist delegation in July 1949, he was willing to envisage a division of labour – the Chinese would lead revolutionary movements in the colonial or semi-colonial countries, while the Soviets dealt with the others.³ The Chinese communists for their part had fought their own battles and worked out their own version of Marxist doctrine, suitable to Chinese circumstances. Mao was his own man, not Stalin's.

Despite these difficulties, the Chinese had no real choice. They could not stand alone, and the Soviet Union was the only ally available. Mao declared that China would 'lean towards' the Soviet Union and against capitalist imperialism. The phrase was cautious, but Mao's actions were swift. He met Stalin in Moscow on 16 December 1949, but then had to wait in idleness and isolation until 22 January 1950 for a second meeting. It was a slight he did not forget. Eventually the two sides got down to business, and on 14 February 1950 the foreign ministers signed a Soviet–Chinese Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance.

The treaty was a simple one, providing for mutual military assistance against aggression by Japan, or any other state that might collaborate with Japan in acts of aggression, which was an indirect reference to the United States. Alongside the treaty, the Soviet Union extended to China a credit of \$300 million, at only 1 per cent interest, to be repaid over ten years starting in 1954. In 1952 the Soviet Union also undertook to restore to China the naval base at Port Arthur and the South Manchurian Railway which ran from Port Arthur to Mukden. These were issues which had been in dispute between the two countries for many years. The Chinese recognized the 'independence' of Outer Mongolia. This had formerly been Chinese territory and now provided bases for Soviet troops.⁴

An economic agreement signed in March 1950 set up three joint Sino-Soviet companies, one to run air services between the two countries, and the other two to exploit deposits of oil, gas and non-ferrous metals in Manchuria and in Xinjiang province. The Soviets were greedy for rare metals such as wolfram and antimony that were found there. In general, the balance of the Sino-Soviet agreements was favourable to Moscow, which negotiated with brutal regard for its own immediate interests. While China did receive the protection of Soviet military power, credit on excellent terms, and the return of Port Arthur, the Soviet Union established its status as senior partner in the new communist alliance, kept control of Mongolia and gained economic advantages that were

'heavily reminiscent' of the so-called unequal treaties signed by China with European powers in the nineteenth century.⁵

There was a curious postscript. Stalin sent an ideological expert, Pavel Yudin, to Beijing to supervise an edition of Mao's works and to report on the orthodoxy of his Marxism – a sign of the importance attached to doctrinal and theoretical matters, and of Stalin's fears that Mao (like Tito) might deviate from the paths of orthodoxy. Stalin's fears were not misplaced. In the long run, ideology was to prove a bone of contention between the two regimes.

The impact of the communist victory in China in 1949 and the Sino-Soviet alliance of 1950 on international relations was enormous. The most populous country in the world had joined the communist camp. The two communist giants had formed a military alliance and established a new economic relationship. It became common in later years, in the light of the Sino-Soviet dispute, to emphasize the differences between the two powers. But at the time the new alignment appeared formidable. The communist bloc now stretched from Eastern Europe to the Bering Straits. It was a vision which struck dismay, sometimes amounting to fear, in the United States, and aroused admiration (again sometimes mingled with fear) over much of Asia. The world had changed with dramatic suddenness.

The Sino-Soviet split

For some time the Sino-Soviet alliance worked well. The two countries cooperated in the Korean War, where the Chinese did the fighting and the Soviet Union provided material and diplomatic support. There was a difficulty when Moscow failed to hand over Port Arthur on the agreed date in 1952; but this was cleared up, and the Soviets had left the base by the end of 1955. In 1954 the Soviet Union provided a new loan of US\$130 million to China. More important, in 1957 the two countries concluded a military agreement under which the Soviets helped the Chinese to develop nuclear power and atomic weapons. Soviet specialists went to China to advise on nuclear energy (and also to look for uranium). The Chinese began to build their first nuclear reactor, with Soviet help.

Even at this stage there were difficulties. The Soviets took their own view of economic relations with China: the Soviet Union would export manufactured goods and expertise, in return for raw materials and foodstuffs. It was an arrangement reminiscent of old-style economic imperialism, and naturally

resented by the Chinese, who were themselves seeking to lead the former colonial countries in the elimination of imperialism. In 1955 a great Afro-Asian conference met at Bandung, in Indonesia, as a showpiece for the emerging Third World countries. Moscow angled desperately for an invitation, claiming that the Soviet Union was in large part an Asian state – as indeed it was in terms of area. But no invitation arrived. Instead, the Chinese took centre stage at Bandung, scoring a great diplomatic and propaganda success and establishing China as a model for the former colonial states.

In February 1956 Khrushchev's 'secret speech' at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union brought a new and dangerous friction into Sino-Soviet relations. Khrushchev denounced Stalin's 'cult of personality', and proclaimed the need for peaceful coexistence with the United States. Neither proposition was welcome in Beijing. Mao himself had created a personality cult of enormous proportions, and resented criticism even at one remove. As for peaceful coexistence, Mao claimed to be unafraid of nuclear war with the Americans, because there were so many Chinese that enough would survive to win the final victory. (The United States was only a 'paper tiger' anyway.) Moreover, Khrushchev made his speech without even informing, let alone consulting, the Chinese in advance, thus treating them as mere subordinates rather than as powerful colleagues in the world communist movement.

Mao retaliated in kind in 1958. He announced, without consultation with the Soviets, the 'Great Leap Forward' which was to take China to communism in one bound. This was a direct ideological challenge to the Soviet Union, which had been moving towards communism ever since 1917 without ever claiming to have reached the goal. China thus embarked on an ideological conflict with the Soviet Union, which thus far had set the standards for all communist doctrine. The Great Leap Forward proved a disaster, which played into Soviet hands; but the principle remained of crucial importance.

Peaceful coexistence and relations with the Americans also produced a split between China and the Soviet Union in 1958, over the apparently insignificant islands of Quemoy. The Quemoy is a group of twelve small islands, about ten kilometres off the Chinese mainland facing the port of Amoy. Along with the Matsu Islands further north, the Quemoy islands had been held by Kuomintang forces in 1949, and were an irritant to the Chinese because of their proximity to the mainland. In 1954 Chinese artillery bombarded Quemoy and Matsu, and the Americans responded with a public warning that they would intervene against a Chinese attack. Encouraged by American support, the Kuomintang clung on to

Quemoy and Matsu, with very strong garrisons (65,000 troops in Quemoy). When the Chinese bombarded the islands again in August 1958, the Americans moved warships to the area.

There ensued a strange military and diplomatic quadrille. On 6 October the Chinese announced a cessation of their bombardment, to allow the islands to be provisioned. On 25 October the Chinese Ministry of Defence announced that they would bombard Quemoy on odd dates and observe a ceasefire on even dates, a practice which they proceeded to follow carefully for forty-four days, and then sporadically for the next twenty years.⁶ The purpose of the bombardment was political not military, and was directed against the Soviets more than the Americans. Before the shelling began, Mao said privately that he intended to send a message to Khrushchev about his relations with the Americans. 'He wants to improve relations with the United States? Good, we'll congratulate him with our guns.'⁷ On 7 September 1958 Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai warned Gromyko, his Soviet counterpart, that China was prepared to face a local war with the United States over Quemoy, and was even willing to risk atomic attack and the destruction of cities. Khrushchev waited for twenty days before replying dutifully that an attack on China would be regarded as an attack on the Soviet Union. In fact he had no intention of being drawn into a war with the United States over an issue as trivial as Quemoy.

The Sino-Soviet alliance was thus subject to a good deal of strain, economic, ideological and diplomatic. In the summer of 1959 these problems came to a head. On 20 June 1959 the Soviet Union suddenly renounced the military agreement of 1957 and withdrew its military advisers. In August the Soviets failed to deliver a tactical nuclear bomb which was due to be transported to China. Khrushchev had decided that the Chinese were not to be trusted with nuclear weapons. An apparently trivial border dispute between China and India in September 1959 also produced a rebuke of China by the Soviet Union. Chinese troops crossed the McMahon Line (which the British had established in the nineteenth century as the frontier with Tibet) and attacked Indian Army posts. On 9 September, the Soviet government issued an official statement regretting the dispute between two states which were *both friends of the Soviet Union*, a phrase that put China and India on the same footing, though China was in the socialist camp and an ally of the Soviets, while India was non-aligned. Salt was rubbed into China's wounds by Khrushchev's visit to the United States from 15 to 27 September. The very fact of the visit went against Chinese policy; and in the final communiqué Eisenhower stressed the joint responsibility of the

United States and the Soviet Union to the world as a whole. It seemed that the superpowers were in league with one another to control the rest of the world – including China.



MAP 7 *China and her neighbours.*

Meanwhile, the ideological division worsened. In November 1960 delegates from no fewer than eighty-one communist parties met in Moscow, in a great conclave, where the Chinese charged the Soviets with ‘revisionism’ (i.e. their willingness to compromise on the idea of world revolution). Khrushchev

responded accusing the Chinese of ‘adventurism’. The Soviet leader rallied most of the world’s communist parties to his support, though Stalinist Albania backed the Chinese. This summit was long shrouded in secrecy, but it marked a watershed in the ideological conflict between the Chinese and the Soviets. The full significance of this break in their relations was to emerge later.

In 1962 the Chinese–Indian border dispute broke out again. In October and November large Chinese forces attacked the Indians, defeated them, and advanced well across the disputed frontier. They then retreated to the line which they defined as the true frontier, and declared a ceasefire on 14 November. This time, Khrushchev openly went against China and gave firm diplomatic support to India. Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, the Soviet Union confronted the United States in the Cuban missile crisis. From the Chinese point of view, Khrushchev, by backing down during the Cuban crisis, had again put peaceful coexistence with the Americans above the solidarity of world communism.

In 1963 the Chinese chose to raise another matter of dispute: their border with the Soviet Union, which they regarded as disputable along almost its whole length. On 8 March 1963 the *People’s Daily* (the official Chinese newspaper) published an article listing nine treaties which former Chinese governments had been forced to sign, including the treaties of Aigun (1858) and Peking (1860), by which Russia had acquired a total of 824,000 square kilometres of Chinese territory, including the port of Vladivostok. The article suggested that China reserved the right to reopen such questions.⁸ In the meantime the Chinese demanded that the unequal treaties should at least be properly observed instead of being violated, as they claimed the Soviets were doing along the Amur and Ussuri Rivers.

The Sino-Soviet dispute thus developed over a number of years at many different points; but ultimately its key element was ideological.⁹ The Chinese could undermine the whole legitimacy of the Soviet system by denying the Soviet Union’s standing as the guardian of Marxist–Leninist orthodoxy. China had done this in secret at the Moscow Conference in November 1960. In 1962 Mao *publicly* denounced the Soviets’ ‘revisionism’, and on 14 June 1963 the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party wrote a formal letter to the Soviet Central Committee, explaining in twenty-five points that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was no longer pre-eminent in the socialist camp, and that the Soviet Union had become the ‘objective’ ally of the United States. This letter, written at Mao’s behest, amounted to a radical break with the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Union itself.

The Sino-Soviet alliance of 1950 had been based on hostility to the United States and a common ideological outlook. By 1963 both these foundations had cracked. The Soviet Union, while remaining fundamentally opposed to capitalism, recognized the necessity of avoiding nuclear war with the United States. China claimed by contrast to be prepared to risk war with the Americans. At the same time, the common ideological ground had dissolved in doctrinal dispute, with the Chinese claiming that their form of communism was a better example for the Third World to follow. The two countries thus moved from cooperation to virulent opposition. In the 1960s the Soviet Union reinforced its armies along the border with China. The Chinese intensified their nuclear programme, testing an atomic bomb in 1964; by then there was no doubt that the most likely target of their weaponry was the Soviet Union. The alliance of 1950 had proven short lived.

The recovery of Japan, 1945–62

In August 1945 Japan lay in ruins, with its armed forces in dissolution and the state itself apparently in limbo. The emperor himself and the institution of the monarchy remained, but there was no constitution. The country was ruled by General Douglas MacArthur, the supreme commander of the Allied Forces in Japan. MacArthur was advised by a Far Eastern Commission, made up of representatives of eleven states which had been at war with Japan, and by a Four-Power Allied Council (the United States, Britain, China and the Soviet Union); but he could disregard their advice at will. Stalin himself had agreed at the Potsdam Conference that the American supreme commander should act as the sole executive authority for the Allies in Japan, and that is what he proceeded to do. The United States was sometimes outvoted by three to one in the Allied Council, for example, on the exaction of reparations, but MacArthur simply ignored contrary votes and did as he liked.

In these extraordinary circumstances, two questions arose. What could the Japanese do to restore their own position? And what would the Americans do with their apparently untrammelled authority?

The Japanese were down, but by no means out; and they soon contrived to secure more control over their own affairs than appeared on the surface. Even before the war ended, groups of civil servants were planning the reconstruction of the economy. On 16 August 1945, the day after Japan announced its surrender (the formal agreement was signed on 2 September), the 'Research Group for the

Self-Sufficiency of the Japanese Mainland' held its first meeting; early in 1946 it reported that high-grade machine tools and ultra-shortwave communications apparatus would be the best bet for the Japanese economy – a far-sighted diagnosis. There were other key cases of continuity of administration. The Cabinet Planning Board formed in 1937, when Japan invaded China, simply changed its name to the Economic Stabilization Board in 1946 and the Economic Planning Agency in 1955. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), which was set up in 1949 to direct Japan's economic development, took over elements from the earlier Ministry of Commerce and Industry and even the wartime Munitions Ministry.¹⁰ Thus the Japanese bureaucracy remained in being, with its eye firmly fixed on economic development as the key to the future.

This was in the background. American power dominated the foreground, and at first it seemed likely to be used with severity. President Truman, writing privately during the Potsdam Conference, described the Japanese as 'savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic'; which was probably in keeping with general feeling in the United States.¹¹ In January 1946 MacArthur set up a War Crimes Tribunal, to follow the example of the Nuremberg Trials in Germany. He set out to disarm, demilitarize and democratize Japan – a far-reaching enterprise.

In practice, MacArthur moved cautiously in some respects. The emperor was not brought to trial, even though in principle the whole war had been conducted under his authority. A number of Japanese were granted immunity from prosecution, and even for those who were tried, the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal proved less drastic than the one at Nuremberg. Even so, the Americans imposed sweeping changes on Japan. The new Japanese constitution, which entered into force in 1947, was written along lines laid down by MacArthur himself. It introduced votes for women; imposed freedom of the press; recognized the status of trade unions and the right to strike. MacArthur also insisted that the constitution should renounce war – an unusual step for a general to take, and a complete departure from Japanese tradition. Article 9 of the constitution was to be so important in Japanese foreign relations that it should be quoted in full:

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of

belligerency of the state will not be recognized.¹²

This article, imposed by American authority, later became a stumbling block for the Americans themselves. When the United States wanted to rearm Japan, Article 9 could be quoted against them; and when Japanese pacifists opposed an alliance with the United States, they took their stand upon it.

Gradually the Americans and Japanese settled down to work together. Under the direction of Yoshida Shigeru, who was prime minister for almost the whole period of the American occupation, the Japanese moved towards a more modern state and society. Yoshida was a veteran politician (he was sixty-seven when he became premier in 1946, and seventy-six when he finally gave up in 1954). Like Adenauer in West Germany (to whom he was very close in temperament as well as age), Yoshida was an advocate of cautious dealing with the occupying power. Though willing to accept defeat, he was determined to preserve Japanese national identity, and to stake the country's future on economic development. He is credited with saying that 'just as the United States was once a colony of Great Britain but is now the stronger of the two, if Japan becomes a colony of the United States it will eventually become the stronger'.¹³ Yoshida ran his government (and the Japanese Liberal Party) with an iron hand, and conducted his relations with the occupying power with a velvet glove. For Japan, he was the right man in the right place at the right time.

Yoshida's first priority was to restore the Japanese economy. In 1945 Japanese foreign trade was virtually non-existent, and overseas supplies of food and raw materials – on which Japan, with its large population and slender domestic resources, was heavily dependent – had dried up. The next two years saw only marginal improvement. Food was scarce and expensive, industrial production low and exports weak. In 1947 the Americans improved the situation by relaxing their policy on the control of Japanese industry. A group of businessmen, led by the chairman of Chrysler, recommended slowing down efforts to 'deconcentrate' Japanese industry by dissolving the *zaibatsu* – the big conglomerates in industry and banking that had dominated the Japanese economy before and during the war. By a strange irony, a leader of the American car industry thus offered a helping hand to the Japanese firms which were later to invade the American car market.

This change in American policy was explicitly due to the onset of the Cold War. In the Far East, containment meant ensuring that Japan's economic difficulties did not lead the country into taking a communist turn. The Japanese

and Americans thus began to work together economically. The Americans deliberately fixed the yen–dollar exchange rate at 360 yen to the dollar, which somewhat undervalued the Japanese currency and so helped exports: these reached \$510 million in 1949 – a threefold increase over 1947.¹⁴

But progress was slow and only the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 (‘a gift from the gods’, as Yoshida called it) transformed the position.¹⁵ The American government purchased some \$500 million worth of war supplies from Japan; and large numbers of American servicemen spent their dollars in the country. It was a crucial boost for the Japanese economy. Moreover, the Korean War proved a decisive political turning point. As early as 1949 the American chiefs of staff had advocated a limited revival of Japanese military power, and perhaps even an alliance with Japan as a counterweight to the Soviet Union. The sudden North Korean attack at the end of June 1950 settled the issue. MacArthur ordered the formation of a ‘National Police Reserve’ of 75,000 men, in effect a lightly equipped army, though it was not to serve outside Japan. At the same time a small naval force was set up, and Japanese minesweepers were working with the US Navy off Korea before the end of 1950. In 1952 the ‘National Police Reserve’ was increased in size and equipped with tanks and artillery. In 1954 it was openly called an army, and its strength was fixed at 130,000. In January 1955 an Air ‘Self-Defence Force’ was added, restoring the full range of the three armed services.¹⁶ The problem of reconciling these changes with Article 9 of the Japanese constitution was dealt with by the legal quibble that Japan had never given up the basic right of self-defence, and therefore there was no need to amend the constitution to accommodate purely defensive forces. The degree of rearmament was in any case very limited. Yoshida himself was determined not to derail Japanese economic growth by overspending on the military:

To have invested vast sums of money in armaments would have seriously retarded hopes of completing our recovery and of creating a civilized standard of life for our people through peaceful trade. ... To equip the nation with an effective means of defence would have been tantamount to crippling Japan’s convalescent economy.¹⁷

The Korean War also brought a Japanese peace treaty. As in the case of Germany, no peace treaty had been signed after surrender in 1945. As the Cold War developed there seemed little chance that the Americans and Soviets could agree on one; the communist victory in China added another complication. The Korean War convinced American leaders to attempt a peace treaty with Japan, in

company with the Soviets if possible, but without them if necessary; and in any case without the Chinese. The United States and Britain, as two of the most important former belligerents, invited fifty other states which had been at war with Japan to a conference at San Francisco in September 1951. The Soviet Union was invited and accepted. India, Burma and Yugoslavia were invited but declined. Neither communist nor Nationalist China was invited, which avoided diplomatic problems but had the damaging effect of excluding the country that had suffered most grievously from Japanese aggression. Eventually 49 governments signed the Treaty of San Francisco on 8 September 1951.

Under this treaty, Japan renounced all claim to territories surrendered at the armistice of 1945, including Korea, Taiwan, the Kuril Islands and South Sakhalin. However, the treaty did not grant possession of Taiwan to China, nor of the Kurils and South Sakhalin to the Soviet Union, so that these territories remained in a sort of legal limbo. The treaty specified that Japan was to pay reparations for damage and suffering caused during the war; but the actual amounts were left open for negotiation between Japan and the countries concerned. Japan was to resume its full sovereignty, and the occupation forces were to withdraw no later than ninety days after the treaty came into effect; but there was a proviso that this did not prevent the stationing of foreign armed forces in Japan under other treaty arrangements. On the same day that the peace treaty was signed, a security treaty between the United States and Japan was also concluded. It authorized the United States to maintain land, sea and air forces in and about Japan, to defend the country against external attack, and also (if the Japanese government so requested) to quell riots inside the country which might be caused by the instigation of an outside power – a most unusual function for foreign troops. Japan undertook not to permit any other country to establish bases or station troops on its territory without the consent of the United States. Thus the Americans secured exclusive military use of Japanese territory and also assumed the defence of Japan against outside attack and, by implication, against internal subversion.¹⁸

While the peace treaty was under discussion, Australia and New Zealand expressed their fear of a resurgence of Japanese power. To reassure them, on 1 September 1951 (in advance of the Treaty of San Francisco), the United States concluded the ANZUS Pact, which committed Washington to the defence of both those countries. Australia and New Zealand had formally turned to the United States for protection, instead of to Great Britain as in former times. In practice, this had been the case ever since the fall of Singapore in February

1942; but it was still a great departure to acknowledge the change in principle.¹⁹

The Soviet Union refused to sign the Treaty of San Francisco, because it failed to confirm the annexation of the Kuril Islands and South Sakhalin to the Soviet Union and because they objected to the parallel arrangements for American forces to stay in Japan. The territorial questions between the Soviet Union and Japan therefore remained unresolved, though the two countries resumed diplomatic relations in 1956 and could at least communicate directly with one another.

After the treaty, relations between Japan and the United States achieved a sort of balance. The Americans tried but failed to get the Japanese to bring their new armed forces up to 350,000 effectives. On the other hand, the United States successfully insisted that Japan should establish no formal relations with communist China (which the United States did not recognize), and imposed tight restrictions on trade with the Chinese, which Japan would gladly have increased. In practice, the Japanese found ways round these restrictions, for example, by selling goods to Hong Kong for re-export to the mainland.

Japanese economic development was now well under way. Exports totalled \$827 million in 1950; \$1.3 billion in 1952; and \$2.8 billion in 1957. Imports were higher, and Japan did not record a trade surplus until 1965.²⁰ In 1955, on American initiative, Japan was admitted to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the International Monetary Fund and the UN – a triple recognition of the country's restored standing in world politics.

In 1959 the Japanese sought a revision of the Japanese–American mutual cooperation and security treaty of 1951, to put the two countries on a footing of greater equality, at any rate in principle. Under the revised treaty, signed on 19 January 1960, the United States retained the use of bases in Japan, but subject to new conditions: they would consult the Japanese government before increasing their forces in Japan, and before making any major changes in their armaments – a veiled reference to nuclear weapons. In fact, after the signature of this agreement, the American forces stationed in Japan were substantially reduced in numbers.

All in all, the new treaty was favourable to Japan, and yet it aroused vigorous opposition and vast street demonstrations in Japanese cities. This opposition sprang from different sources. The very fact of the treaty was resented by nationalist Japanese who did not like to be reminded of their dependence on the Americans. Pacifist and anti-nuclear sentiment, especially among students, was aroused by even a hint of the introduction of nuclear weapons to Japan. The

premier who negotiated the treaty, Nobosuke Kishi, was unpopular with many Japanese because he had been a member of Tojo's wartime government and was thought not to have repented sufficiently. The Lower House of the Japanese Parliament voted to accept the treaty on 20 May 1960, but the street demonstrations grew so large and violent that Kishi had to advise President Eisenhower to cancel a visit which he was due to make to Tokyo, because his safety could not be guaranteed. Kishi stepped down in July. After this gesture the opposition died down, and the treaty came into force in June 1960 in comparative calm. But the episode left a lasting impression. Japanese opposition to any revival of militarism, to nuclear weapons and even to the American alliance doubtless arose only from a minority in the country as a whole; but it was sufficiently intense to bring down a prime minister and stop a visit by an American president. Both governments trod more cautiously in the future.

By 1960 Japan had moved far from the defeat and desolation of 1945, but remained in a curiously ambiguous position. It was an ally of the United States, and protected by the American nuclear shield; yet significant sections of Japanese opinion resented dependence on the Americans and were bitterly opposed to nuclear weapons. Japan had made no peace treaty with the Soviet Union and had no direct relations at all with communist China. By its constitution Japan had renounced war and the use of force to settle disputes; and its post-war governments had set out to pursue economic development as the principal activity of the state. In this, the Japanese had the advantage of bearing only a light burden of armaments and military expenditure – in the eyes of their competitors, this represented a 'free ride' at the expense of the Americans. Japan was a full member of the most important world organizations but it was still militarily weak, with all kinds of inhibitions about the use of power by the state. It was a partial and ill-defined restoration of Japan's place in the world – and one that was resented by Japan's most important neighbours.

India and Pakistan

On 20 February 1947 Clement Attlee, the British prime minister, announced in the House of Commons that Britain intended to transfer power in India to 'responsible Indian hands' no later than June 1948; but he did not specify whose hands he had in mind. In fact, events moved far more rapidly than Attlee envisaged. It was at midnight between 14 and 15 August 1947 that Britain handed over power to the two new states of India and Pakistan.

Two crucial developments thus took place at the same time. The British left India in haste, and spared themselves the long and fruitless struggles waged by the Dutch in the East Indies and the French in Indo-China. They achieved this by means of the partition of the former British India, and they were succeeded by two states which from the start were hostile to one another. The British thus avoided a colonial war, but left behind them a war of succession. The background of these events needs explanation.

The Indian nationalist movement was led by the Congress Party, which in the name of Indian independence demanded that the British should 'Quit India'. But the leader of the Muslim League, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, demanded that the British should 'Divide and Quit' – in that order.²¹ Division (or partition) meant the creation of a separate state of Pakistan, to be based on the Muslim religion, which Jinnah saw as the key to national self-determination. Jinnah put his case thus in March 1940: 'Hindus and Muslims have two different religious philosophies, social customs, literatures. ... Muslims are a nation according to any definition of the term, and they must have their homelands, their territory and their state.'²² After prolonged uncertainty, Mountbatten, the last viceroy of India, and the British government accepted partition in April 1947; and the Congress leaders (though not Gandhi) came round to the same position. Their motives were mixed. 'India's Bismark', Vallabhbhai Patel (who ranked with Jawaharlal Nehru in the creation of modern India), explained to Congress on 10 June 1947 that it was necessary to 'cut off the diseased limb and save the main body' – meaning that he preferred a cohesive Indian state to one which might overreach itself by trying to include all the Muslim areas.²³ Congress leaders understood that events were moving fast, and that they could not delay independence in order to try to preserve unity. Most shared an underlying belief which they preferred not to avow: that partition would not last; Pakistan would not survive, and if only for economic reasons would soon return to a united India. This proved to be an error, and disappointment soon bred bitterness.

The British devised the final partition in haste; the immediate results predictably proved disastrous. In several areas, especially the Punjab, order broke down completely. Some 10 to 12 million people left their homes in mass migrations. Hindus and Sikhs fled from the new Pakistan to India; Muslims from India to Pakistan. The total of those killed in communal conflict during these events remains unknown, but was probably not less than a million, and perhaps more.²⁴ Millions were left displaced and homeless on both sides of the new frontiers. The result was a legacy of bitterness and hatred, exacerbated by the

widespread belief in both India and Pakistan that the authorities in the other country had welcomed and encouraged the killing in order to consolidate the new order.

Of the two new states, India had the more solid political base to build on, and settled down into remarkable internal stability under a federal and parliamentary form of government. Pakistan was in two parts, West and East, separated by about 1,600 kilometres of Indian territory. The West, based on the Punjab and its neighbouring areas, was the seat of the capital and provided most of the army; the East, made up of a large part of Bengal, was home to a majority of the population. In these circumstances, not surprisingly, stability between Pakistan and India proved impossible to maintain: the two new nations plunged at once into a state of undeclared war. The founders of Pakistan had wanted their new state to be larger than it was; most Indian leaders had not wanted partition at all, and hoped it would soon come to an end. The massacres and forced migrations of 1947 left deep scars on both sides.

To these general causes of conflict was soon added the specific issue of Kashmir. When the British left India, no fewer than 562 Indian princely states that had retained their existence under British colonial rule had to choose whether to join India or Pakistan. Almost all were absorbed reasonably smoothly into one or the other; but there were some difficult cases. In Hyderabad the ruler was a Muslim, and the population mostly Hindu. Adherence to Pakistan was no more than a remote possibility, if only on grounds of distance; but in any case the issue was resolved by the Indian Army, which occupied the state and ensured that it joined India.

In Kashmir and Jammu the opposite situation prevailed: the maharajah was a Hindu, and the population of some 4 million was three-quarters Muslim.²⁵ At the time of independence in August 1947, the maharajah hesitated, and did not declare for either India or Pakistan. India maintained that the ruler had the right to choose; Pakistan that the population should be consulted. In Jammu, in the north of the state, where the population was only 60 per cent Muslim, there were attacks by Hindus on Muslims. On the Muslim side, Pathan guerrillas invaded Kashmir, with the connivance and support of the Pakistani authorities. The maharajah fled to India, where he pledged his adherence in return for military support. Indian troops were airlifted to the capital, Srinagar; and by a treaty signed on 26 October 1947 the Indian government accepted the adherence of Kashmir to India, but undertook that the future of the territory should be settled by its people when law and order were restored. Fighting went on throughout

1948, involving regular forces from India and Pakistan as well as guerrillas. The UN arranged a ceasefire on 1 January 1949, and later that month the Security Council adopted Resolution 39 establishing the UN Commission for India and Pakistan to act as a mediator in the dispute.

A final ceasefire line, to be supervised by UN observers, was established on 27 July 1949, and it left Pakistan in control of the northernmost third of the state's territory, while India dominated the rest, including Srinagar. No plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the population ever took place, in part because the Indians knew the vote would go against them, and perhaps even more because the existence of the Indian state would be put at risk by an example of secession. No permanent settlement was attained; Kashmir was divided along the ceasefire line, not an agreed frontier; and the issue continued to vex relations between India and Pakistan, with fighting breaking out sporadically for the next fifty years.

In their conflict, in which Kashmir was a symbol as well as a cause, both Pakistan and India looked for outside support. Pakistan turned first to the United States, joining the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 and the Baghdad Pact (later the Central Treaty Organization) in 1955. Pakistan was distant from the areas covered by these treaties, but it used them to obtain military equipment from the Americans. India, for its part, turned towards the Soviet Union, receiving economic aid and diplomatic support, and welcoming a spectacular visit from Khrushchev and Bulganin in 1955 – though it continued to proclaim its non-aligned status.

For Pakistan, relations with India filled the horizon, and foreign policy was concerned with little else. India, by contrast, thanks to the personality and interests of Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister, aspired to a greater international role. Nehru was a cosmopolitan figure, educated in England at Harrow, Cambridge and the Inns of Court. He had absorbed an internationalist mode of thought from progressive friends in Britain; while from Gandhi he had learnt a philosophy of idealism and non-violence, though he was not himself a pacifist.

Moved by these ideals, drawn from both West and East, Nehru conceived a deep faith in the principles of coexistence – the *panchsheel* which were somewhat incongruously set out in the preamble to a commercial treaty between India and China in April 1954 – an agreement which among other things recognized Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. The principles, five in number, were as follows: mutual respect between states for their territorial integrity and

sovereignty; non-aggression; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; equality in status between states; and peaceful coexistence. These notions breathed a vague goodwill, which the actual conduct of China towards Tibet might well have called into question; but Nehru placed great faith in them, and propagated them further at the Afro-Asian Congress at Bandung in April 1955 (see [Chapter 11](#)). Nehru thus became a quintessential Third World figure, deeply versed in the language of non-alignment and anti-colonialism.

At the same time he also played a key role in the Commonwealth, even though it was in some ways a vestige of colonialism. In 1950 India became a republic, and it seemed likely that this would mean leaving the Commonwealth, whose members at the time were united by their mutual recognition of the king or queen of the United Kingdom as their head of state. Nehru was determined that India should stay a member and largely on his initiative a formula was devised by which member states acknowledged the British monarch only as head of the Commonwealth. This crucial device allowed the Commonwealth to assume a form which almost any country, whatever its form of government, could accept. Nehru's motives were mixed. He valued the British connection; he wanted to match Pakistan, which intended to remain in the Commonwealth – and he secured another vehicle for his ambition to be a world statesman as well as premier of India.

In 1962 the principles of *panchsheel* were abruptly discarded by the Chinese, who had probably not taken them seriously in the first place. As we have seen, the border between India and Tibet along the McMahon Line, drawn at a conference at Simla in 1914, had long been in dispute; and when the Chinese occupied Tibet in 1950 they revived old claims. On 20 October 1962 Chinese troops attacked the Indians in one of the disputed areas, in Assam, driving them back in disorder. An agitated Nehru appealed for American and British help. Both agreed; though only small quantities of military supplies had actually arrived when the Chinese announced on 21 November that they were ceasing fire and would withdraw to what they insisted was the correct frontier. The Indians lost nearly 1,400 killed, 1,700 missing and 4,000 prisoners, which was a heavy toll for such a limited campaign. They suffered a much greater loss in prestige and confidence. Nehru saw his faith in *panchsheel* collapse in ruins and suffered the humiliation of having to appeal to the Americans for help. The lofty world leader had stubbed his toe sharply on military realities.

Pakistan seized the opportunity offered by the Chinese–Indian conflict to improve relations with China. In March 1963 the Pakistan government

concluded an agreement with China settling their own disputed frontier in north-east Kashmir. The two countries followed this up with military cooperation, enabling Pakistan to strengthen its position against India. On their side, the Chinese were not perturbed by Pakistan's Muslim basis, or by the Pakistani government's hostility to communism within its own borders. On both sides, power politics prevailed: the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Relations between India and Pakistan and between China and India had only marginal links with other events in international affairs. India and Pakistan pursued their conflict with little reference to the Cold War except when they tried to exploit it, as Pakistan did through membership of the Baghdad Pact and SEATO. China and India carried on a border dispute left over from the age of imperialism. The two superpowers, for their part, were partly influenced by the Cold War, which drew them into issues which they might otherwise have ignored; but their interventions appeared to be scarcely affected at all by ideology. The Americans retained Pakistan as an ally when it came under military rule in 1958. The Soviet Union cooperated with India even though it was a parliamentary democracy led by a 'bourgeois nationalist'. It was the conflict for influence and prestige in the Third World, and to some degree calculations of power politics, which counted for the superpowers.

The Cold War was incidental to events in the Indian subcontinent. The conflict between India and Pakistan which arose out of partition and the Kashmir question was to outlast the Cold War, and proved one of the most durable and irreconcilable problems in the post-war world. The relationship between the two countries remained suspended in a strange state of neither war nor peace – oddly characteristic of much of international affairs since 1945.

The French war in Indo-China and the American road to Vietnam

French Indo-China, which brought together Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in a somewhat artificial union, had been under French control since the 1880s. The Japanese occupied the country from 1941 to 1945, maintaining the formal arrangements of French colonial rule. In March 1945, when the Japanese were losing the war against the Western allies, they suddenly dissolved the French administration and declared the independence of Vietnam, under Bao Dai, who had succeeded to the largely empty title of emperor of Vietnam as long ago as

1926. When Japan surrendered in August 1945 Bao Dai abdicated, and the Vietnamese communist leader Ho Chi Minh formed a new government and declared the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on 2 September. Meanwhile in France General de Gaulle had maintained throughout the Second World War that the French Empire should remain intact, and he was determined to restore French authority in Indo-China. At the end of 1945 De Gaulle sent General Philippe Leclerc, one of the most distinguished French commanders of the time, to Saigon (in the south of Vietnam) with a force of some 50,000 French troops.

The French and the government of Ho Chi Minh thus found themselves face to face in Indo-China. Throughout 1946 the French tried to restore their control over the country by negotiation, aiming at the construction of a complicated federation of three Indo-Chinese states (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) that would be incorporated in the French Union – de Gaulle’s bid to preserve the essentials of the French Empire under a new name. Ho Chi Minh went to France, and agreement seemed to be close during negotiations at Fontainebleau in September 1946; but in fact the gap between the French intention to restore their control and Ho Chi Minh’s determination to achieve genuine independence could not be bridged.

At that stage, the French were well established in southern Vietnam, and the Viet Minh (Vietnam Independence League) were dominant in the north. In November 1946 the French decided to use force to defeat the Viet Minh. On 23 November French warships bombarded Haiphong, the main port in northern Vietnam, and French troops landed shortly afterwards. In December 1946, the Viet Minh attacked the French garrison in Hanoi and war broke out.

The French hoped for a rapid victory, but the Viet Minh proved a new sort of enemy. Their leader, Ho Chi Minh, had lived the life of a communist conspirator, including some time in the Soviet Union, where he had learnt the value of discipline and ruthlessness. He aimed at nothing less than the foundation of a completely independent communist state in Vietnam, and would accept no compromise. He was supported on the military side by another committed communist, General Vo Nguyen Giap, who was only thirty-four in 1946. Giap had fought against the French in the 1930s, and organized resistance against the Japanese during their occupation of Indo-China. He was a hardened fighter and a skilled guerrilla leader. He successfully commanded the Viet Minh forces throughout the war against the French from 1946 to 1954 (the French had eight different commanders in the same period) and was to do so again during

the whole conflict against the Americans. It was a remarkable record.

This combination of political discipline and military leadership surprised the French. Middle-ranking French army officers later conceived a great admiration for their opponents' toughness and dedication, which they set out to emulate; but meanwhile the French authorities were at a loss. The governments of the Fourth Republic in Paris were short-lived and hesitant. They could not decide whether to cut their losses and pull out of Indo-China, as the British had withdrawn from India in 1947, or to commit France's full might to winning the conflict. The war in Indo-China was fought by regular soldiers and the Foreign Legion (and by large numbers of Vietnamese), not by conscripts, so that most of the French public ignored it for most of the time. French governments usually failed even to ask, never mind answer, the question of what the war was about.

The nearest they came to an answer to this crucial question was the Ha Long Bay statement of December 1947, in which France accepted the principle of Vietnamese independence, followed by an agreement in June 1948 setting up a Vietnamese state, with the emperor Bao Dai as its head, to which the French promised full independence at some future date. This created a strange position whereby both the Viet Minh and the French claimed to be fighting for the independence of Vietnam. This played into the hands of the Viet Minh, who obviously meant what they said. The French claims were unconvincing, because Bao Dai was only a puppet, and independence – if it ever arrived – would be a sham. Yet at the same time the French undermined their own will to fight, because they had at least to pretend that they were at war only to secure the privilege of leaving the country to Bao Dai.

In these circumstances it was surprising that the military balance remained fairly even until 1949. The French held the cities, and most of the countryside in the south. Giap built up his guerrilla forces in the mountains and rural areas of the north. Actual fighting was limited, and the war itself remained self-contained – a colonial war on the French side, a war of liberation for the Viet Minh. At the end of 1949, the communist victory in China transformed the situation. The Chinese provided the Viet Minh with arms (including artillery), and with facilities for training large units ready for a move from guerrilla to open warfare. On the other hand, the French were now able to appeal for American help, on the ground that they were not fighting a colonial war but were engaged in the worldwide struggle against communism. In May 1950 the Truman administration agreed to provide military aid to the French in Indo-China.

This proved to be the crucial first step towards American involvement in

Vietnam, which was to last for a quarter of a century and end in disaster for the United States. How did it come about? The immediate reason was the communist victory in China, which convinced the US government that no further communist expansion could be tolerated. Behind this lay the 'Munich syndrome' – the conviction that appeasement had been fatal in the 1930s and must not be repeated. In February and April 1950 the National Security Council (NSC-64 and NSC-68) argued that Indo-China was the crucial link in a chain including Thailand, Malaya, the Philippines, Indonesia and Burma; and the breaking of one link would mean the loss of the whole chain. By a change of metaphor, this was to become the 'domino theory' which President Eisenhower expounded in April 1954, and which had some justification in recent experience. In 1941, after all, Japanese occupation of southern Indo-China had been followed by attacks on Singapore, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies (as Indonesia was then called). In principle the same thing might well happen again.

There were difficulties. The Americans had to find an uneasy compromise between their genuine anti-imperialism and fervent anti-communism. They soon found themselves on a slippery slope. The more they insisted on the crucial importance of Vietnam, the more help the French could ask for. The more help the Americans sent, the more they had to be sure it was used properly. Before the end of 1950 the Americans sent to Saigon a Military Assistance Advisory Group – only a few dozen men, but the vanguard of what was to become a much larger military commitment.

There followed a period of intensive fighting in Vietnam. The French gained victories under the leadership of General de Lattre de Tassigny in 1951; but Giap's forces in the north held their own, not only in guerrilla fighting but increasingly in regular warfare. In 1953 the French government made serious diplomatic moves to end the war, and declared its willingness to grant independence to the three separate states of Indo-China – Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. A treaty of independence for Laos was actually signed in October 1953, though it included a French undertaking to defend the country against communist attack, which left scope for a continued military presence. In autumn 1953 the French attempted to improve their military position, and so gain better terms in negotiations, by setting up a fortress at Dien Bien Phu, in northern Vietnam, and challenging the Viet Minh to a pitched battle on a ground of French choosing. The plan went completely wrong. The position was ill-chosen, in a hollow commanded by surrounding hills. The Viet Minh were equipped with Chinese heavy artillery which played havoc with the French defences.

Eisenhower considered direct military intervention (by means of air bombardment, the sending of airborne troops or even the use of tactical nuclear weapons); wiser counsels prevailed. After a long siege, the French garrison surrendered on 7 May 1954. It was one of the most significant battles of modern warfare: the victory of an Asian army over a European power in regular combat. In the nineteenth century – despite occasional disasters – European armies had easily defeated Asian and African opponents. Now the tables were turned. The organization of the Viet Minh had created a new sort of army; Chinese heavy artillery had changed the balance of armaments; and the stern political will of the Viet Minh had prevailed over the uncertainty of governments in Paris. The Viet Minh victory at Dien Bien Phu sent a signal to nationalist movements across the world.

While Dien Bien Phu was still under siege, an international conference met at Geneva to reach a negotiated settlement of the Indo-China war. The initiative came from the French. A new and relatively resolute government headed by Pierre Mendès-France was determined to end the war as quickly as possible. The Geneva Conference convened on 26 April 1954, and continued until 21 July. It was attended by nine states: France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (the Viet Minh), Vietnam (the state recognized by the French), Cambodia and Laos. An Indian representative (Krishna Menon) acted as an intermediary between the communist states and the Western powers, especially the British who became the conference's honest brokers. The fall of Dien Bien Phu on 7 May, when the conference had been at work for less than two weeks, virtually destroyed the French bargaining position. The other participants formed a disparate band – the Americans and Chinese had no diplomatic relations with one another; the two Vietnamese governments were sworn enemies. It was remarkable that the conference achieved any result at all, even though it was only in the form of a series of armistice agreements and accompanying declarations.²⁶

Three armistices were signed at the end of the Geneva Conference by the French and Viet Minh high commands, dealing with Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, respectively. These armistices were technically military documents but had important political consequences. The Vietnam armistice established a ceasefire line and a demilitarized zone close to the line of the 17th Parallel of latitude, which later became the line of division between North and South Vietnam. Each side was to withdraw behind the ceasefire line, over a period of

300 days. The French were to withdraw their forces from all three states within a period to be agreed. In Vietnam, elections were to be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission, to determine the final status of the country.

The results offered little satisfaction to anyone. For France, the Geneva Conference put a diplomatic seal on military defeat. Yet the result also represented a setback for the Viet Minh, which had aimed at the unification of Vietnam under its own control and had to settle for half. The Chinese pressed this concession upon them, in the belief that a divided Vietnam would offer no danger to Chinese interests. The Viet Minh were thus denied their main objective and regarded the settlement as merely temporary. By the same token the Vietnamese government (effectively the government of southern Vietnam) protested against the armistice terms and reserved its freedom of action. The United States dissociated itself from the later phase of the conference (John Foster Dulles actually went home in May, leaving a deputy to represent him). Washington did not sign the agreements and only took note of the final declaration of the conference. Essentially, this partial settlement's main achievement was to bring the war between the French and the Viet Minh to an end, and to allow the French to make their exit in reasonable order. The question marks over the country's future remained.

The last French forces left Vietnam in May 1956. The Americans moved in to replace them, supporting the state of South Vietnam which began to develop to the south of the 17th Parallel armistice line. They hoped, with a simple optimism, to build a new democracy in South Vietnam, choosing as their instrument a Catholic politician, Ngo Dinh Diem. A referendum removed the absentee emperor Bao Dai (who preferred to live on the French Riviera rather than in South Vietnam); and a republican regime was set up. On 9 April 1956 Diem postponed the elections which were due to be held under the Geneva agreements to decide the future of the country, because he had concluded that in any election held in Vietnam as a whole the communists would probably win. Senator John F. Kennedy nevertheless visited the country the same year, and rashly declared that it was 'a proving ground for democracy in Asia'.²⁷ The Americans dispatched advisers to set up a new South Vietnamese Army on their own model, equipped and trained primarily for conventional warfare of the kind seen in the Second World War and in Korea.

These policies proved ill-conceived. South Vietnam, unsurprisingly, failed to produce a democracy on the American model; and the war in which South

Vietnam was soon engaged was not a repetition of the Second World War. In 1958 the Viet Cong (the military wing of the South Vietnamese communists) began an insurrection against the Saigon government. In December 1960 the Viet Cong set up the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, and embarked on extensive guerrilla warfare, supported and organized from the North, with the aim of destroying the South Vietnamese government and uniting the country under communist rule.

The United States stood by the South Vietnamese. They had convinced themselves of the crucial importance of South Vietnam, as the domino which, if it fell, would bring down Thailand, Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines and even Australia. They provided increasing amounts of economic assistance to Saigon; they committed more military advisers; and in December 1961 President Kennedy, as he then was, decided to raise the number of American troops in the country to 15,000. It was to prove a fatal involvement.

South-East Asia: Indonesia and Malaysia

Indonesia

The Dutch East Indies, later to become Indonesia, was a vast archipelago of about 3,600 islands, stretching over a distance of 4,800 kilometres from east to west. During the Second World War, the Japanese occupied these territories and gave encouragement to the Indonesian nationalist movement there. When Japan surrendered, the Indonesian leaders Ahmed Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta sought to pre-empt the return of the Dutch by declaring independence on 17 August 1945. When Dutch forces and colonial authorities reappeared on the scene, they tried to regain at least a part of their former position. In 1947 they tried to set up an Indonesian Federation, in which some territories would be under their control and others under Indonesian government. When the nationalists rejected this plan, there was heavy fighting between Dutch and nationalist forces in Java in the second half of 1947 and again at the end of 1948. While these events were in progress, in September 1948, there was a communist rising against the nationalists in Java, which was violently suppressed by Sukarno's nationalist forces.

In 1949 the United States intervened to break the deadlock between the Dutch and the Indonesian nationalists. American anti-colonial sentiment was still strong and Sukarno's success against the communists had convinced them that

he would be a reliable ally. Moreover, the Americans had no wish to see the Dutch wasting their share of Marshall Aid in a futile war in the East Indies. The United States accordingly threatened to cut off the flow of dollars if the Dutch did not relinquish their colonial position. The Dutch, who were already finding the burden of maintaining their empire a heavy one, acquiesced ungracefully. In August 1949 the Dutch government and the Indonesian nationalists, led by Sukarno, signed an agreement at The Hague, setting up a Federal United States of Indonesia, together with a Netherlands–Indonesian Union designed to save some standing (and some face) for the Dutch. This attempt at a halfway house soon broke down, and at the end of December 1949 the Netherlands acknowledged the complete independence of Indonesia.

There was an exception. The Dutch clung on in Western New Guinea (West Irian), which they rightly claimed had never been administered as part of the East Indies and was different in both ethnic make-up and state of development from the rest of the territory. Indonesia, on the contrary, claimed that it should be the heir to all the former Dutch colonial territories, including West Irian. The Indonesian claim remained largely nominal for some years, until in 1961 the Dutch established representative institutions in the colony as a prelude for independence. Indonesia then stepped up its pressure, and landed troops by sea and air to raise an insurrection. The Americans again intervened to promote the Indonesian cause, and the UN was mobilized to provide the machinery for a transfer of sovereignty. In August 1962, through American mediation, the Dutch and Indonesian governments reached an agreement by which the territory was to be administered by the UN prior to a handover to Indonesia in May 1963. The population of West Irian was then to make a ‘free choice’ on its future, no later than the end of 1969. This provision was observed, after a fashion, in 1969, not by plebiscite, but by a gathering of about 1,000 representatives of the people, who voted to remain part of Indonesia. This settlement did not prove permanent; but that is another story.



MAP 8 *South-East Asia.*

The independence of Indonesia showed some striking features. The role of the United States in intervening on the side of the nationalists, and pressing the Dutch to withdraw, was an instance of American anti-colonial sentiment at its most powerful. Indonesia itself went straight from its struggle against colonialism to its own brand of imperialism, claiming West Irian simply as the successor to the Dutch and showing no inclination to allow the population of that territory to decide its own future – except in the most carefully supervised manner.

From Malaya to Malaysia

Malaysia proved a distinctive case in the history of decolonization. The Malay States were particularly important colonies for Britain in the immediate post-war period, as producers of tin and, especially, rubber, whose export earned large sums for the sterling area. The British sought to maintain these economic advantages while making some concessions to local self-rule by bringing the Malay States together in the Federation of Malaya (February 1948), which preserved British control while permitting considerable autonomy in internal affairs. In June 1948 the Malayan Communist Party (whose membership was mostly Chinese in ethnic origin, not Malay) began an insurrection against British rule, which for over three years gained widespread successes. The insurgents dominated much of the countryside, damaged rubber production, inflicted casualties on civilians and the armed forces and finally killed the British high commissioner himself in an ambush.

At this stage, the insurrection showed marked similarities to that in Indo-China, where the French were fighting a losing battle against General Giap. But in Malaya the British succeeded in defeating the insurgency. In February 1954 the communist commanders had to retreat to Sumatra, although the state of emergency declared by the government did not end until July 1960. How was this success achieved? Part of the answer lay in the appointment of General Gerald Templer as high commissioner and commander-in-chief in February 1952. Templer adopted a combination of methods – improved intelligence on communist activities, air attacks on guerrilla camps, the introduction of fortified villages to protect civilians against guerrilla attacks and economic rewards for areas that were declared pacified. The rural Chinese were limited by strict curfews and checkpoints from moving freely and giving logistical support to the guerillas in the jungle. The British were also able to exploit a number of general advantages that the French did not have. The guerrilla forces could be cut off from outside support. Malaya's only land frontier was with Thailand, and the Thais were opposed to the guerrillas. Indonesia was willing to support the rebels, but the British could call on their naval power to intercept supplies at sea. The communists were mainly Chinese, and therefore the British were able to appeal for the support of the Malay majority of the population. That appeal was successful because the British convinced the Malays that they were serious about handing over power. Malaya indeed became independent in August 1957, before the state of emergency came to an end. At the same time, it was agreed that

Malaya would remain in the Commonwealth and in the sterling area, so that the most important British economic interests were safeguarded.

The case of Malaya showed that with good military strategy, support from the population and in favourable geographical circumstances, it was possible for a colonial power to defeat a communist insurrection. The Malayan example naturally encouraged the Americans to believe that the same methods could succeed in Vietnam, where they subsequently adopted a number of the methods used by the British – for example, fortified villages and air strikes against guerrilla camps. But the circumstances were very different – the Vietnamese communists had an open frontier with China behind them; there was no split in the population to be exploited; the fortified villages did not work in a different environment; the Americans changed their personnel in Vietnam constantly, and never achieved the continuity which was so important for Templer's operations. The Malayan experience was only partially transferable to Vietnam.

There was a further outcome to these events, in which Indonesia and Malaya came together – or rather, came into dispute. In 1961 the prime minister of the independent Malaya, Tengku Abdul Rahman, proposed to form a new Federation of Malaysia, uniting Malaya, Singapore and the British Borneo territories of Brunei, Sarawak and North Borneo. At the time, this was welcomed by the other parties concerned (notably Lee Kuan Yew, the prime minister of Singapore), and by Britain as the former colonial power. Indonesia, the most important neighbouring country, made no initial objection. But in January 1963, when the Federation of Malaysia had actually been formed, Sukarno denounced it, and announced that Indonesia would adopt a policy of 'confrontation' towards it – which meant in practice diplomatic and economic pressure and some military harassment in the Borneo territories. This was partly a matter of prestige (Indonesia insisted on great-power status in South-East Asia, and wanted to be consulted on changes in its area) and partly the result of Sukarno's need for an enemy to hold his disparate country together. The Indonesian policy of confrontation was a failure. With British military and naval support, the Borneo territories stood firm, and Sukarno himself lost interest as his power at home faded away. Singapore broke away from the Malaysian Federation, for its own reasons, and attained striking economic success in its own right.

By the early 1960s, the huge events described in this chapter had produced three grave conflicts. India and Pakistan were locked into a constant hostility. The United States was becoming increasingly involved in Indo-China, where the French had already lost one war. The Chinese–Soviet dispute, in its different

aspects of ideology, territory and power politics, was well under way. All these conflicts were to be carried on into the future. The consequences of decolonization in Asia had been far from peaceful.

Notes

- 1 See Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–1962* (London, 2011), for estimates of the deaths caused by the 'Great Leap Forward'.
- 2 Harold C. Hinton, 'China as an Asian Power', in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford, 1994), pp. 349, 352.
- 3 John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know; Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 66–7.
- 4 Treaty of 14 February 1950, and attached agreements, J. A. S. Grenville, *The Major International Treaties, 1914–1973* (London, 1974), pp. 370–3.
- 5 Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945–1957* (London, 2013), pp. 123–4.
- 6 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp. 227–8.
- 7 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 221.
- 8 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1963, p. 19,566.
- 9 Steven M. Goldstein, 'Sino-Soviet Relations', in Robinson and Shambaugh, *Chinese Foreign Policy*, p. 237.
- 10 Ian Nish, 'Preparing for Peace and Survival: The Japanese Experience, 1943–46', Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Annual lecture, 4 November 1996, published by King's College, London, pp. 10–11, available at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/archivespec/documents/archivesdocs/1996-lecture.pdf>; see also John Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Essays on History, Culture and Race* (London, 1996), p. 11.
- 11 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 155.
- 12 Grenville, *Major International Treaties*, p. 287.
- 13 Quoted in Robert Harvey, *The Undefeated: The Rise, Fall and Rise of Greater Japan* (London, 1994), p. 339.
- 14 Figures in Akira Iriye, *Japan and the Wider World* (London, 1997), p. 100.
- 15 Quoted in Richard J. Barnett, *Allies: America, Europe, Japan since the War* (London, 1984), p. 81.
- 16 Figures in Harvey, *The Undefeated*, pp. 306–8.
- 17 Quoted in Richard J. Samuels, *Machiavelli's Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan* (Ithaca, NY, 2003), p. 205.
- 18 Treaty of San Francisco, Grenville, *Major International Treaties*, pp. 283–6.
- 19 ANZUS Pact, *ibid.*, pp. 337–9.
- 20 Iriye, *Japan and the Wider World*, pp. 116–17, 132.
- 21 Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience*, Vol. II, *From British to Multiracial Commonwealth* (London, 1982), p. 122.
- 22 Quote in *ibid.*, p. 117.

- 23 Quoted in Michael Edwardes, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London, 1971), p. 206.
- 24 Estimates of casualties in Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London, 1997), p. 636.
- 25 R. J. Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth* (Oxford, 1987), p. 47.
- 26 Documents resulting from the Geneva Conference, Grenville, *Major International Treaties, 1914–1973*, pp. 454–62. There were in all three armistice agreements, six unilateral declarations and a Final Declaration.
- 27 Quoted in Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London, 1993), p. 639.

10

The new Africa, 1945–62

North Africa – The Algerian War, 1954–62 – Africa south of the Sahara – The rush to independence – The Congo crisis – South Africa and apartheid – African unity and conflicts.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Africa was almost entirely partitioned between European colonial powers; and at the end of the Second World War this situation remained unchanged. Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium and Spain (in rough order of the extent of their colonial possessions) controlled most of the continent. There were only four independent states – Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa – and of these Egypt was under British influence and in South Africa power lay in the hands of a minority of European descent.

The war brought great changes. Axis and Allied armies fought campaigns across North Africa. Southern France was liberated by an army largely made up of North African troops. American influence was felt all over North and West Africa. African mineral resources (gold, copper, uranium) proved vital for the Allied war effort. Africa was drawn into the mainstream of wartime strategy. Even so, in 1945, the European colonial powers still believed that the war had been an interlude, after which the status quo would be restored in all essentials. The British government which handed over power in India in 1947 was convinced that independence for its African colonies lay far in the future. French governments knew that the empire had played a crucial role during the Second World War and believed that their African colonies formed an essential support for French power and prestige in Europe. The two countries together held a series of conferences (between 1947 and 1950) to work out how their combined African possessions could put them economically on a par with the American

and Soviet superpowers: the concept of 'Eurafrica' was especially important to French policymakers. The assumption was that in Africa the imperial powers had plenty of time. Other parts of the colonial world, in India or Indo-China, might be in flames, but most of Africa seemed fireproof and far from inflammable materials.

Events were to prove otherwise.

The Maghreb: French North Africa

French North Africa had felt the direct impact of the war. British and American armies had occupied the area, weakening the authority of the French. President Roosevelt in person had visited Sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Yusef of Morocco and encouraged the cause of independence. The whole territory, Arabic-speaking in language and Islamic in religion, had links with the Arab countries of the Middle East and was bound to be influenced by nationalist movements in Egypt and Syria.

The area also had its own political structures. Tunisia and Morocco were not strictly speaking colonies but protectorates. France controlled all foreign and military affairs, and French officials conducted most of the internal administration; but the sovereignty of the bey of Tunis and the sultan of Morocco was formally preserved. Algeria on the other hand was in French law a part of France itself, organized into three departments and represented in the French National Assembly. There was no Algerian state, even in shadow form. These somewhat technical differences were to have important effects.

In Tunisia, a nationalist movement had been at work for some years. The Neo-Destour (New Constitution) Party had been founded in 1934, with Habib Bourguiba as its secretary and later as its leader. In 1945 Bourguiba published a proposal for complete union between Tunisia and France, with no reservations or distinctions; predictably, he received no response. From 1945 to 1949 he lived in Cairo and other parts of the Middle East, drawing inspiration from Arab progress there. Back in Tunisia, Bourguiba led the Neo-Destour in demands for complete independence and was arrested and deported in February 1952. There followed a period of rioting, martial law and widespread insurrection. By 1954 the country was in a state of revolt, with nationalist guerrillas operating in the hills and launching terrorist attacks in the cities. French premier Pierre Mendés-France, who had decided to end the war in Indo-China, also resolved to escape from the Tunisian conflict. In July 1954 he offered to grant Tunisia complete internal

autonomy, while retaining control of defence, foreign policy and foreign trade for France. This offer came too late. The Neo-Destour demand was for full independence, which the French (by then engaged in a war in Algeria) were in no position to oppose. On 20 March 1956 the French protectorate, which had been established in 1881, was formally brought to an end. Bourguiba became prime minister of the newly independent Tunisia. In 1957 he deposed the bey, declared the country a republic and became president – a position which he was to hold until November 1987 when mental infirmity led to his removal.

In Morocco a nationalist movement took shape, led by the Istiqlal (Independence) Party, founded in December 1943, whose manifesto, published in January 1944, made a bid for American support by invoking the Atlantic Charter of 1941. The sultan threw his influence behind the independence movement in a speech at Tangier in April 1947, thus linking his traditional authority with the modern appeal of Istiqlal. The French put up serious resistance, using direct repression and also an alliance with El Glaoui, the pasha of Marrakesh and leader of the Berbers, a non-Arab people of Muslim faith. They put pressure on the sultan to break with Istiqlal, without success – the sultan even used a formal speech from the throne in November 1952 to appeal to Moroccan nationalism. In August 1953 the French lost patience and deposed Mohammed ben Youssef, sending him into exile in Madagascar and replacing him by one of his cousins. This move provoked bomb attacks in the cities and sporadic fighting in the countryside.

By 1955 French will to maintain control over Morocco was withering away. Concessions had already been made in Tunisia, and war had begun in Algeria. The French government was neither able nor willing to make the military effort necessary to assert its control in Morocco. Mohammed ben Yusef was recalled from Madagascar to France, and at the château of La Celle-Saint-Cloud signed an agreement on 6 November 1955 with the French government, which in tortuous language conceded independence to Morocco. The sultan returned to his capital, Rabat, and took the new title of King Mohammed V. The French protectorate was formally brought to an end on 2 March 1956, in the same month as that over Tunisia. The final handover of power was smooth; most French residents remained in the country; and the king retained the authority which he had established by his shrewd alliance with the nationalists.

The Algerian War of Independence

These events in Tunisia and Morocco were bound to have repercussions in Algeria, which lay geographically between the two and whose population was largely Arab and Muslim. Algeria had no framework as a state like that in Tunisia and Morocco. Before the Second World War the principal Muslim leader, Ferhat Abbas, who was himself assimilated into French culture, sought greater political rights for Muslims under French rule, not separation for a new Algeria. Wartime experience, and the widespread nationalist ferment of the post-war years, transformed the situation. Ahmed Ben Bella, an Algerian soldier who had fought in the French Army and was personally decorated by General de Gaulle with the *médaille militaire*, turned completely against the French. By the end of 1954, under Ben Bella's leadership, the Algerian nationalist movement had built up its own organization, the National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale*, FLN), whose purpose was to pursue an armed revolt until independence was achieved.

The nationalists were encouraged by the French humiliation in Indo-China, where Algerian troops served at Dien Bien Phu and witnessed the French surrender at close quarters. Yet concessions from France, or other forms of compromise, were not on the agenda in Algeria. The FLN accordingly set up a National Army of Liberation (*Armée Nationale de Libération*, ANL) to act as its military force. On 1 November 1954 (All Saints Day and a French public holiday) the FLN launched a coordinated rising, which achieved only limited success and little popular support, but which marked the opening of the Algerian War. A proclamation by the FLN, broadcast on Cairo Radio and distributed in pamphlets across Algeria, presciently declared that 'the struggle will be long but the outcome is certain'.¹

The French response was in no doubt. Mendès-France, the Radical Party premier who had brought the war in Indo-China to an end and gone far to meet nationalist demands in Tunisia, declared in the National Assembly on 20 November that 'the Algerian departments are part of the French Republic'. There could be no comparison with Tunisia – '*Ici, c'est la France*'.² Jacques Soustelle, a right-winger and a Gaullist, declared when he took up his appointment as governor general in Algiers that France would no more leave Algeria than she would leave Provence or Brittany. François Mitterrand, later to be the first socialist president of the Fifth Republic, spoke of one France extending from Dunkirk to Tamanrasset. Across the political spectrum the watchword was the same: Algeria was France. The French backed up their words with force. On 1 November 1954 there were 56,000 French troops in

Algeria. By January 1955 there were 83,000; at the end of that year 200,000; and in 1956 the total reached 400,000.³ Conscripts were sent to Algeria, as they had never been to Indo-China, and the length of military service was increased from eighteen months to two and a half years.

About a million European 'pieds noirs' – French, Spanish and some Italians – lived in Algeria: more than a tenth of the population. Most were long settled, sometimes for generations; Algeria was their home. The majority were city workers or poor farmers, with no wealth to fall back on if they were forced to flee the country. Through their representatives in the National Assembly, the pieds noirs could obstruct or overthrow any government that veered towards compromise with the Arab majority. The European population of Algeria, and their supporters in France and the French Army, became a third force in the struggle. The FLN, the French government and the pieds noirs fought a triangular war, made even more complicated by divisions within all three sides.

On the ground, the struggle was ferocious, and by no means uneven. The Army of National Liberation extended its operations across the country and launched attacks even in the cities. French paratroops fought a brutal battle in Algiers at the end of 1956 (and fought it without mercy, with scant regard for human rights) that broke the nationalist hold over the Muslim quarters of the city. But the vast areas of mountainous countryside proved impossible to subdue. In August 1956 the FLN set up forms of political organization across Algeria, with representatives in all areas intent on building up the framework of a state. The nationalists received help from Egypt, Morocco and above all Tunisia, which provided a route for arms supplies, a safe haven for hard-pressed guerrillas and a base for the Algerian leaders. The French in their turn attacked Egypt during the Suez War of November 1956 in the hope of cutting off Egyptian help to the rebels; and in February 1958 French aircraft bombed the Tunisian village of Sakiët, near the border with Algeria.

The war thus became an international issue, which the FLN had wanted from the beginning. The Front sent observers to the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in April 1955, where they were warmly welcomed and won wide support. In September 1955 a group of Afro-Asian countries raised the question of the Algerian War at the United Nations (UN), and on 30 September the General Assembly agreed, by a vote of 28–27, with 5 abstentions, to place the matter on its agenda. From then onwards the subject came up each year for debate, and France was hard pressed to avoid the passage of condemnatory resolutions proposed by the African and Asian states. In December 1957 the

FLN was accepted at a new Afro-Asian Conference at Cairo on the same footing as other states. On 19 December 1960 the General Assembly of the UN passed a resolution recognizing the right of the Algerian people to independence and declaring that the Algerian situation was a threat to 'international peace and security'.⁴ These votes could not compel a change of French policy, but they exerted considerable influence, particularly because the two superpowers added their weight. Khrushchev granted de facto diplomatic recognition to the FLN in 1960. In 1961 John F. Kennedy, who had supported Algerian independence in the Senate as early as July 1957, took office as president and put pressure on the French to reach a settlement.

This growing international intervention in the Algerian War, from the Third World, the UN and the superpowers – all on the Algerian side – gave the FLN immense moral support and condemned France to increasing isolation. It was a sign of the new pressures at work in international affairs, marking a complete change from the pre-1945 world, when colonial powers had conducted their policies largely on their own terms.

In these circumstances, the pressure on France to meet Algerian demands grew steadily stronger. The financial and economic burden of the war was great, and the political and moral strains were even greater. The issue of the use of torture by French forces in Algeria brought a sharp revulsion against the government, especially among the intellectuals who were so important in French political life. The avowed French aim of the integration of Algeria with France, which would be immensely costly and might well result in a Muslim majority in the combined country within the foreseeable future, became steadily less convincing or acceptable. Public opinion in France swung against the war.

But, as was mentioned earlier, the conflict was not simply one between France and the Algerian nationalists. The *pieds noirs* and some of the military leaders on the ground in Algeria rejected any thought of a compromise peace. In May 1958, Algiers erupted into open rebellion against the government in Paris. The Fourth Republic foundered, and only the return to power of General de Gaulle, who managed to avoid civil war by appealing to all shades of opinion, preserved the unity of France. De Gaulle visited Algeria and on 4 June 1958 told the white population of Algeria 'Je vous ai compris' – 'I have understood you.' They were soon to discover that this did not mean 'I will support you unconditionally.'

The Algerian War thus brought down not just the French government, but the whole regime. De Gaulle's condition for his return to office was a new constitution that gave the presidency sweeping powers. The Fifth Republic

replaced the Fourth Republic, whose passing was unlamented. At much the same time, in September 1958, the FLN set up a Provisional Government of Algeria, headed by Ferhat Abbas, who had earlier in his life worked within the French system but had joined the FLN in 1956. There were now two new governments, representing France and Algeria, respectively; and the Algerian War assumed more and more the character of a conflict between two states, though one of them was an established entity and the other only striving to come into existence.

De Gaulle conducted the ground war in Algeria with characteristic energy, but he soon realized that it was necessary to get France out of the war, while, if possible, saving something from defeat. Concessions to nationalism were inevitable. De Gaulle publicly accepted the principle of self-determination for the Algerian people on 16 September 1959. In November 1960 he declared that there would be an Algerian Algeria, with its own government, institutions and laws. In January 1961 the French government held a referendum on self-determination in both France and Algeria. In mainland France, self-determination was accepted by 75 per cent of those who voted; in Algeria itself 69 per cent agreed, and 60 per cent voted, despite a boycott ordered by the FLN. The dual referendum thus accepted the principle of Algerian independence. The way was open for negotiations to begin between the French government and the Provisional Government of Algeria; and secret meetings began in February 1961.

In Algeria, the most alienated *pieds noirs* and part of the French Army took desperate measures to stop these negotiations. During the night of 21 and 22 April 1961 four retired generals launched an attempted coup in Algiers. De Gaulle naturally stood firm, appearing on television to urge the French people to back him and his policies. Most of the troops in Algeria were not behind the generals and the coup collapsed ignominiously after only three days. It was a severe (though not yet final) blow for the Europeans in Algeria, and it cleared the way further for negotiations.

Negotiations between the French and the FLN began at the spa town of Évian, on 20 May 1961. The French aims were to secure a special status for the European community in independent Algeria, with reserved political rights and guarantees; and to establish a special regime for the Sahara, which contained reserves of natural gas and was also the site of the French atomic testing ground. The Algerians on the contrary insisted on the unity of the whole of Algerian people, with no recognition for separate communities, and on the integrity of Algerian territory within its existing borders – including the Sahara. These

differences proved unbridgeable, and the negotiations broke down on 28 July 1961.

In August 1961 the National Council of the Algerian Revolution met in Tripoli; at this meeting Benyoucef Benkhedda replaced Ferhat Abbas as head of the provisional government. It was a victory for the hardliners and the FLN continued to prosecute its struggle remorselessly. The French position on the other hand grew steadily weaker. The French authorities in Algeria had largely lost control of the country. The Algerians increasingly obeyed the provisional government. Most of the Europeans supported (or at any rate obeyed) a newly formed revolutionary body, the Organization of the Secret Army (*Organisation de l'Armée Secrète*, OAS) which aimed to preserve at least something of a French Algeria.

De Gaulle himself despaired of saving anything from the wreck, accepting that the only option was disengagement, or, in plain terms, surrender. On 5 September 1961 he agreed that the Sahara should belong to Algeria. In November he accepted that the FLN was supported by the majority of the Algerian population. By February 1962 he had dropped any reference to the cooperation of communities in the new Algeria, and thus tacitly abandoned the claim for a special status and institutions for the European population. Secret contacts between the French and Algerians were resumed during the winter of 1961–2; and final negotiations took place at Évian from 7 to 18 March 1962. The Évian agreements bringing the war to an end were signed on 18 March.

The first step was a ceasefire, to come into effect on 19 March; the Algerian forces were to remain in their existing positions and the French to avoid contact with them. The fundamental element in the agreement was the French acceptance of Algerian sovereignty, though under a number of conditions. French residents in Algeria were to be allowed a three-year period in which to choose Algerian nationality, to remain in the country as foreigners or to leave. If they decided to leave, they were to be free to take with them their goods and capital. France was to station some troops in Algeria for three years; retain the atomic testing site in the Sahara for five years; and keep the naval base at Mers-el-Kébir for fifteen years. Existing concessions to French companies to exploit oil or gas in the Sahara were to be maintained, and French firms would have preference when applying for new concessions. France and Algeria were to grant each other preferential commercial treatment, and Algeria would remain in the currency zone of the French franc.⁵

In war-weary France, these terms were overwhelmingly approved in a

referendum held on 8 April 1962. In Algeria, the ANL ignored the provision that they should stand fast in their positions at the time of the armistice, and occupied most of the country. The OAS launched a last paroxysm of violence, with thousands of terrorist acts across Algeria and mainland France, which failed to hold off Algerian independence but struck a death-blow to any slender hopes that the European population might remain in Algeria with some degree of safety. FLN rule presented the Europeans with a stark choice: the suitcase or the coffin, and they packed their suitcases – literally, because only two cases per person were allowed by the new authorities. Over a million people crossed the Mediterranean to France. The OAS, venting their spleen on the man they rightly regarded as the architect of their defeat, tried to assassinate de Gaulle twice in 1962: after the second occasion, in August, when his car was machine-gunned, the imperturbable French president reflected that the would-be killers had ‘shot like pigs’.⁶

The independence of Algeria was officially proclaimed on 3 July 1962. The war had lasted seven and a half years. The economic cost to France and Algeria was heavy, though impossible to estimate with any accuracy, because it lay in the disruption of agriculture, industry and trade as much as in direct expenditure or losses. French casualties were comparatively light – official figures put them at 17,456 military dead, and something over 10,000 European civilians killed (although this was still far higher, as a percentage of the population, than the number of Americans who would subsequently be killed in Vietnam). French estimates put the total of Arab dead at 219,000, of whom an estimated 141,000 were killed by the French and the rest by the FLN. Thousands of *harkis*, Arabs who had collaborated with, or simply worked for, the colonial authorities, were slaughtered indiscriminately by the FLN after the war; their families still face notable discrimination today. The FLN subsequently put the total of war dead at a round figure of 1 million.⁷ The psychological effects of the long and terrible struggle, in which no quarter was given by either side, were probably even more grievous and lasting than the casualties and the material damage.

Almost as soon as the war against the French was over, civil war broke out among the Algerian nationalists, involving fighting as severe as anything during the war against the French. Ben Bella, the founder of the FLN, denounced the Évian agreements as surrender to French colonialism. With the support of a section of the army, led by Colonel Houari Boumédiène, he overthrew Benkhedda’s provisional government in September 1962, becoming president the following year. The new government proclaimed itself ‘revolutionary’ and

followed a policy of socialism and nationalization. Ben Bella became increasingly authoritarian, purging his rivals and creating his own cult of personality. He remained in power until 1965, when he was in turn overthrown by a military coup led by Boumédiène. The army took over, imposing a severe military dictatorship.

The Algerian War was an outstanding event in the history of decolonization. It reversed a French conquest and occupation going back over a century, to 1830. The presence of over a million Europeans in Algeria meant that it was a war of decolonization of the most extreme kind, ending in the displacement of a large and long-established population, rather than a few settlers or administrators as was the case in most colonial territories. The war demonstrated the growing influence of the Afro-Asian movement and revealed the new balance of power at the UN, where the newly independent states came to outnumber the old and imposed a new order of priorities. A great European power was defeated in what it claimed to be its own territory, after committing the greater part of its armed strength to the conflict. It was a famous victory for the emergent forces of the Third World. Yet the new state soon fell into bloody internal strife, ending in a military coup and brutal dictatorship. It was an unhappy precedent for much of what was to follow elsewhere in Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa

At the end of the Second World War the European colonial powers expected to retain their control over Africa, south of the Sahara, well into the future. The constitution of the Fourth Republic in France set up the French Union, granting the African colonies the status of Overseas Territories of the Republic, with representation in the National Assembly. In effect, French authority remained intact. In Britain, the Labour government between 1945 to 1951 was in principle opposed to imperialism but in practice assumed that the African colonies could only attain independence after a long period of systematic preparation. Belgium and Portugal simply assumed that they would continue to rule their African colonies as usual, and made no preparation for withdrawal. The colonial powers remained prepared to maintain their authority by force when necessary. The French crushed a revolt in Madagascar in 1947 with great severity. The British fought a long campaign against the Mau Mau insurrection in Kenya after 1952. At the same time, both France and Britain put a good deal of effort into the economic development of their colonies, and into education and medical

services. The colonial administrations continued to work much as usual.

These expectations of continuity were rapidly revised. Between 1957 and 1964, twenty-seven former colonies in Black Africa attained independence. In 1960 alone sixteen new African states became members of the UN.

These remarkable events arose from a combination of circumstances. Pressure from nationalist movements within the colonies increased steadily. A key example was in the Gold Coast (later Ghana), where the nationalist leader Kwame Nkrumah hustled the British out of their policies of gradualism and into a rapid transfer of power. Once set, this example was almost certain to be followed elsewhere, and Nkrumah himself became a magnetic figure throughout Africa.

The Cold War too played its part, as the British sought to bring their West African colonies to independence in order to pre-empt Soviet influence. Perhaps above all, the French and British lost the *will* to maintain their African colonies – the imperial idea had lost its attraction and seemed no longer worth sustaining. Harold Macmillan, the British prime minister, summed up these sentiments in a speech to the South African Parliament in Cape Town on 3 February 1960: ‘The wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact.’⁸

Only Portugal, the weakest among the colonial powers in material terms, stood fast against the wind of change and held on to its colonies until the 1970s – but the economic and political cost to the country was immense. The radicalization of the Portuguese Army and the subsequent ‘Carnation Revolution’ of 1974 was a direct consequence of the Portuguese determination to cling on to the nation’s African ‘possessions’, especially after the Indian Army dislodged Portugal from its colony in Goa in December 1961. Portugal’s national self-esteem was deeply tied to its status as an imperial power: the regime of Portuguese dictator Antonio de Oliviera Salazar diffused a map, entitled ‘Portugal is not a small country’, of Western Europe with the Portuguese colonies (Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde) superimposed in red over Germany, France and Spain.

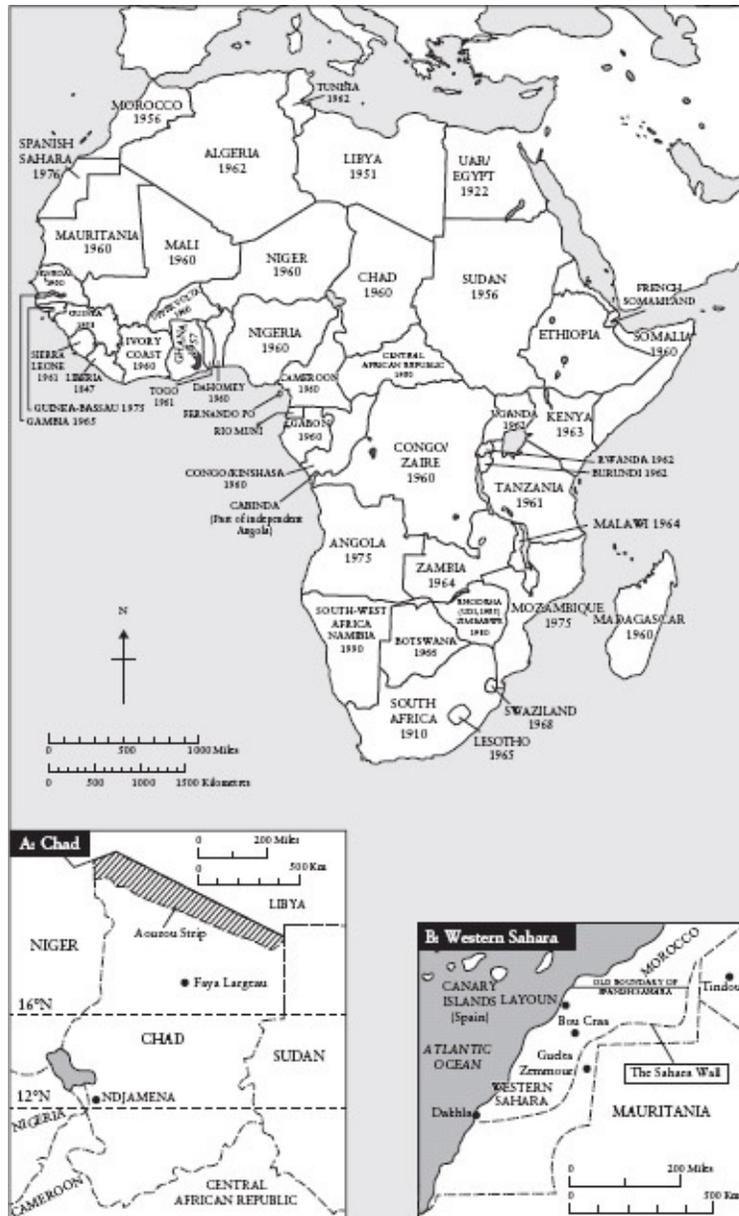
Year of independence	British	French	Belgian	Other
1957	Ghana			
1958		Guinea		
1960	Nigeria	Cameroon Central African Rep. Chad Dahomey (Benin) Gabon Ivory Coast Madagascar Mali Mauritania Niger Senegal Togo Upper Volta (Burkina Faso)	D.R.Congo	Somalia
1961	Sierra Leone Tanganyika			
1962			Rwanda Burundi	
1963	Kenya Zanzibar			
1964	Malawi Zambia			
1965	Gambia			

Note: In 1964 Zanzibar joined Tanganyika to form Tanzania.

The transformation of the British and French colonial territories followed different paths. The British had prepared their principal West African colonies for independence by a careful introduction of elected assemblies and self-government in internal affairs. In 1957 the Gold Coast was the first colony to attain independence, taking the new name of Ghana under the leadership of Nkrumah. Nigeria, the largest and richest of the West African colonies, followed in 1960, while Sierra Leone became independent in 1961. Each was endowed with a British-style parliamentary system, while Nigeria could boast a carefully balanced federal constitution.

It would be wrong, however, to give the idea that Britain everywhere

disengaged from Africa with good grace. The case of Kenya was an Algeria in miniature in which the local white community fought a 'dirty war' to retain its position. Horror of the Mau Mau's violence, a deeply ingrained and virulent racism, and fear for the economic position of whites in the event of independence led to the savage oppression of the principal tribe in Kenya, the Kikuyu. The British fenced off the Kikuyu tribe from the rest of the country, housed Mau Mau suspects in 'detention' camps and established a 'pipeline' whereby suspects were passed through various levels of interrogation until they were 'cleansed' of their cultish beliefs. This process degenerated in hundreds and perhaps thousands of individual cases into gruesome abuses: torture, rape and murder were a commonplace. Shamefully the colonial administration in Nairobi, and the central government in London, turned a blind eye to the outrages being perpetrated by the white settler population and their auxiliary troops from other Kenyan tribes. Only in 1959, after eleven Kenyan men were beaten to death at Hola camp, did parliamentary and public opinion demand that 'British justice' be applied to the Queen's African subjects as well as to her White ones. Kenya subsequently became independent in 1963 under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta, an African lawyer who had been jailed by the British after a rigged trial in 1952. Historical research has shown beyond argument that initial estimates that no more than 10,000 or so Africans died in the Kenyan uprising are only a small fraction of the real figure.⁹



MAP 9 Africa, showing dates of independence (insets: Chad; Western Sahara).

Central Africa also presented major problems for the British government. The British combined the three colonies of Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia into the Central African Federation in 1953, but gave up the project in 1963, leaving the colonies to take their separate ways. Nyasaland, where there was almost no British settler community, became independent in 1964 under the name of Malawi and the rule of Hastings Banda, who was to prove one of the most durable of African leaders. Copper-rich Northern Rhodesia, with a European population of about 70,000, also became independent in 1964, taking the name of Zambia. The situation in Southern Rhodesia was

very different. The population of some 3,000,000 in 1960 included a substantial minority of 225,000 Europeans (mostly British). The colony had attained a large degree of autonomy as far back as 1923, and the Europeans controlled the internal politics and the economy of the country, with only a token number of Africans being elected to the country's parliament. The Labour government elected in 1964 pushed the colony to outline a timetable for a transition to democracy, but the white Rhodesians resisted; in November 1965 a Rhodesian government headed by a former RAF officer called Ian Smith even made a 'unilateral declaration of independence' (UDI) from Britain, rather than accept so-called majority rule. Rhodesia, rather than concede full political rights to its African peoples, was willing to militarize its white population and fight a lengthy war against nationalist guerillas operating across the border in Zambia and Mozambique. Its intransigence became one of the central preoccupations of British foreign policy until 1980.

Meanwhile the French African colonies followed a more regular course towards independence. In 1956 the French government introduced a law setting up assemblies in each colony, to be elected by universal suffrage and a single electorate. New government councils, responsible for the assemblies, provided internal self-government for each colony. The constitution of the Fifth Republic also set up the 'French Community', which was intended to maintain the internal autonomy of the colonies while retaining French supervision over foreign affairs, defence, finance and economic policy. De Gaulle offered the African colonies a choice, to be exercised by referendum, between membership of the French Community and complete independence – which would entail the cutting off of all French aid. On 23 September 1958 eleven African colonies voted for membership of the Community. Only one, Guinea, led by Sekou Touré, voted for immediate independence.

Yet this success for de Gaulle's policy proved short-lived. It was a sign of the times that the example of independence set by Guinea turned out to be more attractive than the apparently profitable choice made by the majority. There was a telling contrast in the General Assembly of the UN, where Guinea was accepted as a full member while the other countries within the French Community were accepted only as observers, forming part of the French delegation. This could not last. As early as 1959 Senegal and Madagascar began to negotiate their independence, which they secured in June 1960. All the other former French colonies followed suit; though all signed treaties with France, and French troops remained stationed in some of the new states.

The Congo crisis

Despite the horrors of Kenya and the intransigence of Rhodesia's whites, the transfer of sovereignty from the British and French empires to the new African states was achieved smoothly and with relative good order. The early 1960s were days of hope for most of Black Africa. To this general rule the Belgian Congo formed a grievous exception.

The Belgian Congo was a vast territory of about 2,350,000 square kilometres, with a population in 1960 of about 14,000,000, comprising over two hundred different peoples and languages. After 1945 the Belgian administration, making belated amends for the exploitation of the colony that had characterized its rule previously, introduced reasonable levels of primary education and medical services. Brussels, however, had made no preparations for a transfer of power. There were no African administrators, engineers or doctors, only a handful of Congolese had studied for a university degree, and the highest rank open to Africans in the *Force Publique*, the colonial army, was that of sergeant. In 1956 a committee recommended a move to independence over the next thirty years; but the Belgian government rejected this timetable as too hasty. Events elsewhere in Africa imposed greater speed, but even when the Belgian government held a conference in Brussels in January 1960 with representatives of Congolese political parties, its intention was to propose a four-year timetable for independence. Before the conference was over, this had been shortened to six months. The transfer of power was thus attempted at the shortest conceivable notice, and with virtually no preparation. Belgium's behaviour can only be described as cynical disregard for the inevitable consequences of its actions.

The independence of the Congo was declared on 30 June 1960, with Joseph Kasavubu as president and Patrice Lumumba as prime minister – two men opposed to one another on personal and tribal grounds as well as being advocates of different structures for the new state. Almost at once the country fell into chaos. As early as 5 July the Congolese troops of the *Force Publique* mutinied against their Belgian officers. Lumumba called in Colonel Joseph Mobutu to restore calm in the ranks: it was the start of what would prove to be an inglorious career. Belgian troops who had remained in bases in the Congo were deployed to protect the European population from rebel soldiers, and parachute troops from Belgium arrived in the capital, Leopoldville. On 11 July the province of Katanga, which with its copper and uranium mines was the mainstay of the country's wealth, declared its secession and independence under

the leadership of Moïse Tshombé, a move actively encouraged by the principal Belgian mining company, the *Union Minière*. South Kasai province, another mining area, followed suit and seceded from the Congo on 9 August 1960. The new state was thus breaking up into separate parts, losing its major sources of wealth in the process, and at the same time dissolving into internal disorder.

These events opened a profound and complicated crisis, which at once assumed international dimensions. On 13 July Lumumba appealed to the UN to take action against Belgian aggression and to preserve the integrity of the Congo. The Swedish secretary-general of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld, acted with great energy and proposed to the Security Council the formation of a UN force for the Congo. The Security Council authorized the establishment of a UN force to maintain law, order and essential services in the Congo, though without specifically mentioning Katanga. The UN was not to become party to any internal conflict and was to use force only in self-defence – provisions which placed severe limitations on its capacity for action. On 31 July the UN force, made up of contingents from six African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Morocco and Tunisia) and two neutral European states (Ireland and Sweden) began to arrive in the Congo. It reached a total strength of just over 11,000, which was a pitifully small number in such a vast country. It did not move against the Katangan secessionists.

A frustrated Lumumba then appealed to both the Soviet Union and the United States for help. He received a quick response from the Soviets, who in September provided transport aircraft to fly six hundred Ghanaian troops to Leopoldville to help Lumumba. Foolishly, Lumumba accepted – and naturally became typecast as a communist sympathizer as a result: Allen Dulles, the head of the CIA, said he was ‘a Castro or worse’.¹⁰ South Kasai was reoccupied by the Congolese army, but Katanga remained in secession. Not until 21 February 1961, seven months after the UN intervention, were its troops in the Congo formally authorized to use force against the Katangan government and the large contingent of well-paid mercenaries and Belgian liaison officers that supported it. Even then, the UN representatives on the spot preferred to try diplomatic methods of ending the secession, and Tshombé proved adept at gaining time. On 18 September 1961 Hammarskjöld, who was in the Congo in an attempt to resolve the dispute, was killed in a (suspicious) air crash, which deprived the UN actions of the drive and initiative which he had imparted. It was not until December 1962 that UN troops and forces of the Congo government used force to compel Tshombé to abandon his separatist plans. UN troops left the Congo on

30 June 1964. They had contributed, though with long delay, to resolving one aspect of the Congo crisis. The break-up of the state by the secession of its richest provinces had been prevented.

By then, however, Lumumba was long dead. In August 1960, when the state had been in existence for little more than a month, President Kasavubu tried to dismiss Lumumba, who refused to resign and in turn asked the Congolese parliament to remove Kasavubu. The new chief of staff, Colonel Mobutu, who had built up a base for himself in the army, took advantage of the rivalry to seize power by a coup d'état. Lumumba fled, was captured and in January 1961 was handed over to his enemies in Katanga, where he was tortured and murdered by members of Tshombe's government while Belgian officers looked on.¹¹ Mobutu broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and sought help from the United States, receiving clandestine assistance from the CIA. He promoted himself to the rank of major general and assumed command of the army. In February 1961 he formally handed power back to President Kasavubu and the civilian authorities but in practice he retained great influence. In November 1965, after several years of confusion and internecine political conflict – during which period, American-financed mercenaries and Belgian troops crushed the remaining 'Lumumba-ist' rebels within the country – Mobutu carried out a second coup d'état, this time installing himself as a military dictator for a supposed trial period of five years. In fact, he clung to power for the next thirty-two years, during which time he presided over the economic collapse of his country, which he renamed Zaire in a token gesture to Africanization, and supposedly amassed the largest personal fortune of any postcolonial African leader.¹²

The international significance of these events was far-reaching: for the UN, for the Cold War and for Africa. The UN intervened in the crisis largely on the initiative of its secretary-general, Hammarskjöld, and dispatched a substantial force under UN command – a very different situation from that in Korea, where forces flew the UN flag but were under American command. The UN Charter prohibited intervention in the internal affairs of member states, yet at one time or another the UN force in the Congo was engaged in keeping order; helped to bring the secession of Katanga to an end by force; and even on one occasion set up a government by the drastic method of shutting up members of the Congolese parliament together until they produced a set of names for a ministry. A small number of UN officials provided a skeleton civil service for the Congo. If this precedent had been followed, the UN might have assumed a much more active

role in world affairs. In the event, the risks involved in Hammarskjöld's activities caused alarm among UN members and in its bureaucracy. Hammarskjöld's successors as secretary-general were notably more cautious about the use of force, and the organization itself became chary of repeating such drastic intervention in the internal affairs of a member state. UN intervention in the Congo thus opened a road which was almost immediately closed again.

At the same time, the Congo crisis brought the Cold War to Africa. In August 1960 the Soviet Union provided aircraft and land transport to help Lumumba; and later the Soviets established a large embassy full of advisers of dubious purpose. More important in the long run, the Soviet Union took up the cause of the murdered Lumumba, and elevated him into a left-wing hero and martyr. A Lumumba University was set up in Moscow to educate African students at Soviet expense, and to nurture them in Marxist–Leninist doctrine. The Americans for their part threw their political weight, financial support and the clandestine activity of the CIA behind Mobutu, who claimed to provide a barrier against Soviet influence in the heart of Africa. Other African states which came into being at the height of the Cold War took to the same game, playing one superpower off against the other to gain prestige and economic advantage. In the long run this strategy exacerbated civil strife, diverted effort from serious development and led to a new form of dependence just as African states were gaining their freedom.

Indeed, for Africa as a whole the Congo set a dismal example of personal rivalries and military coups. The country of Lumumba, Kasavubu, Tshombe and Mobutu became a divided state on the road to disaster. It would, however, be wrong to point too stern a finger of blame at Congo's hapless and venal post-independence politicians. The legacy of Belgium's paternalistic, exploitative and racist rule had made the country a catastrophe waiting to happen. Belgium's intervention on behalf of Tshombe (and the mining industry's profits) made the catastrophe worse. Approximately 100,000 people died violently between Independence Day and Mobutu's seizure of power. No African country was less prepared for self-rule than Congo; no European country has been less willing than Belgium to admit its responsibility for the tragedy that followed decolonization.

South Africa and apartheid

South Africa had been effectively independent since Britain set up the Union in

1909, and unequivocally so since the Statute of Westminster in 1931. Thus in one sense there was no question of decolonization for South Africa, because it was not a colony. But in fact there was a much deeper and more dangerous question. South Africa maintained a political regime and social system based on white supremacy and racial segregation. The electoral victory of the Afrikaner National Party in 1948 marked a crucial transition to the systematic imposition of the doctrine of apartheid – the separate development of races based on white supremacy. From 1948 onwards, apartheid was imposed by legislation which divided the whole population into fixed racial groups, prohibited mixed marriages or sexual relations, allotted specific areas to different races and provided separate education. Hendrik Verwoerd, who was prime minister from 1958 until his assassination in 1966, brought an ardent fervour and a pseudo-theoretical rigour to the system.

In different circumstances and at an earlier time, these matters would have been regarded as internal questions for South Africa, of no concern to other countries or to international bodies. In the early 1950s, older members of the Commonwealth such as Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand made no issue of the right of South Africa to control its own internal affairs. Newer members such as India and Pakistan respected this convention by raising the question of apartheid at the UN but not at Commonwealth meetings.¹³ But this situation was changing rapidly. The concept of universal human rights implied intervention in internal affairs: states – at any rate small states – could not claim any longer that what happened within their borders was of no concern to foreigners. Moreover, the issue of race was becoming crucial, and the surge of African independence from 1957 onwards meant that it became impossible for a white minority in South Africa to rule over a black majority without challenge from outside.¹⁴

In these circumstances, South Africa became increasingly isolated. A violent clash at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960, in which the police killed 67 Africans and wounded 186 during a demonstration against the ‘pass laws’ (laws that restricted freedom of movement for the African majority), drew condemnation from around the world. South Africa was increasingly criticized even within the Commonwealth. The South African government in fact withdrew from that body in 1961, forestalling probable expulsion. At the UN, African and Asian countries pursued a campaign of condemnation, supported by the Eastern bloc and some Western states. In South Africa itself, the African National Congress (ANC) and its military wing, the Spear of the Nation, became increasingly active, using the

shelter of neighbouring African countries.

For a long time this hostility had little direct effect. South Africa produced immense quantities of minerals which were in heavy demand abroad – gold, diamonds, manganese, copper and uranium. Manufacturing industry developed rapidly. With a good deal of investment from Britain and the United States, the South African economy flourished in the 1960s, attracting workers from neighbouring countries despite the conditions imposed under apartheid. The South Africans manufactured their own armaments and imported others, maintaining the strongest armed forces on the continent. Strategically, South Africa was the beneficiary of the Cold War and the Suez crisis of 1956, which enhanced the importance of the route round the Cape of Good Hope from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic. The United States and West European countries wanted to keep the Cape in safe hands; and even apartheid South Africa was thought safer than its likely successor.

South Africa came increasingly to resemble a fortress under siege, but the garrison was well supplied, resolute and not without outside support. The result was a constant international problem, involving states across the world, and generating an intense emotional charge which in the modern world attaches to racial questions more than anything else. In the early 1960s this problem was still in its early stages; its full significance was to appear in the 1970s and 1980s.

The new Africa: African unity and conflicts

The new Africa which took shape in the late 1950s and early 1960s aspired to some form of political unity which would demonstrate African identity and give the continent its distinctive place in the world.

This began at once, with the first appearance of independent Black African states. As soon as Ghana achieved independence in 1957 Kwame Nkrumah took the lead in promoting pan-African unity. In consultation with President Bourguiba of Tunisia, he invited nine independent African states – including South Africa – to a conference at Accra. In the event, the South Africans made their acceptance conditional on the presence of European states with an interest in Africa – a condition which naturally proved unacceptable. Delegates of eight countries therefore gathered at Accra from 15 to 22 April 1958 – three from Black Africa (Ghana, Ethiopia and Liberia) and five Arab states (Libya, Morocco, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria). The Algerian National Liberation Front and the Union of Cameroon Peoples

attended as observers. The conference denounced colonialism in general and French rule in Algeria in particular. The delegates agreed that all colonial domination in Africa must be ended, though they were willing to contemplate some sort of timetable for the process, on condition that the UN and the independent African states were involved as well as the colonial powers. 'Africa for the Africans' was the watchword of the conference, and there was talk of a 'Monroe Doctrine for Africa' to protect the continent from outside intervention. The conference affirmed the principle of economic cooperation, proclaimed the importance of an African identity in cultural affairs and aspired towards cooperation in education. The delegates agreed to form an African subgroup within the Afro-Asian group already operating at the UN. Alongside this emphasis on African unity, the conference also passed a strongly worded resolution affirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all African countries. Newly gained independence was not to be compromised, and there was a striking determination to maintain the frontiers which had been imposed on the continent by the colonial powers. The new African states sought unity, but not at the expense of their independence or their territory.

Other meetings followed. An All-African Peoples' Conference (AAPC) at Accra in December 1958 brought together delegations from all kinds of non-governmental bodies aspiring to the liberation of Africa and affirming African solidarity; a subsequent meeting in Tunis switched the focus to the dangers of neocolonialism, on the grounds that the imperial powers had granted political independence only to reintroduce economic subordination. Delegates were especially critical of the terms being discussed at that time for the affiliation of African countries to the recently formed European Economic Community (EEC).

In this way the impulse towards Pan-Africanism was maintained; but the diplomatic activity of the newly independent states did not stop there. Other aggregations were formed. The former British colonies nearly all joined the Commonwealth. In December 1960 all the former French colonies except Togo, Mali and Guinea formed the Brazzaville Group, working in cooperation with France. In 1961 this group changed its name to the *Union Africaine et Malgache*, and it was later joined by Congo. The new African states thus divided along lines of language and the old split between British and French colonies, each with links to the former imperial power. There was also a profound division between the Arab and Muslim countries of North Africa and the mainly Christian states of Black Africa. Nkrumah liked to claim that this was an

artificial division imposed by imperialism, but both geography and history were against him. The Sahara never became a bridge uniting the two parts of Africa.

Despite these problems, in May 1963 Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia used his personal prestige and his country's standing as the oldest African independent state to convene a conference attended by thirty independent African states, to set up the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The organization's aims were set out in its charter: to promote the unity and solidarity of the African states; to collaborate in achieving a better life for the African peoples; to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of African countries; to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa; and to promote international cooperation. These aims were supplemented by a set of principles: the sovereign equality of all member states; non-interference in the internal affairs of states; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state; peaceful settlement of disputes; condemnation of political assassination and subversive activities in another state; dedication to the total emancipation of African territories which were still dependent; and non-alignment with regard to all blocs. The organization was to comprise of an Assembly of Heads of State and of Governments, meeting at least once a year; a Council of Ministers to meet at least twice a year; and a Secretariat headed by a secretary-general. A Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration was to deal with disputes between member states, according to carefully drafted rules. There were no provisions for the enforcement of recommendations made by the commission, however, so conflict resolution depended on negotiation and mutual agreement. The founder members of the OAU were:¹⁵

Algeria	Gabon	Nigeria
Benin	Ghana	Rwanda
Burkina Faso	Guinea	Senegal
Burundi	Ivory Coast	Sierra Leone
Cameroon	Liberia	Somalia
Central African Republic	Libya	Sudan
Chad	Madagascar	Tanganyika
Congo (Brazzaville)	Mali	Togo
Congo	Mauritania	Tunisia
Egypt	Morocco	Uganda
Ethiopia	Niger	

The aspirations of the OAU were high, and its structures carefully established. Yet, like the EEC, it laid as much emphasis on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states as on cooperation between them. The organization itself reinforced this point in July 1964 by declaring specifically that all member states ‘pledge themselves to respect the frontiers existing on their achievement of national independence’.¹⁶ This provision, and the commendable but unusual condemnation of political assassination in the original charter, displayed the nervousness of African states about the fragility of their borders and the possible activities of their neighbours. There was in fact almost inevitably a contrast between the high ideals and aspirations towards solidarity expressed by the OAU and the conflicts which actually arose, both between the new states and within them.

The boundaries drawn by the European powers in Africa were often arbitrary – in extreme cases they were merely straight lines drawn on the map with scant regard for the terrain or its inhabitants. The resulting colonial territories therefore often contained widely different peoples, who were sometimes intensely hostile to one another. There was every chance of frontier disputes between the new states and of conflicts within them.

Morocco opened frontier disputes with its neighbours as soon as it achieved independence from France in 1956, reviving ancient claims to the Spanish Sahara, Mauritania and parts of Algeria. In 1957 the Moroccans attempted an invasion of the Spanish Sahara, without success; and in 1963 they attacked the Tindouf region of Algeria, only to be driven back. Some of these claims were later continued in the long dispute over the Western Sahara which has persisted through to the present day (see [Chapter 19](#)). When Somalia attained independence in 1960 it laid claim to ‘lost territories’ in northern Kenya and the Ogaden province of Ethiopia. In March 1963 the Somalis began fighting on the border with Kenya, continuing sporadically until 1967. In February 1964, Somali forces advanced into the Ogaden to enforce their claims there. The OAU intervened, and on 30 March 1964 President Abboud of Sudan arranged a ceasefire based on the existing frontier. However, the Somalis did not give up their claim, and the conflict later resumed.

As for divisions within countries, Chad, in Central Africa, presented a classic case. The population in the north was Arab, Muslim and largely nomadic; that in the south was Black, Christian or animist in religion and lived mainly by agriculture. The two parts, each with roughly half the total population of 4.5 million, had little in common except their shared experience of colonialism. The

presence of French troops helped to keep the country together for some years; when the French garrisons left the north, the National Liberation Front (FROLINAT: *Front de Libération Nationale*) began an insurrection which opened a long, though sporadic, civil war (see [Chapter 19](#)). To the east of Chad, the Sudan was similarly divided between an Arab and Muslim north, which controlled the government in Khartoum, and a black population in the south, mainly Christian or animist. A guerrilla war for secession began in the south in 1963 and continued more or less permanently. Further east again, in the Horn of Africa, Eritrea, a former Italian colony, was incorporated into Ethiopia in 1962; the Eritrean Liberation Front began a war of secession as early as 1963 and struggled for independence with great tenacity.

In the years between 1945 and the early 1960s events in Africa moved at remarkable speed. A new continent was born in just twenty years. Nevertheless three great events stand out, with major long-term effects on world affairs. First, the Algerian War between 1954 and 1962 was a momentous war of national liberation. France, a great colonial power, was defeated on what it claimed to be its own home territory. About a million Europeans, many of whose families had been settled in Algeria for generations, were driven out – decolonization in the most emphatic sense of the term. The Algerian independence movement won its struggle by political as much as military means, securing help from other Arab countries and using the leverage provided by the UN – a new and unforeseen use for that organization. The second event concerned the UN itself, which was transformed by the flood of African states achieving statehood. By the end of 1962 no fewer than thirty-three African states were members of the UN. With this change of membership, the UN assumed a very different character and role from those foreseen by its founders in 1945: the struggle against racism and colonialism, symbolized by the UN's adoption of a declaration on the 'granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples' on 14 December 1960, became a leitmotif of the organization's activity. Third, apartheid in South Africa became a new and persistent focus of conflict in Africa, in the UN and in the Commonwealth. White rule in South Africa and Rhodesia represented an affront to the new African nations. In all these ways, Africa, which in 1945 had seemed to be on the margins of global politics, had gained by the early 1960s a role of enduring importance.

Notes

- 1 Quoted in Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (London, 1987), pp. 94–5.
- 2 Ibid., p. 98.
- 3 Figures in Denise Bouche, *Histoire de la Colonisation Française*, Vol. II (Paris, 1991), p. 477.
- 4 General Assembly Resolution 1573 (XV) Question of Algeria. Available at: <http://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/15>.
- 5 See the summary of the Évian agreements in Horne, *Savage War of Peace*, pp. 520–1.
- 6 Ibid., p. 538. Horne observes that the monthly French military casualties, for most months of the war, were fewer than those killed on the roads in France.
- 7 Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Ruler* (London, 1991), p. 328.
- 8 J. D. B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition, 1953–1969* (Oxford, 1974), p. 112.
- 9 For a brilliant revisionist account of the Kenyan insurgency and repression, see Caroline Elkins, *Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London, 2005).
- 10 Quoted in Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 138.
- 11 For full details of Lumumba’s downfall and murder, see Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London, 2002).
- 12 According to the obituary notice on Mobutu in *The Times*, 9 September 1997, the country’s per capita income fell by 60 per cent in thirty-two years. *Le Monde*, 9 September 1997, noted that Mobutu himself claimed to hold \$8 billion in a Swiss bank account.
- 13 Miller, *Survey*, p. 26.
- 14 Population of South Africa (in millions):

	1951	1970
Blacks	8.6	15.1
Whites	2.6	3.8
Coloureds	1.1	2.0
Asian	0.4	0.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>12.7</i>	<i>21.5</i>

Source: J. A. S. Grenville, *History of the World in the Twentieth Century* (revised ed., London, 1998), p. 781.

- 15 Chris Cook, ed., *World Political Almanac* (3rd. ed., London, 1995), pp. 22–3.
- 16 Quoted in J. A. S. Grenville, *The Major International Treaties, 1914–1973* (London, 1974), p. 483.

11

The Afro-Asian movement and non-alignment, 1955–61

Origins of the Afro-Asian movement – The Bandung Conference – Its significance and consequences – The non-aligned movement – The moral high ground.

The dissolution of the Western empires in the Middle East, Asia and Africa brought into being a large number of newly independent states, stretching halfway across the globe from Morocco to Indonesia, and varying enormously in population, size, economy and culture. In Asia these new states took their place alongside long-established countries which had never fully lost their independence – Japan, China, Thailand, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey. All these states had their own interests and were often in conflict with one another. Yet in spite of their diversity and frequent conflicts, a movement towards unity between the states of Asia and Africa soon sprang up and maintained its impetus with remarkable persistence, adding a new and dynamic element to international relations. In this movement, the Afro-Asian Conference held at Bandung in Indonesia in April 1955 played a crucial part, shaping a Third World identity which was to have profound effects on world politics.

This striking and in many ways surprising development had distant origins. As early as February 1927 a ‘Congress of Oppressed Nationalities’ had been held at Brussels, financed by the governments of China (then under the Kuomintang) and Mexico, encouraged by the Soviet Union and attended by a number of left-wing European intellectuals. Those present included a Vietnamese, Nguyen-Ai-Quoc, later known as Ho Chi Minh, and Jawaharlal Nehru, who was to become

the first prime minister of India.

Nehru never lost this early interest in promoting a widespread anti-colonial movement. In March 1947, even amid all the turmoil of the move to Indian independence and partition, Nehru held an 'Asian Relations Conference' in New Delhi, attended by delegates from twenty-five Asian countries, who agreed to set up an Asiatic Relations Organization. This did not actually materialize but Nehru had signalled his intention of taking the lead in Asian international relations.

In the early 1950s an Arab–Asian group was formed at the United Nations (UN), made up of twelve countries: Afghanistan, Burma, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the Yemen. Later, Ethiopia and Liberia joined the group, which began to be called 'Afro-Asian'. Its main activities were directed against France in Indo-China and later in Algeria. The war in Indo-China was naturally a major concern for the states of southern Asia, and in April 1954 the heads of government of Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was called until 1972), Burma, India, Indonesia and Pakistan met at Colombo, the Ceylonese capital, to try to bring the war to an end. In the course of their discussions, Indonesia proposed the idea of a large-scale Afro-Asian conference, with a wide-ranging agenda; the Indonesian government was charged with the preparation of such a conference. This was partly a move in Indonesian domestic politics, where the government was in need of a spectacular success, but aims for the conference were much wider than that. Nehru, in particular, saw the conference as a 'historic showcase for the countries of Asia and Africa' and had far-reaching hopes that the Afro-Asian countries could establish a new influence in world affairs.¹

The Bandung Conference

In December 1954 the five states that had previously met in Colombo held a new meeting at Bogor, in Indonesia, to prepare for the great Afro-Asian conference. Their first problem was simple in form but complicated in substance: Who should be invited? In particular, should they invite the Soviet Union, whose territory stretched far into Asia, and perhaps even its individual Asian republics, which undoubtedly fell within the Asian continent? Moscow angled hard for an invitation, but Nehru took the lead in excluding them, while making sure that communist China was invited. Other questions arose about invitations for countries which were not yet independent. The organizers agreed to invite the Gold Coast (later Ghana), the Sudan and the Central African Federation – the

last being an unexpected choice, because the Federation was dominated by European minorities, and was vociferously opposed by African nationalists. In the event, the government of the Federation declined the invitation, anticipating a hostile reception if it attended. Representatives of a number of liberation movements were also invited as observers.

Finally, representatives of twenty-nine states or aspiring states gathered at Bandung from 18 to 24 April 1955. They varied enormously in almost every respect. China had a population of about 600 million, Liberia about 1 million. Japan was the home of a rapidly developing industrial economy; Nepal practised the simplest forms of agriculture and forestry. Indonesia, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia were important oil producers; Sudan had almost no natural resources at all. Forms of government included parliamentary democracies, monarchies with varying degrees of power, assorted military and authoritarian regimes, and communist dictatorships. China was the vanguard of an ardent style of revolutionary communism; Japan combined capitalism with a deeply conservative society. In foreign policy, about half the Bandung states were non-aligned or neutralist, and the other half were allies of the superpowers or closely linked to them (see the list that follows).² Some of those attending were open enemies – India and Pakistan, North and South Vietnam.

States attending

Independent states: Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam (North and South), Yemen.

Countries not yet independent: Gold Coast (later Ghana), Sudan.

Observers from: Algeria (National Liberation Front), Morocco, Tunisia, Cyprus, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem (Palestine).

Foreign policy status of states (aligned or non-aligned)

Allies of the United States: Turkey (NATO), Pakistan (SEATO), Philippines (SEATO), Thailand (SEATO), Japan, South Vietnam.

Linked to the United States: Iran, Saudi Arabia.

Allies of Britain: Iraq (Baghdad Pact), Turkey (Baghdad Pact), Jordan, Libya.

Ally of the Soviet Union: China.

Linked to China: North Vietnam.

Non-aligned: Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Nepal, Syria, Yemen. (*Note:* Ceylon was strongly pro-Western, though not strictly an ally of Britain or the United States; Egypt was developing links with the Soviet Union.)

Total number of states in alliances or alignments: 13.

Total non-aligned states: 14.

The objectives which this heterogeneous group of states gathered to pursue were set out by the five originators of the conference during their meeting at Bogor, in December 1954, as follows: (1) to encourage goodwill and understanding between the nations of Asia and Africa, and to promote their common interests; (2) to examine the social, economic and cultural relations between the states represented at the conferences; (3) to examine problems of particular concern to the peoples of Asia and Africa: national sovereignty, racism and colonialism; and (4) to consider the position of Asia and Africa in the world, and how they could contribute to the establishment of peace and international cooperation.

These objectives were general to the point of vagueness, but were no less real or important for that. On the first two issues, the crucial point was that the existing lines of economic and cultural relations, especially for the educated and prosperous elites, often ran between former colonies and the imperial powers – for example, between the Indian subcontinent and Britain. Ties of language, education and culture linked Asian and African elites to Europe more strongly than to neighbours which were geographically closer. The working language of the Bandung Conference itself was English – the Asians and Africans could only communicate by means of a European tongue. They therefore sought to create a new network of contacts to promote an Afro-Asian identity, though this proved much easier said than done. The third point – national sovereignty, racism and colonialism – represented the greatest common interest and the most acute point of concern. The new states represented at Bandung were particularly sensitive about their sovereignty, and even the long-established countries (such as China, Thailand or Iran) had suffered grievous encroachments on their independence which made them all the more determined to reassert it. The strongest bond between the vastly different countries represented at Bandung was anti-colonialism, and an opposition to racial discrimination which found expression in a strongly asserted consciousness of colour, and racial identity, as a defining theme in modern political life. President Sukarno of Indonesia deliberately

emphasized this issue: 'This is the first inter-continental conference of coloured peoples in the history of mankind.'³

The fourth and final point represented the conference's greatest hope: to establish a distinct and powerful influence on the affairs of the world, developing the start which had already been made by the Afro-Asian group at the UN.

The conference itself was a massive gathering, thriving on oratory and on an active social life. President Sukarno of Indonesia's opening speech as conference chair struck a confident and uplifting note: 'We, the people of Asia and Africa ... far more than half the human population of the world, we can mobilize what I have called the moral violence of nations in favour of peace.' Sukarno aside, the other two outstanding figures were Nehru and Zhou Enlai, prime minister of India and foreign minister of China, respectively. Nehru used the conference to persuade Zhou to commit China once more to *panchsheel* (the five principles of coexistence): mutual respect between states for their sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression; non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states; equality in status between states; and peaceful coexistence. As we have seen, these principles had previously been stated in the Indian–Chinese treaty of April 1954; their repetition in the far wider context of the Afro-Asian conference was regarded by Nehru as a great success. Nehru also sought to urge upon the other Afro-Asian leaders his own vague concept of neutralism, and above all to use the conference as the starting point of a great movement to restore the former colonial peoples to their true place in the world.

Zhou Enlai for his part sought primarily to be reassuring. He explained that China, though communist, was perfectly willing to cooperate with bourgeois nationalists in other countries. He undertook that his government would give no encouragement to subversive activities among the Chinese minorities in South-East Asia. He was generous with assurances that China was willing to condemn all aggression, and ready to settle frontier questions with her southern neighbours peacefully. He mounted, in short, a thoroughgoing public relations bid for the leadership of Afro-Asian states and his 'charm offensive' scored a marked diplomatic success.

After labouring for seven days the conference achieved a unanimous (though sometimes vague) set of conclusions. It called for the establishment of a special UN fund for economic development, and urged the World Bank to allocate an increased proportion of its resources to Africa and Asia. It requested the UN to ensure stability in commodity prices, to protect those countries which were at the

mercy of fluctuations in the prices of minerals and foodstuffs. It recommended the establishment of a common policy on the production and sale of oil. These proposals contained the seeds of two important future developments: the claim for a redistribution of resources for the benefit of poorer countries, through the intervention of the UN and the World Bank and the emergence of a common front among oil producers. In practice, when the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was established in the 1970s it produced results far different from anything envisaged at Bandung. The oil producers wanted higher prices, with disastrous effects on many African and Asian countries.⁴

On cultural matters, the conference deplored the ignorance of their own cultural inheritance imposed on Asian and African countries by centuries of foreign domination, and called for the establishment of cultural and educational exchanges between the Bandung countries. The conference also expressed strong support for human rights and national self-determination. It was asserted that it was the positive duty of all countries which had attained liberation to assist those who were still struggling for it – Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Aden, South Yemen, Irian (New Guinea) and the Arab population of Palestine were singled out for particular mention.

This brought the conference to the general question of colonialism and the problems of colonial peoples, which raised a knotty point of definition. What was a colony, and which were the colonial peoples? The prime minister of Ceylon, Sir John Kotelawala, argued that the conference should condemn *all* forms of colonialism, specifically including Soviet domination over the countries of Eastern Europe; he gained much support. On 22 April a group of countries made up of Ceylon, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sudan and Turkey put down a draft resolution condemning colonialism in all its manifestations, and deplored those international doctrines which adopted the methods of force, infiltration and subversion. This, obviously, was a reference to communism as well as to European imperialism. The resolution was opposed by China, and also by Nehru, who was anxious to cooperate with the Chinese and did not wish to cause further offence to the Soviet Union, which he had excluded from the conference in the first place. Nehru accordingly devised a definition of colonialism which excluded any member of the UN from being termed a colony. Since the countries of Eastern Europe *were* all members of the UN, they could not by definition be victims of colonialism – a distinction that doubtless consoled them and which evaded the point that several nationalities, notably the peoples of the Baltic States, were in

the Soviet Union against their will. The shortcomings of Nehru's approach were obvious, however. The whole debate was a clear reminder that the conference participants did not necessarily think alike, despite their shared experience of European oppression.

The Political Committee of the conference debated the question of Israel and the rights of the Palestinian people, passing a resolution declaring the conference's support for 'the rights of the Arab people of Palestine', and calling for the implementation of UN resolutions on Palestine – though without specifying precisely which ones they wanted to implement.⁵ In the debate, Nehru condemned Zionism as an aggressive movement, but appealed for understanding of the motives which lay behind it (Zionism was, after all, a nationalist movement akin to the ones that had brought most of the Bandung governments to power). In general, however, the debate showed the hostility of Afro-Asian governments towards Israel, which was regarded as a sort of colony created by Western imperialism in Asian territory. This conviction has been a powerful and sometimes virulent theme in international politics ever since.

Finally the conference set out no fewer than ten principles of coexistence – an improvement, or at any rate an increase, on the original *panchsheel*, which only had five. These ten principles included respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations; recognition of the equality of all races and all nations; non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries; respect for the right of self-defence, individually and collectively; and refusal to join collective defence agreements designed to serve the particular interests of any great power. These last two fitted together only awkwardly, if at all. Turkey, Pakistan and the Philippines voted for the resolution despite being, respectively, members of NATO and SEATO; China voted for it while maintaining its alliance with the Soviet Union. It was just possible for the governments concerned to argue that the alliance in question did not serve the *particular* interests of either the United States or the Soviet Union; but this carried little conviction, and the contradiction between these two principles undermined confidence in the others – like the thirteenth stroke of a clock, which casts doubt on all its predecessors.

The significance and consequences of Bandung

The participants in the Bandung Conference spoke eloquently of Afro-Asian solidarity; in fact solidarity was sadly lacking, and the divisions between the participants were painfully obvious. Economically, the Bandung states were far

too diverse to find interests common to all. Japan, Afghanistan and Liberia, to take three disparate cases, simply had no point of contact. Even when countries could be classified together as primary producers, there was a vast difference between producing oil (Saudi Arabia) and producing jute (Pakistan). On the foreign policy question of alliances versus non-alignment or neutralism, thirteen of the Bandung states had alliances or close ties to one or other of the superpowers, and fourteen did not – giving generous benefit of the doubt to Egypt, which was already developing links with the Soviet Union. The idea of an Afro-Asian cultural identity, or even similarity of objectives, was far-fetched.

In view of all these difficulties and divisions, it is remarkable that the Bandung Conference produced any lasting results at all – and yet it did. The Afro-Asian idea did strike a chord, even though the ideological divisions between China and the Soviet Union (see [Chapter 9](#)) prevented a second major conference of the heads of state of the Afro-Asian peoples from being held. The African and Asian peoples subsequently met at a vast conference at Cairo (from 26 December 1957 to 1 January 1958). The inspiration was the same as at Bandung, but the composition of the conference was very different. The delegates (some five hundred from forty-six states or aspiring states) represented not governments but groups and organizations – trade unions, associations of teachers and students, business corporations, as well as some parliamentary representatives and government officials. This time the Soviet Union was represented, sending a delegation drawn mainly from the Central Asian Republics, headed by the president of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Japan sent a large delegation, headed by a businessman and a member of the Japanese parliament, on the lookout for commercial opportunities. The gathering was strongly anti-colonialist, proclaiming the right of self-determination and demanding immediate independence for remaining African colonies, the restoration of Okinawa (then still occupied by the Americans) to Japan, and of West Irian to Indonesia. French, British and American imperialism was freely denounced; Soviet imperialism went unremarked. The European Economic Community (EEC), then in its infancy, was condemned as a new form of colonialism. The views expressed at the conference were thus strongly anti-colonial, but by no means non-aligned. The Cairo Conference's stand on the question of European colonialism was an important part of the process that led, on 14 December 1960, to the adoption by the UN of a 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples'. This document, which passionately asserted its belief that the 'subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and

exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation' was a landmark statement of the ideology driving the countries of the Third World as they emerged from colonialism.

An attempt was made to encourage economic cooperation at an Afro-Asian economic conference, again in Cairo, in December 1958. This conference recommended the establishment of an 'Afro-Asian Organization for Economic Co-operation', and advocated the formation of associations among producers of particular commodities – for example, rubber, tin, cotton and tea. A committee met in Bandung in May 1959 to elaborate these proposals; but it soon ran into trouble by deciding to exclude the Soviet Union from the proposed organization. A further conference on Afro-Asian economic solidarity met in Cairo (from 30 April to 3 May 1960), adopting the compromise of inviting delegations from the Soviet Asian Republics but not the Soviet Union itself. No progress was made with the ambitious proposals for economic cooperation, which were in fact impossible of achievement among countries of such different economic levels, needs and forms of organization. This aspect of the Bandung movement thus ran into the sand.

Yet, like a river which goes underground only to reappear, the currents which started at Bandung came to the surface again in various forms, notably in the movement of non-aligned states. The concept of non-alignment was only one idea among many, and less important than anti-colonialism or the solidarity of coloured peoples. It later developed a momentum of its own, starting with a strange meeting (from 18 to 20 July 1956) at Brioni, an island off the coast of Yugoslavia, between Tito, Nasser and Nehru. They were an ill-matched trio. Tito, the host, was a tough communist dictator and former partisan leader, who had successfully broken with Stalin without joining the Western camp, and was looking for another foothold in international affairs. Nasser was an army officer in politics, recently established as ruler of Egypt and aspiring to become the leader of pan-Arab nationalism – the conference took place on the eve of his decision to nationalize the Suez Canal. Nehru was a wealthy patrician, a genuine idealist but also an actor constantly in search of a new role on the world stage. Nasser and Nehru had met and impressed one another at Bandung, but Tito's position as host and the site of the meeting in Europe added a different dimension to the summit. The three together recalled the ten Bandung resolutions, deplored the division of the world into hostile camps and proclaimed their intention of creating a non-aligned group of states which would form a

zone of peace in a troubled world.⁶

It was four years before this initiative produced results, at a conference in Cairo (from 5 to 18 June 1960), at which twenty states met to prepare for a full-scale gathering of non-aligned countries. The Cairo conference set out five criteria for non-alignment, which were important as a declaration of principle, though in practice they were often disregarded. (1) States were to follow an independent policy based on peaceful coexistence and non-alignment, or at least be favourable to such a policy – a statement vague enough to include almost anyone. (2) They were to support all movements for national liberation – which maintained continuity with Bandung and with the anti-colonial struggle. (3) They were not to belong to any collective military alliance in the framework of conflicts between the great powers. (4) They were not to conclude any bilateral alliance with a great power. (5) They were not to accept, of their own free will, the establishment on their territory of military bases belonging to a foreign power. These were precise criteria, and were frequently disregarded, as the later history of the movement was to show.

The first Summit Conference of Non-Aligned States met at Belgrade, from 1 to 6 September 1961. Twenty-five states attended:⁷

Afghanistan	Ghana	Saudi Arabia
Algeria	Guinea	Somalia
Burma	India	Sudan
Cambodia	Indonesia	Tunisia
Ceylon	Iraq	United Arab Republic
Congo/Zaire	Lebanon	(Egypt-Syria)
Cuba	Mali	Yemen
Cyprus	Morocco	Yugoslavia
Ethiopia	Nepal	

Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador were present as observers.

This membership showed that the Cairo principles were applied with a degree of flexibility. Cuba was in close alliance with the Soviet Union and Egypt relied on Moscow for supplies of weapons. Saudi Arabia was closely linked to the United States. Cyprus provided military bases for Britain – though technically they were not under Cypriot sovereignty. The conference tried to establish its role in world affairs, giving priority to resolving the superpower conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and to the problems of colonialism and economic

development – the idea of a North–South divide between developed and underdeveloped countries was already present, though the nomenclature had yet to be invented. The conference also represented a significant broadening of membership from the ‘Afro-Asian’ pattern of previous meetings. The very fact that it met in Belgrade and involved Latin American states, even though mainly as observers, implied that the movement begun at Colombo by five South Asian states was becoming global in scope.

The conference predictably produced only lofty resolutions. It was in favour of peace and disarmament, condemned colonialism and racism and wished to play a role in the settlement of international problems. The participants prepared two identical letters to Kennedy and Khrushchev, warning them of the dangers of nuclear war and urging them to open an East–West dialogue. President Sukarno of Indonesia travelled to Washington, and Nehru and Nkrumah, the president of Ghana, to Moscow, to deliver these letters in person. They were politely received in both capitals, since the superpowers were very conscious that the Cold War itself might be won or lost in the so-called Third World.

The superpowers’ circumspection was highly significant. At Belgrade, the non-aligned states had claimed the moral high ground in world affairs, affirming their impartiality as between the superpowers, and between capitalism and communism; and their claim was tacitly accepted by the Soviet and American leaders. On the issue of colonialism and underdevelopment, the conference went even further, and professed to represent the conscience of the world. After Bandung, the governments and peoples of the rich, or ‘developed’, world took the non-aligned movement at its own valuation. In the nineteenth century Europeans had assumed without question that they held the moral high ground and that they had the right to export their civilization and values to the rest of the world. By the middle of the twentieth century this position had been to some extent reversed. The moral advantage was held by the Third World, and Western Europe (and even the United States, although Washington was certainly not diffident about proclaiming the supremacy of its way of life) was plagued by guilt. The results of this situation were seen subsequently in the Brandt Commission, a group of eighteen prominent politicians and economists who convened in 1977 to conduct an inquiry on the North–South divide. Brandt published his Commission’s report on development in 1980, and more generally expressed the growing conviction that global disparities in power and wealth were unacceptably large. The postcolonial world was not necessarily a just one.

A new element thus appeared in international affairs, and it was to show

remarkable staying power. In the decades following the Belgrade Conference in 1961, a further ten conferences of non-aligned countries took place – four in Africa, three in Asia, two in Latin America and one in Europe (Belgrade again, in 1989). The number of states attending grew steadily. The shape of the movement and its precise purposes changed over the years, but its essential components remained the same: anti-colonialism, the economic rights of the poor countries and the primary producers and the moral high ground of non-alignment. A new force was at work in international affairs: the moral and psychological influence of the Third World.

Notes

- 1 Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (London, 2003), p. 260.
- 2 See G. McT. Kahin, *The Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung* (London, 1956).
- 3 J. D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (London, 1972), p. 264.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 265.
- 5 *Keesings Contemporary Archives*, 1955, p. 14,184.
- 6 Brioni communiqué, *ibid.*, 1956, p. 15,008.
- 7 *Keesings Contemporary Archives*, 1961, p. 18,601.

Latin America in the world, 1945–73

Latin American contradictions – The United States and Latin America – Intervention in Guatemala, 1954 – The challenge of Cuba – The Alliance for Progress, 1961 – American interventions in Brazil and in the Dominican Republic: ‘No More Cubas’ – Allende and Chile.

Latin American contradictions

Latin America covers an enormous territory, stretching from the northern border of Mexico to the southern tip of South America. South America is itself a continent, with an area of 6,900,000 square miles (17,840,000 square kilometres) and a population in 1960 of some 148 million divided into only twelve sovereign states (French Guiana is an Overseas Department of France). Central America comprised seven small states, from the isthmus of Panama to the Mexican border, plus Mexico itself, which has a vast territory of slightly more than 760,000 square miles (1,972,550 square kilometres). The population of Central America in 1960 was just under 52 million. The Caribbean area includes a number of small island states, of which Cuba is the largest and Grenada the smallest. In 1960, the Caribbean was populated by some 21 million people.

Almost all of these territories were colonized, intensively and over a long period, by Spain and Portugal. The principal languages are Portuguese in Brazil and Spanish everywhere else; though there are substantial indigenous populations, with their own languages, particularly in Mexico and some of the Andean countries. The predominant religion is Roman Catholicism. Latin America is thus in many ways an offshoot of European civilization which has been grafted deeply (and painfully) into the soil of a new continent.

Nearly all the Latin American states from Spain to Portugal achieved independence between 1816 and 1825 (Cuba, which remained a Spanish colony until 1898, was an exception). After an early period of confusion and border conflicts between the new states, Latin America settled down into a remarkable territorial stability. (There were exceptions in the Chaco conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay, and a border dispute between Peru and Colombia; but in so broad an area these served only to prove the rule.) As a result of this stability, most Latin American states are older than most European states in their present form – Germany and Italy, for example, are late-nineteenth-century creations, and many states in Eastern Europe date only from 1919, and in some cases much later.

Latin America is thus European in history and culture, but has been independent for so long and is separated by so great a distance from Europe that it has become a distinct entity. It also contrasts sharply with the other European transplants in North America, the United States and Canada, which have adopted very different forms of political tradition and economic development. This situation has produced some strange results. Latin American countries are highly conscious of their differences from the United States, and resentful of excessive American economic, political and cultural influence in their affairs. Yet they are also aware of their common European and Western heritage *with* the United States. In the great political and ideological divide of the Cold War, Latin American political, economic and cultural elites were usually on the same side as the Americans. The Catholic Church, despite the growth of ‘liberation theology’, was fundamentally opposed to communism. The dominant economic groups (banks, mining companies, the big producers of meat, sugar, fruit and coffee) were on the same side as their principal customers or investors. It is true that radical Latin American governments opposed the United States and sometimes looked to the Soviet Union for help; and that others chose to exaggerate their anti-communism in order to attract American assistance. But all in all there was a good deal of genuinely common ground between Latin America and the United States.

Large parts of Latin America are geographically remote from the rest of the world, separated by the expanses of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. But the nature of the Latin American economy has meant that the area has always been closely dependent on the outside world. In the long colonial period, the external trade of the various territories was almost exclusively directed towards Spain or Portugal. After independence a similar economic dependence prevailed, though in different circumstances and on different countries. Latin American countries

became exporters of primary products – minerals, coffee, bananas, cereals, cattle. This meant heavy dependence on foreign investment for machinery (e.g. sugar mills and refrigeration plant) and communications (especially railways); and on foreign customers to buy the products. In the late nineteenth century, Britain and Germany played a major role as both investors and customers; and gradually the United States joined them.

This situation was transformed, first, by the great economic depression of the 1930s and then by the Second World War. The great depression brought a collapse in markets for primary products, and the drying up (sometimes the withdrawal) of foreign investments. The Second World War removed Germany from the Latin American economic scene, first by blockade and then by defeat. At the same time, British influence was drastically diminished, by the sale of investments during the war and economic exhaustion after it. After the Second World War, the external economic relations of Latin America were dominated almost exclusively by the United States.

In the middle of the twentieth century, Latin America underwent rapid population growth.¹ The population became increasingly urban in character during the early Cold War years. From about 1960 onwards, a majority of the Latin American population lived in towns. Several cities of enormous size developed: Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro (the Brazilian capital until that year) both had populations of approximately 5 million in 1960. Buenos Aires had nearly 7 million. The Peruvian capital of Lima, which had been hit by an earthquake in 1940, expanded its size fivefold between that date and 1960, when 2 million people lived there. Such cities combined great wealth with extreme poverty, gleaming skyscrapers surrounded by shanty towns, with consequent social and political strains. The rural population grew more slowly, but there was still pressure on the land and acute demand for agrarian reform: most of the land was in the hands of an elite of proprietors; the army was the guarantor of this elite's position and power and usually had no scruples about intervening in the political process. These internal problems, urban and rural, arose at the same time as the Cold War dominated international relations; and the United States and the Soviet Union, capitalism and socialism, offered very different solutions.

In international relations, Latin America offered the striking spectacle of an area almost free from war between states. From 1945 to the end of the century there were only three such wars, of small scale and brief duration. Two were between Central American states: Nicaragua and Honduras in 1957, and Honduras and El Salvador in 1969 (the so-called Football War, because it broke

out after a soccer match between the two nations). Both ended in ceasefires brokered by the Organization of American States (OAS) and no territory changed hands. The third, which is discussed at greater length in [Chapter 20](#), was between Argentina and Great Britain in 1982, over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (or under their Spanish name, the Malvinas).

Over a period of some fifty years, especially in a territory the size of Latin America, three small wars amount to very little when compared to international conflicts in the rest of the world. But there was another side of the coin, in an endemic instability *within* states throughout Latin America – a constant succession of coups and revolutions, and abrupt swings from dictatorship to democracy and back again. The roots of this instability went back to the wars of independence, when the new states were established by force and became heavily dependent on their armies for internal security. In the nineteenth century, political change, particularly of a ‘progressive’ or radical nature, was achieved by military means because no other methods would work. The pattern of armed coups and military rule remained predominant after 1945. The very absence of wars meant that armies had almost no occupation except politics.

This endemic internal instability had important consequences in international affairs. The different sides in internal conflicts looked for support from outside, sometimes from neighbouring Latin American states (e.g. in the 1950s Nicaragua provided shelter and assistance to rebels against the government of Costa Rica), but above all from the United States, whose understanding of domestic politics to its south was shaped by its own preoccupations and preconceptions, not by any great willingness to diagnose the social causes of Latin American unrest. American intervention was not a one-way street – sometimes Washington took the initiative, but on other occasions they were invited in. Either way, in the early Cold War years the internal politics of Latin American states became a battleground for international politics and an arena of the Cold War.

Latin America was thus a bundle of contradictions. The area was geographically isolated from the rest of the world, but economically dependent on it as a source of investment and a market for exports. Very close economic and political ties with the United States went alongside resentment against American influence and a constant search for an alternative to the American connection. It was in some ways the most politically volatile region of the world, yet its principal states did not wage war upon one another. Amid these various contradictions, the examination of Latin America in world affairs must start with

its relations with the United States.

The United States and Latin America

The involvement of the United States in Latin America has deep historical roots. The Monroe Doctrine, embodied in President Monroe's message to Congress on 2 December 1823, declared that 'the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers'.² This was a warning to the European powers against any future conquests on the American continent; but by implication it was more than that. Behind the emphatic negative, 'Thou shalt not intervene,' lay a hidden positive, 'But we will.' In future, the United States was to be the predominant power in the hemisphere. As the nineteenth century came to an end and the twentieth began, the Americans were able to make this implicit claim good. In 1898 the United States went to war with Spain, helped Cuba throw off Spanish rule and established a form of protectorate over the newly independent island. In 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt engineered a coup in Panama, then part of Colombia; set up Panama as a new state; and then ensured that the Panama Canal ran through a Canal Zone under American control. In December 1904 Roosevelt announced what he called his 'Corollary' to the Monroe Doctrine, asserting that brutal wrongdoing or dangerous impotence by a government in the Western hemisphere might require intervention by a 'civilized nation' – meaning the United States. Cuba and Panama showed that the United States regarded the Caribbean and Central America as its sphere of influence. The Roosevelt Corollary asserted a right of American intervention in the whole of Latin America.

The motives behind these claims were a mixed bag of strategy, economics, prestige and idealism. The Caribbean was so close to American territory as to affect the safety of the United States itself. In 1940, when Germany defeated France in Europe, the Americans would not allow the Germans to take control of the French Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe; and US warships were dispatched to make sure that they did not do so – in very much the same way as the navy was to establish a blockade against the Soviets off Cuba in 1962. The Panama Canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans was vital to American strategic communications. Mexico and Venezuela provided secure sources for American oil imports. American commercial enterprises of various

kinds (e.g. mineral companies and fruit growers) imposed favourable political conditions for their operations. In all these matters, American prestige came to be deeply involved, with consequences far outside the hemisphere – after all, if the Americans could not impose their will in their own backyard (as when they singularly failed to overthrow Castro in Cuba), they were bound to lose credibility elsewhere. Idealism added another element, and also a good deal of confusion. American governments often genuinely wanted to do good in Latin America – to promote human rights, encourage democracy and diminish poverty. Yet these aims were frequently in conflict with more material objectives, laying the Americans open to charges of hypocrisy. To combine the interests of a great power with the aspirations of liberal idealism was difficult, if not impossible, though the Americans were not deterred from trying.

American policy towards Latin America thus showed both the outstretched hand of friendship and the mailed fist of armed intervention. It also produced grandiose projects of aid and cooperation. After the Second World War, the United States set out to organize the American hemisphere under its own leadership, but using all the forms and language of cooperation. The Treaty of Rio de Janeiro (2 September 1947), between the United States and eighteen Latin American countries (Nicaragua and Ecuador joined a few months later), established an alliance for collective defence against armed attack, or to meet any situation which might endanger the peace of the continent – a provision directed against subversion by the Soviet Union, though no enemy was named.³ This treaty was followed up by a Conference of American States (held at Bogotá, Colombia, from 30 March to 2 May 1948), which set up the OAS. The Charter of the OAS laid down that the territory of a member state was inviolable and was not to be the object of any military occupation or other measures of force, direct or indirect (Article 21); but at the same time it provided that an armed attack or other form of aggression, or ‘any other fact or situation that might endanger the peace of America’ would require measures to maintain peace and security (Article 29). The Charter thus closed the door against American intervention with one hand, and reopened it with the other.⁴ The OAS was also furnished with permanent councils to deal with economic, social and cultural affairs; though little was done to add substance to this framework for inter-American cooperation – especially by comparison with the immense effort which the Americans put, at much the same time, into Marshall Aid for Western Europe. As one scholar has dryly commented, between 1945 and 1952, the twenty Latin American members of the OAS received ‘less economic aid from

the United States than did Belgium and tiny Luxembourg'.⁵ This failure on the part of the United States to invest in the future of its southern neighbours was a source of much frustration for liberals in Latin America. Individuals such as Romulo Betancourt, president of Venezuela from 1945 to 1948 and from 1959 to 1964, argued passionately that unless greater economic opportunities were created for the impoverished masses of their countries, radical doctrines, including communism, were bound to flourish. Only the Americans could provide the investment that was needed.

The Americans supplemented the OAS by working directly with various Latin American states on security questions. Between 1952 and 1954 the United States concluded military agreements with ten countries: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru and Uruguay. The Americans agreed to supply military equipment and to train officers in the armed services; in return, the other governments agreed to supply strategic materials, and to restrict exports to the Soviet Union. The United States also tried to persuade all Latin American countries to cut off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union; and eventually all did so, with the exception of Argentina, Mexico and Uruguay.

As this energetic diplomatic activity suggests, American policymakers did fear communist contagion in 'their' hemisphere. Particularly during the Eisenhower administration, reds were found lurking under every imaginable Latin American bed, with the result that the United States conducted a number of ethically dubious interventions that tarnished its reputation. In the uncompromising words of Gaddis Smith, 'The abandonment after 1945 of its original ideals made the last years of the Monroe Doctrine a history of moral degradation.' Any means was acceptable to 'maintain compliant, anti-Soviet regimes and undermine those who were uncooperative'.⁶ The case of Venezuela is an instructive one. Romulo Betancourt's first presidency was overthrown in November 1948 by a military coup led by Colonel Marcos Pérez Jiminéz. He ruled brutally for a decade, filling the jails of Caracas with prisoners and employing torture on a large scale. He nevertheless provided a stable environment for American oil interests and was accordingly regarded as a mainstay of American policy in Latin America: in October 1954, President Eisenhower even awarded him the Legion of Merit, one of the United States' highest military honours. The dictator was cited for his 'indefatigable energy and firmness of purpose' in building up Venezuela's armed forces; his 'constant concern' about 'communist infiltration' was also praised.⁷ Pérez Jiminéz took refuge in the United States after his regime fell in

January 1958, though he later found a congenial home in Franco's Spain.

In the early Cold War years the United States rhetorically preferred democracy in Latin America, but in practice it sided with authoritarian governments, even murderous ones, rather than allow any kind of leftist radicalism or social experimentation. At root, this attitude reflected a deep distrust among senior American policymakers of Latin America's capacity for democratic rule. The political culture of the Latin American states was dismissed as insufficiently strong to withstand the insidious propaganda of the communists. In the words of George Kennan, who as we have seen was one of the architects of the United States' strategy towards Western Europe: 'Where the concepts and traditions of popular government are too weak to absorb successfully the intensity of the communist attack, then we must concede that harsh governmental measures of repression may be the only answer.'⁸ Unfortunately, in Latin America, American policymakers too often assumed that any attempt to provide elementary social justice was an instance of 'communist attack'.

Intervention in Guatemala, 1954

These strictures about the fundamental character of American policy towards Latin America are borne out by an examination of the crises in Guatemala and Cuba in the 1950s. In both cases, the United States paid mere lip service to the provisions of the Treaty of Rio and the Charter of the OAS banning external intervention in the domestic affairs of Latin America's states.

Guatemala is a Central American state, with a population, in the 1950s, of some 4 million people and of no great wealth. Its main trading partner, inevitably, was the United States, which in the mid-1950s provided 65 per cent of its imports and purchased 74 per cent of its exports, mostly coffee and bananas.⁹ Between 1931 and 1944 Guatemala was ruled by Jorge Ubico, who was a staunch defender of the interests of the United Fruit Company – the most important American investor in Guatemala – and the landowners, but an equally determined opponent of social reform. Following riots in the capital in 1944, Ubico resigned; after a turbulent interim period, he was replaced as president by a liberal professor, Juan José Arévalo, who was elected by a landslide and who enacted a series of substantial social reforms. In 1951 Arévalo was substituted by Jacobo Arbenz, a former army officer who had been minister of defence in the Arévalo administration.

Despite his background as a soldier, Arbenz was a progressive, prepared to

work with communists and to accept them into his government; his programme of reforms included an agrarian law (1952) that crucially provided for the expropriation of uncultivated land at rates of compensation calculated according to the value declared by the owners for purposes of taxation – a shrewd device, since the land was in reality worth far more. Much of this land was owned by the United Fruit Company. The direct threat to American economic interests was nevertheless trivial. The land reform was substantially similar to that being introduced contemporaneously in Italy; it was also similar in spirit to the ‘Homestead Act’ that had created a large class of landowners in nineteenth-century United States. Arbenz was hardly proposing the wholesale socialization of the land. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, encouraged by almost the whole American policymaking establishment, quickly concluded however that Arbenz’s reformist policies were directly inspired by Moscow and thus presented a dangerous threat. In Dulles’s mind Arbenz represented the thin end of the wedge: if this somewhat ramshackle, underdeveloped country were to turn communist, the dominoes would begin to fall. This essentially ideological–strategic motive for American hostility seems to have predominated, although it is also true that numerous members of the Eisenhower administration, including John Moors Cabot, the assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs, and his direct superior, Undersecretary of State Walter Bedell Smith, had ties to the United Fruit Company.¹⁰

In March 1954, at the tenth Inter-American Conference in Caracas – a location that was not congenial to Latin America’s liberals – Dulles secured the passage of a resolution declaring that the control of the political institutions of any American state by the international communist movement would be a threat to its own independence and to the peace of the hemisphere as a whole. At Caracas, Dulles browbeat and bribed (with economic concessions) the reluctant Latin American states into agreement. In the end, only Guatemala voted against the resolution, which was passed 17–1, albeit with the significant abstentions of Argentina and Mexico, and with a patent lack of enthusiasm on the part of many of those who bowed to the United States’ demands. The stage was set for armed intervention to extirpate the alleged ‘communist menace’ in Guatemala. In June 1954, after a lengthy period of black propaganda inside Guatemala, a small so-called army of liberation, directed and armed by the CIA, and led by Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, invaded Guatemala from the neighbouring states of Honduras and Nicaragua.

The intervention caused notable tensions between the United States and its

European allies, especially France. The Arbenz government appealed to the UN, asking it to send observers to ascertain the origin of the attacking forces. Both France and Great Britain, as permanent members of the Security Council, were initially sympathetic to this request. The United States, arguing that the crisis was an internal Guatemalan matter, pressed both its Latin American and European allies to have the crisis referred to the OAS for resolution – at the San Francisco Conference in the spring of 1945, the United States had insisted, as a way of maintaining the ‘Monroe Doctrine’, that regional peace organizations were to have primacy in the resolution of disputes (Article 52 of the UN Charter subsequently authorized ‘regional arrangements or agencies’ to settle disputes between their members before turning to the Security Council, although the right of member states under Article 35 to bring threats to their security to the attention of the Security Council remained theoretically unimpaired). Britain and France cracked under American pressure and abstained when a motion was put to place the case of Guatemala on the UN’s agenda. The United States then called a 7 July meeting of the OAS’s foreign ministers to charge *Guatemala* with aggression against Nicaragua and Honduras. The meeting was never held: by 7 July 1954 Castillo Armas was in power and had naturally immediately withdrawn the request for UN adjudication (Arbenz stepped down and fled on 27 June).

The case of Guatemala was essentially a reversion to the common practice earlier in the century, when the United States had intervened by force in a number of Central American countries. But in the early 1950s the fear of communism had introduced a new element to American thinking, which appears to have been decisive for policy. This can be seen by comparing Guatemala with other Latin American states of the same period. In Costa Rica, President José Figueres pursued a radical policy of social reform (including higher taxation of the wealthy and the abolition of the army). The United Fruit Company also operated in Costa Rica, and Figueres did not hesitate to raise taxes on the company’s profits from 10 to 30 per cent. At the same time, however, he outlawed the Communist Party, and was able to proceed with his measures without interference from the United States. In Bolivia in 1952 the National Revolutionary Movement took power, embarked on land reform and the nationalization of the tin mines, and appealed to the United States for help. President Eisenhower concurred. In 1953 the United States bought large quantities of Bolivian tin at high prices and continued to provide economic aid over the next few years. The crucial distinction between these two cases and that

of Guatemala was the conviction of the upper reaches of the Eisenhower administration that Arbenz was under direct Soviet influence, whereas the governments of Costa Rica and Bolivia were not.

The consequences of the American-backed intervention in Guatemala were heavy. Guatemala remained arguably the most unsavoury regime in the whole of Latin America for the next three decades (no small claim). Castillo Armas (who was assassinated in 1957) drove the peasants off their newly acquired land, and his successors presided over a country that was wracked with social conflict and abject poverty.

The challenge of Cuba, 1959–62

In Guatemala the Americans used the iron hand; in Costa Rica and Bolivia the velvet glove. In Cuba, which as we have seen was to become the emblematic and most dangerous Cold War crisis, the Americans for a long time did almost nothing, while what were to prove decisive events took place. Eisenhower and Dulles had fretted mysteriously in 1954 that Guatemala might become a ‘Soviet beachhead’ in Latin America; Cuba, under the leadership of Fidel Castro, actually did. It did so, moreover, on their watch.

Cuba was the last Spanish colony in America to become independent (in 1898), and until the 1930s was virtually a protectorate of the United States. In the 1950s, under the corrupt dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, it was a rotten apple ready to fall. Its capital, Havana, with the help of American-organized crime, had by then ‘developed its eminence as a center of gambling, pornography, and prostitution, attracting American tourists eager to get drunk, get laid, and look for Ernest Hemingway’.¹¹ Aside from the revenues raised by these activities, which were of scant benefit to the peasants and fishermen who constituted most of its population of 7 million, Cuba was an island almost entirely reliant on the production of sugar (which provided 80 per cent of its exports in 1955). In 1955, Fidel Castro, an aspiring revolutionary not yet thirty years old, landed in Cuba from Mexico and began a guerrilla campaign against Batista in the hill country in the east of the island. The United States began to withdraw its support from Batista as early as 1957 and ceased to supply him with arms in March 1958. By the autumn of 1958, Batista’s army and regime were disintegrating. On 1 January 1959 Castro’s forces entered Havana as victors.

So far, there was nothing strikingly unusual about these events – neither dictators nor revolutions were out of the ordinary in Latin America. It remained

to be seen what sort of regime Castro would set up. He was certainly left-wing, an ardent nationalist and strongly anti-American. He embarked at once on agrarian reform and the redistribution of land, state intervention in industry and the imposition of rent control in the cities. He also had a good many people associated with the Batista regime shot. It remains uncertain how far, at this stage, he was simply a revolutionary nationalist, and how far he was already a Marxist socialist who as yet preferred not to display his true colours.

Quite reasonably, the US government did not know what to make of Castro. Secretary of State Christian Herter and Vice President Richard M. Nixon met him in April 1959, when he visited the United States, and found him an enigma; Eisenhower himself (who had many other things to think about) was willing to wait and judge Castro by his actions. At the end of 1959, right-wing opinion in the United States began a vehement campaign against the 'red menace' represented by Castro's regime. A do-nothing policy became hard to justify. In February 1960 the Soviet Union granted Cuba a credit of \$100 million and undertook to make large purchases of Cuban sugar. Eisenhower abruptly concluded that Castro was fundamentally hostile to the United States. On 17 March 1960 the president approved a CIA scheme to set up a Cuban rebel force in Guatemala to overthrow Castro's government, in the same way that Arbenz's government had been overthrown in Guatemala itself in 1954. The administration's secret goal was 'to bring about the replacement of the Castro regime with one more devoted to the true interests of the Cuban people and more acceptable to the U.S. in such a manner as to avoid any appearance of U.S. intervention'.¹² In July 1960 the United States applied what was expected to be a decisive economic sanction by forbidding imports of Cuban sugar. Castro retaliated by nationalizing the remaining American assets in Cuba. The Soviet government now offered to buy the whole Cuban sugar crop, which nullified the effect of the American embargo and transformed the political situation. Soviet leader Khrushchev asserted that he stood by Castro in his struggle against American imperialism and added: 'We consider that the Monroe Doctrine has outlived its time ... has died, so to say, a natural death. Now the remains of this doctrine should best be buried as every dead body is so that it should not poison the air by its decay.'¹³

The Cuban revolution was hence supported by a superpower – and the United States was faced with the situation it had dreaded: a direct Soviet challenge to the Monroe Doctrine in its own backyard. Emboldened, the Cubans stood up to the 'Yankees' in ever-more provocative fashion. Cuba brought the United States

before the Security Council of the UN in mid-July, accusing Washington, quite accurately, of planning an illegal intervention. The Eisenhower administration vigorously denied this charge; during the 1960 election campaign Vice President Nixon, the Republican candidate, even argued against the use of force against Castro in a televised debate with John F. Kennedy. Seeming weak on Cuba, in the ideologically polarized climate of the times, may have swung decisive votes to Kennedy, who campaigned as a Cold War hawk.

The outgoing Eisenhower administration broke off diplomatic relations with Havana in January 1961 after the Cubans demanded that the United States reduce the number of personnel at its embassy in Havana. Kennedy subsequently allowed the CIA to go ahead with its plan for an attack on Cuba by the exiles based in Guatemala, in the hope of triggering a revolt against Castro. A force of about 1,400 anti-communist Cubans, with ineffectual American support, landed at the Bay of Pigs on 17 April 1961, and was crushed within three days. Kennedy left the Cubans in the lurch, refusing to send American forces to their aid even when it became apparent that they were being slaughtered on the beachhead. The United States cut a terrible international figure. As one of Kennedy's closest aides wrote despairingly: 'We not only look like imperialists; we look like ineffectual imperialists, which is worse; and we look like stupid, ineffectual imperialists, which is worst of all.'¹⁴ It was not a dazzling start for the high-minded intellectuals and policy wonks surrounding the young president in 'Camelot'.

The Americans turned next to a strange mixture of clandestine conspiracy and open diplomacy. Their conspiracies included a number of bizarre schemes to overthrow or assassinate Castro; proposed assassination devices that 'ran the gamut from high-powered rifles, to poison pills, poison pens, deadly bacterial powers, and other devices which strain the imagination'.¹⁵ The CIA also aspired to poison Castro's cigars with deadly botulinum and to sabotage his showerhead with a chemical that would make his beard fall out.

America's spooks had more success with another inconvenient dictator, Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, the mountainous eastern half of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. One of the most murderous leaders in all Latin America, Trujillo had long been a stalwart supporter of the United States, albeit an unusually independent-minded one. In the late 1950s, Trujillo's behaviour made him persona non grata in the Eisenhower White House. American policymakers were alarmed that his arbitrary, authoritarian form of government might stimulate a Cuban-style revolution. Trujillo paid no heed to American

requests that he step down, telling Washington openly that he would leave office 'feet first'. Trujillo also began dabbling in the internal affairs of his neighbours (he organized an assassination attempt on the life of President Betancourt of Venezuela, for instance). The American government accordingly conspired with the internal opposition to Trujillo to get rid of this turbulent and no longer useful former servant. In May 1961 the dictator was ambushed and shot dead while on his way to an assignation with a young mistress. Weapons provided by the CIA were almost certainly involved. President Kennedy remarked after he was informed of Trujillo's death: 'There are three possibilities in descending order of preference: a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime, or a Castro regime. We ought to aim at the first, but we can't renounce the second until we are sure that we can avoid the third.'¹⁶ In many ways, this remark summed up post-war American policy towards Latin America in two short sentences.

In the case of Castro, diplomacy had to suffice. The Kennedy White House brought the machinery of continental cooperation fully to bear. In January 1962 the foreign ministers of the OAS met at Punta del Este in Uruguay and a numerical majority of member states agreed to exclude Cuba from participation in the organization's activities. Only Cuba voted against; Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Ecuador abstained. Together, they represented two-thirds of the population of Latin America. The OAS also placed an embargo on all arms sales to Cuba, and recommended trade sanctions without making them mandatory.

The United States itself had already imposed a rigid embargo on all trade and contacts with the Havana regime – a policy that continued until the last days of the Obama administration. Washington also pressured OAS governments into breaking off diplomatic relations with Cuba, and by April 1962 fifteen states had done so. Mexico alone maintained full diplomatic and travel links. This diplomatic strong-arming was the immediate background to the Cuban missile crisis.

In response to these attempts to isolate Cuba, Castro nailed his colours to the mast by publicly declaring his adherence to Marxism–Leninism. The Cuban government launched a Four-Year Plan for the economy, to diversify agriculture and reduce dependence on sugar and to introduce new light industries. Collective farms were introduced, and industry and commerce were nationalized. Rationing of food and other goods was introduced in 1962, as a demonstration of equality as much as to cope with the American economic blockade. Soviet economic

assistance increased to the point that Cuba became overdependent on Moscow. Castro personally became an unmistakable figure, known throughout the world by his shaggy beard, cigars, camouflage uniforms and impressive personal charisma – and also for his immensely long speeches. He was the man who had defied the United States in its own backyard and lived to tell the tale.

Castro hoped (just as the Americans feared) that his revolution would act as a focal point for others in Latin America. The Cubans did in fact back revolutionary movements in Bolivia, Venezuela and Guatemala, but without success. On the other hand, the mythos of the Cuban revolution achieved considerable influence, especially in Europe, where Castro became an iconic figure for the progressive left, by means of radio broadcasts, films and cultural propaganda. Writers and film-makers, including the inevitable Jean-Paul Sartre, flocked to Havana. Would-be student revolutionaries across Europe pinned portraits of Castro's romantic second-in-command, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, an Argentine doctor who had been radicalized by the poverty he saw around him in Latin America, to their bedroom walls.¹⁷ But such influence had its limits, and by the end of the 1960s the impetus of the revolution was fading, along with the living standards of Cuba's citizens. Cuba stood alone, in defiant isolation.

This defiance remained a red rag to bull-headed American conservatives. The survival of a pro-communist, overtly anti-American regime in Havana was seen by many Americans as a shameful betrayal of the Monroe Doctrine. Kennedy's firm but cautious policy in October 1962, and his preference for diplomatic pressure on Havana thereafter, was a triumph for good sense and strong nerves, but it also amounted to a symbolic renunciation of American hegemony over the hemisphere that opinion makers in the United States found difficult to swallow. For American nationalists, the United States had 'lost Cuba', just as it had 'lost China' in 1949. The Republican candidate in the 1964 presidential elections, Barry Goldwater, who was considered by many to be a right-wing extremist, made much play of the Democrats' supposed weakness towards the Castro regime. But by then Kennedy had been assassinated.

A half-hearted alliance, 1961–73

Despite the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and the uncompromising line it took towards Cuba within the OAS, the Kennedy administration was well aware when it took office that it had to mend fences with public opinion in Latin America. Anti-American sentiment was too virulent to be ignored by policymakers in

Washington DC. In 1958 Vice President Nixon had been repeatedly mobbed while on a tour of South American capitals; in Caracas, he had been lucky to escape with his life after rioters attacked his motorcade. The Eisenhower administration predictably blamed communist agitators for the attacks on Nixon, but in practice American policymakers knew full well that dollars had to start flowing south to boost living standards in Latin America. The Eisenhower administration accordingly launched a number of initiatives to strengthen American public and private investment. When Kennedy took office he decided he would be bolder than Eisenhower in this respect.

At the very time that the Bay of Pigs adventure was being prepared, President Kennedy and his advisers were devising a proposal for an 'Alliance for Progress', which was announced on 13 March 1961 and adopted at a meeting of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council (a section of the OAS) at Punta del Este in the following August. It was the policy of the outstretched hand at its most generous: the Marshall Plan for Latin America that liberals like Betancourt had been pleading for since 1945. The declaration which prefaced the so-called Charter of Punta del Este set out a formidable list of objectives. The Alliance for Progress would strengthen democratic institutions; accelerate economic and social development; carry out housing programmes and provide decent houses for all; encourage agrarian reform and redistribution of land; assure fair wages and working conditions; wipe out illiteracy; improve health and sanitation; reform tax laws so as to redistribute income to those in most need; and find a quick and lasting solution to the problem of excessive fluctuations in the prices of Latin American primary products. To help achieve these aims, the United States undertook to provide the major part of the \$20 billion which would be required over the next ten years to supplement the efforts of the Latin American states themselves. Economic targets were set at an average growth rate of 2.5 per cent per year in gross national product per head, and a 50 per cent rise in living standards, over a ten-year period.¹⁸

The Charter was an astonishing and utopian scheme, stopping barely short of promising a new heaven and a new earth. It is not surprising that it was not fully carried out. In the coming years the United States met its financial commitments, providing \$18 billion of government money and another \$3 billion in private investment. But 90 per cent of these considerable sums was used by the receiving states to service or repay their existing debts, which made a useful contribution to their public finances but fell far short of the immense promises held out by the declaration.¹⁹

Again, the Alliance for Progress was intended to promote democratic regimes. The Americans made a start on this, and between 1961 and 1963 they suspended economic aid and/or broke off diplomatic relations with various countries where military coups established dictatorships of various kinds – Argentina, Dominica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru. But these measures were imposed only temporarily, for periods varying from three weeks to six months. In 1964, under the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, the attempt to discriminate against military regimes was given up. In several Latin American countries, the armed forces of dictators were strengthened by funds, equipment and training supplied under the Alliance for Progress.

Even more to the point, the United States also reverted to direct intervention by its own forces, or used domestic military clients, to subvert progressive governments that they feared were taking a ‘Cuban’ turn. In 1964 the United States carried out a ‘quiet intervention’ to oust the president of Brazil, João Goulart. Brazilian politics had been veering leftwards since the mid-1950s. President Juscelino Kubitschek, an ambitious liberal who had envisaged and constructed the new capital of Brasilia, berated the Americans for their lack of imagination in investing in Latin America. His ideas for an ‘Operation Pan-America’ in many ways were a harbinger of the Alliance for Progress. His successor, Janio Quadros, who took office almost contemporaneously with Kennedy in January 1961, was worse: he reopened diplomatic relations with both the Soviet Union and China, but resigned after only eight months once rumours of a coup began to swirl. He was replaced by Vice President Goulart, an open leftist who was detested by the military and who was regarded as a red by American ambassador Lincoln Gordon, who held views on the communist menace that were unsubtle even by the standards of time. Over the next two years, American officials hinted to the Brazilian military that they would support a domestic-led coup d’etat, despite (or perhaps because of) Goulart’s growing popularity with the Brazilian poor. By March 1964, angered by Goulart’s promotion of trade unions, his good relations with Moscow, and his attempts to democratize the army, military commanders were ready to act. On 30 March the tanks appeared in the streets. The next day top American officials, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Defence Secretary Robert McNamara and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell Taylor, decided to send considerable quantities of aid to the rebels and to mobilize a naval task force that would sail to Brazil to intervene on the side of the plotters. ‘Had Brazil fallen into the predicted civil war between the forces of the coup and those loyal to

Goulart, Lyndon Johnson was ready to fight.’²⁰ Operation ‘Brother Sam’, as it was codenamed, sent an unambiguous signal that Washington wanted a change of regime. American leaders made no complaints when General Humberto Castelo Branco, the coup leader, arrested thousands of suspected communists and waged a dirty war against the regime’s political opponents: they were too happy to have prevented the spread of communism to arguably the most important country in the so-called Third World. Brazil remained under military rule until the late mid-1980s. Its social inequalities, which by some measures were the worst on the planet, remained substantially ignored.

The following year, the United States forestalled the return to power by the constitutionally legitimate, but left-wing, president of the Dominican Republic by the overt use of force. After the assassination of Trujillo in 1961, voters had elected Juan Bosch, a progressive intellectual, as president of the republic. Washington, in keeping with Kennedy’s formulation, soon came to regard Bosch as incapable of running a decent democratic regime; they accordingly welcomed a 1962 coup that ousted him. In April 1965, when a group of constitutionally minded officers tried to reinstate Bosch, Johnson acted fast. On 2 May 1965 Johnson bluntly stated that ‘the American nations cannot, must not, and will not permit the establishment of another communist government in the Western Hemisphere’. Washington rapidly dispatched 24,000 troops to the Caribbean to keep the ruling junta in power. The intervention was camouflaged by the subsequent arrival of an Inter-American Peacekeeping Force, with troops from five Latin American countries as well as the United States commanded by a Brazilian general; but the basis of the operation remained solidly American. Whatever else it had achieved, the Alliance for Progress had not superseded more old-fashioned methods.

The United States’ most notorious post-1961 intervention in the domestic affairs of a Latin American country, however, was the case of Chile, where it was profoundly disturbed by the threat represented by Salvador Allende, a ‘Marxist democrat’ similar to Goulart in his political sympathies and programme, who also had ties to Cuba. In 1964, the United States undertook a major covert operation in Chile to prevent Allende from winning the presidential elections. The CIA poured nearly \$3 million into the campaign of Allende’s principal opponent, the Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei, and spent a similar sum distributing black propaganda designed to inform voters about the perils of communism, which Allende allegedly represented. Frei was apparently unaware of the source of the cash sustaining his campaign. The CIA believed that ‘with

some good fortune and tactful handling, Frei could become an outstanding leader and statesman in Latin America and an exceptionally valuable, if occasionally carping, friend of the United States'.²¹

Frei was indeed an impressive leader, but Chile's problems were too pressing for his moderate approach. In 1970 Allende's 'Popular Unity' coalition of socialists and communists narrowly beat the right-wing candidate Jorge Alessandri by 36.3 per cent of the popular vote, to 34.9 per cent. Frei's Christian Democrats placed third with 28 per cent of the vote. Under the Chilean Constitution, a candidate who did not receive 50 per cent of the popular vote had to be confirmed by the two chambers of the National Congress, or parliament. The Christian Democrats, in order to give the left an opportunity to govern democratically, sided with Allende – though they might not have had they known that his campaign had been partially financed by the Soviet Union.²² Chile, in short, was set in 1970 to become a Cold War battleground. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger summarized the fears of the United States succinctly:

I have yet to meet somebody who firmly believes that if Allende wins, there is likely to be another free election in Chile. ... Now it is fairly easy for one to predict that if Allende wins, there is a good chance that he will establish over a period of years some sort of communist government. In that case, we would have one not on an island off the coast (Cuba) which has not a traditional relationship and impact on Latin America, but in a major Latin American country you would have a communist government, joining, for example, Argentine ... Peru ... and Bolivia. ... So I don't think we should delude ourselves that an Allende takeover and Chile would not present massive problems for us, and for democratic forces and for pro-U.S. forces in Latin America, and indeed to the whole Western Hemisphere.²³

President Nixon was furious with the CIA for having permitted a left-wing victory in Chile. The Americans tried to prevent Allende's confirmation by bribing members of Congress; General René Schneider, the commander-in-chief of the army, a committed 'constitutionalist' opposed to military involvement in politics, was assassinated by other figures in the military with links to the CIA. Such measures were to no avail. Allende was elected president. Despite his slender mandate, he embarked on a radical and confrontational programme of nationalizing the copper mines without compensation for the shareholders (Frei had already partly nationalized the copper industry, which was the mainstay of

the Chilean economy), the steel industry, several banks and many commercial firms, foreign as well as Chilean. In the countryside, the large estates were seized, and replaced either by state cooperatives or by small landowners – a change which was imposed with great rapidity and naturally caused a sharp drop in agricultural production. These policies were collectively known as the ‘Chilean way to socialism’ and were applauded by Castro, who toured the country for four weeks at the end of 1971 to great acclaim. Opposition to these measures built up in Congress, and in 1972 Allende attempted, but failed, to change the constitution by replacing Congress with an ‘assembly of the people’. Allende won a second national election in 1973 with an increased share of the vote, but he used all legitimate and illegitimate means to do so – his subsequent martyrdom should not disguise the fact that he was bent on retaining power to complete the task of establishing a socialist state in Chile.

By 1973 the Chilean economy was in chaos. The government could not cope with the enormous tasks which it had taken on by nationalizing so many companies; price controls led to a widespread black market; inflation reached 150 per cent, and perhaps as much as 500 per cent at one stage. Anti-government strikes paralysed the country and the government, fighting to maintain control, increasingly bypassed the National Congress and ruled by decree. In August 1973 the National Congress rebelled. It accused Allende of repeated violations of the Chilean Constitution and of wanting to install a totalitarian regime. Allende in his turn accused the Congress of blocking the social revolution being demanded by the Chilean people.²⁴

In September 1973 an exceptionally violent military coup took place, led by Defence Minister General Augusto Pinochet. Allende refused an offer of safe passage abroad, and stood his ground in the presidential palace, which was attacked by a rocket-firing aircraft. Allende committed suicide, and the coup was followed by a lengthy period of savage repression of all Chileans with progressive political leanings. ‘Marxist’ organizations were banned. As many as 15,000 people may have been tortured and killed during Pinochet’s crackdown: the true number of ‘desaparecidos’ (the ‘disappeared’) may never be known.

The American role in these terrible events may not have been decisive, but it was real. The CIA provided large subsidies for opposition groups, political parties and newspapers after 1970, and American intelligence had maintained close links with the officers who ultimately overthrew Allende. In 1975 many of the details of American intervention were made public by the investigations of a committee of the US Senate presided over by Senator Frank Church. The Church

Committee found no smoking gun to prove that the United States had actively plotted with Pinochet to overthrow Allende, but its observations were nevertheless damning:

There is no hard evidence of direct U.S. assistance to the coup, despite frequent allegations of such aid. Rather the United States by its previous actions ... its existing general posture of opposition to Allende, and the nature of its contacts with the Chilean military probably gave the impression that it would not look with disfavor on a military coup. And U.S. officials in the years before 1973 may not always have succeeded in walking the thin line between monitoring indigenous coup plotting and actually stimulating it.²⁵

What certainly was clear was that the United States was reluctant to pressure the Chilean regime to return to constitutional government. Washington preferred Pinochet, whose economic policies were free market and pro-business, to any further experiments in democracy. This instinctive siding with reactionary forces in Latin America was what prevented the Alliance for Progress from fulfilling its potential. For top American policymakers, one Cuba was enough; rather than cope with others, Washington preferred compliant colonels.

Latin America in search of alternatives

It should be said in conclusion to this chapter that Latin America's problems were not only inspired by external pressures from Washington. Unlike Western Europe, where nation states embarked on an ambitious attempt to create a 'common market' between 1958 and the end of the 1960s (the European Economic Community), Latin American nations seemed unable to combine in a coherent economic whole that would have left them less dependent on the United States. As early as 1948 an Economic Commission for Latin America was set up as a regional agency under the UN, establishing its headquarters at Santiago in Chile, about as far from Washington as it was possible to go. Its executive secretary was Raul Prebisch, an Argentinian economist and banker who wanted to assist Latin American primary producers by securing agreements to protect them against extreme price fluctuations, and also to diversify the Latin American economies through the planned development of industry. These ideas, which were similar to the *dirigisme* practised in France under Jean Monnet's National Plan, were taken up by a number of states, notably Brazil, but Latin American governments lacked the continuity and authority to pursue them

consistently. Moreover, the United States at first opposed Prebisch's plans, which ran counter to ideas of free enterprise and offered a threat to American economic predominance. Later, however, the thinking behind the Alliance for Progress drew on the Economic Commission's ideas, and stable commodity prices and diversification of the economy have remained the most likely solutions for Latin American economic problems.

Various groups of Latin American countries set up other organizations to promote economic cooperation, though usually with limited or short-lived effects. In 1958 a draft treaty for a Central American Common Market was signed by El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, leading to a General Treaty of Central American Economic Integration concluded in December 1960, which the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Panama joined later. In February 1960 the Treaty of Montevideo set up a Latin American Free Trade Association, initially including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Colombia and Ecuador joined in 1961; Bolivia and Venezuela in 1966 and 1967, respectively. This ambitious organization remained largely a paper exercise, however. On 29 May 1969 five countries (Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) concluded the Andean Pact, to reduce tariffs and improve economic cooperation (e.g. by coordinating their manufacture of petrochemical products, rather than competing against one another). Venezuela joined the Pact in 1973, and both Mexico and Spain became associate members. A Caribbean Free Trade Association was formed in December 1965 and developed slowly into the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM).

All these organizations set out to work within the American hemisphere. Venezuela, however, set out to work with other oil producers, notably in the Middle East. In 1960 Venezuela took a leading role in setting up the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and remained the only permanent Latin American member of the organization.

A very different way of looking outside Latin America for an alternative to relations with the United States was to identify with the Third World. In the 1960s and 1970s there was a strong movement in this direction, following a theory of dependency which corresponded closely to Latin American conditions. In simple terms, 'dependency theory' argued that a 'core' of industrialized states was exploiting a 'periphery' of primary producing countries, by purchasing their commodities cheaply, accumulating profits for themselves rather than for the producing countries and by working with elites in the producing countries at the

expense of the population at large. These conditions in fact prevailed over large parts of Latin America. The United States was obviously a powerful industrialized state; Latin American countries relied heavily on primary products, whether crops or minerals, which mostly went to the United States; the profits of these transactions frequently went to American companies and their local partners, without reaching the mass of the population. This theory also corresponded with the obvious economic fact that primary producers were entirely dependent on the prices of their commodities on the world markets, which were liable to fluctuate wildly. There was a strong case for finding out whether the 'periphery' could negotiate better terms with the 'core', and whether fluctuations in commodity prices could somehow be controlled – which was what Raul Prebisch had argued in 1948.

This global aspiration for a new economic order linked up with efforts being made separately by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which held its first meeting at Geneva, 23 March to 16 June 1964, attended by 120 governments, of which 77 were from developing countries. The first UNCTAD failed to find agreement between different proposals for fixing prices for primary products; and the second, at New Delhi from 31 January to 29 March 1968, only produced hopeful recommendations for new tariff arrangements to favour developing countries. Latin American countries took part in both these conferences, and the third UNCTAD was actually held in Latin America, at Santiago (Chile), 13 April to 21 May 1972; but it made no significant progress.

As the 1960s drew to a close, Latin America, for the most part, was an integral part of the Third World, although still wealthy Argentina would have quibbled with this description. The principal reason for political upheaval and the rise of political leaders advocating ideas that the policy establishment of the United States dismissed, fearfully and often hysterically, as communist was the grinding poverty afflicting too many of the region's citizens. In all probability, Arbenz, Betancourt, Bosch, Goulart and other Latin American progressives did not have a recipe for lasting development. Castro certainly did not, the effects of the American embargo notwithstanding. Yet so long as the political life of Latin American states were dominated by expensive, intolerant and reactionary elites, who obstructed the creation of a property-owning middle class and who were willing to use the power of the military to protect their privileges, Latin America simply could not develop either economically or politically. To this extent, all the leaders mentioned here could be commended for having sought to modernize

the class systems of their countries: to make them less *feudal*.

It is hard not to conclude a survey of Latin America in the first two decades of the Cold War, however, without coming to the conclusion that the United States, whether through ignorance or calculation, strongly preferred the status quo. The Alliance for Progress represented a generous American gesture towards modernization, but overall American policymakers consistently preferred men in uniform to the huddled masses of *campesinos*, or to the dirt-poor proletariat living without running water, electricity, sewerage or adequate education in the shanty towns of the burgeoning cities of Latin America. In the short run this cynicism brought strategic advantages to the United States. There were indeed ‘no more Cubas’.

In the long run, however, the United States tarnished its reputation as the defender of democratic values. The worldwide phenomenon of anti-Americanism, which so distressed policymakers and conservative intellectuals in Washington, but which was so much a part of the 1960s, was intimately linked to American actions in Latin America – and, of course, Vietnam. People detested the United States because of what its leadership did, not because of who Americans were or the values they stood for.²⁶ Insofar as the Cold War was a battle for the hearts and minds of the peoples of the world, and not just a military conflict, the United States wasted a huge patrimony of goodwill in Europe, but above all in the countries of the Third World.

Notes

- 1 Tulio Halperin Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America* (Durham, NC, 13th ed., 1996), pp. 403–4; Robert Chapuis and Thierry Brossard, *Les quatre mondes du Tiers Monde* (Paris, 2nd ed., 1997), pp. 81–2.
- 2 Monroe Doctrine quoted in Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (London, 4th ed., 1954), Vol. I, p. 462. For the comment on ‘Thou shalt not’, see R. W. Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (London, 1960), pp. 98–9.
- 3 Abridged text of the Treaty of Rio, J. A. S. Grenville, *The Major International Treaties, 1914–1973* (London, 1974), pp. 325–8.
- 4 See website:
http://www.oas.org/dil/treaties_A41_Charter_of_the_Organization_of_American_States.htm.
- 5 Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower & Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anti-Communism* (Chapel Hill, 1988), p. 17.
- 6 Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945–1993* (New York, 1995), p. 7.
- 7 Rabe, *Eisenhower & Latin America*, p. 39.
- 8 George F. Kennan, quoted in Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine*, p. 70.

- 9 *Oxford Economic Atlas of the World* (London, 4th ed., 1972), p. 160.
- 10 See Grace Livingstone, *America's Backyard: The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror* (London, 2009), p. 27, for a full list of the United Fruit Company's connections in the Eisenhower administration.
- 11 Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine*, p. 94.
- 12 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 99.
- 13 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 100.
- 14 Arthur M. Schlesinger Junior, *Journals 1952–2000* (New York, 2007), p. 120.
- 15 US Senate Select Committee on Alleged Assassination Plots involving Foreign Leaders, 1975. Quoted in Livingstone, *America's Backyard*, p. 32.
- 16 Quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: J.F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, 1965), p. 641.
- 17 A moving (and convincing) account of Che Guevara's politicization is found in *Diarios de Motocicleta* (*Motorcycle Diaries*, 2004), a biographical film directed by Walter Salles. It recounts the story of how Che and a friend set off on their motorcycles to explore the Andes in 1952. Guevara was killed in the course of revolutionary activity in Bolivia in 1967.
- 18 Text of Declaration to the Peoples of America and abridged text of the Charter of Punta del Este, Grenville, *Treaties*, pp. 346–50.
- 19 J. P. T. Dunbabin, *The Post-Imperial Age: The Great Powers and the Wider World* (London, 1984), pp. 397–8.
- 20 Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine*, p. 121.
- 21 See website: <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/news/20040925/docs.htm>. Accessed 17 March 2016.
- 22 See Vasili Mitrokhin and Christopher Andrew, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York, 2005), pp. 69–88, for the Soviet activities in support of Allende.
- 23 Henry Kissinger, 16 September 1970, quoted in *Covert Action in Chile, 1963–1973* (Washington DC: Senate of the United States, 1975) p. 52.
- 24 For differing accounts of Allende's regime and the Pinochet coup, see Donghi, *Latin America*, pp. 344–51; and Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine*, pp. 132–7.
- 25 *Covert Action in Chile*, p. 28.
- 26 This is the starting point of the thesis of Max Paul Friedman, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, 2012).

Reflection

The 'Third World'

The term 'Third World' attained a wide currency in historical discussions of international relations in the post-war period, although it has been eclipsed by the rival term 'developing world' since the 1980s. It is however a concept that needs to be clarified.

The phrase was originated in 1952 by the French demographer and economic historian Alfred Sauvy, in an article in a weekly journal under the title 'Three Worlds, One Planet'.¹ Sauvy recalled a pamphlet published by the Abbe Sieyès in 1789, on the eve of the French Revolution, when the French population was divided into three Estates, or social categories: the clergy, the nobility and all the rest of the population. In this pamphlet, Sieyès asked: 'What is the Third Estate? Everything. What has it been up to now in the political order? Nothing. What does it ask for? To become something.' Sauvy observed that the Cold War was being fought between the capitalist world and the communist world, but that there was also a Third World, economically underdeveloped, sometimes ignored by both sides and sometimes an object of their conflicts. Like the Third Estate in Sieyès's time, this Third World wanted to become something, to attain an importance of its own.

Sauvy's phrase rapidly entered into general circulation. In English, it was defined as 'an expression coined in France (*le Tiers-Monde*) and applied to those less developed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America which are not substantially aligned with the capitalist or communist "worlds" or political groupings'.² This definition fastens onto two crucial aspects: non-alignment and economic underdevelopment. As we have seen, non-alignment, or neutralism, was a prominent concept at the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian countries in April 1955, and it became the basis of the movement of non-aligned countries

founded at the Belgrade Conference in September 1961. Strictly speaking, this should have ruled out alliances or alignments with either the capitalist world, dominated by the United States, or the communist bloc, controlled by the Soviet Union. In practice, many of the states which claimed to belong to the Third World were in fact aligned, sometimes by formal treaties of alliances and sometimes by looser but still powerful ties – arms supplies, military ‘advisers’, foreign bases or heavy economic dependence. Only Burma took the idea of non-alignment to its logical (if extreme) conclusion, by virtually cutting off all contacts with other countries and adopting for a time a near-pacifist stance.

The criterion of economic underdevelopment was for a long time as uncertain as that of non-alignment. When the Afro-Asian group took shape at Bandung, there was nothing to link together the economic interests of Japan (a highly developed industrial country), Saudi Arabia (a wealthy oil producer) and Nepal or Liberia (poor countries that were barely self-sufficient). Attempts by the Afro-Asian states to set up some form of common market in the late 1950s broke down at once on the unbridgeable gaps between the countries concerned. Gradually a recognizable (though never absolutely clear-cut) line emerged between the industrialized, or industrializing, countries on the one hand and those which remained essentially primary producers on the other. At the first UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held at Geneva in 1964, the so-called Group of 77 (often abbreviated to G-77) of developing countries made a common cause on behalf of primary producers and put forward a joint set of economic claims. Even then, primary producers differed widely; and a number of criteria were introduced for the definition of ‘underdevelopment’: the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture; average GDP per inhabitant as a measurement of wealth; literacy rates; infant mortality rates and adult expectation of life. These at least provided some definite means of measuring economic development and underdevelopment; but they still revealed not one Third World but several. Four could readily be distinguished: Africa south of the Sahara, which (except for the prosperous but ostracized South Africa) was the poorest; East and South-East Asia; the Arab world; and Latin America. But even among these there were wide variations – for example, in the Arab world between Tunisia and Saudi Arabia; or in Latin America between Honduras and Argentina. Thus, while underdevelopment became widely used to define the Third World, it was a simple term which concealed a complicated and divergent reality.

There was another defining feature of the Third World. It was anti-colonialist,

and represented the unity of the previously colonized and conquered peoples against the imperialists. Again, the reality behind this apparently straightforward sentiment was far from simple. The elites in former colonies often derived much of their culture from the metropolitan country. For example, they spoke, wrote and thought in English or in French; had received a university education in Britain or in France; and were often widely separated from the mass of the population in their own countries. Moreover, there was a great divide between countries with long histories of civilization and political life (e.g. China, Egypt, Ghana, India, Iran, Peru and Thailand) and other areas where the whole concept of an organized state had been imposed by the colonizing power, and where frontiers were simply lines drawn on maps by European governments in the nineteenth century (as was the case in much of Africa).

There was a further difficulty, because a division into colonialists and colonized implied only two worlds, not three. In the nineteenth century, Russia had been every bit as much an imperialist power as Britain or France, conquering Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan in the same way as the British conquered Zululand or the French invaded Algeria. Similarly, the Americans had fought their Indian wars and conquered territory from Mexico in war. Logically, the countries of the Third World should have lumped the imperialists together and denounced them all; but in practice they mostly preferred to ignore the continuing empire of the Soviet Union and concentrated their fire on the West European colonial states and on the economic and cultural imperialism of the United States.

Anti-American sentiment became increasingly important as the concept of the Third World was extended from the Afro-Asians to include Latin America, as occurred in the early 1960s. The Latin American states had certainly been colonies in the somewhat distant past, having achieved their independence from Spain and Portugal at the beginning of the nineteenth century. But in practice the Latin American claim to belong to the Third World in the guise of anti-colonialism was based on resentment against the economic predominance of the United States, not on their status as former Spanish or Portuguese colonies. Here was another element to add to the anti-colonial sentiment which, despite some complications, was probably the simplest and strongest characteristic of the Third World.

The principal reason for anti-Americanism becoming a core characteristic of the Third World's political identity was, however, the foreign policy of the United States itself. The repeated interventions by Washington in the domestic

quarrels of Asian, African and, above all, Latin American countries bred a global conviction that the United States was a neo-imperialist power, the heir to the European empires of the past. As we have seen, between 1945 and the mid-1960s, the United States established a client state in South Vietnam, overthrew Arbenz, Goulart and Mossadeq and did everything within its power to sabotage Cuba's revolution – much of Fidel Castro's otherwise inexplicable prestige in Europe, let alone the Third World, was due to the fact that he had stood up to the 'Yankees' and had not been squashed. Around the globe (Congo, Spain, South Korea, above all across Latin America), the United States had backed ruthless men in uniforms while proclaiming the universality of human rights and the advantages of democracy. As Odd Arne Westad has written:

By around 1970 the United States had done much to create the Third World as an entity both in a positive and a negative sense. Through its policy of confronting revolution, Washington had helped form blocks of resistance and a very basic form of Third World solidarity. Ironically, its interventions had also contributed to radicalizing many Third World regimes, including some that were distinctly uncomfortable with any association with the Soviet Union.³

Each of these criteria (non-alignment, economic underdevelopment and anti-colonialism/anti-Americanism), if applied separately, would produce a different 'Third World'; though it would be possible to draw up a list of countries which at a given date satisfied all three criteria. For the countries involved, this flexibility has had its advantages. A grouping that cannot be strictly defined is easy to belong to, or to slip in and out of without fuss; and this almost infinite suppleness has helped to ensure for a remarkable longevity for the Third World concept. It sometimes appears that a country forms part of the Third World when its government declares that it is. But such variability makes the term a dangerous one for historians. We cannot define it strictly, because it slips through our fingers, or changes according to the criterion we are applying; yet we cannot dispense with it, because it is a part of our vocabulary and almost part of the world in which we live. Since we can neither define it nor do without it, the best we can do is to use it with caution.

There remains a question. It is easy to see why the countries of the Third World (however defined) sought to establish their own identity and to exert a collective influence on world affairs. But why did the United States and the Soviet Union, operating from a position of power (military, economic and political), regard the Third World as important to them, and sometimes take the countries of the Third

World at their own valuation? There were a number of solid, practical reasons. Third World countries produced large quantities of oil, raw materials and other commodities. They commanded key points on the world's maritime communications: the Straits of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, the Suez Canal and the approaches to the Panama Canal through the Caribbean. The superpowers had their own regional interests which were affected by Third World issues. For example, the republics of Soviet Central Asia were likely to be influenced by developments in Afghanistan or Iran, while the United States had substantial economic and strategic interests in Latin America. In the UN General Assembly, Third World countries could command a majority from about 1960 onwards, with the influx of large numbers of new African states. UN resolutions were by no means always carried out, but they were always of propaganda significance, and sometimes had a cumulative effect on issues of substance.

The Cold War added its own weight and intensity to all these matters. At various times both the superpowers thought that the Cold War might be won and lost in the Third World, which led them to intervene in countries (notably in Africa) where they would not otherwise have been concerned and where they had little or no direct material interest. Behind this lay a deeper ideological issue. Both the United States and the Soviet Union claimed that their system of beliefs was of universal application and that the whole world would eventually adopt (or at any rate would be better off with) capitalism and American-style democracy on the one hand, or socialism and people's democracy on the other. The Third World movement, with its claims to a separate identity and even to moral superiority, was a challenge to these deeply held assumptions.

Finally, there was in the West a powerful psychological influence: guilt. American governments and liberal public opinion felt guilty about slavery and the position of blacks in American society. An influential section of British public opinion felt guilty about the empire and the slave trade. This was largely an Anglo-Saxon phenomenon. French governments (of all political complexions) were unperturbed by their imperial past, and they worked hard to preserve the remains of the French Empire as Overseas Departments or Territories of France and to retain a strong French influence in Africa. But in Britain and in the United States there prevailed a mixture of guilt and condescension – 'We feel superior even while we beat our breasts,' wrote Paul Bauer.⁴ It was a powerful combination of emotions, with lasting effects on policy and influential sections of public opinion. For all these reasons, the countries of the First and Second World concentrated much attention on the

Third, enhancing its reputation and increasing its influence. In the early 1960s, it was not yet clear how the Third World was to develop. At the risk of anticipating our story, we can say that thirty years or so from the 1960s to the late 1980s, three strong tendencies emerged.

First, much of the Third World (Africa, Asia and Latin America) became politically unstable, with frequent insurrections, military coups and civil wars. Military regimes became common in Africa and took over in a number of Asian countries; they had long been endemic in Latin America. Taking the standard idea of the three worlds, the First World (led by America and mainly capitalist in its economic organization) proved to be politically stable; the Second World (the Soviet Union and its eastern European satellites) was held together by the straitjacket of Soviet power and was stable to the point of immobility; but the Third World, with some notable exceptions, was in a constant state of flux.

Second, a number of home-grown Third World ideologies competed for the allegiance of Asian and African countries, and to a lesser degree those of Latin America. Maoist communism flourished in China, made an appeal in Africa and flickered in Latin America, before fading with the reputation of Mao himself after his death. Islam, in an austere and vigorous form, revived in militancy and appeal, notably in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Pan-Arab nationalism ebbed and flowed. All these movements, as Alan Cassels observes, were in part 'expressions of resentment at Western imperialism, stimulated by some degree of racial, anti-white sentiment'.⁵

Third, following the UNCTAD in 1964, the economic aspect of Third World identity grew in importance. That Conference set out, as No. XIV of its General Principles, that 'complete decolonization was the necessary condition for economic development'. This was elaborated as a widely held theory that the 'centre' of the economic system (the industrialized states) exploited the 'periphery' (the Third World), imposing poverty on the deprived nations by an economic system dictated by the demands of the industrialized states. This exploitation was achieved by a variety of means: industrialized states bought their raw materials and food cheaply from the primary producers; international companies made profits for themselves, not for the countries where they operated; and indigenous capitalists within the Third World supposedly collaborated with foreigners at the expense of their own people.

There were many difficulties with this theory, which sought to impose a single pattern on a very complex situation. Notably, there were a number of the poorest countries which had almost no international trade (such as Ethiopia) or had never

been colonies (like Liberia). The export of primary products (e.g. rubber from Malaysia) or agricultural produce (e.g. vegetables and coffee from Kenya) was often very profitable to the exporting country. Moreover, it was possible to point to an Asian country with very little land, a large and dense population, compelled to import all its oil and raw materials, the home of many international companies, and under colonial rule by a European power, and yet with a thriving economy – Hong Kong. It was also the case that the French-speaking states of West and Central Africa did at least as much to exploit their links with France as the French did to exploit them. Despite these exceptions, so-called dependency theory was widely regarded as a compelling account of economic relationships in the post-war world; hence it became an influential way of describing the Third World.⁶

The truth is that while governments from Africa, Asia and Latin America aspired to achieve solidarity among themselves at the UN and in other international forums, in practice, like all nation states, especially when newly founded and insecure, they primarily looked after their own interests.⁷ Between 1989 and 1991, as first the Soviet bloc and then the Soviet Union itself disappeared, one of the original two ‘Worlds’ which had given the Third World its name ceased to exist. And indeed, since then, we have tended to prefer the term ‘developing world’. Despite this, the term ‘Third World’ is an indispensable concept if we are seeking to explain global politics in the first two decades of the Cold War. While it lacks any precise definition, and while the circumstances which gave birth to it have ceased to exist, this does not mean that we should regard it as a meaningless concept. It had meaning at the time and influenced events. Our analysis of international relations is largely conducted through the prism of such concepts. We do well to remember it.

Notes

- 1 Alfred Sauvy, ‘Trois mondes, une planete’ (three worlds, one planet), *France-Observateur*, 14 August 1952.
- 2 *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (2nd ed., London, 1981), p. 1,203.
- 3 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 157.
- 4 P. T. Bauer, *Equality, the Third World and Economic Delusion* (London, 1981), p. 84.
- 5 Alan Cassels, *Ideology and International Relations in the Modern World* (London, 1996), p. 238.
- 6 Raymond Aron, *Les dernières années du XXe siècle* (Paris, 1984), pp. 66–85; Bauer, *Equality*, pp. 66–85, 185–90 (including the example of Hong Kong); David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*

(London, 1998), especially chapter 25.

7 See Rosemary Righter, *Utopia Lost: The United Nations and World Order* (New York, 1995), p. 20.

PART THREE

Détente Between the Superpowers, 1963–80



PHOTO 5 *US president Richard Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev seated in the White House with a portrait of George Washington in the background (Getty Images. Credit: Universal History Archive).*

13

Cold War and détente, 1963–9

The beginnings of détente – The background to Soviet policy, 1963–8 – American policy and the problem of Vietnam – Soviet–American relations and the development of détente – Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968 – Nixon and a new start, 1969.

The coming of détente

The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 was a profound shock to the superpowers. Unlike the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, it was not a confrontation between allies or substitutes, but between the Americans and Soviets themselves, who metaphorically looked straight down the barrels of each other's guns – which were not rifles but nuclear missiles. The experience was salutary as well as alarming, and gave a sharp new impulse to the search for a *modus vivendi* between the superpowers, in the literal sense of finding a means of staying alive.

In 1961, before the Cuba crisis, Raymond Aron had written that the United States and the Soviet Union were *frères-ennemis* – brothers as well as enemies.¹ The crisis brought this paradox home to both governments. They did not cease to be enemies, but they knew that they had to cooperate and to keep in touch with one another. In purely practical terms, they needed a quicker means of communication in times of emergency. At one point during the Cuba crisis, the Soviet ambassador in Washington had to send an urgent cipher message to his government, using the services of the American Western Union telegraph office, which actually sent a messenger by bicycle to collect the telegram. This touch of absurdity in circumstances of high drama and imminent peril brought home the need for something better by way of communications; and a Soviet–American

agreement signed in Geneva on 20 June 1963 provided for the establishment of a 'hot line', which was in practice a direct telephone link between Moscow and Washington, via Helsinki, Stockholm, Copenhagen and London. This was less certain than it appeared – a Finnish farmer once cut the cable in the course of his labours; a second line was therefore installed by way of reinsurance, and eventually a radio–telephone link via satellite was set up.²

In the event, the hot line was not used until 1967, during the Six-Day War between Israel and the Arabs; but its very existence was significant. At the same time the Soviet ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, in cooperation with American officials, developed means of making highly secret contacts between the two governments. Over the next ten years these contacts were to reach the stage where, by Dobrynin's own account, he could say to Henry Kissinger (President Richard M. Nixon's chief adviser on foreign policy, and later secretary of state): 'Come on Henry, this is a bluff, a nonsense. What are you trying to do?'.³ This degree of informality took time to develop, but a start was made in 1963. Moreover, Nixon and Kissinger themselves developed close personal relations, largely concealed from Congress and the press, so that American relations with the Soviet Union were conducted behind a double shield of secrecy.

The United States and Soviet Union also began to move towards some form of arms control. Along with Britain (at that time the only other nuclear power) they concluded, on 5 August 1963, a limited Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, which committed its adherents to give up the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, in outer space or under water. This did not prevent underground tests and therefore did little to hinder the development of nuclear weapons even by the three signatories; and neither France nor China, which were at work on their own nuclear weapons, acceded to the treaty (although, under American pressure, West Germany did; a symbolic renunciation of its right to develop nuclear arms, and one which some leading West German politicians resented). Even so, the treaty had major significance as the first treaty on arms control concluded by the superpowers; and ending tests in the atmosphere was a practical advantage in itself. The agreement was followed by others – the same three powers concluded a treaty on 27 January 1967 providing for the demilitarization of outer space; and on 1 July 1968 all three signed a treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which by 1972 had been joined by a total of seventy-one states.

The 'hot line' and the Test-Ban Treaty of 1963 were limited in their effects, but

none the less important for that. After the brief but alarming paroxysm of the Cuban missile crisis, the Cold War continued, but with an admixture of détente. The word 'détente' itself did not become current until the end of the 1960s, but the fact preceded the name. The problems of definition to which the word gave rise will be examined later; for present purposes, it is enough to take it as meaning a relaxation of tension, and a willingness on both sides to look for limited agreements. The reasons for this change were wider than the immediate shock of the Cuba crisis and may be found in the problems faced by the two superpowers in the 1960s.

The background to Soviet policy, 1963–8

The Cuba crisis ended in a grave setback for the Soviet Union. Khrushchev had ostentatiously directed missiles to Cuba and had then been compelled to withdraw them. Moreover, the defeat appeared worse than it actually was because the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba was partially balanced by the American undertaking to remove their own missiles from Turkey; but the former was made public and the latter was not. Khrushchev's reputation also suffered through his treatment of Castro, who had thrown in his lot with the Soviet Union and then been left in the lurch. When all was over, Khrushchev made amends by inviting Castro to Moscow, providing large quantities of Soviet aid and ensuring that Cuban exports of sugar and tobacco were purchased by the Soviet Union and the countries of the eastern bloc; it was nevertheless impossible to disguise the fact that, at the height of the missile crisis, Cuba itself had been a mere spectator. The Soviet Union, though a socialist state, had simply behaved like a great power – no great surprise, perhaps, but disconcerting to many of the Marxist faithful.

The prestige of the Soviet Union, and Khrushchev's own reputation, thus suffered a bad blow. But Khrushchev was a buoyant, resilient character, and at the beginning of 1963 he could find much cause for optimism. The Berlin Wall had averted the collapse of East Germany, which had begun to settle down and even to prosper. The upheavals of the 1950s in Poland and Hungary had been weathered, and the Soviet bloc seemed more solid. In 1963 the Bulgarian communist leader Todor Zhivkov even sought to have his country incorporated into the Soviet Union – a vote of confidence which the Soviet leadership cautiously declined. Soviet relations with Yugoslavia had improved, though Tito remained resolutely independent. The long-running dispute between the Soviet

Union and China was harmful to the socialist camp, but in 1963 Khrushchev had every hope that he could come out on top. Above all, Khrushchev was convinced that the Third World was moving decisively into the Soviet orbit, and that the Cold War would be won in Africa, Asia and Latin America. On the military front, the Soviet Union was increasing and improving its nuclear weaponry, and after 1962 constructed a great surface fleet, one able to carry the Red Flag into the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. The American maritime supremacy which had decided the Cuban missile crisis was being eroded.

The upshot was a sort of balance. On the credit side, the Soviet position had many advantages and offered good reasons for confidence in the future. On the debit side, Soviet prestige had suffered during the Cuba crisis, and the expenditure on armaments bore heavily on the Soviet economy, which failed to develop at the rate which Khrushchev hoped for. The internal political situation also had its difficulties. In 1964 Khrushchev was overthrown, not least because of his misadventures in foreign policy, and replaced as secretary-general by Leonid Brezhnev, who proved more cautious than Khrushchev, and altogether less ebullient in personality. There were disquieting signs of internal opposition to the Soviet system. In 1965 there was a trial of Ukrainian nationalists in Kiev and demonstrations against Soviet rule in Armenia. In September that year the writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuri Daniel were arrested for circulating *samizdat* publications (a form of clandestine press) critical of the regime. They were sentenced to spells in labour camps in 1966; but the opposition was not silenced. In 1968 a *samizdat* journal, *The Chronicle of Current Events*, began a hazardous but persistent existence, reaching an increasing readership.⁴ The Soviet authorities tried to suppress these activities, but without reimposing the full rigour of Stalinist terror. The result was a continuous grumbling against the regime, which posed no serious or immediate threat but appeared to be gathering weight.

Soviet leaders were thus confident in their own power and looked forward to the success of the socialist cause – Khrushchev brashly, Brezhnev more circumspectly; but at the same time they were sufficiently aware of their own economic and political difficulties to try to lighten some of the burdens on the population and offer some material improvements. They were prepared to confront the United States, but they also looked for some measure of détente by means of arms control and limited diplomatic cooperation. In principle this was not new, but only an extension of the long-standing doctrine of peaceful coexistence, which itself signified a continuation of competition with the

capitalist camp by other means than those of total opposition. The Cold War and détente could go forward together.

The background to US policy: The shadow of Vietnam

The United States emerged successful, if shaken, from the Cuban missile crisis; but even so they faced a legacy of problems. During the crisis, America's allies in NATO had been dismayed by the way in which the United States had taken all the crucial decisions; and the European countries sought some means of sharing in choices whose results could mean life and death to them all. To assuage these anxieties, the Americans attempted to remodel NATO, proposing the establishment of a new integrated nuclear force (called rather clumsily the Multilateral Force, or MLF), to be made up of warships from various countries and to include all the British, and a small proportion of the American, nuclear armaments. The missiles carried by the ships of the MLF would only be used after a unanimous decision by the governments involved, thus giving the Europeans a finger on the nuclear trigger. This complicated proposal was put forward by the Kennedy administration and continued under its successor, and was taken sufficiently seriously for an American warship, the USS *Claude V. Ricketts*, to sail round the Mediterranean with an eight-nation crew to try to prove that it would work. But the scheme was implausible in itself, and in any case left the Americans in charge of the vast majority of their own nuclear weapons – after all, how could it really be otherwise? It died from its own weaknesses by the end of 1964. The Americans retained control of all their weapons; so did the British and French, with their relatively small atomic and nuclear forces. (The British had exploded their first atomic device in 1952 and a nuclear device in 1958; the French tests were in 1960 and 1968, respectively.)

In other respects Western Europe was escaping from American hegemony. France, under the presidency of Charles de Gaulle, pursued an increasingly independent policy, leaving the NATO command structures (though not the treaty itself) in 1966. West Germany began to follow a new course when the long-serving chancellor Adenauer left office in 1963. The socialist leader Willy Brandt, who became foreign minister in 1966 and chancellor in 1969, evolved a new policy towards Eastern Europe, so-called *Ostpolitik*, which produced agreements with Poland, East Germany and the Soviet Union between 1970 and

1972. In the Middle East, Israel struck out on its own course in launching the Six-Day War against Egypt, Jordan and Syria in June 1967 (see [Chapter 16](#)). There were enough difficulties here for the Americans; but all came to be overshadowed by the problem of Vietnam.

In 1954 the Geneva Conference had agreed to divide North Vietnam from the South along the 17th Parallel of latitude, though with the hope of later unification. The United States refused to sign the Geneva agreements; but when the French finally withdrew from Indo-China in 1955 the Americans stepped in to support South Vietnam, building up its armed forces and trying – in theory, at least – to shape its political system on democratic lines. Unlike President de Gaulle, who became one of the most critical voices raised against America's campaign in Vietnam, the Americans at that stage (and for some time afterwards) saw no distinction between communism and Vietnamese nationalism – victory in Vietnam for Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese would mean the advance of world communism, and this could not be permitted.

President Eisenhower thus embarked on intervention in South Vietnam; and when Kennedy succeeded him as president in January 1961 he continued the same course. Vietnam was by no means Kennedy's first priority, and it was not until November 1961 that the new administration decided on its practical policies. The National Security Council ruled out sending combat troops, with the exception of 400 men of the Special Forces (the Green Berets) to train South Vietnamese commandos and undertake small-scale clandestine operations; but agreed to raise the strength of the South Vietnamese Army to 250,000, and to supply it with American equipment. Economic aid to the South Vietnamese government, headed by Ngo Dinh Diem, was to be made conditional upon its making progress towards democracy.

This policy sought to protect South Vietnam, and eventually get the country to stand on its own feet, while limiting the scale of American intervention. But the limits proved difficult to maintain and intervention soon increased. American 'military advisers', who numbered about 3,000 when Kennedy took office, were reinforced to 8,000 by the end of 1962. Infiltration by North Vietnamese guerrillas in support of the South Vietnamese communists (the Viet Cong) increased steadily, and the Americans tried to check the flow by using helicopters (flown by American pilots) to harass the Viet Cong's lines of communication. The line between 'advising' and actual fighting grew blurred and was frequently crossed. In political affairs, the Americans lost faith in Ngo Dinh Diem, whom they had long identified as a democratic leader who would

become the saviour of his country. On 1 November 1963 a group of South Vietnamese generals, with at least the connivance of the American Embassy and CIA officers in Saigon, overthrew Diem's government. Diem himself and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, were both murdered. It appears that top officials of the Kennedy administration, including the president himself, were aware that the coup was being planned. The inevitable result of Diem's ouster was to draw the Americans increasingly into the intricate domestic politics of South Vietnam. During the next year, 1964, there were no fewer than seven changes of government in South Vietnam, and the Americans found themselves providing almost the only element of continuity.

When President Kennedy was assassinated on 22 November 1963, his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, continued the same policy of limited intervention, though it was already looking threadbare. By then there were about 16,000 American 'military advisers' in South Vietnam; which was beginning to seem either too many or too few. They were too many in that they represented a commitment which would be difficult to escape from without loss of prestige; yet they were also too few, in that they were not producing decisive results.

Thus far, up to the end of 1963 and early 1964, Vietnam had not become a primary concern either for American policy or for American public opinion. Berlin and Cuba far outweighed Vietnam from 1961 to 1962; and in 1963 domestic politics predominated. As for public opinion, the press and television covered Vietnam only cursorily; no TV network was regularly represented in the country before 1965. The public as a whole showed little interest – nearly 800 Americans were killed in Vietnam during Kennedy's presidency, without creating any great stir at home.⁵ In the next few years, between 1964 and 1967, this situation changed drastically. American military forces intervened in Vietnam on a large scale, and in consequence the war became a central concern for the American media and public opinion. How did this change come about?

On 4 August 1964 an American warship, the USS *Maddox*, claimed to have been attacked by night in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, and to have sunk its attacker (presumed to be North Vietnamese) without trace. President Johnson seized on this mysterious affair to secure the support of Congress in what had so far been very much a presidential involvement in Vietnam. Within three days he secured the passage through Congress of a resolution (the Tonkin Gulf Resolution), concluding that, if the president judged it necessary, the United States was prepared to do all in its power, including the use of its armed forces, to ensure the independence and integrity of South Vietnam and Laos.

This resolution, which gave the president virtually a free hand to use force in Vietnam, was passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 416 to nil, and in the Senate by 88 votes to 2 (both Democrats – Senators Wayne Morse of Oregon and Ernest Gruening of Alaska). This overwhelming support included all the ‘liberal establishment’ of that time – James Fulbright, a distinguished and internationalist Democratic senator, guided the resolution through the Senate, and in the press the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* both supported it. Public opinion polls were favourable. The later opposition to the war was at this stage unforeseen, and perhaps unforeseeable. The consensus behind government policy seemed virtually complete. Ernest R. May, an American historian, wrote in 1973 that ‘given the assumptions generally shared by Americans in the 1960s, it seems probable that any collection of men and women would have decided as did the members of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations’.⁶

In view of later events, it is necessary to ask why this was so. What were the assumptions shared by Americans in the 1960s? They were doubtless a mixed bag, but their total effect was formidable. American policymakers were still much influenced by the reaction against the policy of appeasement in the 1930s, and felt that there must be no surrender to aggression – no repetition of the Munich agreement of 1938. This attitude was closely allied to the ‘domino theory’ – if South Vietnam fell, the rest of South-East Asia would follow, a belief which bore the authority of Eisenhower, who had been a military hero as well as a popular president. To these assumptions Kennedy added his own belief that Khrushchev’s emphasis on wars of national liberation meant that guerrilla warfare would be the new test of American strength and determination. The United States must face this test and pass it. For a superpower and the leader of the ‘free world’, there was no alternative. The whole American stance from the Truman Doctrine to Kennedy’s inaugural address led inexorably to the same conclusion. Moreover, behind all these assumptions lay the certainty that the Americans could win the war in Vietnam. They possessed total supremacy in the air, and if necessary could use massive firepower on land. In the 1960s, American strategic thinking was dominated by a pseudo-scientific approach, strongly advocated by the secretary for defence Robert McNamara, in which everything could be calculated in terms of firepower, bomb-loads and casualty rates (an insistence on ‘body counts’ later became a feature of American military policy in Vietnam), and too little attention was paid to the imponderable and incalculable issue of morale.

Within a few years, these assumptions lost all their substance, and the

arguments came to seem no more than illusions. American intervention in Vietnam appeared at best an enormous mistake and at worst a crime against humanity and an offence against the ideals that the United States ostensibly stood for.

When the Tonkin Gulf Resolution passed in 1964 no great change in policy had yet been decided upon. The resolution conferred wide freedom of action on the president, but he had still not decided how to use it. Johnson campaigned in the presidential election of 1964 on a platform which included non-escalation of the war in Vietnam. Unhappily, limited intervention still failed to produce results. The Viet Cong guerrillas, supplied and reinforced from the North, continued their operations in South Vietnam. The Americans turned to air power to cut their enemies' communications and destroy their sources of supply. In March 1965 they began the heavy bombing of North Vietnam (grandly code-named 'Operation Rolling Thunder'), ostensibly directed against factories, military installations and supply routes, and intended more broadly to 'punish' the North Vietnamese for their intervention in the South – though the Americans were careful to keep clear of the Chinese border, and to avoid provoking further Chinese intervention in the war.

This proved to be the beginning of the escalation which had so far been avoided. The American military commanders felt they had to defend the bases from which the bombers operated, and did not trust South Vietnamese troops to do the job. General William Westmoreland therefore asked for a force of Marines as reinforcements. President Johnson agreed, and on 8 March 1965, 3,500 Marines landed at Da Nang, where the main American base was established. They were ostentatiously welcomed with garlands of flowers, but their arrival proved to be a prelude to disaster. More Marines followed, and then infantry contingents. The air bombardments continued, with destructive intensity, but they failed to bring the war on the ground to an end. In July 1965 Johnson, along with almost all his close advisers (George Ball in the State Department was a far-sighted exception), concluded that the war would have to be won by dispatching large numbers of American troops, not just as advisers or to defend bases, but to fight. The Americans set out to win by wearing down the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese by bombing from the air, by overwhelming firepower on the ground and by sheer weight of casualties. It was to be a war of attrition.

They miscalculated completely. As Ho Chi Minh and his military commander, General Giap, knew well, the North Vietnamese were far more willing to take

heavy casualties than the Americans were to accept their own, much lighter losses. They had outlasted the French, and were ready to outlast the Americans. Moreover, the North Vietnamese were receiving supplies and equipment from both the Chinese and the Soviets, so that even in material terms they were not totally at a disadvantage. Despite the disparity in firepower between the two sides, attrition favoured the North Vietnamese, not the Americans.

In the mid-to-late 1960s this was not yet clear to the Washington policy establishment (though it perhaps should have been). The Americans rapidly built up their forces in Vietnam – 184,000 at the end of 1965, 385,000 at the end of 1966, 485,000 at the end of 1967.⁷ The American commanders continued to promise victory, though they could not yet produce it; indeed, the Americans' own estimates of North Vietnamese infiltration into the South increased steadily. Nonetheless, at the end of 1967 General Westmoreland had convinced himself and his government that victory would be achieved in 1968. He was wrong.

Soviet–American relations, 1963–7

In the period following the Cuban missile crisis, the Soviet Union therefore remained committed to competition with the United States, but also had good reasons to pursue a policy of peaceful coexistence by means of arms control and improved communications with Washington. The United States was waging the Cold War with increasing intensity in Vietnam, but was willing to improve relations with the Soviet Union at the same time. The two superpowers therefore manoeuvred rather awkwardly for diplomatic advantage.

After the Cuban missile crisis, Khrushchev revised his opinion of Kennedy, referring to him as another Roosevelt, and looking forward to working with him as joint peacemakers who could cope with the problems of the world. Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 and Khrushchev's removal from office in October 1964 changed all that. Johnson was an unknown quantity to the Soviet leadership; and in 1964 he had to fight a presidential election in which his Republican opponent was Barry Goldwater, who was fiercely anti-communist. Johnson was anxious to maintain the contacts with the Soviet Union which had been established since 1962, but he did not dare to appear less anti-communist than his opponent. He was convinced that he must not show weakness. He therefore took the precaution of explaining to the Soviet ambassador, through an intermediary, that during the election campaign he might well have to say unpleasant things about the Soviet regime.

Such distinctions between election rhetoric and serious policy were not always understood in Moscow, where elections were simpler matters; and it may well be that the tone of the 1964 presidential election campaign did some harm to American–Soviet relations, despite Johnson’s attempt at reassurance. But when the election was over, the Americans were anxious to resume contacts with the Soviet government, not least in the hope that the Soviet Union might act as an intermediary with North Vietnam. In 1965 the American secretary of state, Dean Rusk, and the vice president, Hubert Humphrey, approached Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador, to see whether the two governments could work together towards an agreement in Vietnam. In Moscow, Brezhnev and Gromyko were sympathetic to these approaches, recognizing that in terms of power politics their relations with the United States were more important than socialist solidarity with Vietnam. But the Soviets too had their political difficulties. If Johnson could not afford to be thought soft on communism, the Soviet leaders could not afford to be thought weak in their anti-imperialism. The Soviet government could not act as mediator between the Americans and North Vietnam (however unofficially) without appearing to betray the communist cause, and thus allowing the Chinese to denounce them. The best they could do was to help North Vietnam without becoming involved in the war, and to keep up their relations with the Americans, which was important (as Gromyko explained in a memorandum for the Politburo in January 1967) in order to avoid nuclear war and to offer protection against ‘Chinese adventurism’.⁸

The two superpowers thus found they still had something in common, and showed their determination to remain in contact by holding a summit meeting between Johnson and Alexei Kosygin, Brezhnev’s principal Politburo colleague, at Glassboro, New Jersey, from 23 to 25 June 1967, a location chosen because the Soviets thought it politically unwise to hold an official visit to Washington DC while the Vietnam War was raging. During the conversations, Johnson tried to persuade the Soviet government to help in negotiations for a settlement in Vietnam. Kosygin cautiously refused to commit himself, denying that he had any authority to deal with the matter, and pointing out that the North Vietnamese often acted independently, without even keeping Moscow informed. For his part, Kosygin tried to focus the discussions on the Middle East, where the Six-Day War between Egypt, Jordan and Syria and Israel (from 5 to 10 June) had taken place just before the summit began. The conference achieved little in specific terms, but (as is often the case with summit meetings) it was important simply in itself. Johnson and Kosygin at least had met and talked. Before the meetings

ended, Kosygin invited Johnson to visit the Soviet Union in 1968. Johnson accepted, and said that he would like to see a summit meeting take place once a year – something which was to be achieved for a short while in the 1970s.

The Vietnam War did not prevent the Americans and Soviets from improving relations in 1967; and from the American point of view it actually gave an impetus to détente. The process of superpower accommodation ultimately was one that possessed a strong rationale. As a result, it was even able to withstand 1968, when the Soviet Union's troubles in Czechoslovakia and the United States' military conduct in Vietnam brought about major crises of legitimacy for both superpowers.

The Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968

Dramatic events occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1968 as internal political difficulties between reformers and hardliners, and between Czechs and Slovaks, caused turmoil in the ruling Communist Party. In December 1967 Soviet leader Brezhnev declared that the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party was a question for its own members. After this apparent green light, on 5 January 1968, the first secretary of the party (and in effect the ruler of the country), Antonin Novotny, was removed and replaced by a Slovak and a reformer, Alexander Dubček. For a time Novotny remained in the largely honorary post of president of the Republic; but on 22 March he resigned and was replaced by General Ludvik Svoboda. Novotny had been content to keep the regime ticking over and was anxious to clamp down on new ideas – more than anywhere else in the Soviet bloc, Czechoslovakia was enjoying a ferment of free thinking about politics, law, philosophy and art in the mid-1960s.⁹ Dubček by contrast wished to make radical changes, while retaining the communist system, as did General Svoboda. His surname happened to mean 'freedom'; the day when he took office was by some reckonings the first day of spring, and he made a point of visiting the grave of Thomas Masaryk, the founder of the Czechoslovakian state. All these things seemed to be portents of change.

Dubček described what he wanted to do in a striking phrase – to create 'socialism with a human face' – which bore the sadly accurate implication that so far the face of socialism had not been human. He relaxed censorship in March and abolished it in June. The result of this change was an explosion of books,

articles and pamphlets attacking the Czech brand of socialism. The most notorious of these works was a brief article called 'Two Thousand Words that Belong to Workers, Farmers, Officials, Scientists, Artists and Everybody', penned by the dissident author Ludvik Vaculik, but signed by more than sixty prominent intellectuals. A ringing condemnation of party rule, which Vaculik argued was attractive only for 'power-hungry individuals eager to wield authority ... and to people with bad consciences'. The publication of 'Two Thousand Words' infuriated the Warsaw Pact's leaders, who saw it as a sign that 'counter-revolutionary' forces were prevailing.¹⁰

Dubček, by contrast, seemingly shared the radicals' views of the need for party reform. He called for a Special Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, to meet in September to consider a programme of changes – the introduction of self-management and workers' councils in factories, and possibly the creation of 'interest groups' which could be represented in the communist-controlled National Front, which had ruled the country since 1948, without forming new political parties. In making these proposals, Dubček remained committed to socialism; he also was intent on preserving the directing role of the Communist Party and had no intention of abandoning the Warsaw Pact or moving towards neutrality. His programme was popular in Czechoslovakia. Would it be acceptable in Moscow?

The Soviet leaders hesitated for some time, not about aims but about methods. They were agreed that they could not simply stand aside and leave Czechoslovakia to its own devices, thus opening the way for other countries to follow suit. Czechoslovakia must be brought back into line, but opinions were divided as to how this should be done. Andropov, who had been involved in crushing the Hungarian rising in 1956, wanted to use force again. Others wanted to repeat the internal coup of 1948, using Czech communists loyal to Moscow to restore the situation; but they were not sure they could find enough supporters. Brezhnev was apparently uncertain about using force, right up to the last moment.

The Soviet leaders put heavy pressure on Dubček. At the end of July they summoned him to Moscow for a meeting; courageously, he refused to go, insisting that he would talk only on Czechoslovakian territory. Meetings took place from 29 July to 1 August, and again on 3 August, when Dubček agreed on a form of words to the effect that his government would not allow anyone to undermine the bases of socialism. But this did not suffice. During the night from 20 to 21 August 1968 a powerful army of twenty-nine divisions, with 7,500

tanks, invaded Czechoslovakia. They were supported by contingents of troops from East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria (but not Romania, which was highly critical of the operation). The force was so overwhelming that there was little resistance, with casualties variously estimated at between eighty and two hundred.¹¹ The Soviets could find no collaborators able to command public opinion, so that Dubček was not removed from office. Instead he was compelled to go to Moscow, where on 26 August he accepted, under duress, the Moscow Protocol, by which communist orthodoxy was to be restored in Czechoslovakia. A new censorship law was imposed in September. Eventually, in April 1969, Dubček was replaced as first secretary of the Czechoslovakian Party by Gustav Husák, who began a process of ‘normalization’ (i.e. a purge). In May 1970 Dubček was expelled from the Communist Party and became an ‘unperson’ for the official media; but he was at least allowed to live in retirement, in striking contrast to the fate of those who had been purged in earlier times.

The Soviets justified their action in principle by setting out the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine in an article in *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party, on 26 September 1968, under the heading: ‘Sovereignty and the international obligations of socialist countries’. According to this article, the freedom of foreign (i.e. non-Soviet) socialists to determine their own country’s path of development must be subordinate to the cause of universal Marxism–Leninism. ‘Any decision of theirs must damage neither socialism in one country nor the fundamental interests of other socialist countries nor the world-wide workers’ movement. ... This means that every Communist party is responsible not only to its own people but to all socialist countries and to the entire Communist movement.’¹² In other words, communist countries should subordinate their independence to the interests of communism as a whole, as defined by the Soviet Union. The imperialistic nature of the Soviet Union had seldom been so crudely displayed.

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia caused scarcely a ripple in the pond of détente. At the end of July, Dean Rusk, the American secretary of state, let his opposite number, Gromyko, know that the United States had no wish to become involved in events in Czechoslovakia. When the invasion actually took place, the Soviet ambassador in Washington, Dobrynin, went to see President Johnson at 8.00 pm on Sunday, 20 August, at the very time when Soviet tanks were moving into Czechoslovakia, to explain the Soviet action. By Dobrynin’s account, Johnson displayed no strong reaction and went on to talk about his proposed visit to Moscow as though there were no difficulty in its going ahead as planned.

In Western Europe, the former French premier, Michel Debré, described the Soviet invasion as merely a minor incident on the road to détente. Harold Wilson, the British prime minister, who had recently visited Moscow, refused to allow the invasion of Czechoslovakia to interfere with the good relations he was building up with the Soviet Union.

There was in effect no international crisis over the invasion of Czechoslovakia. No one imposed, or even suggested, economic sanctions against the Soviet Union. France postponed (but did not cancel) meetings arranged between French and Soviet ministers. The Security Council of the UN debated a resolution on 22 August condemning the armed intervention in Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact powers, and calling upon them to withdraw their forces forthwith; but the resolution concluded by merely requesting members of the UN 'to exercise their diplomatic influence' to bring about its implementation. The Soviet Union vetoed the resolution, and there the matter rested.¹³

The reasons for this passivity are not far to seek. The United States was in deep trouble in Vietnam and hoped that the Soviet Union might help them out. American opinion was increasingly divided over the war in Vietnam, and there was no scope for the United States to take a high moral line about intervention in a foreign country. Moreover, the United States and the Soviet Union actually signed a nuclear non-proliferation treaty on 1 July 1968, and they planned to begin talks on strategic arms limitation, which the Americans had no intention of giving up. Finally, after Dubček himself had yielded to superior force and come to an agreement with his adversary, it would have appeared strange for the Western powers to care more for Czech independence than the Czechs themselves did.

It is worth dwelling on the contrast between the Western reactions to the Prague coup of February 1948 and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. The coup of 1948 was a communist seizure of power, but involved no invasion by Soviet troops; yet the West responded by the immediate conclusion of the Brussels Treaty and the opening of moves which led to the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. In 1968 the Soviet Union and four other countries invaded Czechoslovakia, and the Western response was to carry on with business as usual. Relations between the United States (and other Western powers) and the Soviet Union had changed out of recognition. Brezhnev drew the conclusion from the lack of any strong Western reaction to the invasion of Czechoslovakia that the borders drawn in Central Europe between 1945 and

1946 were in fact permanent. He therefore set out to change this de facto situation to a de jure acceptance through ratification by a series of treaties. This was to be a major objective of Soviet foreign policy for some years to come.

The Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia thus passed with remarkably little disturbance. In Czechoslovakia, the question of how far the regime could be reformed without changing its fundamental nature was never answered. The application of overwhelming force reimposed Soviet control with very little bloodshed. There was no international crisis, but instead a general acceptance that the status quo should be maintained. But there was movement beneath the surface. The Prague Spring stirred a response in other countries, and Dubček's phrase about 'socialism with a human face' was long remembered. Even within the Soviet Union, dissidents protested clandestinely against the invasion. Some twenty years later Mikhail Gorbachev was to raise the question of reforming socialism in the Soviet Union by means of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring), reviving the main themes of Dubček's abortive changes in 1968. The events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia left their mark; and Dubček himself was to live to see a happier ending in 1989.

The United States and Vietnam, 1968: The year of crisis

In 1968 the Soviet Union was confronted by a challenge to its authority in Czechoslovakia, and responded with overwhelming military force. In the same year the United States faced a far-reaching crisis in Vietnam and at home, and fell into disarray. During the night from 30 to 31 January 1968 Viet Cong guerrillas and forces from North Vietnam launched a surprise offensive against the Americans and South Vietnamese right across South Vietnam. The date chosen was Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, when the South Vietnamese troops were off guard; and at the beginning the Tet offensive achieved startling successes. In Saigon, the capital, guerrillas even attacked the American Embassy, various government buildings and the airport. Gradually the Americans and South Vietnamese recovered; and when the fighting drew to a close at the end of February the offensive had achieved only small gains at the cost of heavy casualties among the attacking forces.

But the immediate psychological impression could not be effaced. Instead of the victory which the American commanders had been forecasting for 1968,

there were Viet Cong guerrillas firing mortar shells at the US Embassy under the gaze of American reporters and cameramen. The American news media (television, radio and press) conveyed an impression of calamity, evoking comparisons with the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The result was a striking example of how publicity and the mass media can affect policy and strategy. When President Johnson claimed, correctly, that the Americans had won the battle, hardly anyone believed him. Americans had nearly half-a-million troops in South Vietnam at the end of 1967, but the result of this deployment was the Tet offensive. Americans drew (the accurate) conclusion that something was going disastrously wrong.

In March 1968, military commanders in Vietnam asked the government for the dispatch of a further 206,000 troops. This new escalation could only be done by calling up reservists, which had so far been avoided; and the treasury secretary, Henry Fowler, pointed out that it would have to be paid for by reducing other forms of expenditure (at the time, the cost of the Vietnam War was being met *in addition to* increased social spending). The request for more troops was only partly met: the increase in numbers from 1967 to 1968 was limited to about 50,000 – from 485,000 to 536,000.¹⁴

The general consensus in favour of the war when the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed in 1964 had been steadily eroded. Opposition had begun on a small scale, among pacifist and left-wing groups, and in universities, and grew as the war went on. In April 1967 there were large-scale organized demonstrations in San Francisco and New York; during the summer the White House was besieged by protesters, so that the president could scarcely leave without a confrontation. In October there was a vast march on the Pentagon. The East Coast press (notably the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*) turned against the war. More important for public opinion in general, the presentation of the war on television became more prominent, and shifted from support to neutrality, and in some cases to hostility by 1968. It has been calculated that before the Tet offensive, editorial comment on television ran about 4–1 in favour of American policy in Vietnam, and afterwards 2–1 against. It is hard to believe that this shift in attitude had no effect, or that the shock administered by the reporting of the Tet offensive passed rapidly away.¹⁵

In any case, the change in opinion was far from total. The anti-war movement never achieved coherence or permanence in organization. It was not clear that a majority of the American people opposed the war. But President Johnson's personal popularity suffered badly, with an 'approval rating' falling as low as 26

per cent in March 1968.¹⁶ A presidential election was due in November 1968, but it would take place without the sitting president. On 31 March the discredited Johnson announced that he would not stand for re-election, and would instead devote the remainder of his term of office to a search for peace. It amounted to outright surrender by the president, who had previously committed himself to the war.

Articulate American opinion was thus plunged into dispute and dissension over what the historian and intellectual Arthur Schlesinger Jr called the 'bitter heritage' of the war. Was the corrupt and dictatorial regime in South Vietnam worthy of American support? What sort of conflict was it that could cause American troops to commit terrible war crimes such as the My Lai massacre (March 1968), when US troops indiscriminately killed hundreds of people in a village suspected of harbouring Viet Cong guerrillas? Could the United States 'save Vietnam' by a war which in itself threatened to destroy the country? The unity of American society was undermined by these questions, and American self-confidence began to collapse.

The crucial nature of this change may be illustrated by comparison with the situation during the Second World War. The United States fought that war in alliance with the Soviet Union, a totalitarian dictatorship far worse in character than the Saigon regime. American troops fought with great ruthlessness, especially against the Japanese. The air force bombed towns flat, regardless of civilian casualties. But hardly anyone protested; and if they did, they gained little support. The crucial issue did not lie in the moral character of America's allies, or the methods of warfare adopted, but in the belief of the American people that the war was necessary and right. When that belief was undermined, as it was over Vietnam, discord and loss of confidence followed. Napoleon is reported to have said that in war three-quarters of the result turned on morale, and material factors counted for only the remaining quarter. The situation of the Americans in Vietnam bore out that verdict.

Failure in self-confidence within the United States was accompanied by a rise in anti-American sentiment outside, where the Vietnam War became a focus and stimulus for an already existing fund of resentment against the United States. In Japan, there was public opposition to American aircraft taking off from Okinawa to bomb North Vietnam. In London, there were repeated demonstrations against the Vietnam War outside the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square. In Paris, the students who demonstrated and rioted so spectacularly in May 1968 included the Vietnam War among the many objects of their political passion. Even in West

Germany, which owed so much to the United States, the press was often severely critical. In all these countries, the pictures displayed on television screens *from American sources* undermined support for the United States even among those normally inclined to be sympathetic. The Americans appeared, on their own testimony, to be ‘not only brutal but incompetent’.¹⁷ To some observers the first fault was more significant, and to others the second; together they were almost fatal.

Almost fatal, but not quite. Even in the midst of its difficulties, the United States remained a great power, which governments did not desert even when they were dismayed by some of its actions. Some countries were so closely bound to the United States that they sent troops to fight in Vietnam. Australia contributed a total of 60,000, with a maximum of 8,500 serving at any one time. New Zealand sent a small contingent; South Korea a large one – about 300,000 men in all. In Britain, Harold Wilson, the Labour prime minister, resolutely refused American pleas to send even a token force of British troops to Vietnam, but he maintained steady diplomatic support, and resisted pressure from his party to condemn American policy in his speeches. The West German government, under Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger, remained firm in its public support. Japanese governments continued to support the United States and were not unwilling to accept the advantages which the Americans produced to reward their loyalty. Only in France did the government, under President de Gaulle, express open opposition to American policy in Vietnam – most spectacularly in a speech in Phnomh Penh, the capital of Cambodia, in September 1966. The allies of the United States were dismayed by the American troubles in Vietnam and disturbed by the reactions of public opinion in their own countries; but their ties with the United States were far too important to be given up.

Nixon and a new start in American foreign policy, 1969

In the American presidential election of 1968, the Republican candidate, Richard Nixon (who had previously been Eisenhower’s vice president and had lost the election of 1960 to Kennedy) narrowly defeated his Democratic opponent, Hubert Humphrey. During the campaign, the Soviet leadership was so perturbed by Nixon’s reputation for anti-communism that, according to Dobrynin’s memoirs, they made a secret offer of help to Humphrey – who at once refused

it.¹⁸

Such anxiety proved misplaced. Nixon quickly made it clear that he wished to maintain confidential relations with Moscow through Henry Kissinger, his national security adviser, and Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador in Washington. Dobrynin became a frequent visitor to the White House, using the service entrance when he wished to be discreet; and he established a close and confidential relationship with Kissinger (Nixon was much impressed that nothing ever leaked out from the Soviet Embassy, and doubtless wished, in view of subsequent events, that the White House staff had been equally good at keeping secrets). Kissinger himself was keenly aware that the United States, weakened by the Vietnam War, would have to rely more than in the past on diplomacy. He set out, by his own account, to find a compromise 'between abdication and overextension'.¹⁹

The new team in charge of American foreign policy was well suited to seek such a middle road. Nixon, despite his ardent anti-communist past, became primarily concerned with national interests and the balance of power. He placed a portrait of Woodrow Wilson prominently in the Cabinet Room in the White House, but he operated less like Wilson than Talleyrand. Nixon appointed William Rogers as secretary of state, but in fact his principal adviser on foreign policy was Kissinger, who had written a study of the Congress of Vienna, where Talleyrand, the French foreign minister, had achieved much for his country from a position of weakness.

Kissinger proved to be a skilful practitioner of secret diplomacy and power politics. He wrote later, with almost palpable scorn, of those who regarded foreign policy as a subdivision of theology, who hoped the Soviets would be converted, and those who thought it was a branch of psychiatry, who thought they should be made to feel secure. Kissinger, on the contrary, set out with the limited objective of making the Soviet Union a less dangerous enemy.²⁰

Nixon expounded his foreign policy in a speech at Guam, in the Pacific, on 25 July 1969. Even in what was to prove the age of the new realism he still used the old nomenclature, and called his policy the 'Nixon Doctrine'; but in fact he was severely practical. In the face of doubt about American steadfastness and strength of will, he reassured his allies that the United States would stand by its treaty commitments. The Americans would continue to provide a nuclear shield against nuclear threats; but they would also expect other countries to provide for their own defence against non-nuclear aggression. With regard to the Soviet Union, the United States would maintain *détente*, and if possible speed it up. His

first priority was arms control, and indeed on 25 October 1969 the American and Soviet governments announced jointly that strategic arms limitation talks (generally known by the acronym SALT) would begin in Helsinki on 17 November. Nixon was in a hurry – he was already a quarter of the way through his four-year presidential term of office, and had to use his time to good effect. His mind was already ranging far ahead, and he had major surprises in store.

Notes

- 1 Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (London, 1966), pp. xi, 536. The French original, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, was published in 1962.
- 2 See Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962–1986)* (New York, 1995), pp. 96–8, for the episodes of the Western Union cyclist and the Finnish farmer.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 4 For details of *samizdat* and nationalist dissent, see Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (London, 1997), pp. 381–2, 390–1.
- 5 Jacques Portes, *Les Américains et la Guerre du Vietnam* (Paris, 1993), p. 83.
- 6 Ernest R. May, 'Lessons' of the Past: *The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 120–1.
- 7 Portes, *Les Américains et la Guerre du Vietnam*, p. 111, citing *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1985, p. 342.
- 8 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp. 156–8.
- 9 See Vladimir I. Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: The Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge, 2002) for these debates.
- 10 See Jaramir Navratil et al., eds, *The Prague Spring 1968* (Budapest, 1999), documents 44 and 52 for the 'Two Thousand Words' article and the reaction it provoked.
- 11 R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1994), p. 336.
- 12 Alan Cassels, *Ideology and International Relations in the Modern World* (London, 1996), p. 222, citing J. L. Nogee and R. H. Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II* (New York, 1981), pp. 37–9.
- 13 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1968, pp. 22,967–72.
- 14 Portes, *Les Américains et la Guerre du Vietnam*, pp. 346–7.
- 15 See the contrasting views in Philip M. Taylor, *Global Communications, International Affairs and the Media since 1945* (London, 1997), pp. 111–15; and Brian Bond, *The Pursuit of Victory: From Napoleon to Saddam Hussein* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 189–90.
- 16 Portes, *Les Américains et la Guerre du Vietnam*, p. 189.
- 17 Richard J. Barnet, *Allies: American, Europe, Japan since the War* (London, 1984), p. 264.
- 18 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 176.
- 19 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London, 1995), pp. 703–4.
- 20 Barnet, *Allies*, p. 297; Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, pp. 709–10.

14

The high tide of détente, 1969–75

*The problems of the superpowers – The stages of détente and the end in Vietnam
– The limits of détente and the fall of Nixon – Détente in Europe: Brandt's
Ostpolitik – The Helsinki Conference – Results of détente.*

The years between 1969 and 1975 saw an extraordinary transformation in international relations. In 1972 the United States opened diplomatic relations with communist China, in a manner inconceivable ten years before. Between May 1972 and November 1974, American and Soviet leaders held no fewer than four summit meetings. In 1973 the Americans accepted defeat in Vietnam and escaped from a disastrous war by a peace settlement which itself collapsed within two years. At the same time, there was a new flexibility in Europe, where Chancellor Willy Brandt's policy of *Ostpolitik* led to treaties with the Soviet Union (August 1970), Poland (December 1970), East Germany (December 1972) and Czechoslovakia (December 1973). In July 1973 there began the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which concluded in August 1975 with an agreement which itself produced some striking long-term consequences. Détente, which had begun hesitantly in the 1960s, now flourished. Something like a 'Seven Years' Peace' succeeded the lengthy initial period of Cold War tensions. What lay behind these events, and what were the results of détente in this period? Let us look first at the superpowers and their problems.

The problems of the superpowers

Between 1969 and 1975 the United States faced a series of difficulties. The most

obvious was also the most difficult: how to get out of Vietnam without utter disaster and with a 'peace of honour'. When President Nixon took office, he was confronted by a war which the United States could not win and was in fact beginning to lose. He had to terminate an intervention which Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson had consistently declared to be vital for the United States and for the whole of South-East Asia. To get out of the Vietnam War while salvaging American credibility (on which the whole American position in the rest of the world depended) and calming the unrest caused by the war within the United States itself was a Herculean task.

Less obviously, the United States also faced an economic crisis. Inflation and a deteriorating balance of payments made it increasingly difficult to maintain the Bretton Woods structure, in which the US dollar had assumed the role of the world reserve currency, with a fixed parity against gold at the rate of \$35 per ounce of gold.¹ The United States was being steadily pushed towards devaluation of its currency, a fact which Nixon accepted in August 1971 by floating the dollar. The Americans were also increasingly dependent on imported oil, a situation whose full dangers did not appear until the 'oil shock' at the end of 1973, when the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) suddenly trebled the price of oil.² The United States had passed from a situation of unchallenged economic supremacy to one of increasing vulnerability.

Just as important as Vietnam and economics, and linked to both, was a crisis of morale. From 1947 onwards the United States had sustained a political, military and economic world role. Suddenly, in the space of two or three years after 1968, the will to continue this effort sagged. The Vietnam War was the immediate cause of this change, but there was also a long-term weariness under the weight of an apparently endless (and largely thankless) task. By 1969 American spirits were failing, and the broad unity of opinion on foreign policy which had prevailed for over twenty years was breaking down. In all these problems, an improvement in relations with the Soviet Union offered the prospect of relief. The Soviets might help to find a settlement in Vietnam. Détente and arms control could diminish the economic burdens borne by the American government and taxpayers. The worldwide confrontation and endurance test of the Cold War might be eased.

The Soviet leaders faced no crisis of the immediacy and severity of Vietnam; and indeed in 1968 they had dealt with dissent in Czechoslovakia with remarkable ease. But they had difficulties too. In foreign policy, the Soviet Union had seen China turn from an ally to an enemy. In a way, the Soviets had

'lost' China, just as the Americans believed that they had 'lost' it in 1949. A hostile China posed a military threat to the Soviet Union along the long land frontier between the two countries. Moreover, China had tested its first nuclear weapon in 1964. When Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev visited America in June 1973, he told Nixon that China would become a serious nuclear power within the next ten years, and he seemed a good deal agitated by this prospect.³ Moreover, Chinese ideological independence had split the socialist camp and deprived the Soviet Union of its prestige as the unchallenged leader of world communism.

The Soviet Union faced other challenges to its hegemony within the world socialist movement. The invasion of Czechoslovakia had aroused opposition among the communist parties of Western Europe – even the reliable French had uttered a feeble protest. In 1972 the Italian, Spanish and French parties jointly adopted the principles of so-called Euro-communism (in general, an affirmation of these parties' independence from Moscow and a commitment to work within the structures of Western democracy). The Soviet Union's efforts to counteract this show of independence was fruitless. Four years of intense ideological debate did not prevent a June 1976 conference of twenty-nine European Communist parties from approving a final document that referred to the 'equality and sovereign independence' of all communist parties, and expressed 'respect for their free choice of different roads' to socialism.⁴ The socialist camp in Europe was in danger of losing its cohesion.

The Soviet leadership also had difficulties at home. Stalin's power had been unquestioned, but that of his successors was not. Khrushchev had been overthrown by his opponents. Brezhnev could not always impose his views on his colleagues. The ruling elite was ageing; the Politburo's revolutionary zeal had largely evaporated. Dissent was increasing. In 1970 a Human Rights Committee was founded by the eminent physicist Andrei Sakharov and other writers, scientists and intellectuals. Soviet Jews demanded visas to emigrate to Israel – a cause which attracted much support in the United States. Writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970, but the Soviet authorities could not risk allowing him to attend the ceremony to receive it. Solzhenitsyn's three volumes on *The Gulag Archipelago*, containing an immense mass of evidence about Soviet purges and prison camps, appeared in *samizdat* between 1970 and 1974. Nationalist agitation continued in the Ukraine and Estonia.

The Soviet Union also had graver economic problems than the United States. There was a sharp contrast between a military sector which produced

sophisticated weaponry and a civilian sector which failed to produce consumer goods of decent quality. The Soviet Union could put a man into space, but finding toilet paper was a struggle. Western estimates placed Soviet economic growth at about 4 per cent per year in the early 1970s, a figure that was still nominally higher than the mature economies of the West, but which took no account of the fact that the economy was simply not producing the right things.⁵

The Soviet economy was slow, for instance, to develop the computer. In 1974, there were only an estimated 12,500 computers in the Soviet Union, as against 207,000 in the United States. In software development, the Soviets lagged far behind.⁶ In order to keep up, the Soviet Union therefore needed to import advanced technology from the West. The abysmal failure of Soviet agriculture was also apparent. By the mid-1970s, the Soviet Union was importing wheat from the United States at high prices. In October 1975 the Soviet government signed an agreement with the Americans to purchase at least 6 million tonnes of wheat and corn each year for five years, starting in October 1976, and agreed in advance to meet increases in cost over the period.⁷

Increasingly, the Soviets had to borrow to pay for these imports of technology and grain. In 1970 the Soviet Union had hard currency debts of \$6.5 billion; by 1975 the figure had increased to \$29.6 billion. The countries of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe also borrowed heavily from the West.⁸ Growing economic dependence on the West was a powerful impulse towards détente, since it made it easier for the Soviet Union and its satellites to secure credits for their imports.

In addition to these political and economic reasons for seeking détente with the United States, deep psychological motives were at work. The Soviet leaders craved *acceptance* by the Americans; to be recognized and treated as equals. This influence was to prove particularly strong during the Helsinki Conference where the Soviet Union was anxious to secure formal recognition of the status quo which had prevailed in Eastern Europe since 1945, and had been accepted in practice for many years.

The Soviet Union therefore had powerful reasons to seek better relations with the United States. They were suffering nothing so damaging as the American trauma over Vietnam, but they faced a combination of political and economic problems which weighed heavily upon them. On both sides of the Cold War divide, détente became a logical policy to follow.

The stages of détente and the end in Vietnam, 1971–4

On 9 July 1971 Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's national security adviser and closest colleague on foreign policy matters, was on a visit to Pakistan. That morning, Kissinger stated that he was unwell and would remain in his room. In fact, he slipped out, and flew in a Pakistani aircraft to China, where he met the Chinese prime minister Zhou Enlai in Beijing. By Kissinger's account, Zhou asked him whether he was 'one of those Americans who refused to shake hands with Chinese leaders' – a pointed reference to John Foster Dulles's behaviour towards him at the Geneva Conference in 1954.⁹ This greeting was a sign of the frosty and distant nature of Chinese–American relations for the past twenty-two years. The United States had never recognized the communist government which had come to power in China in 1949. The two countries had no diplomatic relations. For some years they exchanged occasional communications through their respective ambassadors in Warsaw; but at the time of the Cultural Revolution in China in 1966 all Chinese ambassadors were recalled from every capital in the world except Cairo, so that even this slender link was severed.

The two countries were ardent ideological opponents. To the Chinese, the United States represented all the evils of capitalism and imperialism. Moreover, the Chinese were hostile to détente between the United States and the Soviet Union, which boded ill for them. In addition, there were specific grievances between the two countries. The United States still recognized the government in Taiwan (headed by Chiang Kai-shek until his death in 1975) as that of China. Until October 1971, on American insistence, Taiwan had held China's permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations (UN). The Chinese, on the contrary, insisted that Taiwan was part of China and claimed their country's rightful place at the UN.

These attitudes presented formidable obstacles to any rapprochement between the two countries. Yet it was in China that Nixon and Kissinger sought a diplomatic opening. They had much to gain if they could pull it off. Nixon was personally convinced that communist China had to be integrated into global politics. In a 1967 article in *Foreign Affairs*, the most important American periodical of foreign policy, he had written that 'taking the long view', 'we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbours'.¹⁰ In immediate practical terms, the Chinese government had provided substantial help to the North Vietnamese and had acquired influence which might now be used to end the Vietnam War. An agreement with China might provide a lever in American relations with the Soviet Union, which would not like to see its two

adversaries getting together. Perhaps above all, Nixon hoped for advantage at home, to win over American opinion by the boldness of his gesture – this was a gamble, because the China lobby and the supporters of Chiang Kai-shek would be offended. But Nixon thought it was a chance worth taking.

Kissinger's visit to Beijing, accomplished in total secrecy, revealed the outline of a possible bargain between the Americans and the Chinese. Kissinger offered to make a commitment to withdraw American forces from Taiwan; in return the Chinese agreed to invite Nixon for a visit to China early in 1972, and to use their influence on the North Vietnamese government to bring about a settlement in the Vietnam War.¹¹ On 15 July 1971 Nixon sprang the news on the American people, and to an astonished world, that he was to visit China the next year.

On 17 February 1972 Nixon flew to Beijing. Leaving the aircraft, he made sure to shake hands with Zhou Enlai in full view of the press and television. Indeed, the whole visit was arranged with an eye to publicity; 1972 was a presidential election year. Nixon called on Mao Zedong – a symbolic meeting between the embodiment of capitalist imperialism and the revolutionary icon. The visit lasted ten days, including much sightseeing and several banquets. Behind the scenes the two sides worked hard to prepare a final communiqué, made public in Shanghai on 27 February 1972.

This document made little attempt to register agreement, but instead stated the two governments' views in separate sections. One of the very few points which they presented jointly was that 'neither [country] should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region, and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony'. This was universally understood to refer to the Soviet Union. On other matters, the two governments agreed to differ. On Taiwan, the Chinese stated that the People's Republic was the sole legitimate government of China, and that Taiwan was part of China; that the liberation of Taiwan was an internal Chinese affair; they added that all American forces should be withdrawn from the island. The Americans recognized that all Chinese (in China and Taiwan) maintained that there was only one China, of which Taiwan was a part. They reaffirmed their interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves; and declared that their ultimate objective was the withdrawal of all American forces from Taiwan. Meanwhile, those forces would be progressively reduced as tensions in the area diminished. On Vietnam, the Americans declared that they were searching for peace, while the Chinese firmly supported the Vietnamese people and all oppressed peoples struggling for liberation – they too had an eye for public

relations. On Korea, the Americans reiterated their support for the South, while the Chinese backed North Korean demands for unification.¹²

The most remarkable fact about this visit was that it took place at all. Its consequences were mostly worked out slowly, but one became apparent at once. In view of the barely concealed declaration of opposition to Soviet hegemony in Asia and the Pacific, it might have been expected that the new Chinese–American relationship would set back the cause of détente between the United States and the Soviet Union. The reverse proved true – as Nixon and Kissinger had calculated. Within a month of Nixon’s broadcast announcing his forthcoming visit to China, the Soviet government invited him to Moscow for a summit meeting which proved to be the first of four such meetings between 1972 and 1974. The coup de théâtre of the ‘opening to China’ thus paid a rapid diplomatic dividend. But it could not save the Americans from the grim reality of defeat in Vietnam.

The end in Vietnam

On 18 January 1969 (after innumerable problems of procedure had been overcome) a Vietnam peace conference had opened in Paris, attended by four delegations, representing the United States, the South Vietnamese government, the North Vietnamese government and the rebel movement in South Vietnam, the National Liberation Front (NLF). Progress was painfully slow. The two principals (the United States and North Vietnam) were in agreement in one respect: the Americans wanted to withdraw their forces, and the North Vietnamese wanted to see them go. But they differed on how to achieve this objective. The Americans wanted to safeguard their protégés in South Vietnam and salvage at least some prestige. They therefore required the cessation of supplies and other assistance from North Vietnam to the NLF, and agreement that the future of South Vietnam should be decided by its own people, by means of free elections. They also wanted the North Vietnamese to return American prisoners of war before the US forces withdrew from Vietnam. The North Vietnamese, on the other hand, demanded the *unconditional* withdrawal of American forces, and the removal of the government in Saigon headed by Nguyen Van Thieu, whom they regarded as a puppet of the Americans. In short, the Americans sought a compromise, but the North Vietnamese intended to win. The Americans thus found themselves at the wrong end of a demand for unconditional surrender, which had been their own watchword during the

Second World War.

The American bargaining position was fatally weak. In the field, the fighting power of the US Army was deteriorating fast. Most soldiers were sent to Vietnam for only a single year, on a rotation system which meant that every month a unit might send back home one-twelfth of its men, with disastrous results for cohesion and morale. In 1970, there were some 350 court martials for the murder or attempted murder of officers by their own troops. In 1971 it was estimated that 40,000 American soldiers in Vietnam were using heroin.¹³ At home, opposition to the war increased steadily. In October and November 1970 the peace movements organized large-scale demonstrations. Almost every day the television networks transmitted news film, bringing the war into people's homes. This had grave effects, because any attempt by the Americans to put military pressure on the North Vietnamese (e.g. by attacking North Vietnamese bases in Cambodia, or by bombing North Vietnam) was at once denounced by the peace movement and became a domestic political issue.

The North Vietnamese and their allies in the NLF presented a complete contrast. They were resolute in policy, ruthless on the battlefield and implacable at the negotiating table. They faced heavy casualties without flinching. Ho Chi Minh once said that, if necessary, his forces would take casualties at a rate of ten to one against, and sometimes they actually did so. Over the whole period of the war the North Vietnamese and NLF armed forces (the Viet Cong) sustained deaths at a rate of almost four to one American and South Vietnamese, and sixteen to one against the Americans alone.¹⁴ The Vietnamese displayed a stoicism which the Americans could not match.

In these circumstances, the United States had almost no military options available. The land war was coming to an end. President Nixon steadily reduced the number of American troops in Vietnam. At the end of 1970 there were 334,600; at the end of 1971, 156,800; and by the end of 1972 a mere 24,200.¹⁵ In principle, the Americans could still bomb North Vietnam or mine the ports through which the North Vietnamese received their supplies; but in practice domestic opposition limited the scope of such operations. The United States was left with only two choices: unconditional withdrawal; or the 'Vietnamization' of the war by shifting the burden of the fighting on to the South Vietnamese. This latter strategy merely postponed the inevitable. It was highly unlikely that the South Vietnamese could win the war on their own when they had failed to do so with massive American help – as Le Due Tho, the principal North Vietnamese negotiator in the peace talks, pointed out to Kissinger.¹⁶

The American position thus remained desperately weak, until in May 1972 Nixon's visit to China produced some diplomatic effects. Secret conversations began between Henry Kissinger and his North Vietnamese counterpart Le Due Tho, outside the formal sessions of the peace conference, which remained deadlocked. In September 1972 the North Vietnamese made a concession by dropping their demand for a date to be set for the complete withdrawal of American forces. Between 8 and 12 October 1972 Kissinger and Le Due Tho reached an agreement providing for a ceasefire, the clearing of mines from North Vietnamese ports, the return of prisoners and measures for the progressive unification of Vietnam by peaceful methods. The North Vietnamese did not insist on the immediate elimination of Thieu's government, which was to remain in being until a government of 'national reconciliation' was formed, comprising representatives of the South Vietnamese government, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (i.e. the NLF) and 'neutrals' – whoever they might be. Kissinger took these terms to Saigon (from 19 until 23 October), only to find that Thieu refused to accept the formation of the three-sided coalition government.

The deadlock was broken when Nixon was re-elected as president in November 1972, with a huge majority, winning 60.7 per cent of the popular vote against McGovern's 37.5 per cent, and carrying every state except Massachusetts. Exploiting his new freedom of action, Nixon ordered the resumption of aerial bombardment of the North with the goal of winning concessions from Hanoi. The bombing provoked widespread protests in the United States and elsewhere, but on 27 January 1973 an agreement to end the Vietnam War was signed in Paris by the four parties to the discussions.

The principal terms were as follows. There was to be an immediate ceasefire from midnight from 27 to 28 January. Mines were to be cleared from North Vietnamese ports and waterways. All foreign troops and advisers were to withdraw from South Vietnam within sixty days, and bases were to be dismantled within the same period. Captured military personnel and foreign civilians were to be returned within sixty days. On the political side, the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination was declared to be sacred and inalienable. The two South Vietnamese parties to the agreement (i.e. the existing government and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam), in an extraordinary provision, were to 'achieve national reconciliation and concord, end hatred and enmity, prohibit all acts of reprisal and discrimination'. They were to set up a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord,

with three elements (government, provisional government and neutral), which was to organize free and democratic elections. The reunification of Vietnam was then to be carried out by peaceful means. Finally, a Joint Military Commission of the four parties to the agreement and an International Control Commission made up of outside powers (Canada, Hungary, Indonesia and Poland) were to supervise the implementation of the agreement; and an International Conference, meeting within thirty days, was to acknowledge the agreement and guarantee its provisions.¹⁷

The final agreement was a complex document, comprising nine chapters and twenty-three articles. It had taken four years to produce. It proved to be not worth the paper it was written on. The last American troops left Vietnam on 29 March 1973, which secured the principal North Vietnamese objective. But fighting continued throughout South Vietnam, between South Vietnamese, North Vietnamese and the supporters of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. 'National reconciliation' was a mere mockery. At the end of 1973 the North Vietnamese launched a general offensive; in 1974 they occupied central Vietnam; and two years after the signature of the Paris agreement, they overran the whole of South Vietnam. The last Americans left in haste, lifted by helicopter from the roof of the Embassy in Saigon on 30 April 1975. The North Vietnamese occupied Saigon on 30 April 1975, and promptly renamed it Ho Chi Minh City in honour of their greatest hero, who had died in 1969. They had aimed not at compromise, but at victory; and having achieved it, they registered it on the map.

Cambodia and Laos also fell to the communists. In Cambodia (renamed Kampuchea), the Khmer Rouge, supported by the Chinese and the Soviet Union, occupied the capital, Phnom Penh, on 17 April 1975. The Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot, embarked on a reign of terror which was directed as much against national enemies (Vietnamese, Thais, Laotians and even Chinese) as against class opponents. In the next four years, almost 2 million people were slaughtered or systematically starved to death in the 'killing fields' of the new totalitarian communist state.¹⁸ In Laos, a communist regime was installed in December 1975. The overall human costs of the war, in Vietnam and throughout South-East Asia, had been catastrophic:

Casualties in the Vietnam War, 1967–73¹⁹

	Killed	Wounded	Missing
United States	57,685	152,303	695
S. Vietnam armed forces	183,528	Approx. 500,000	
S. Korea	4,407		
Australia	492		
New Zealand	35		
N. Vietnam armed forces, plus Viet Cong	Approx. 950,000		
Total Vietnamese	Approx. 1,133,000		
Total non-Vietnamese	62,619		

It is worth pausing for a moment to note the comparative impact of the casualty figures for the conflict. The United States lost some 58,000 dead out of a population of nearly 200 million – a tiny proportion. Vietnamese *military* casualties on both sides amounted to more than 1 million dead out of a population of about 37 million, approximately 3 per cent. To this huge figure must be added the many civilian casualties caused by American bombing. The principal human cost of the Vietnam War was paid by the Vietnamese, though the psychological cost for the United States was immense.

Remarkably, after such a devastating experience, Vietnam emerged as a strong regional power. In 1978 the Vietnamese invaded Kampuchea; and in 1979 they successfully resisted a Chinese invasion of their own territory – demonstrating that their victory had been nationalist as well as communist, and that communist states could go to war with one another. Equally remarkably, after Cambodia and Laos passed under Vietnamese control other dominoes did not fall. Thailand, the closest neighbour to the new Vietnam, remained intact and largely unperturbed. Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore were unaffected. The Americans were comforted that South-East Asia did not fall to communism, but dismayed that the domino theory was proved false. The war had not only been a disaster, but it had seemingly been futile.

In the United States, the war and the defeat had far-reaching consequences. The war divided Americans, in contrast to the unity which they had maintained in earlier conflicts. The divisions did not run along normal political lines, because intervention in Vietnam was the work of four presidents, two from each party; but between those who supported the war and those who opposed it, and

between those who served in Vietnam and those who did not (or even avoided service). The defeat was the first for a country which had long been accustomed to victory (even Korea had been a draw). In its last stages defeat amounted to a humiliation, greater in 1975 with the fall of Saigon than in 1973 at the time of the peace agreement. The morale of the army suffered gravely and took a long time to recover.

Yet there was at least some balancing compensation. American policy emerged from the defeat with a greater realism. The United States was now more conscious of the limits of its power. Moreover, American statesmen had come to recognize that the communist bloc was not monolithic, but had divisions of its own which they could exploit. In the circumstances of the new realism, Nixon and Kissinger were able to play the China card in 1971–2. From 1972 onwards they set out to see what advantage could be gained from developing détente with the Soviet Union.

Détente and American–Soviet summit meetings, 1972–

4

Détente between the two superpowers had begun in the late 1950s, with the contacts between Eisenhower and Khrushchev, and developed as the two sides came to grasp their common interest in avoiding mutual destruction. In the 1960s American and Soviet leaders had held occasional summit meetings, and concluded agreements on limited aspects of nuclear weaponry, notably the treaty of 1963 prohibiting nuclear tests in the atmosphere. In November 1969 the superpowers had begun strategic arms limitation talks, which proceeded at a technical level and very slowly.

There was thus some basis to build on when in 1971 both governments sought to hurry matters along. Each side had its own reasons for haste. Nixon wanted both the kudos and the solid advantages of an agreement on arms control, and he was anxious to shed his reputation as a man of war in Vietnam by assuming the mantle of a man of peace in relations with Moscow. The Soviet leadership had been shaken by Nixon's announcement that he was to visit China, and it moved quickly to ensure that in the new triangular diplomacy they were one of a pair rather than being isolated. They also needed to ease the strain of the arms race on their weaker economy. And they too sought to enhance their reputation as peacemakers and as equal partners with the United States in the management of

world affairs.

On 10 October 1971, after a good deal of manoeuvring behind the scenes, the Soviet government formally invited President Nixon to visit Moscow. The date of the summit was fixed for 22–30 May 1972. At the last minute, in early May 1972, the fate of this meeting hung in the balance as the Soviet leaders debated whether they could receive Nixon in Moscow while the Americans were bombing North Vietnam. Opinions were divided; but Gromyko, the experienced foreign minister, pointed out that to abandon the summit would mean allowing North Vietnam a veto on Soviet foreign policy.

Nixon's visit to Moscow was the first to the Soviet capital by an American president, although Roosevelt had been to Yalta, in the Crimea, in 1945 (Nixon himself had been to Moscow twice before, once when vice president in 1959 and once as a private citizen in 1967). In his opening remarks, Nixon stressed the importance of leaders reaching agreement: 'If we leave all the decisions to the bureaucrats, we will never achieve any progress,' he said.²⁰ There were indeed substantial results, notably a 'Joint Declaration on Principles' and two important agreements on strategic arms limitation.

The 'Joint Declaration' was phrased in general terms, but was no less important for that. The first of its twelve points stated that there was no alternative to peaceful coexistence, and that 'differences in ideology and in the social systems of the USA and the USSR are not obstacles to the bilateral development of normal relations based on the principles of sovereignty, equality, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual advantage'. The two sides went on to undertake to try to avoid confrontations, to exchange views at the highest level, to limit armaments, to promote commercial and economic ties and to encourage contacts in science, technology and culture. They were careful to emphasize that they made no claims to special rights or advantages, and that their relations were not directed against other countries.²¹

On the question of nuclear weapons, the two sides had to grapple with two major new technological developments. The defences of both countries had been improved by the introduction of anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs), capable of intercepting enemy missiles in flight and thus offering some protection against a nuclear attack. At the same time, their offensive capabilities had been strengthened by the development of multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs), missiles carrying several nuclear warheads which could each be directed against a different target. In Moscow, the two sides grappled with the defensive problem by concluding a treaty on 26 May on the limitation of ABMs.

Each country agreed to station ABMs at just two sites: one to protect their respective capitals, Moscow and Washington; and another elsewhere in the country. Each site was to contain just one hundred ABMs. The two sides agreed to verify the execution of the treaty by means of satellite observation.

The principal significance of this accord on the deployment of ABMs was twofold. First, it limited the number of ABMs held by each power, and thus placed some check on the expenditure which they required. Second, the establishment of a mere two defensive zones left most of each country exposed to attack, so that each side acknowledged its own vulnerability. By implication, both superpowers recognized the principle of deterrence. The treaty had no time limit, but permitted either signatory to withdraw upon six months' notice if it considered that its 'supreme interests' were being jeopardized.²²

The two sides also reached a further agreement on strategic arms limitation (usually referred to as SALT I – Strategic Arms Limitation Talks 1). This was an interim arrangement for five years, limiting the numbers of missile launchers (on land or on board submarines) to those already in existence or under construction. Numbers of offensive weapons, as distinct from the defensive ABMs, were limited as follows:

United States:	1,054 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)
	656 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs)
	1,710 missiles in total
Soviet Union:	1,608 or 1,408 ICBMs
	740 or 950 SLBMs
	2,358 missiles in total ²³

The apparent disproportion in favour of the Soviet Union was less significant than it might appear. No limit was placed on the numbers of MIRV warheads, in which the United States held a considerable advantage. The United States accepted, in other words, that the Soviet Union should have numerical superiority of missiles, but balanced this by possessing a preponderance in numbers of MIRVs, and by a general technical superiority. Neither side abandoned the development of new types of weapons. In the United States, opponents of the agreement, headed by Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson (Democrat), claimed that the United States had unwarrantably conceded superiority to the Soviets. The so-called neoconservative movement, in fact, was born of the opposition to Nixon's policy of nuclear détente, which led many lifelong Democrats to switch to the Republican camp. In fact, both sides had

made a virtue of accepting the existing balance of terror, which gave each of them ample strength to inflict catastrophic damage on the other.

Just over a year after the Moscow summit meeting, between 18 and 25 June 1973, Brezhnev returned Nixon's visit by travelling to the United States. In the course of their discussions, the two leaders signed eleven separate agreements and declarations, mainly concerning such matters as air services between the two countries, cultural and scientific contacts, and exchange of information on agriculture and the non-military uses of atomic energy. Nixon and Brezhnev also signed an agreement to prevent nuclear war, not only between their own countries but also between either of them and a third power, which implied that the two superpowers together were assuming a directing role in world affairs; this was a potent indicator of how the nature of their relationship had changed.

The informal aspects of the visit went well. Brezhnev went to Camp David in Maryland for a day or two. Nixon presented him with a Lincoln Continental motor car, which the Soviet leader drove enthusiastically round the Camp David roads. They then went to Nixon's summer residence at San Clemente, California, where they talked late into the night. In general, Nixon was impressed by the contrast between Brezhnev's demeanour and that of Khrushchev during his visit to America in 1959. Khrushchev, he thought, had been anxious to compensate for weakness by being tough; Brezhnev was confident and relaxed.²⁴ Nixon hoped to establish summit meetings as regular annual events, ensuring a constant level of contact between the two governments; and indeed a third meeting followed almost precisely a year later.

Nixon went to the Soviet Union on 27 June 1974, and stayed until 3 July. The meetings began at the Kremlin, where the two leaders signed an agreement limiting underground nuclear tests, supplementing the Moscow Treaty of August 1963, which had prohibited tests in the atmosphere. Brezhnev then reciprocated Nixon's hospitality in California by taking the president to his own summer retreat at Yalta in the Crimea. Since Nixon did not want to be associated with the place where Roosevelt was said by his critics to have given away Eastern Europe, the Soviets tactfully substituted the name Oreander, after the hotel where Nixon stayed, put up some new signposts and spared their guest embarrassment.²⁵ Nixon invited Brezhnev to return to the United States in 1975, and the Soviet leader accepted – an arrangement made public in the communiqué at the end of the visit. In fact, by June 1974 Nixon was already gravely damaged by the Watergate affair. With that change, the pattern of summits was broken.

The three summit meetings between 1972 and 1974 produced significant

results. The strategic arms agreements were their most important achievement, and require some further analysis. The agreements confirmed the two superpowers' capacity to inflict, in the language of a jargon-ridden age, 'mutual assured destruction', or when abbreviated to its initials – MAD. They were also assured of their superiority over other nuclear powers, though they could not disregard the damage which could be inflicted by even a small number of missiles. In this balance of terror, the Soviet Union held some advantage in numbers of missiles, but the United States was ahead in the development of MIRVs, whose multiple warheads did much to offset the imbalance in missiles. At the same time, the superpowers put fresh efforts into types of weapons which were not covered by the agreements; and here the Americans had an advantage in the development of intermediate-range missiles from 1976 onwards.

What the statistics do not show is the relative ease with which the two superpowers sustained the competition in armaments. The overall strength of the American economy was such that the United States could maintain its nuclear weapons programmes with a smaller proportion of its national resources than could the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Soviets achieved a prime psychological objective in that in the arms limitation agreements the United States accepted the Soviet Union as an equal in superpower status. Much later, when the Cold War was over, Yuri Kvitsinsky, a Soviet diplomat and specialist in arms control, told a Western interviewer: 'We were happy that we had achieved parity with the Americans. We had sacrificed maybe the lives of two generations for this task.'²⁸ When the Americans, under Reagan's presidency, withdrew this recognition of equality of status by embarking on the Strategic Defence Initiative, the Soviets's self-esteem was wounded, and they were thrown off balance strategically and economically.

The nuclear balance in the mid-1970s

Nuclear missiles and bombers, 1974²⁶

	USA	USSR	UK	France	China
ICBMs	1,054	1,575			
IRBMs		600		18	c.80
SLBMs	656	720	64	48	
Bomber, LR	437	140			
Bomber, MR	66	800	50	52	100

Innovation in strategic nuclear weapons²⁷

Type of innovation	USA	USSR
Nuclear-powered submarine	1954	1958
First trial of ICBM	1958	1957
ICBM operational	1960	1959
Submarine-launched ICBM operational	1960	1957
ICBM fitted with MIRVs	1970	1974–5
First trial of IM cruise missile	1976	1979
Cruise missile operational	1983–4	1984–5

Note: ICBM: intercontinental ballistic missile; IRBM: intermediate-range ballistic missile; SLBM: submarine-launched ballistic missile; LR: long-range; MR: medium-range; IM: intermediate-range; MIRV: multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle.

The fall of Nixon and the slowdown of détente

A world in which the president of the United States and the leader of the Soviet Union met each year was a safer place than one where they did not even speak to one another. Even so, the policy had many critics in the United States. The new approach to China offended those who still supported Chiang Kai-shek. Many American intellectuals and politicians were deeply committed to the ideological struggle against communism, and disliked the increasing cooperation with the enemy.²⁹ It seemed that détente was pursued by ignoring the issue of human rights within the Soviet Union – for example, Senator Henry Jackson, in addition to his opposition to the SALT 1 agreement, complained that the United States was failing to help Jews who wanted to emigrate from the Soviet Union to Israel.

Such criticisms might have done little damage if it had not been for the

Watergate affair, a scandal which swelled to enormous proportions and eventually brought down President Nixon. A burglary in June 1972 at the Democratic National Committee's headquarters in Washington in the Watergate complex of buildings was later shown to have been approved by the then attorney general. Officials at the White House made a concerted attempt to conceal what had happened. A Senate committee, and later a special prosecutor, investigated the affair. Eventually, it was demonstrated by tape-recorded conversations that Nixon himself had known about the burglary and its concealment almost from the beginning, and that he had tried to obstruct the Federal Bureau of Investigation's enquiry into the break-in. Articles of impeachment were brought against the president in July 1974; on 5 August Nixon released transcripts of the tape recordings; and on the 9 August he resigned from office, with his reputation in ruins. The vice president, Gerald Ford, became president in his stead.

These events absorbed much of Nixon's attention from the spring of 1973 onwards and gradually undermined his conduct of foreign policy. For a long time, the Soviet government did not grasp the gravity of the affair. The Soviet leaders (who were not perturbed by crimes far worse than burglary) regarded the Watergate affair as an intrigue by enemies of détente. Brezhnev accordingly did what he could to sustain Nixon in his trials. On 10 November 1973 he sent the president a personal letter wishing him, 'from the depths of my heart', success in overcoming his difficulties. By the time of Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union in June and July 1974, it appears that Brezhnev was anxious not to tie the advantages of détente exclusively to Nixon; but, as we have seen, he still agreed to meet the president again in 1975.³⁰

In the event, the fall of Nixon had serious consequences for Soviet-American relations. Ford, the new president, was a beginner in foreign policy. He had spent twenty-five years in the House of Representatives, which was by tradition much less concerned with foreign affairs than the Senate. The Soviet Embassy in Washington described him as 'a typical Congressman-patriot of the Cold War era'.³¹ On the other hand, Kissinger remained in office as secretary of state and sought to continue the policy of détente in which he had played so large a part. The new president agreed to meet Brezhnev in the Soviet Union, at the unusual venue of Vladivostok.

The Vladivostok summit was short, occupying only two full days (from 23 to 24 November 1974). The two leaders worked under handicaps – on the American side obvious, on the Soviet side hidden. Ford was only a stop-gap

president, until elections came round in 1976. Brezhnev suffered a minor heart attack on the evening of 22 November, after greeting Ford on his arrival; he recovered well enough to get through the summit, but his illness was the beginning of a long-term decline in health which impaired his subsequent performance as a world leader. Despite these personal issues, the Vladivostok conference made further progress on strategic arms limitation. The two sides agreed to move towards parity in numbers of intercontinental missile launchers, with a total of 2,400 each (of which no more than 1,320 should be MIRVs). This agreement was to take over from the interim arrangement reached at the first Nixon–Brezhnev summit at Moscow in 1972, which was due to expire in 1977. This represented only a very modest achievement. Parity was not to be reached until 1985, which was a long way ahead, and only at the cost of some increase in numbers of launchers.³²

The Vladivostok conference was an attempt to prolong détente after the fall of Nixon. But at the same time détente was under threat from within the United States, over the issue of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. In October 1972 a trade agreement had been concluded between the United States and the Soviet Union, in which the former was to grant ‘most favoured nation’ status to the Soviet Union. This deal had to be ratified by Congress before it came into force; and in March 1973 Henry Jackson in the Senate and Charles Vanik in the House of Representatives proposed an amendment to the Trade Reform Bill to prevent any state which restricted emigration from receiving ‘most favoured nation’ status. The Soviet Union made concessions, removing an ‘exit tax’ on emigrants imposed in 1972, and secretly offering to permit 50,000 Jews to leave the country each year. This proposal was communicated in confidence to Senator Jackson, who passed it on to the press and demanded an increase to 60,000. Moscow rejected Jackson’s proposal as interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. Finally, Congress passed the Trade Reform Bill with the Jackson–Vanik amendment attached to it. President Ford signed the bill in January 1975, but the Soviet Union refused to comply with the amendment.

The two governments maintained that détente as a whole was unaffected by this dispute; in fact superpower relations suffered grave damage. The Soviet Union resented the attempt to interfere in its domestic affairs. In the United States, demonstrations took place outside the Soviet Embassy, and a sustained campaign in the press and on television brought a renewed edge of bitterness to American attitudes to the Soviet Union. By 1975 détente between the superpowers was faltering, and the improved atmosphere generated by the

summit meetings was fading. Yet at the same time a movement towards détente in Europe came to a successful conclusion.

Détente in Europe: Germany, 1969–73

Germany had been at the centre of the Cold War between 1948 and 1961. By the late 1960s, this was no longer the case. The United States was concentrating its attention on Vietnam. The Soviet Union had achieved stability and increasing prosperity in East Germany by building the Berlin Wall. The German question, namely, the relations between the two Germanies, the possibility of unification and the status of Berlin, seemed to have solidified beyond the possibility of change. Successive West German governments, under three chancellors – Adenauer (from 1949 to 1963), Erhard (from 1963 to 1966) and Kiesinger (from 1966 to 1969) – bound their country tightly to the West. The Federal Republic was a loyal member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and remained faithful to the American alliance despite the unpopularity of the Vietnam War. West German rearmament proceeded steadily, and the *Bundeswehr* played a significant role in NATO's strategy. At the same time, West Germany became a leading member of the European Economic Community (EEC). On 22 January 1963 Adenauer and de Gaulle signed the Élysée Treaty, committing their two countries to a close and far-reaching cooperation and ending the long rivalry between the two powers.

Towards the east, on the other hand, Bonn showed total rigidity. In 1955 Walter Hallstein, a senior adviser to Chancellor Adenauer, and subsequently first president of the European Commission, laid down the so-called 'Hallstein Doctrine', by which West Germany refused to recognize East Germany and undertook to break off diplomatic relations with any government which did. Dynamism in the West was thus contrasted with complete immobility towards the east.

In the 1960s President de Gaulle made a major diplomatic effort to raise Western Europe's profile in international affairs, and to introduce a new flexibility towards the superpowers. In March 1966 de Gaulle announced the withdrawal of France from NATO, though not from the treaty itself. NATO headquarters had to move from Paris, and all foreign troops were to leave France by 1 April 1967. After this bombshell, de Gaulle attempted to improve relations with the Soviet Union (which he preferred to call Russia), in pursuit of his cloudy grand design of a Europe stretching 'from the Atlantic to the Urals'. He

visited the Soviet Union in June 1966 to a warm popular welcome. In the long run, and psychologically, de Gaulle's initiative did loosen the straitjacket of European diplomacy.

The West German 'Grand Coalition' government (from 1966 to 1969), headed by the Christian Democrat Kurt Kiesinger, brought about a more significant shift in relations with the Soviet bloc. In 1967 the Federal Republic breached the 'Hallstein Doctrine' by establishing diplomatic relations with Romania and Yugoslavia. In October 1969 Willy Brandt became chancellor at the head of a new coalition government formed by the Social Democrats and Liberals. Prompted and aided by Egon Bahr, his closest assistant, and a man who has often been compared to Henry Kissinger, Brandt embarked on a far-reaching *Ostpolitik* (Eastern policy), aiming at the recognition of East Germany, the acceptance of the Polish frontier along the Oder–Neisse line and an improvement in relations with the Soviet Union. This was a risky policy in domestic terms, because it meant the formal renunciation of territories which were still 'home' to many people who had been refugees in 1945, but Brandt saw no other way of bringing 'human relief' to the German citizens trapped behind the Iron Curtain. If he could make concessions on border, he could get improvements in human contacts, trade and cultural links. Brandt also secured the backing of Nixon's administration in the United States. Indeed, Nixon grasped that Brandt's *Ostpolitik* represented an opportunity to obtain a new agreement on Berlin.

Brandt began by arranging meetings with the premier of East Germany, Willi Stoph, first in Erfurt (in the East) on 19 March 1970, and then in Kassel (in the West) on 21 May. In Erfurt, Brandt was greeted by what the East German secret police called 'unscripted crowds', and by citizens holding placards marked with the letter 'Y' to show their preference for the West German chancellor; in the West, Stoph encountered hostile demonstrators.³³ The contrast might well have brought the new policy to a halt; but it did not. The key to success lay not in East Germany but in Moscow, which could call its satellite to heel. The crucial negotiations were hence those with the Soviet government, leading to the Treaty of Moscow (12 August 1970). In this treaty, the Soviet Union and West Germany agreed that their objectives were peace and the relaxation of tension (apparent platitudes which were in fact of the highest significance); renounced the threat or use of force in their relations with one another; and undertook to respect the territorial integrity of all states in Europe within their existing frontiers, *specifically including* the Oder–Neisse line between Poland and East

Germany, and the border between East and West Germany, which were to be regarded as *inviolable*.³⁴ While this treaty was being negotiated, Brandt made clear that its ratification by West Germany would be dependent on the conclusion of an agreement on the status of Berlin and rights of access to the city; which was a point which Nixon had requested when he gave his backing to the *Ostpolitik*.

West Germany thus accepted the Oder–Neisse line as the western boundary of Poland in a treaty with the Soviet Union. It then became possible to acknowledge the same frontier by direct agreement with Poland. The Treaty of Warsaw (7 December 1970) between West Germany and the Polish government accepted the Oder–Neisse line was inviolable, confirmed the respect of the two parties for each other's territorial integrity and affirmed that neither country had any territorial claims against the other. The last of these points marked a crucial renunciation by West Germany of the former German territories that were now part of Poland.³⁵

While these negotiations were in progress, the four occupying powers in Berlin (the United States, Soviet Union, Britain and France) began their own discussions in March 1970, and reached a successful conclusion in a Four-Power Agreement on Berlin (3 September 1971). The four governments reaffirmed their existing joint rights in Berlin. The Soviet Union undertook not to impede transport between the western sectors of Berlin and West Germany, and the access routes were defined in detail. The three Western powers accepted that West Berlin was not a constituent part of the Federal Republic and would not be governed by it, while the Soviets dropped their claim that West Berlin was part of the territory of the German Democratic Republic.³⁶ With this agreement, the successive crises over Berlin which had plagued relations between East and West came to an end. The situation which had long been accepted in practice was now formally acknowledged by treaty.

All these agreements together paved the way (though only after difficult negotiations) for the crowning achievement of a treaty 'concerning the basis of relations' between the two Germanies, signed on 21 December 1972. By this treaty, the Federal Republic and the Democratic Republic recognized one another and agreed to exchange diplomatic representatives. They affirmed the inviolability of the existing frontier between them and declared that the sovereign power of each state was limited to its own territory, which marked the renunciation of the long-standing West German claim to be the rightful representative of the whole German people.³⁷

This treaty, and the new atmosphere which it encouraged, brought significant changes in relations between the two Germanies. The West German government financed the maintenance of road and rail communications with West Berlin, across East German territory. Personal communications were renewed: West Germans could now talk to their grannies on the other side of the Wall. There was a large increase in West German economic assistance to the East, which had begun by hidden means under Adenauer's chancellorship. In general, the goal of *Ostpolitik* was to bring 'human relief' to fellow Germans behind the Iron Curtain. As a policy, it was both deeply realist – insofar as it accepted the East German state as a reality with which Bonn had to deal – and profoundly humanitarian in its motivation. The East Germans took advantage of this latter concern. As a result of détente between the two Germanies, a clandestine trade in people grew up. As early as 1963, East Germany had handed eight prisoners over to West Germany in return for payment. This practice then continued sporadically, and after the 1972 treaty attained large proportions, so that by 1989 a total of nearly 250,000 persons had been traded from East to West for payments amounting to some 3.5 billion German marks.³⁸

The treaties resulting from Brandt's *Ostpolitik* all confirmed the territorial status quo. Yet the *diplomatic* status quo was broken by West Germany's progressive attitude. Brandt's patent sincerity and eye for a symbolic gesture also helped. His famous decision in Warsaw to drop to his knees in front of the memorial to the Warsaw Ghetto was one of the iconic moments of the Cold War in Europe. All in all, *Ostpolitik* gave birth to a new climate that made further advances in relations between the two blocs possible. These were embodied in the Helsinki Accords in August 1975.

The Helsinki process

The idea of a general conference on European security and cooperation originated with the Soviet Union. On 5 July 1966 the Warsaw Pact powers, meeting at Bucharest, proposed a conference to discuss European security, to be attended by all European states in order to register their formal acceptance of the existing frontiers and political systems in the continent. For almost two years this proposal remained without a reply from the NATO countries. Then, at a meeting in Reykjavik (25 June 1968), the NATO states put the ball back into the opposite court by proposing a negotiation on mutual and balanced reduction of forces in Europe. This reply was not only extremely slow, but sought to change

the subject. The Soviet bloc had wanted primarily to talk about politics, while NATO wanted to talk about military strength.

Half-hearted discussions of these divergent proposals continued, interrupted for a time by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, until in 1969 the Warsaw Pact powers twice renewed their appeals for a conference (at meetings in Budapest in March, and Prague in October). The NATO allies, at a meeting in December 1969, approved in principle the idea of a Conference on European Security and Co-operation; but even so it was not until 22 November 1972 that a preparatory meeting, at ambassadorial level, began at Helsinki. Discussions continued until 8 June 1973, dealing with the date and place for the conference; the question of who was to be invited; and what was to be on the agenda. This preparatory meeting finally agreed that the conference should proceed in three stages: first at Helsinki, between foreign ministers (from 3 to 7 July 1973); second, meetings of experts at Geneva, to prepare detailed draft agreements (these lasted for two years, from 18 September 1973 to 21 July 1975); and finally a meeting (again at Helsinki) of heads of governments or states, to finalize the recommendations made by the officials at Geneva. Thirty-three European states, plus the United States and Canada, were represented at all these meetings. It is scarcely surprising that progress was so slow, and indeed it was remarkable that the whole proceeding was followed through to a final conclusion – in itself a sign of the changed circumstances brought about by détente between the United States and the Soviet Union, and by the complex treaties relating to Germany.

The purpose of the Soviet Union in initiating this vast diplomatic effort was to secure public international recognition of the post-war boundaries in Europe and of the existing order in Europe as a whole. The Soviets had in practice controlled Eastern Europe since 1947, and the recent treaties of 1970 and 1972 concerning the two Germanies and Poland had recognized the most contentious frontiers in Europe – yet they still sought the formal acceptance of these facts. The United States, for its part, was at first doubtful as to the value of a conference on European security, attaching more importance to the idea of force reductions which had been the original NATO riposte to the Soviet proposals. Kissinger was prepared to give the Soviets what they wanted by formalizing the status quo in Europe, which had after all been accepted for many a long year; but he seems to have expected little else from the long negotiations. In the event, both the superpowers were surprised by the outcome. The Soviets achieved their main objective, only to find that other elements had been introduced into the deal.

One of the main reasons for this was the role played by the countries of the EEC, which in October 1972, at a summit in Paris, had agreed to create a 'European Union' by 1980 that would act as a 'distinct entity' in international affairs. The Helsinki process gave them an early opportunity to show they could do this. The EEC 'Nine' (Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark joined the original six member states on 1 January 1973) collectively made clear that they expected the final accord to contain specific guarantees of human rights and not be limited to agreements on borders. The Dutch were particularly vocal in this regard. The prime minister of Italy, Aldo Moro, signed the final accords on behalf of the EEC.

The Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, concluded by all thirty-five governments at the end of July 1975, comprised three sections, often referred to as 'baskets', a curious term conveying the impression that each comprised a somewhat miscellaneous collection of provisions – which was indeed the case. The first 'basket' dealt with questions relating to security in Europe; the second with commercial, industrial and environmental cooperation between the signatories; and the third with cooperation in humanitarian and cultural matters. The contents of this complicated and crucial agreement may be summarized as follows:³⁹

First section (or basket): Security in Europe

This set out a declaration of principles, accepted by all the signatories for the conduct of their relations with one another, including:

- Acceptance of the sovereign equality of states
- Rejection of the use or threat of force
- Acceptance of the inviolability of existing frontiers (this represented the key objective for the Soviet Union)
- Recognition of the territorial integrity of states
- Peaceful settlement of disputes
- Non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states
- Respect for human rights and fundamental liberties, including freedom of thought, conscience and religious or other convictions
- Acceptance of equality of rights among peoples, and the right of peoples to self-determination
- Cooperation between states
- The carrying out in good faith of obligations assumed in conformity with

international law. (This tacitly accepted both the two alliance systems of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and also the position of neutral states.)

In addition to these general principles, this section provided for the exchange of military information, and the signatories agreed to give prior notice of manoeuvres and large-scale movements of troops; to exchange military personnel and arrange visits by military delegations to the other side; and to undertake other measures to increase confidence between the alliances.

Second section (or basket): Cooperation between signatory states

This section set out a programme of cooperation by means of trade agreements (to be based on the 'most favoured nation' principle); cooperation in industrial matters, in science and technology and in matters concerning the environment, transport, tourism and migrant workers.

Third section (or basket): Cooperation in humanitarian and cultural matters

In this section, the signatories agreed to increase cultural and educational exchanges and to improve the circulation of and access to information. The agreements specifically undertook to facilitate the dissemination of newspapers and other printed matter, of films and of broadcast information. They also undertook to develop contacts between individuals, and resolve humanitarian problems – for example, by reuniting families and permitting marriages between citizens of different countries.

Finally, the signatories agreed that the implementation of the Helsinki Accords should be reviewed at a further conference of foreign ministers, to meet in Belgrade in 1977.

The Helsinki Accords received only a lukewarm welcome by the two superpowers. In the United States, wholehearted opponents of communism – notably Solzhenitsyn, who had been expelled to the West in 1974 – complained that the agreements abandoned the peoples of Eastern Europe to domination by an oppressive regime. Human rights activists, by contrast, claimed that the accords did not go far enough in compelling the Soviet Union to change its policies, for example, on emigration. In the administration, Kissinger had never been keen on the Helsinki idea, and Ford was coming near the end of his term as

a stop-gap president. In the Soviet Union, the leadership (which had left the details of the negotiations to the foreign ministry) was surprised by the contents of the third section, on humanitarian and other questions. A group led by Kosygin and Andropov disliked commitments which might open the way to intervention in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. Gromyko, the foreign minister, argued that the balance of the whole agreement was favourable: section one scored a major success by securing acceptance of the post-1945 boundaries; and even under section three the Soviet government could still decide what constituted interference in internal affairs and act as it thought fit. The Helsinki Accords, moreover, were not legally binding in the same way that a formal treaty would have been. Brezhnev, anxious to secure a big success in international affairs, supported Gromyko, and the agreement was accepted.⁴⁰

In the event, the misgivings of the doubters proved well founded. The text of the Helsinki agreement was published in *Pravda*, giving it wide circulation and the authority of government approval. So-called dissidents were motivated by the Helsinki Accords to make outspoken protests against the widespread abuses of human rights by the communist regimes of Europe. Quite contrary to the intentions of the Soviet Union, which had been to consolidate the status quo in Eastern Europe, the Helsinki Accords in the long term had a destabilizing effect throughout that area and played a significant part in the eventual collapse of communism.⁴¹

As a counterpart to the negotiations on European security and cooperation, the Soviet Union agreed to parallel discussions on mutual and balanced-force reductions, which the NATO states had proposed in 1968 and again in 1970. The NATO proposal was to set a maximum of about 700,000 troops on each side in an eastern zone made up of East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia, and a western zone comprising West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Reductions in strength were to be mutual and balanced, but NATO insisted that they should take into account the geographical fact that if American forces left Europe they would have to cross the Atlantic to return, while Soviet forces would merely move into adjoining territories. (In the jargon of the time, this was called the 'geographical asymmetry' between the two sides.) The Soviet Union, for its part, held a considerable superiority in land forces in Central Europe, which it saw no sense in giving up without securing some solid compensation.

The two sides were thus a good distance apart. They agreed to convene a 'Conference on Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction' which opened in Vienna

on 30 October 1973, attended by seven NATO states (the United States, Canada, Britain, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) and four Warsaw Pact countries (the Soviet Union, East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia).⁴² The Vienna Conference failed to find enough common ground to reach an agreement, but did not close down, clinging on like the ghost of détente until 1989, when suddenly the continent changed around it.

The results of détente

Détente had a chequered career between 1969 and 1975. The Americans and the Soviets in their summit meetings attained a degree of cooperation and personal warmth inconceivable even ten years earlier. The agreements on arms control did not end the arms race but did limit the total numbers of long-range ballistic missiles and ABMs. The ideological aspects of the Cold War did not disappear, but became far less prominent as each side granted the other a sort of grudging respect. In Europe, the treaties of 1970 and 1972 between the two Germanies, Poland and the Soviet Union settled frontiers which had been in dispute since 1945; and Berlin, which had been the centre of one crisis after another, was removed from the international agenda. The Helsinki Conference formally endorsed the existing situation in Europe, with all its international frontiers and internal political arrangements. Even the wraithlike Vienna Conference did not actually break down.

These were valuable achievements, especially when compared with the situation during the worst period of the Cold War. Yet by the end of 1975 it appeared that the period of détente was coming to an end. American public opinion came to regard the whole concept as a failure – it was symptomatic that in the presidential election campaign of 1976 Gerald Ford instructed Republicans not to use the word ‘détente’. There were misgivings in the Soviet leadership about the agreements signed at Helsinki. More widely, the mid-1970s were a time of change. A number of the protagonists of the period of détente withdrew from public life or died. In May 1974 Willy Brandt resigned as chancellor of West Germany, after a scandal involving East German espionage. President Nixon, as we have seen, was driven from office in August 1974. Brezhnev suffered the first onset of serious illness during the Vladivostok Conference in November 1974. Zhou Enlai died in January 1976 and Mao Zedong in September.

At a deeper level, the two superpowers were in a worse state than they had

been before embarking on détente. The United States' prestige and reputation was tarnished by defeat in Vietnam and by its support of the Pinochet coup d'état in Chile. The prestige of the presidency, and of the country as a whole, suffered a drastic decline thanks to Watergate. The value of the dollar had plunged since August 1971. The Soviet Union was in the grip of a creeping economic crisis, and discontent in its Eastern European Empire was on the rise, but its leadership was also susceptible to the idea that it could exploit America's malaise. Its efforts to do so would lead to the end of détente in the second half of the decade.

Notes

- 1 The United States showed a deficit on its balance of payments of \$9.83 billion in 1970 and \$29.59 billion in 1971 – Diane B. Kunz, *Butter and Guns: America's Cold War Economic Diplomacy* (New York, 1997), p. 114. For Bretton Woods, see *ibid.*, pp. 47–8.
- 2 For the 1973 oil shock, see Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (London, 2009), p. 587.
- 3 Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon*, Vol. III, *Ruin and Recovery* (New York, 1991), p. 175.
- 4 *Keessing's Contemporary Archives*, 1976, p. 27,954.
- 5 Figures from Herbert S. Levine, 'Economic Development, Technological Transfer and Foreign Policy', in *The Domestic Context of Soviet Foreign Policy*, ed. Seweryn Bialer (London, 1981), p. 178.
- 6 Seweryn Bialer, *The Soviet Paradox: External Expansion, Internal Decline* (London, 1986), p. 77.
- 7 Arcadius Kahan, 'Soviet Agriculture', in *Domestic Context*, ed. Bialer, p. 267.
- 8 See the table in Paul Marer, 'The Economics of Eastern Europe and Soviet Foreign Policy', in *ibid.*, p. 279.
- 9 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London, 1995), p. 719.
- 10 Quoted in Margaret Macmillan, *Seize the Hour: When Nixon Met Mao* (London, 2006), p. 10.
- 11 Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon*, Vol. II, *The Triumph of a Politician* (New York, 1989), pp. 451–3.
- 12 Text of Shanghai communiqué, J. A. S. Grenville, *The Major International Treaties, 1914–1973* (London, 1974), pp. 465–71. See also Macmillan, *Seize the Hour*, pp. 299–311, for a detailed account of how the final draft emerged.
- 13 Gabriel Partos, *The World That Came in from the Cold* (London, 1993), p. 152, Ambrose, *Nixon*, II, p. 418.
- 14 Ho Chi Minh, quoted in Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London, 1989), pp. 522–4. For casualty figures, see Chris Cook, *World Political Almanac* (3rd ed., London, 1995), p. 315.
- 15 Jacques Portes, *Les Américains et la Guerre du Vietnam* (Paris, 1993), pp. 346–7, citing *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1985*, p. 342.
- 16 Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 684.
- 17 Text of agreement in Grenville, *International Treaties*, pp. 465–71.
- 18 Compare J. A. S. Grenville, *History of the World in the Twentieth Century* (revised ed., London, 1998),

- p. 625, with *Daily Telegraph* obituary of Pol Pot, 17 April 1998.
- 19 Casualty figures in Cook, *World Political Almanac*, p. 315; Portes, *Les Américains et la Guerre du Vietnam*, pp. 319, 328, 346–7. Other figures put the North Vietnamese losses at 1.1 million dead.
 - 20 Quoted in Ambrose, *Nixon*, II, p. 545.
 - 21 Text of Declaration in Grenville, *International Treaties*, pp. 520–1.
 - 22 Summary of the treaty, *ibid.*, p. 513.
 - 23 Figures in J. P. D. Dunbabin, *The Cold War: The Great Powers and Their Allies* (London, 1994), p. 176, n. 57. If the Soviet Union built up to the higher number of ICBMs, they were to keep to the lower figure for SLBMs.
 - 24 Ambrose, *Nixon*, II, pp. 173–6.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, p. 371. Nixon himself had joined in the criticism of Roosevelt’s actions at Yalta and so wished to avoid the comparison.
 - 26 Figures in Kennedy, *Great Powers*, p. 510.
 - 27 Daniel Colard, *Les Relations internationales de 1945 á nos jours* (Paris, 1996), p. 164.
 - 28 Partos, *World*, p. 215.
 - 29 Norman Podhoretz, *The Present Danger* (New York, 1980), is perhaps the most trenchant statement of this position.
 - 30 Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents* (New York, 1995), pp. 302–3, 310–11, 314; Ambrose, *Nixon*, III, p. 373.
 - 31 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 321.
 - 32 Figures in Dunbabin, *Cold War*, pp. 178–9.
 - 33 M. E. Sarotte, ‘A Small Town in (East) Germany: The Erfurt Meeting of 1970 and the Dynamics of Cold War Détente’, *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2001, pp. 93–6.
 - 34 Text of treaty in Grenville, *International Treaties*, pp. 293–4.
 - 35 Text of treaty in *ibid.*, pp. 294–5.
 - 36 *Ibid.*, p. 276; Henry Ashby Turner, Jr, *Germany from Partition to Reunification* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 155–6.
 - 37 Text in Grenville, *International Treaties*, pp. 296–7.
 - 38 Partos, *World*, p. 49.
 - 39 For the Helsinki Accord, see *Keesing’s Contemporary Archives*, 1975, pp. 27,301–8.
 - 40 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp. 345–6.
 - 41 Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, NJ, 2001), pp. 39–43.
 - 42 Five NATO countries from the northern and southern flanks attended the Vienna Conference as observers: Norway, Denmark, Italy, Greece and Turkey. Similarly Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, from the Warsaw Pact, attended as observers. France declined to take part, rejecting the whole idea of negotiation between blocs on the ground that it would impede the emergence of a Europe independent of the superpowers.

15

The end of détente, 1976–80

The Carter presidency – The state of the Soviet Union – Détente at half-speed: strategic arms limitation – Détente under strain: the Soviet Union in Africa – The end of détente: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – Balance sheet for the late 1970s.

In November 1976 Jimmy Carter, the Democratic candidate, won the presidential election in the United States, defeating the incumbent, Gerald Ford. The result was a striking change in personalities and attitudes to foreign policy. Ford had continued much of Nixon's policy and had retained Kissinger, with his approach based on power politics and secret diplomacy, as secretary of state. Carter came to the presidency after serving four years as governor of Georgia. He had little experience of Washington politics and even less of world affairs. He was a man of genuine idealism, determined to break with what he saw as the cynicism and secrecy of the Nixon–Kissinger era and restore a foreign policy based on moral values. This was not a flash in the pan. From when he took office he spoke of his determination to solve the global problems of 'nuclear war, racial hatred, the arms race, environmental damage, hunger and disease' – a remarkable list, and a perfectly serious intention. One American ambassador to the UN reflected that 'the problem with Jimmy Carter is that he is righteous. He makes everybody else feel guilty.'¹

Carter was deeply committed to the concept of human rights and established a new bureau in the State Department to ensure that they were at the forefront of American foreign policy. He thus appealed at one and the same time to liberals who had been offended by Kissinger's realism and to Cold War hawks who thought that Kissinger had been too soft on the Soviets and failed to bring them

up to the mark on human rights. Carter appointed as his national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, whose father had been one of the many Poles who refused to return to their country after the Second World War, and who was sternly anti-communist. Brzezinski was willing to continue the diplomatic dialogue with the Soviet government begun by his predecessors, but he set out to use it to press the cause of human rights in the Soviet Union.

These new departures paid dividends at home, where they allowed Americans to take pride in a moral foreign policy after the calamities of Vietnam and the realpolitik of Nixon and Kissinger. But they raised problems abroad, in the actual conduct of foreign policy as distinct from enunciating its principles. For example, in pursuit of his devotion to human rights, Carter wrote a personal letter to Andrei Sakharov, a leading Soviet dissident and scientist, in the naive belief that this would do no harm to American relations with the Soviet Union; but in fact the Soviet government naturally regarded the letter as interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. Carter's high moral tone, amplified by the American mass media, worsened relations with the Soviet Union, where the leadership had grown accustomed to Kissinger's very different approach. The Soviets stiffened their attitude on humanitarian issues when the Belgrade Conference met in 1977 to review and develop the Helsinki Accords, and the conference made little progress.

Elsewhere, the concept of human rights was almost inevitably applied inconsistently, and sometimes to the detriment of American material interests. In Nicaragua, the United States withdrew its support from Anastasio Somoza Debayle (the president, and effectively dictator, of the country from 1967 to 1979), thus assisting in his defeat, only to find that he was replaced by the left-wing Sandinista movement, which was hostile to the United States and was also not a model in its respect for human rights. In Chile, the Nixon administration had supported General Pinochet, who had overthrown the left-wing President Allende in 1973. Under Carter, the Americans withdrew their support, but Pinochet remained president until 1990, so that the United States gave offence without securing any practical effect. In Iran, the Carter administration continued its assistance to the shah while criticizing his conduct on human rights, thus weakening his position without gaining any obvious benefit. Indeed, when the shah was overthrown in 1979 the subsequent regime, under Ayatollah Khomeini, proved to be fiercely anti-American and without the slightest concern for Western interpretations of human rights. Thus a number of Carter's interventions to promote human rights proved at best ineffectual and at worst damaging both

to American interests and to the cause they were intended to advance. The result was an impression of muddle and inefficiency which left other governments uncertain as to the real aims of American policy.

At the same time, the Soviet leadership faced its own problems, arising from an odd combination of strength and weakness. The Soviet Union possessed a great armoury of nuclear missiles, and maintained an ocean-going fleet which showed the Red Flag all over the world. Soviet prestige was high, especially in contrast to that of the United States after Vietnam, and Moscow was able to embark on interventions in Africa and South Yemen which brought vast territories under Soviet influence, as we shall see later in this chapter. Brezhnev was in poor health, suffering successive strokes and often appearing, in his meetings with foreign leaders, incapable of coherent thought or conversation. Around him the Kremlin was dominated by old men – the average age of the Politburo in 1980 was sixty-nine.² The Soviet leaders by now knew that the goal set by Khrushchev, to overtake the Americans in industrial production by the mid-1970s, was far out of their reach; indeed, Brezhnev no longer referred to it. Yet they continued to assert, and perhaps believe (as Khrushchev had done), that the triumph of revolution would come about in the Third World. They ran ideology in tandem with power politics, creating an uncertainty among outsiders rather similar to that generated by Carter's ideological forays into human rights. The two superpowers, though opposed to one another, continued to be curiously similar in some respects.

The United States and the Soviet Union, which had achieved a measure of understanding and cooperation in the early 1970s, were thus in uncertain positions. Carter's new administration ran almost carelessly into difficulties through its own idealism. Brezhnev's Soviet Union had immense prestige and an apparently free hand in large parts of the world, yet was conscious of its own economic weakness. Each was tempted into new adventures, the United States making forays into human rights, the Soviet Union seizing opportunities in Africa. What was to become of détente in these new circumstances?

Strategic arms: Limitation and new competition

The most tangible successes of détente (as distinct from improvements in atmosphere and personal relations) had been in strategic arms limitation, through the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty I (SALT I) of 1972 and its extension in the Vladivostok agreement of November 1974. In March 1977 the Carter

administration put forward proposals for a new agreement on strategic armaments, and the secretary of state, Cyrus Vance, visited Moscow from 28 to 30 March to open negotiations. The Americans suggested new limits on the numbers of land-based missile launchers, to be restricted to between 1,800 and 2,000 for each country, and also a limitation on the numbers of launchers for multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) missiles, with their multiple warheads, to 550 on each side. These proposals offered substantial advantages to the United States, just over half of whose missiles were at the time deployed on submarines and therefore not subject to the proposed limitations on land-based missiles. For the Soviets, however, the plan meant reductions in their existing armaments in return for cuts by the United States in the future. The Soviet government therefore refused the American proposals as they stood; but the two governments embarked on negotiations, which after just over two years resulted in a further SALT II, signed by Brezhnev and Carter on 18 June 1979 at a summit meeting in Vienna.

This treaty established a limit of 2,400 on all types of strategic delivery vehicles on each side, to be reduced to 2,250 by 1981. Within these figures, a limit of 1,320 was accepted on each side for the combined total of MIRVs and bombers carrying long-range missiles. Within this figure of 1,320, no more than 1,200 could be MIRV missiles; so that if one side built up to the limit of 1,200 for MIRVs, it could have only 120 bombers, but if it built fewer MIRVs it could have more bombers. The treaty also provided for a system of verification of its observance.³

This was at any rate a modest success for strategic arms limitation, after a difficult start. But in other ways the Vienna summit was a failure. There was no personal rapport between Brezhnev and Carter. Brezhnev was seriously ill and confined himself to reading from his brief. Carter was afraid of appearing to concede too much after accusing his predecessors of allowing détente to become a one-way street. Before the conference, Senator Henry Jackson had compared Carter's visit to Vienna to Neville Chamberlain's journey to Munich in 1938; it is said that Carter was so sensitive to this comparison that even though it was raining when he arrived in Vienna he refused to use an umbrella, because in the cartoons of 1938 Chamberlain was always depicted with an umbrella in his hand.

Six months after the Vienna summit, in December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and Carter refused to submit the SALT II Treaty to the Senate for ratification. But even before that, the state of the strategic arms

limitation talks was at best equivocal. The greatest merit of the talks was probably psychological, in the very fact that they took place at all. Their main practical result lay in the acceptance by both sides of a rough balance in the weapons covered by the treaties; but this was still a balance which left each country with ample power to destroy the other. The weakness of the agreements was that they left open the development of other weapons, not covered by the treaties; and the slow pace of negotiation meant that there was plenty of time for such weapons to be produced.

The SALT talks also produced another problem, which eventually developed into an acute crisis. America's allies in Western Europe could see the American–Soviet talks going on over their heads and in some respects to their disadvantage. The dangers became plain in 1977, when the Soviet Union began to deploy in Central Europe a number of SS-20 missiles, which were mobile, carried three warheads and were of medium range – up to 5,000 kilometres. These fell outside the terms of the SALT agreements, which dealt with missiles with a range of 5,500 kilometres or above. The SS-20s presented no danger to the United States, which they could not reach; but they could strike targets anywhere in Western Europe.

This raised in a sharp form a question which constantly lurked not far beneath the surface in the North Atlantic Alliance, and which was the weak point in the doctrine of 'mutually assured destruction' (MAD). Would the Americans risk all-out nuclear war to protect Western Europe if the United States was not itself under threat? President de Gaulle had always doubted that it would – this is why France hastened to build a *force de frappe* under his leadership. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of West Germany, who succeeded Willy Brandt in 1974, expressed his anxiety on this question in a public speech in London on 28 October 1977. Schmidt was one of the more robust anti-communists in Europe, and so his speech struck a chord. He evoked responses across most of Western Europe, precisely because the European members of NATO did not know whether to meet the growing Soviet challenge by resistance or by appeasement; by tightening the alliance or by loosening it. Public opinion was stirred, and campaigns for nuclear disarmament – even unilateral disarmament – revived, particularly in Britain, the Netherlands and West Germany.

President Carter did little to soothe the Europeans' fears. He initially offered to deploy the so-called neutron bomb ('enhanced radiation weapon'), in effect a kind of miniature hydrogen bomb delivered by short-range missiles that produced less blast and heat (and hence did less damage to property), but greater

radiation of neutrons. The neutron bomb, in other words, was designed to kill the crews of advancing tanks, and support forces, while not devastating the landscape (its qualities as a so-called clean nuclear weapon were, however, somewhat exaggerated by its supporters). The problem for the anti-nuclear movement, and for many prominent European leaders, notably the architect of *Ostpolitik*, Egon Bahr, was that the neutron bomb's 'cleanness' seemed to render the weapon more *useable*. A groundswell of public opposition was registered against the decision to add the neutron bomb to NATO's arsenal. Carter abruptly announced on 7 April 1978 that the weapon would not be developed – a 'flip-flop' that infuriated those European leaders, notably Helmut Schmidt, who had expended political capital on getting their legislatures and political parties to accept the weapon.

A summit meeting of NATO's 'big four' – Carter, Schmidt, France's Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and British premier James Callaghan – in Guadeloupe in January 1979 finally agreed to respond to the Soviet deployment of SS-20 missiles by a counter-deployment of American medium-range missiles. After prolonged discussion, NATO agreed in December 1979 on a two-stage policy: to open negotiations with the Soviet Union on the withdrawal of the SS-20s; and if that failed, to station in Western Europe 108 Pershing missiles with a range of 1,800 kilometres and 464 cruise missiles with a range of 2,500 kilometres, which would be capable of attacking Soviet territory. In any event, negotiations proved fruitless, and the deployment of the American missiles began in 1983, amid fervent public protest across Western Europe. A new form of arms race was under way.

Arms limitation thus achieved a modest success in the SALT II of June 1979; but this proved short-lived when the United States declined to ratify it in December, in the wake of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in December 1979 (see later). At the same time, a new competition in medium-range missiles stationed in Europe was beginning. The most prominent and definite aspect of détente between the superpowers was breaking down. Meanwhile, in the Third World, hostility was reviving and sharpening.

The Soviet Union and Africa: Détente under strain

From 1975 to 1979 the Soviet Union undertook a policy of active intervention in several parts of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. In 1975 the Portuguese withdrew from their colonies in Angola and Mozambique. In Angola they left

behind a civil war between rival liberation movements, in which the Soviets supported the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), by granting diplomatic recognition to the government which it established, and by the intervention of a large force of Cuban troops (variously estimated at between 20,000 and 36,000), with Soviet arms and supplies. In October 1976 the Soviet Union concluded a Treaty of Friendship and cooperation with the MPLA government, and Cuban troops remained in the country, though in smaller numbers. In Mozambique the Soviet Union gave diplomatic and economic support to the government formed by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), which was engaged in a civil war against the National Resistance Movement, assisted by the white government in Rhodesia and later by the South Africans. In March 1977 the Soviet Union concluded a treaty with Mozambique, on the same lines as that with Angola.

The Soviet Union also pursued an active policy in the Horn of Africa, in territories close to the Red Sea. In 1974 it signed a Treaty of Friendship with Somalia and began to train and equip the Somali Army and to build naval facilities at the port of Berbera. In 1977 Somali forces moved into the province of Ogaden in Ethiopia, which Somalia claimed as one of its 'lost territories'. The Soviet Union and Cuba first attempted mediation in this dispute, without success; and then, after Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in September 1974 and replaced by a revolutionary regime known as the Derg, gradually switched support to Ethiopia. The key event was the emergence of a strong leader, Mengistu Hailè Mariàm, who in February 1977 purged and killed his principal rivals: 'Mengistu's putsch ... reinforced Soviet confidence in the regime.'⁴ The Soviets began to supply arms to Ethiopia and flew in Cuban troops, which numbered about 18,000 by November 1977. By March 1978 these reinforcements had driven the Somalis out of Ogaden. The Soviet Union then formally adopted Ethiopia, rather than Somalia, as its protégé in East Africa. In November 1978 the two countries signed a Treaty of Friendship and cooperation; some 2,000 Soviet advisers were established in Ethiopia; and Mengistu embarked on a Soviet-style policy of forced collectivization of agriculture (which predictably led, as it had in the Soviet Union and China, first to a terror campaign in the countryside and then, with the complicity of low rainfall, to a catastrophic famine in which hundreds of thousands died). Cuban troops remained in the country, and took part in the long-running war against Eritrean separatists. For these actions, a valuable base was provided by the People's Republic of South Yemen (formerly the British colony of Aden and its

hinterland), where Soviet supplies and Cuban troops landed before going on to Ethiopia. In 1979 the Soviet Union concluded a Treaty of Friendship with South Yemen.

What lay behind this remarkable surge of activity? A leading – perhaps the predominant – motive was ideological. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Khrushchev had confidently predicted that the struggle for world revolution would be won in the Third World; and in the early 1970s Mikhail Suslov, the member of the Politburo primarily concerned with ideological activity outside the Soviet bloc, argued that support for national liberation movements would lead to the ultimate victory of socialism over imperialism. This ideological struggle was by now not only being waged against the Americans and other imperialists but also against the Chinese, who were competing with the Soviets for the allegiance of African countries. Between 1970 and 1975 the Chinese built the Tanzam railway, between Tanzania and Zambia, designed to free Zambia from its dependence on communications through South Africa. Between 1970 and 1977 they gave aid to a total of twenty-nine African countries, as against twenty-two supported by the Soviet Union (though on a larger scale).⁵ From the Soviet point of view, this dangerous Chinese influence had to be countered.

There were other, more specific and practical, reasons for Soviet intervention in Africa. Since the Cuban missile crisis, the Soviet Union had been greatly strengthening its surface and submarine fleets. The total number of new surface ships built and deployed between 1961 and 1979 was over 200: it was ‘an event somewhat reminiscent of Imperial Germany’s naval build-up prior to World War I’, although it should be added that the United States retained a sizeable advantage, notably in aircraft carriers and other heavy warships, just as Great Britain had never truly lost its lead in capital ships over Germany.⁶ The Soviet Union also built a large force of ocean-going attack submarines. The large new Soviet fleet needed friendly ports of call. Soviet intelligence agencies wanted to keep track of shipping movements through the Red Sea and round the Cape of Good Hope, which could be achieved from stations in the South Yemen, Mozambique and Angola. The Soviets also hoped for economic advantage, by seeking outlets for products which no longer found a ready sale in more sophisticated markets – Angola and Ethiopia actually became members of COMECON. Behind all these motives, however, lay the quest for *status*. Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, the longtime commander-in-chief of the Soviet fleet, was determined to demonstrate that the Soviet Union was a state with global reach, able (like the Americans) to project power in far-flung corners of the

earth. The Soviet Navy, which had hardly moved from its home waters before the mid-1960s, carried out literally hundreds of ambassadorial visits to Third World countries in the 1970s: 'flying the flag' in this way was a visible way of asserting parity with the Americans.⁷

The Soviets were also encouraged by the fact that the Cubans provided them with an ace, which they could apparently play again and again with undiminished effect. As well as the substantial forces in Angola and Ethiopia, Cuban troops were deployed at one time or another in Mozambique, Tanzania, Congo and Sierra Leone. They were efficient and well accustomed to tropical environments; above all, they were from a Third World country and thus by definition were not imperialists. Castro himself made a visit to Ethiopia and Somalia in March 1977, preparing the way for revolution by supplies of armaments and experienced military advisers.

The Soviet leaders seemed to be genuinely convinced that their interventions in Africa would not seriously damage their relations with the United States. In private, Suslov assured the Politburo that, by assisting the inevitable process of change in Africa, the Soviet Union was not setting out to undermine American interests there. Brezhnev declared that there was no contradiction between the continuation of détente and the improvement of Soviet relations with countries freeing themselves from colonialism. In any case, it was easy to point out that the Americans themselves intervened all over the world – they had fought a ten-year war in Vietnam, and repeatedly intervened in Latin America; so they had no good ground to complain if the Soviet Union acted similarly. In the late 1970s these assumptions proved reasonably accurate. The Americans were irritated by the Soviet actions, and especially by the role played by Cuba – to watch Cuban troops marching over Africa somehow added insult to injury. But American policymakers had been so shaken by events in Vietnam that they shrank from any new foreign adventures, and under Carter they did surprisingly little to oppose the Soviets' expansion of influence in Africa.

The Soviet Union thus embarked on a series of African adventures, for reasons which seemed sound at the time, given the Soviet Union's position as the leading socialist state. By 1991 the logic seemed much less obvious, and a leading foreign policy expert could look back and ask: 'What the hell did we want to gain in Ethiopia or in Angola or in Ghana?'⁸ But in the late 1970s things seemed different. The Soviet Union basked in the achievement of becoming an African power of some importance. Yet by so doing, it strained détente to breaking point. Projecting power across the Third World was a high-risk strategy, which in

hindsight was bound to provoke the Americans sooner or later. The tipping point came in 1979, after another overt Soviet intervention in the internal affairs of a Third World nation: the landlocked Central Asian country of Afghanistan.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its consequences, 1979–80

Between 24 and 27 December 1979, some 50,000 Soviet troops were airlifted to occupy Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Other forces entered the country by land, and by early 1980 there were between 85,000 and 100,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan. In the nineteenth century, when Afghanistan was at the heart of the ‘Great Game’ played between Russia and Britain for the control of Central Asia, the dispatch of a Russian army to Kabul would not have been unexpected. Both the British and the Russians sent expeditions to Afghanistan, sometimes with disastrous results. On one occasion, only one man returned alive from a British force which marched on Kabul – which perhaps ought to have given the Soviet General Staff food for thought. In the twentieth century, however, such events seemed to have receded into the remote past, becoming merely the stuff of adventure stories and romantic films. What lay behind the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which so abruptly brought the nineteenth century back to life?

In April 1978, an Afghan communist leader, Mohamed Taraki, seized power in Kabul and established a communist government, with Soviet support and – on this occasion – without protest from the United States. In September 1979, Taraki was himself overthrown and murdered by a rival, Hafizullah Amin, who rapidly lost control of the country; in some parts, Afghan troops mutinied and killed their Soviet advisers. In the same year Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran, founding an Islamic Republic which some Afghans were eager to emulate. The Soviet government was faced by a crisis in a neighbouring country where it had earlier helped to set up a communist government.

During the autumn of 1979 the Soviet leadership discussed the possibility of intervention to restore order in Afghanistan. Brezhnev opposed military action, and so did Marshal Orgakov, the chief of the general staff. But by December 1979 this situation had changed. On 12 December a group of Politburo members met, with Brezhnev in the chair. A potent triumvirate of Gromyko, Andropov and Defence Minister Dmitri Ustinov argued that the situation in Afghanistan might be exploited by the United States, China or Iran, and could pose a serious

threat to the Soviet Union's southern borders. Ustinov, who was a front runner in the race to succeed the ailing Brezhnev, claimed – in an egregious case of hubris – that a military intervention could be carried out rapidly and successfully. Gromyko predicted that there would be criticism from abroad, but thought that it would be short-lived; in any case, security considerations must be paramount. The United States, moreover, was hesitating over SALT II. The meeting decided to send in troops, and the Politburo agreed on 13 December 1979.⁹ The Soviet government was clearly motivated by the Brezhnev Doctrine, formulated to justify the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, namely, that no country should defect from the socialist camp once it had joined. Its public statements, moreover, invoked the cause of proletarian solidarity; the men in the Kremlin may have taken this rhetoric seriously, but objectively proletarians were thin on the ground in Afghanistan.

The main reason for the intervention, however, was the belief that it was necessary for reasons of self-defence. Sending in the troops was essential to prevent American and Islamic influences from gaining ground in Afghanistan – the Soviet Central Asian Republics included large Muslim populations, and for Afghanistan to adopt Khomeini's doctrines would be a dangerous precedent. A sort of Soviet domino theory was at work here, in other words, with Afghanistan as the first domino and the later ones in the Soviet Union itself. The Soviet leadership also did not trust Amin. They feared he might be undergoing what Yuri Andropov called, in a private note to Brezhnev, 'political reorientation to the West'. What would happen if Afghanistan moved into the Western camp and permitted medium-range American missiles to be stationed on its soil?¹⁰

Like the United States, whose overblown fears of socialism in Latin America had led it to intervene clumsily more than once, the Soviet regime in other words overestimated the security threat that upheaval in Afghanistan represented. It was also crucial that the Soviet leaders were confident that military operations would be short (perhaps only three or four weeks) and that foreign reactions would be limited and temporary. They were wrong on both counts. The military campaign was to last for over nine years, and foreign reactions were severe and long-lasting.

The Americans indeed reacted with surprising speed and vehemence. As early as 28 December 1979 President Carter used the hot line to Moscow to warn the Soviet leaders that unless they withdrew from Afghanistan they would jeopardize the whole field of Soviet-American relations. Carter's 'State of the Union' message, delivered to the Congress of the United States on 23 January

1980, just a month after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, is a remarkable document that denoted an about-face in American policy towards the Soviet Union and détente. In his speech President Carter asserted that the ‘implications of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan could pose the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War’ – an astonishing claim which rested on certain geopolitical assumptions about Moscow’s objectives:

The region which is now threatened by Soviet troops in Afghanistan is of great strategic importance: It contains more than two-thirds of the world’s exportable oil. The Soviet effort to dominate Afghanistan has brought Soviet military forces to within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Straits of Hormuz, a waterway through which most of the world’s oil must flow. The Soviet Union is now attempting to consolidate a strategic position, therefore, that poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil. ... Meeting this challenge will take national will, diplomatic and political wisdom, economic sacrifice, and, of course, military capability. ... Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.¹¹

Carter subsequently remarked that he had learnt more about the Soviet Union in two weeks than in the previous two and a half years (‘Better late than never,’ French commentator Raymond Aron observed acidly).¹² Such a response to events in a country which was geographically remote from the United States, which affected no immediate American interests and which could not be included in any conceivable definition of the free world or democratic institutions was perplexing, to say the least. How did it come about?

The answer seems to lie in a strange mixture of simplicity and sophistication. Carter was an idealist who was genuinely appalled by the Soviet invasion – though he doubtless also had half an eye on the presidential election due in 1980. The sophistication came from Brzezinski, the national security adviser. It was he who contended that the Soviet Army might move from Afghanistan into Iran, and thus to the Persian Gulf. Moreover, when the invasion of Afghanistan was added to the Soviet interventions in Ethiopia and South Yemen discussed earlier, it was possible (with the aid of a fertile imagination and a small-scale map) to discern the two claws of a pincer movement, ready to close around the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf and the whole of the Middle East oilfields. For the

American government, the invasion of Afghanistan thus appeared at one and the same time as a moral issue, a geopolitical threat and a test of willpower. The Soviets for their part could not conceive that Afghanistan could be of vital interest to the United States, and therefore concluded that the Americans were merely seizing on the issue as a pretext to end détente, resume the arms race and organize a propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union.

In fact, the Americans were in deadly earnest. In 1980, within a year from the start of the invasion, the United States imposed a partial embargo on the export of cereals and high technology to the Soviet Union; refused to ratify the SALT II; boycotted the Olympic Games (held in Moscow in July 1980), along with more than sixty other nations; and sent economic and military assistance to Pakistan, which was encouraging resistance to the Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

Hostile reactions to the Soviet operation were by no means confined to the United States. As early as 3 January 1980 the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by 104 votes to 18, with 18 abstentions; and on 14 January another resolution calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops was approved by the same majority. The minority of 18, constituting a list of the Soviet bloc and its supporters at the time, was made up as follows: Afghanistan, Angola, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, East Germany, Grenada, Hungary, Laos, Mongolia, Mozambique, Poland, Ukraine, the Soviet Union, Vietnam and Yemen.¹³ These votes were highly significant, because the General Assembly, dominated by Third World countries, had for some time been anti-American and at least broadly pro-Soviet. From 1980 onwards, annual resolutions calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops were put to the Security Council of the United Nations, accepted by a majority and vetoed by the Soviet Union. This rallying of opinion against the Soviet Union came partly from the Islamic states. A conference of the foreign ministers of Islamic countries, meeting at Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, in January 1980, unanimously condemned the Soviet aggression against the Afghan people. China also opposed the Soviet invasion and carried a number of Third World states with it.

International opinion as expressed through the United Nations thus moved strongly against the Soviet Union. In immediate practical terms this had little effect, because the Soviet Union ignored votes in the General Assembly, vetoed resolutions in the Security Council and carried on fighting; but in the long run it undermined the gains which the Soviets had made in the Third World during the 1970s.

On the other hand, the United States failed to win solid support among its traditional West European allies for the new tough line against Moscow. To a large extent, this recalcitrant European attitude was due to the fact that the Europeans simply did not think that the Afghan crisis was as serious as Carter alleged. The president's rhetoric seemed excessive and the change of direction in policy seemed too abrupt. Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany supposedly responded to Carter's comment that the Soviet invasion was the biggest threat to peace since 1945 with the sardonic comment that Soviet troops were stationed 50 kilometres from his home in North Germany. Schmidt was anxious to maintain the advantages of détente and thought that Carter was exploiting the Afghan issue to secure his own re-election. Neither France nor West Germany imposed economic sanctions on the Soviet Union, and indeed increased their trade with the Soviets to fill the gaps left by American sanctions (both Schmidt and President Valéry Giscard D'Estaing visited Moscow in the months following the imposition of the American embargo). The West Europeans also declined to follow the American lead in boycotting the Moscow Olympics, although in this regard West Germany was one of just four NATO states that did not send teams (the others were Canada, Norway and Turkey). Even Britain, which was now governed by the 'Iron Lady', sent a team, despite Margaret Thatcher's own strident support for a boycott of the games.

More generally, America's European allies were fed up with Carter, and with the state of the 'Atlantic alliance' as a whole. The Carter presidency was the culmination of a tense decade in transatlantic relations. The persistent weakness of the dollar since Nixon had gone off the gold standard had complicated the functioning of the European Community's Common Market, especially its politically sensitive Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It had also 'signalled the abrogation of the post-war economic compact', namely, that the 'United States would be willing to make economic sacrifices in return for political privileges'.¹⁴ America could not claim the right to set the Europeans' strategic priorities if it was unwilling to pay the price of leadership. Carter in any case had given the impression of not regarding Europe to be a priority at all. His presidency had been dominated by his Middle East policy, by the crisis in Iran, by China and by the question of the Panama Canal: the Europeans unquestionably felt neglected. This was above all due to Carter's wobbliness over the question of European defence, which the Europeans naturally took very seriously. To describe Afghanistan as *the* major threat to world peace, at a moment in which the Soviet Union was deploying hundreds of SS-20 missiles in

Eastern Europe, seemed like a major misjudgement of geopolitical realities – at any rate to Europeans. Helmut Schmidt, whose personal relationship with Carter can only be described as dire, was among the loudest voices applauding the ‘new self-confidence and determination’ in America after the election in November 1980 of Ronald Reagan.¹⁵ Carter’s Afghanistan policy was, in short, arguably the last straw for European leaders frustrated with his ‘idealistic and fickle’ leadership of the West.¹⁶

There was thus some comfort for the Soviets; but it soon became evident during the course of the early 1980s that they had nevertheless made a bad mistake by invading Afghanistan. The Soviet Army held Kabul and other towns, but struggled in vain to establish lasting control in the mountainous countryside against determined Afghan guerrillas, supplied from Pakistan. They found themselves in a dilemma, not unlike the one which the Americans had faced in Vietnam. They were involved in a guerrilla war which they were unable to win, at the cost of serious casualties and much erosion of morale. Yet they had to persist, because their reputation (both political and military) was at stake. So they continued the war, year after year, in an ultimately disastrous struggle. As the war went on, they increasingly drew upon themselves the hostility of Islam, which had previously been directed almost exclusively against the Americans.

Meanwhile, the Americans found themselves with a diplomatic and numerical advantage in the United Nations – an unusual luxury. They could make fine gestures (like boycotting the Moscow Olympics) at no great cost to themselves. And they began to harass the Soviet forces, at a safe distance, by supplying the Afghan guerrillas with arms by way of Pakistan. Like the Soviets using the Cubans in Africa, the Americans could enjoy the benefit of waging war by proxy. In Africa, détente had been severely strained. In Afghanistan, it was broken.

The balance sheet, 1975–80: The end of détente

Between 1975 and 1979 the balance of power in the Cold War moved steadily in favour of the Soviet Union. The Soviets established their influence in large parts of Africa and in South Yemen. Even the invasion of Afghanistan went well in its early stages. Pessimistic observers in the West estimated that in five years about 100 million people had come under Soviet influence. On the military front, the SALT treaties had recognized Soviet parity with the United States. In 1977 the Soviets began to deploy SS-20 missiles in Central Europe, plunging the Atlantic

alliance into uncertainty as to how to respond. A revival of pacifism and campaigns for nuclear disarmament in Britain and West Germany and other European states, notably the Netherlands, gave the Soviets a propaganda foothold in Western Europe which they had lacked for some time. The Soviet government could look on events with some satisfaction – until disaster began to creep up on them in Afghanistan.

At the same time the influence and reputation of the United States were in further decline. After the Vietnam War ended in humiliation, the American slogan was ‘No more Vietnams’, which meant renouncing military intervention almost anywhere in the Third World. American prestige suffered a further blow in Iran during 1979–80 (see [Chapter 17](#)). The shah of Iran, whom the Americans had regarded as a safe ally (safe enough, indeed, to be criticized on his human rights record) was suddenly overthrown in 1979 by the fiercely anti-American Ayatollah Khomeini. To many, the United States at the end of the Carter presidency seemed a clumsy and helpless giant. It was a time of repeated disaster for the Americans.

Meanwhile, détente was as dead as a doornail. It had been ailing as early as 1974 and 1975, with the fall of Nixon and the limited success of the Vladivostok summit; and it suffered relapses between 1977 and 1978, with Soviet actions in Ethiopia and the deployment of SS-20 missiles in Central Europe. The Vienna summit in June 1979, and the SALT II signed by Carter and Brezhnev, brought only temporary relief. Afghanistan proved the fatal blow. After 1979 there was to be no further summit meeting between the Americans and Soviets until President Reagan met Mikhail S. Gorbachev at Geneva in November 1985 – a gap of just over six years, in marked contrast to the Nixon–Brezhnev pattern of a meeting each year. It was possible to look back and argue that détente itself had not failed, because for a time it had produced considerable effects. But in 1980 it was over. The superpowers were moving into a new period of intense Cold War, which within a few years was to see a remarkable reversal of fortunes.

Notes

- 1 Quoted in Richard J. Barnet, *Allies: America, Europe, Japan since the War* (London, 1984), p. 365.
- 2 Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (London, 1997), p. 404.
- 3 Stephen Richard Ashton, *In Search of Détente: The Politics of East–West Relations since 1945* (London, 1989), p. 147; Chris Cook, *World Political Almanac* (3rd ed., London, 1995), p. 366. Text of agreement in *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1980, pp. 30,117–28.
- 4 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*

(Cambridge, 2007), p. 271.

- 5 Philip Snow, 'China and Africa', in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (Oxford, 1994), pp. 286–7; R. K. I. Quedsted, *Sino-Russian Relations: A Short History* (London, 1984), p. 147.
- 6 Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars, 1945–1980* (New York, 1984), p. 42.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 43–4.
- 8 Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov, interview in Gabriel Partos, *The World That Came in from the Cold* (London, 1993), p. 169.
- 9 Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York, 1995) pp. 436–40.
- 10 For a fascinating reconstruction of how the decision to invade was taken, see Westad, *Global Cold War*, pp. 316–21.
- 11 President James E. Carter, 'State of the Union' Address, 23 January 1980; see website: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33079>].
- 12 J. P. D. Dunbabin, *The Cold War: The Great Powers and their Allies* (London, 1994), pp. 329–30; Robert Colquhoun, *Raymond Aron, Vol. II, The Sociologist in Society, 1955–1983* (London, 1986), p. 557.
- 13 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1980, p. 30,236.
- 14 Wolfram F. Hanreider, *Germany, America, Europe: 40 Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven, 1989), p. 306.
- 15 Helmut Schmidt, 'A Policy of Reliable Partnership', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 59, 1981, p. 745.
- 16 Helmut Schmidt, *Men and Powers* (New York, 1989), p. 101.

Reflection

The essence of détente

By 1980 détente was dead. What did it signify while it was alive? The term presents some of the same problems of definition and usage as ‘Cold War’ and ‘the Third World’. We cannot do without it. It was frequently used in the 1960s, became almost omnipresent in the diplomacy of the 1970s and remains a standby for historians to this day. But the word was used in widely different senses by statesmen who pursued policies of détente; it caused some confusion at the time; and it remains difficult to use with precision.

For those familiar with the ‘old diplomacy’, as practised before 1914, there was no difficulty about the term ‘détente’. At that time, French was the language of diplomacy, and ‘détente’ signified the relaxation of tension between states which had been in dispute about some issue or problem. It was possible for détente (the lessening of tension) to lead to an ‘entente’ (which means an understanding or agreement, falling short of an alliance) and so to cooperation; but such a progression was by no means certain.

In the changed conditions after the two world wars, the customs and vocabulary of the old diplomacy fell into disuse, and to a large degree into disrepute. The system of diplomacy which (as many believed) had led Europe into the Great War between 1914 and 1918 and then at least failed to prevent the Second World War seemed to have little to recommend it, and its old-fashioned French terms appeared too refined for the harsh rivalries of the Cold War. Its return to common parlance in the 1960s reflected the need to find a convenient shorthand description for the improvement in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union after the Cuban missile crisis; and its adoption in the 1970s as a fashionable term owed much to Henry Kissinger, who, in a previous incarnation, had been a historian of European diplomacy in the age of

Metternich, Castlereagh and Talleyrand.¹ Kissinger used the language of the old diplomacy with an authority and conviction which proved infectious. Between 1962 and 1980, most governments came to use the word 'détente'. Even the People's Republic of China, where Mao Zedong had long refused to countenance the term, came round to it by 1980 – just when détente itself was coming to an end.

What did the word mean in the two decades of its heyday? General de Gaulle, the president of France in the 1960s, regarded détente as a policy of improving relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe so as to end the division of Europe and escape the American–Soviet domination of the world. Chancellor Brandt of West Germany, whose *Ostpolitik* was one of the practical forms of détente, also aimed to improve relations with the East. In his case the objective was to secure the stabilization of the existing order in Europe, and the acceptance of the partition of Germany which lay at its centre – not to *end* the division of Europe, but to *ameliorate* its consequences for the Germans on the wrong side of the Wall. These two experienced European statesmen thus used the word 'détente' for widely different purposes. They sought to improve relations, and to relax tension, but with completely opposite ends in view.

De Gaulle and Brandt, though important European statesmen, were secondary figures on the world stage. The principal significance of détente lay in relations between the two superpowers. What did détente signify for the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States? It appears that for Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the principal Soviet leaders of the 1960s and 1970s, détente was a variant on the old theme of peaceful coexistence, which had always meant the improvement of some aspects of relations with the capitalist powers without abandoning the fundamental struggle between two ways of life, which was a basic tenet of their beliefs. Brezhnev put the matter plainly in 1976: 'Détente does not and cannot in the slightest abolish or change the laws of the class struggle.'² The class struggle, the conflict of ideas between socialism and capitalism, the economic competition between the two camps and their rivalry in the Third World – all these were bound to continue. For the Soviet Union to adopt the economic or political ideas of the United States – the free market or American views of human rights – was unthinkable. What the Soviet leadership wanted was a sufficient degree of agreement with the United States to avoid nuclear war – which would be fatal; and to secure some slackening in the nuclear arms race – which was ruinous for the faltering Soviet economy. They also sought commercial agreements, for example, on supplies of cereals; and access

to American science and technology. Less precisely, but crucially in a psychological sense, the Soviets were anxious to secure recognition and acceptance from the United States as an equal partner in world affairs. The summit meetings and strategic arms agreements were designed in large part to make this point, which was one of prestige and esteem. The main areas for détente would thus be nuclear armaments, trade, technology and summit diplomacy, where much might be achieved without prejudice to the fundamental purposes of Soviet policy, which were themselves part of the *raison d'être* of the Soviet state.

The American conception of détente shared some common ground with these Soviet ideas. The Americans were as anxious as the Soviets to avoid nuclear war. In the 1960s they were glad to make a start on arms control with treaties forbidding nuclear tests in the atmosphere and on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; and in the 1970s they moved on to strategic arms limitation agreements. From about 1970, facing defeat in Vietnam, the United States saw détente as a means of coping with a position of unaccustomed weakness. Nixon and Kissinger set out to create a new flexibility in diplomacy, improving relations with China and finding room for manoeuvre in a triangular balance of power. Kissinger used the word 'linkage' to describe his method of bargaining with the Soviet Union on nuclear weapons, trade and stability in the Third World. Nixon had a high regard for summit diplomacy as a means of improving the atmosphere of American–Soviet relations – it has been well said that détente was a matter of mood as much as of policy.³ Moreover, summit meetings, and the carefully managed publicity which surrounded them, also paid considerable dividends in American domestic politics, where Nixon could earn popularity as a peacemaker. There were difficulties, in that détente aroused opposition from American conservatives who thought it meant making undue concessions to the enemy, and from liberals who claimed it did too little to uphold human rights. But on balance there was much domestic advantage in détente, at any rate up to 1974.

Eventually, the idea of 'linkage' broke down. The Soviet Union would not, indeed could not, give up its basic objectives, and therefore intervened when the opportunity offered to advance the cause of revolution in the Third World, and notably in Africa. In face of this, the Americans came to think that they were making concessions on the nuclear balance and on trade without being assured of a return.

The United States, equally in pursuit of its own basic convictions, kept

reverting to questions of human rights (notably on Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union), which aroused angry Soviet opposition. For a time both sides secured advantages from détente, which diminished the tension between them and reduced the risks of major conflict. But in the late 1970s the Soviet Union took the risk of screwing up tension in Africa, and finally brought tension to breaking point in Afghanistan. The Soviets overestimated their own strength, and almost certainly underrated the American capacity to recover from the disaster in Vietnam. The Americans for their part overestimated the effects of personal diplomacy and a change in atmosphere. Both sides gained something from détente, but were in the long run disappointed.

What are we to make of all this, and how in retrospect should we use the term 'détente'? Let us recall Molotov's brisk comment on the Cold War: 'What does the cold war mean? Strained relations.'⁴ Détente meant the lessening of those strains – the relaxation of tension. In what aspects of the complicated phenomenon we call the 'Cold War' did this come about in the 1960s and 1970s?

The most obvious relaxation was in diplomatic relations and personal contact between the American and Soviet leaders. In the late 1950s, Eisenhower and Khrushchev had made a start in this, notably through Khrushchev's visit to the United States in 1959. The 1960s saw the installation of the hot line and the improvement of confidential relations between the two governments. Between 1972 and 1975 summit meetings were held annually, in each country in turn, achieving a degree of informality and personal contact which would have been unimaginable twenty years earlier. The great frost in personal and diplomatic relations melted away; and even when détente came to an end the ice age did not return.

Another example of lessening tension lay in the partial slackening of the nuclear arms race. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, and the agreements to which they led, limited the numbers of long-range ballistic missiles and anti-ballistic missiles, thus striking a rough balance between the two sides. But the gain was only partial, because the competition in nuclear armaments, limited in long-range missiles, re-emerged in the development of medium-range missiles, like a river held back by a dam and finding its way into other channels.

On the other hand, some aspects of the Cold War continued or even intensified during the period of détente. Ideological competition was unavoidable as long as the United States and Soviet Union maintained their essential characteristics, as societies and forms of government; and in some respects the dispute grew keener

as the Americans put pressure on the Soviet Union about human rights – the Helsinki Accords of 1975, which were certainly part of the process of détente, also worsened American–Soviet relations by making the internal affairs of signatory states a legitimate topic of international condemnation. In the Third World, the Soviet Union continued its support for the cause of revolution and wars of liberation, thus increasing their own pressure on the Americans – not least by the use of Cuban intermediaries. Thus some aspects of the Cold War were more acute towards the end of the period of détente than they had been before it began.

During the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 the two superpowers looked into the abyss of nuclear war and knew with an intense certainty that they did not want to go over the edge. They could not make war with one another. Logically, they might have gone to the other extreme and made peace; but that was beyond them, and they did not even want to do it. They were fixed in the mould of competition. So instead they attempted détente, which was a halfway house. Some aspects of the Cold War would yield to a relaxation of tension. The superpowers could talk to one another. Their experts could agree on some limits to nuclear weaponry. The alignments of power politics could be shifted and softened by diplomacy and summitry. But behind these aspects lay an ideological gulf which could not be bridged, and a conflict of civilizations which could not be reconciled. Détente, by its successes and failures, showed with striking clarity which aspects of the Cold War were fundamental, and which were open to alleviation by the relaxation of tensions. We can therefore use the term ‘détente’ with confidence, in its simple meaning of the easing of strained relations between states; and in so doing we may understand more clearly the essential nature of the Cold War.

Notes

- 1 Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812–1822* (London, 1957).
- 2 Quoted in Peter G. Boyle, *American–Soviet Relations: From the Russian Revolution to the Fall of Communism* (London, 1993), p. 186.
- 3 Stephen Richard Ashton, *In Search of Détente: The Politics of East–West Relations since 1945* (London, 1989), p. viii.
- 4 Vyacheslav Molotov, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev*, ed. Albert Resis (Chicago, 1993), p. 59.

PART FOUR

The Changing World Order, 1960s– 1990s



PHOTO 6 *A different world takes shape outside the Cold War: traditional dress and modern weapons as Iranian women take part in the Islamic revolution that overthrew the shah, January 1979. A force at once old and new entered world politics (Getty Images. Credit: Keystone).*

The Arab–Israeli conflict, 1963–82

Rivalries in the Middle East – The Six-Day War, 1967 – Interval, 1967–73 – The October (Yom Kippur) War, 1973 – OPEC and the oil weapon – The Egyptian–Israeli treaty – Crisis in the Lebanon.

In the mid-1960s the Middle East was the scene of three rivalries: the Arab–Israeli conflict; disputes between (and within) Arab states; and superpower rivalry – the extension of the Cold War to the Middle East. All three were from time to time in suspense, but none showed any sign of being resolved.

The Arab–Israeli conflict was the one that most captured the world’s attention. Israel had survived a difficult start and by the mid-1960s was flourishing, with gross domestic product rising rapidly.¹ The morale of the armed forces was high, and the public mood was one of confidence. The country’s existence was still precarious, however. The population of Israel was approximately 2.7 million according to an estimate in 1967, while the neighbouring Arab states collectively totalled about 40 million. Israel’s territory was difficult to defend, with a wasp-waist only 25 kilometres wide between the Jordanian frontier and the Mediterranean, and a long V-shaped wedge stretching south to Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba, giving access to the Red Sea. Its borders were the ceasefire lines established at the end of the campaigns of 1949 and 1956. None of the adjoining states (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon), or any other Arab country, had recognized these frontiers. The declared objective of the Arab states, indeed, was the removal of Israel from the map. In 1964 the Arab League sponsored the establishment in Jordan of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

In this conflict, there could be no compromise. Either Israel would continue to exist, or it would disappear. This was an issue which engaged the rest of the

world, emotionally as well as politically. The United States and Western Europe broadly supported Israel, for reasons which arose from memories of the Holocaust as well as from current political calculation. Most of the Third World was hostile to Israel and sympathetic to the Palestinians. The Soviet Union supported some of the Arab states while remaining cautious about the Palestinians. Whatever happened in the Arab–Israeli conflict could be sure of world attention.

There were also rivalries within and between the Arab states. President Nasser of Egypt, after his success in the Suez crisis of 1956, had become the focus for aspirations towards Arab unity. But his leadership was soon challenged. The United Arab Republic (UAR) which brought together Egypt and Syria in 1958 broke down in 1961. There were conflicts between radical and conservative elements all over the Middle East. In 1962 civil war broke out in North Yemen, with Nasser supporting a group of army officers who proclaimed a republic, while Saudi Arabia and Jordan backed the monarchy. But even radicals disagreed with one another. In February 1963 the Ba’ath Party (whose name signified ‘renaissance’) seized power in Iraq, and in February 1966 a Ba’athist regime took over in Syria. Both these new governments claimed that Nasser was not doing enough to liberate Palestine. King Hussein of Jordan survived tenaciously as a monarch, holding together a divided population of Jordanians and Palestinians. In the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia and Iran were at loggerheads. The Saudis were Arabs, the Iranians were Persians or Azeris; the Saudis were Sunni Muslims, the Iranians were mainly Shiite; both countries were oil producers and aspired to be the principal ally of the United States in the area. These various conflicts attracted less attention than that between Israel and the Arabs, but they had far-reaching effects.

The United States and Soviet Union pursued their own policies in the Middle East. In the last resort, the United States was prepared to preserve Israel from destruction; no one could doubt that the Americans would use force if necessary. Meanwhile American Jews provided Israel with money and the US government sent military equipment. At the same time the Americans were closely tied to Saudi Arabia, and by the early 1960s were seeking to improve relations with Egypt. Trying to keep a foot in all camps was not easy. The Soviet Union, for its part, provided Egypt with tanks and aircraft and sent thousands of advisers to accompany them. In Iraq, Soviet policy was complicated by problems of ideology. In 1963, the Ba’ath regime persecuted the Iraqi Communist Party mercilessly. The Soviets suspended deliveries of armaments and also gave

assistance to Kurdish separatists in northern Iraq. But later they resumed supplies and sent Iraq Soviet military advisers; they even provided Iraq with a nuclear reactor.² Nevertheless, the Soviet Union maintained diplomatic relations with Israel and offered no support or recognition to the PLO. Like the Americans, the Soviets kept their options open.

The Six-Day War, 5–10 June 1967

In June 1967 these three strands in Middle East politics combined in the Six-Day War between Israel and the Arabs. This war arose in large part from rivalries between the Arab states; it proved of crucial importance in Israeli–Arab relations; and it drew in both the superpowers. In other words, it was a complicated crisis, with far-reaching effects.

Reacting to Syrian criticism of his policy towards Israel, Nasser made the first moves in the crisis. In May 1967 he sought to demonstrate his belligerence. On 16 May he insisted that the UN forces should leave the Sinai Peninsula. Three thousand blue helmets had been present since the end of 1956 to supervise the ceasefire agreed on at the end of the Suez campaign and to ensure the passage of shipping through the Gulf of Aqaba to the Israeli port of Eilat, but this force could only remain on Egyptian territory with the consent of the Egyptian government. Nasser now withdrew his consent. At this stage, the Egyptians received inaccurate reports (originating from Soviet intelligence sources) that Israel was preparing to attack Syria. Nasser moved troops into the Sinai, to show that he would assist the Syrians in case of need. On 22 May he closed the Straits of Tiran, at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba, to Israeli shipping. On 30 May Nasser conducted a military agreement with King Hussein of Jordan, placing the Jordanian armed forces under Egyptian command.

These bellicose actions were in all likelihood sabre-rattling rather than actual preparations to attack Israel. But their combined effect was ominous, and the closing of the Straits of Tiran was a direct blow to Israeli commerce through the Red Sea. As the political philosopher Michael Walzer has argued, citing precisely this case as an example of ‘legitimate anticipation’ in warfare, ‘there are some threats with which no nation can be expected to live’.³ In these circumstances, the Israelis were unlikely to wait and see what Nasser intended to do. Many Israelis thought that an Egyptian attack was imminent; others saw an opportunity to strike first. Either way, Israel was bound to mobilize and call up reservists from civilian life. Mobilization brought the economy almost to a

standstill, and the armed forces could not be held in a state of alert for very long. The Israeli military commanders urged their government to order a pre-emptive strike against the Egyptians, and during the night between 4 and 5 June the prime minister, Levi Eshkol, concurred. The Six-Day War began on 5 June 1967.

In the development of this conflict the two superpowers played an ambiguous role. Soviet intelligence unquestionably helped to provoke the crisis by passing false information to the Egyptians indicating an imminent Israeli attack on Syria. Yet at the same time Moscow explicitly warned Nasser not to strike first. Similarly, the Americans (including President Johnson in person) urged the Israelis not to attack first. But neither actually prevented its protégé from taking action.

The Israelis struck on 5 June with lightning speed and force. Air attacks destroyed the Egyptian air force on the ground. The army invaded Sinai, reaching the Suez Canal in a mere two days. The Israelis briefly offered not to attack Jordan if King Hussein remained neutral, but the king rejected this proposal. He had committed himself to Egypt and could not withdraw without loss of honour: staying neutral might anyway have provoked civil war. On 7 June the Israelis crushed the Jordanian army and quickly occupied the West Bank, including the whole of Jerusalem, which had been divided by the ceasefire line of 1949. This brought all the ancient sites of Jerusalem, notably the Wailing Wall (which was of great historical and religious significance to Jews, but also to Muslims), under Israeli control. On 9 June the Israelis transferred their main forces northwards, attacked Syria and seized the Golan Heights, from which the Syrians had overlooked northern Israel and which now allowed the Israelis to survey southern Syria. All the forces involved agreed on a UN-arranged ceasefire on 10 June. This astonishing war – a six-day wonder – was over.⁴

The Soviet Union watched the defeat of Egypt and Syria from the sidelines. The Soviet Mediterranean Fleet kept out the fighting zone. When the Israelis attacked Syria, the Soviets threatened to intervene, painting bombers with Egyptian markings and warning the United States by means of the ‘hot line’ that they meant business. In fact, the only action the Soviets actually took was to break off diplomatic relations with Israel on 10 June, a gesture which showed solidarity with the Arab states without doing the Israelis any immediate harm. The Americans too did little. The US Sixth Fleet steered clear of the war zone. American diplomatic attempts to end the hostilities succeeded only after the Israelis had achieved their objectives. While the fighting went on, the

superpowers were little more than spectators.

During the war there was a brief glimpse of the shape of things to come. On 6 June 1967 a meeting of Arab oil ministers, called by Sheikh Yamani of Saudi Arabia, declared an embargo on oil exports to countries friendly to Israel. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Libya and Algeria prohibited exports to the United States and Britain, and a reduction of those to West Germany. Within two days, the movements of Arab oil had been reduced by about 60 per cent. By coincidence, Biafra declared its independence from Nigeria on 30 May 1967 (see [Chapter 17](#)), subtracting about half-a-million barrels of oil exports from global supplies, which added to the effect of the Arab action. The American government was sufficiently dismayed to set up an emergency committee on oil supplies, which in cooperation with the oil companies began to find ways of making up the losses. Stocks were called on; Venezuela, Iran and Indonesia increased their production and supertankers which had come into operation since the Suez crisis of 1956 were used to carry supplies to the countries subject to the Arab boycott. In the event, the war in the Middle East was over so quickly that the oil weapon had no effect. By July it was plain that the oil producers concerned were sacrificing their exports and their revenues to no purpose; in August a summit meeting agreed to resume supplies; the embargo was ended in September. The attempt to use the oil weapon against Israel and its supporters failed. Six years later an oil embargo was repeated, with far greater effects.⁵

The Six-Day War had important consequences. Strategically, Israel became more secure, with a buffer against Egypt as far west as the Suez Canal, a short frontier along the Jordan and command of the Golan Heights. Psychologically, the capture of the Old City of Jerusalem was of immense importance, and it speedily became apparent that Israel would not (perhaps could not) surrender this particular gain. The victory gave Israeli morale a tremendous boost, producing a mood of self-confidence which carried the country forward for several years. But at the same time Israel took over a large Arab population in the West Bank and in the Gaza ‘strip’, a narrow band of territory on the Mediterranean coast, largely inhabited by Palestinian refugees, which it could not absorb, and which was to become an increasing source of friction. Israel had won a victory, but at a higher cost than was immediately apparent.

The Arab states, for their part, had suffered a humiliating defeat – the third since 1948. The forces of Egypt, Jordan and Syria had been crushed in a matter of hours. Nasser’s prestige received a blow from which it never recovered. The armaments supplied by the Soviet Union to Egypt and Syria were destroyed in

large numbers, sometimes before getting into action. Jordan received a new influx of about 200,000 Palestinian refugees from the West Bank, adding to the instability of a gravely weakened state.

Interlude and attempt at compromise, 1967–70

As the dust settled after the extraordinary events of the Six-Day War, various responses to the new situation emerged. At the Sudanese capital of Khartoum on 29 August–1 September 1967 a conference of thirteen Arab states proclaimed defiance in defeat. They rejected reconciliation with Israel; reaffirmed the principles of non-recognition and no negotiation; and undertook to maintain the rights of the Palestinian people.⁶ At the UN, on the other hand, the Security Council adopted Resolution No. 242 (22 November 1967), proposed by Britain and supported by both the United States and the Soviet Union, calling for an Israeli withdrawal ‘from territories occupied in the recent conflict’, and for ‘acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force’.⁷ This resolution sought a compromise which would balance Israeli withdrawal from its recent conquests against Arab recognition of the pre-1967 boundaries. The English text contained a hint of ambiguity, referring to ‘territories’ rather than ‘*the* territories’, which left an opportunity for some adjustment of the pre-war boundaries. In practice, any such compromise was out of reach. Israel had no intention of withdrawing from Jerusalem. Sinai, the West Bank and the Golan Heights were all of great strategic value, and the Israelis were highly unlikely to give them up except for some remarkable compensation.

The immediate responses to the Six-Day War thus amounted to defiance by the Arab states, ‘what we have we hold’ on the part of Israel, and a half-hearted attempt at compromise by the superpowers. Indeed, the superpowers diminished the effects of Resolution 242, and of their cooperation at the UN, by their actions in other regards. The Soviet Union urged the Arab states, and especially Egypt, to accept Resolution 242, but at the same time made good the losses in equipment of the Six-Day War. With Soviet encouragement, the Egyptians began the so-called War of Attrition – raids across the Suez Canal. The Israelis retaliated with bombing attacks on targets inside Egypt. The Egyptians appealed for protection, and in January 1970 the Soviets sent SAM-3 surface-to-air missiles, with trained personnel to use them, aircraft and between 15,000 and

20,000 military advisers to back up the Egyptian forces. SAM-3 missiles had never previously been deployed outside the communist bloc.⁸ Soviet diplomacy in support of Resolution 242 thus sought to bring the conflict to an end, but Soviet military actions helped to keep it going.

The United States in principle supported the compromise outlined in Resolution 242, but Secretary of State William Rogers's efforts to broker a peace were ultimately unsuccessful. The Americans themselves had no strong motive to put pressure on Israel to withdraw from the conquered territories, and ample domestic reasons (as a result of the pressure of public opinion, which was strongly pro-Israel) not to do so. On balance it seemed best to leave things alone.

Some three years passed therefore without any sign of a settlement. Meanwhile, Arab internal divisions grew more severe. King Hussein of Jordan made several secret attempts to reach an agreement with Israel about the West Bank. He met the Israeli prime minister, Golda Meir, no fewer than ten times, but always without success. On the other hand, the Palestinians tried to renew the struggle in their own way. In 1969 Yasir Arafat became leader of the PLO, and began a campaign on two fronts. By diplomatic methods (attending international conferences, securing partial recognition from the UN, establishing offices which performed some of the functions of embassies in capital cities) he sought to get the PLO accepted as a state in embryo. At the same time the PLO publicized its claims, and showed its determination, by acts of terrorism, notably the hijacking of civilian aircraft in flight – for example, an El Al airliner on 23 July 1968 and a TWA airliner on 29 August 1969.

The principal base of the PLO was in Jordan, where the organization formed almost a state within a state, undermining the authority of King Hussein. Eventually the king rebelled. On 16 September 1970 he proclaimed martial law, and the Jordanian army attacked the PLO camps. It took ten days of severe fighting, and heavy casualties on both sides, to break PLO resistance. The last PLO forces left Jordan for Lebanon only in July 1971. The PLO called the battle 'Black September'; and an organization bearing that name was formed to take revenge against Jordan as well as to conduct a terror campaign against Israel. Most notoriously, in September 1972 Black September terrorists attacked the Israeli quarters at the Munich Olympic Games, where they murdered eleven Israeli athletes, as well as a German policeman. Israel responded by bombarding PLO bases in Syria and by authorizing Mossad, its secret service, to track down and assassinate Palestinians connected with the terrorist organization.

There was thus no progress towards compromise on the lines proposed by

Resolution 242. Israel held on to its conquests in the Six-Day War. The Arab states made no move to recognize Israel. The Palestinians grew more disposed to terrorism, despite the PLO's defeat and expulsion from Jordan. There seemed no way out of the impasse of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Then, on 28 September 1970 President Nasser of Egypt died of a heart attack. He was succeeded by Vice President Anwar Sadat, who had always 'remained in the shadow of Nasser's magnetic personality and was generally considered to be a political lightweight', but who had nevertheless opted to set out on new paths.⁹

The October War, 1973

The new president of Egypt was determined to extricate Egypt from the conflict with Israel. In the long run he was to succeed, though he would pay for his success with his life and would leave Egypt, the 'self-ascribed leader of the Arab world', in a state of 'near-complete isolation' from other Arab nations.¹⁰ In February 1971 Sadat proposed that the Israelis should make a partial withdrawal from the environs of the Suez Canal, in return for an Egyptian undertaking to reopen the canal to Israeli shipping. Israel rejected this gambit, insisting on retaining the territory won in 1967. The Egyptian leader then turned to a wider plan, based on a daring and finely calibrated gamble: to build up an Arab coalition strong enough to go to war with Israel, with a goal not of total victory but a compromise peace that would reopen the Suez Canal and get the east shore of the Sinai desert back. Sadat conceived the idea of a limited war which would bring in the superpowers to impose a new settlement.

The Egyptian leader began by getting rid of his Soviet military advisers. From the Egyptian point of view, the Soviets were too cautious. Moscow, which was at the apex of its policy of *détente* with the United States, was anxious to keep the peace in the Middle East and to discourage the Egyptians from disturbing the status quo. Even so, it was a bold step for Sadat to demand, on 18 July 1972, the departure of all Soviet military advisers within a week, either taking their equipment with them or selling it to the Egyptian government.

Sadat then strengthened links with the Arab states. He made a military agreement with Syria – a risky move, because President Assad of Syria aimed instead at the complete defeat of Israel and would never have agreed to fight with Egypt for limited objectives. Sadat also approached the oil-producing countries, with a view to reviving the oil embargo which had been briefly imposed in 1967. On 23 August 1973 he visited King Faisal of Saudi Arabia in

Riyadh, told him that Egypt was preparing to go to war with Israel and asked for his help. Faisal agreed to use the oil weapon, but emphasized that it needed time to take effect.

The upshot of Sadat's diplomacy was the October War between 6 and 25 October 1973, which involved a triple crisis. First, there was the war itself, fought by Egypt and Syria (with support from other Arab countries) against Israel. Second, there was a superpower crisis, involving a brief but acute danger of war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Third, there was an oil crisis, as the Arab oil producers cut off supplies to the United States and other countries friendly to Israel.

The Egyptians opened their offensive across the Suez Canal on 6 October, to coincide with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when the Israeli troops were preoccupied with their religious duties; it was also during Ramadan when the Israelis might have expected the Egyptians to be distracted by *their* religious duties. The brilliantly executed attack achieved complete surprise and destroyed some three hundred Israeli tanks on the first day. The Syrians launched a simultaneous attack on the Golan Heights, with immediate success. Iraq contributed three divisions and Jordan two armoured brigades so that the Arab states achieved an unusual degree of coordination. The Israelis rallied, and counter-attacked against the Syrians and their allies on 12 October; on 15 October they attacked across to the western side of the Suez Canal, surrounding the Egyptian Third Army. At that point the superpowers intervened to check the fighting. Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, invited Henry Kissinger to Moscow (20 October) and the two superpowers brought pressure to bear on their respective protégés in the conflict. A ceasefire was declared on 22 October, but broke down on the same day that it began – causing tensions to mount between Washington and Moscow. A truce was agreed between all the belligerents on 24 October.

On the ground, the fighting amounted to a draw. The Egyptians had captured territory on the eastern side of the Suez Canal, while the Israelis had countered by crossing over to the western bank. The Syrians had gained ground on the Golan Heights, and then been driven back. Losses were heavy for such a short campaign. Israeli casualties were 2,812 killed and some 7,500 wounded. The Egyptians' losses were heavier: 5,000 dead, 12,000 wounded and 8,000 prisoners; Syria and the other Arab forces also took severe casualties.¹¹ It was a costly draw, but the Egyptians had achieved their aim.

The second crisis arose between the superpowers while the fighting was going on. At first, the Soviet Union and the United States played little part. The Soviets

did not want war but did nothing to prevent it. In the United States, the political elites were distracted by the aftermath of the Vietnam War and paralysed by the Watergate affair, and were caught somewhat off guard, although American intelligence had been analysing Sadat's strategy since the spring. On 12 October the Israeli prime minister, Golda Meir, made an urgent personal appeal to Nixon, claiming that the survival of her country was at stake. The Americans responded by organizing 'a massive airlift' using their own military transport aircraft: 'Everything from tanks to aircraft was rushed to Israel from aircraft carriers belonging to the U.S. Sixth and Seventh Fleets.'¹² There was a brief attempt at concealment, but many of the planes came in to land at Israeli airfields in broad daylight on 14 October, in full view of anyone who cared to watch.

The Israelis used the new American equipment in their counter-attack across the Suez Canal; and it became the Soviets' turn to fear the defeat of their ally. Security Council Resolution 338 (22 October) called upon all parties in the war to cease fighting within twelve hours; it further called for the implementation of Resolution 242. After this resolution failed to bring a durable ceasefire, the Soviet Union prepared to intervene directly in the battle. Reports reaching the Americans during the night of 24–25 October indicated that Soviet airborne divisions were about to set off for the war zone. In alarm, the US government ordered all its forces (including nuclear forces) on to a state of war alert. Despite the existence of the 'hot line', and the recent advances of détente, they took this drastic step without informing the Soviet Union – though of course the Soviets knew soon enough. The Soviets did not respond with a war alert of their own; but even so the two superpowers were brought near to a confrontation over a crisis which was to them of no more than secondary importance. Kissinger contacted Brezhnev on 25 October; the Soviets agreed not to send troops to Egypt; and the Americans rescinded the war alert. On the same day, the two governments introduced a further ceasefire resolution at the Security Council, and succeeded in bringing the fighting to an end. Even so, neither superpower came well out of the crisis. The Soviets offended Egypt and Syria by working with the Americans to bring about the two ceasefires. The Americans rescued Israel, and to a certain extent consolidated their influence in Tel Aviv, but they alarmed their allies in Western Europe by going on to nuclear alert without consultation; and some NATO countries openly refused refuelling facilities to American aircraft en route for Israel at the height of the crisis.

The third crisis arose from the Arab states' use of the oil weapon. This developed only slowly. It was not until 16 October, ten days after hostilities had

begun, that delegates from the Persian Gulf states (United Arab Emirates, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia) met in Kuwait, and raised the price of their oil from \$3.20 to \$5.11 per barrel, an increase of some 70 per cent. On the same day, King Faisal asked the United States to stop all deliveries of arms and equipment to Israel. As we have seen, the Americans disregarded this request. Indeed, on 19 October Nixon asked Congress to appropriate \$2.2 billion for assistance to Israel. On 20 October Saudi Arabia placed a total embargo on all oil exports to the United States, and also announced a reduction of 10 per cent in its oil production. Libya, Algeria and most of the Gulf States followed at once, stopping oil exports to the United States.

On 4 November the oil ministers of the Arab states agreed on an immediate reduction of 25 per cent from the level of production in September, and further 'rolling cutbacks' of 5 or 10 per cent of production each month. They also extended and refined the embargo on oil exports, by defining three categories of states, as follows: (1) 'Hostile' states, that is, those with close ties with Israel, to which no oil was to be exported; these comprised the United States, the Netherlands, Portugal, South Africa, Rhodesia and Japan. (2) 'Friendly' countries, which had adopted pro-Arab or anti-Israeli policies, which were to receive supplies at the same level as before the embargo was imposed; these included Britain, France, Spain and Belgium. Japan, by a rapid adjustment of its attitude to Israel, secured a transfer to this group. (3) 'Neutral' states, whose supplies were to be subject to a 25 per cent reduction, plus another 5 per cent in December. Finally, on 23 December 1973, the Gulf oil states increased their prices again, this time to \$11.65 per barrel, which meant that the price had more than tripled since mid-October.

Neither Iraq nor Iran joined in the cutbacks in production but even so the effect of the measures was formidable. Before October 1973, the United States had imported 1.2 million barrels of oil per day from the Arab states; by February 1974 this had fallen to a mere 18,000 barrels per day. The Netherlands, which had very little to do with the Middle Eastern crisis, normally imported about 70 per cent of its oil from the Arab states, and was reduced to bringing in supplies from Belgium, which was on the 'friendly' list, or West Germany, which was among the 'neutrals'. Meanwhile, every country in the world outside the Soviet bloc (which produced its own oil supplies) suffered the effects of a tripling of the price of oil.¹³

The oil weapon, though powerful, was slow in coming into action and (despite the distinction drawn between friendly, hostile and neutral states) somewhat

indiscriminate in its effects. It became detached from the October War, which was over before the oil embargoes began to bite; and its major effects were felt far outside the Middle East and in unexpected ways.

The Egypt–Israel peace treaty, 1979

In the October War of 1973, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq all took part in the fighting and coordinated their plans successfully at the start of the conflict. The oil-producing countries, which were mostly conservative monarchies, rallied to the support of the front-line states, which were mostly left-wing and modernizers. From the Maghreb, far distant from the fighting zone, Morocco sent troops and Algeria joined in the oil embargo. The war had also restored Arab military pride, after the disasters of earlier conflicts against Israel. This time the Arab armies, and especially the Egyptians, had fought on level terms. Sadat was now in a position to negotiate with Israel from a position of at least some strength; which had been his principal aim in going to war in the first place. The Israelis, on the other hand, were badly shaken. The immense self-confidence which had led them to reject any compromise after the Six-Day War had been dented, and they became more willing to negotiate with their enemies. How negotiations could begin, and whether they could succeed, remained to be seen.

When Sadat first planned the October War, he recognized that the superpowers would have to be drawn in to achieve successful negotiations. Yet involvement of the superpowers proved a slow and difficult business.

The October War brought about a significant shift in Soviet policy. The limits of their influence on the Arab countries had been exposed, and détente had been destabilized. Moscow now began to press for a Middle East settlement, on conditions satisfactory to itself. Moscow's position was that an agreement should be reached with full Soviet involvement (not just that of the United States), and that it should be a comprehensive settlement that included the Palestinians. This was an important development. In 1973 the Soviets had begun to refer to Palestinian 'national rights', and in September 1974, Nikolai Podgorny (the president of the Soviet Union) publicly advocated the creation of a Palestinian state. The Soviet government gave permission for a PLO office to be set up in Moscow in 1974. By 1977 the Soviet Union had articulated a four-point plan for a Middle East settlement: Soviet–American cooperation in negotiations; Israeli withdrawal from all territories conquered in 1967 and

afterwards; the recognition of the independence, integrity and security of all states in the region, including Israel; and the acceptance of the Palestinian right to an independent state on the West Bank. The United States, on the other hand, regarded a Middle East settlement as its own affair. Henry Kissinger, secretary of state in the administration of President Gerald Ford, conducted a lengthy period of 'shuttle diplomacy' with Israel and Egypt between 1975 and 1976 to the exclusion of the Soviet Union. Kissinger's memoirs contain some interesting reflections about what the fundamental problems of the Arab–Israeli relationship were. On the one hand, the Israelis 'endowed the peace process with a nearly metaphysical significance' and demanded that any peace treaty should 'deliver relations with its neighbors as close as those between, say, Belgium and the Netherlands'. Kissinger thought this was an impossible condition. The Israelis wanted absolute security in a part of the world where that could not be achieved. The Arabs, on the other hand, were labouring under a historical grievance that could not be remedied. Kissinger quotes President Hafez al-Assad of Syria saying to him: 'Why should Arabs pay with their territory for crimes committed in Europe against the Jewish people? Why should Arabs be asked to accept the biblical claim of a religion they do not themselves practice?'¹⁴ The essence of the Arab–Israeli conflict lay in persuading the Arabs to acknowledge the *fact* of Israel, and in persuading the Israelis that the Middle East, with time, patience and good fortune, could be made less of a state of nature.

In the autumn of 1977 Soviet and American policies briefly coincided. In September the Soviet foreign minister, Gromyko, went to New York on his annual visit to the General Assembly, in the course of which he conferred with the new American secretary of state, Cyrus Vance. On 1 October, Gromyko and Vance together publicly proposed to convene a conference at Geneva in December, under joint American–Soviet chairmanship, to be attended by all the states concerned plus the PLO, with the aim of reaching a comprehensive settlement which would ensure the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The proposed presence of the PLO, and the reference to the rights of the Palestinians, offended the Israelis, who vehemently opposed the project. In the United States, President Carter was sternly rebuked for conceding too much to the Palestinians and the Soviets. He retreated from the idea of a peace conference and instead appealed directly to Sadat to make some dramatic gesture to stimulate negotiations.

This appeal yielded historic results. Sadat was already in clandestine contact with the Israelis, discussing a settlement to be based on Israeli withdrawal from

the Sinai in return for diplomatic recognition by Egypt and guarantees of security. On 9 November 1977, he advanced the daring plan of a personal visit to Israel; the next day the Israeli prime minister, Menachim Begin, invited him to address the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) in Jerusalem on 20 November 1977. This astonishing occasion was an act of the highest courage on both sides. Sadat, by going to Jerusalem and talking to the enemy, knowingly took his life in his hands. On the Israeli side, it is likely that only Begin, with his record during the British mandate as leader of the Irgun, and his notorious rigidity towards the Palestinians, could have arranged the visit. Sadat's appearance in the Knesset, and the emotional effect of his speech, made a tremendous psychological impact. The substance of his exchanges with Begin proved a different matter. In brief, Sadat offered Israel recognition and peace; but he referred to peace with *all* the Arabs, including the Palestinians, and required Israeli withdrawal from *all* territories conquered in 1967. This proved too much to ask of the Israelis. Direct negotiations between Egypt and Israel revealed that the Israelis wished to retain the whole of the West Bank (including Jerusalem), and to keep a considerable military presence in Sinai. This fell far short of Sadat's aims, and discussions reached an impasse by July 1978. It appeared that Sadat's visit to Jerusalem might prove to be no more than a striking gesture.

At that point the United States intervened. President Carter persuaded Begin and Sadat to come to Camp David in September 1978 to negotiate an agreement with American mediation. After much difficulty, they reached an agreement on 17 September by which Israel was to withdraw from the Sinai over a period of three years, in return for recognition of Israel as a state and free use of the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran by Israeli shipping. In addition, Israel agreed to begin negotiations with Egypt (and if possible Jordan) to establish some form of Palestinian autonomy (though not independence) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which had been occupied by the Israelis since 1967. Both Egypt and Israel reserved their positions on the question of Jerusalem. These arrangements were to be embodied in a formal peace treaty within three months.

This timetable proved too ambitious, but with persistent American mediation – President Carter, whatever his defects, was undoubtedly tenacious – Sadat and Begin, who in the meantime had won the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize, concluded a peace treaty on 26 March 1979, with a solemn signing ceremony on the White House lawn. Incorporating the essentials of the Camp David agreement, the treaty of peace was the first between Israel and an Arab state, and for this reason it was treated as a historic departure.

The treaty predictably aroused a wave of indignation across the Arab world. Yasir Arafat told a crowd in Lebanon that Sadat was a traitor to the Arab cause and would be eliminated: 'Let them sign what they like. False peace will not last.'¹⁵ Sadat was ostracized by the leadership of other Arab states for breaking the front which they had previously maintained intact and Egypt was expelled from the Arab League, whose headquarters moved from Cairo to Tunis. Israel was reluctant to make progress towards Palestinian autonomy, and that part of the peace agreement remained largely unfulfilled, which stored up trouble for the future.

Sadat's willingness to make peace with Israel, and the growing perception that Egypt was becoming an instrument of American foreign policy, cost the Egyptian statesman his life. On 6 October 1981, he was assassinated by radical Islamists while he watched a military parade commemorating the 1973 war. Sadat was replaced by Hosni Mubarak, who made Egypt a cornerstone of American policy in the Middle East.

The dissolution of Lebanon, 1975–82

As the Arab–Israeli conflict eased in Egypt, it intensified in Lebanon. A small state, with a population of about 2.5 million in 1967, Lebanon was by the 1970s predominately Arab, although there was a sizeable Armenian community. Christians had long been a majority of its population. The main Christian sects were the Maronites, Greek Orthodox and Catholics of various kinds (Greek, Armenian, Syrian, Chaldean and so on). By the 1970s Muslims had become a majority, but the Muslim community was itself balanced between the Sunni, the Shiites and the Druze, whom many Muslims regard as heretics since they do not pray in mosques or go on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

For many years a political equilibrium had been maintained by a power-sharing arrangement whereby the president should normally be a Christian, the premier a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of the assembly a Shiite. The civil war in 1958 apart, this device worked reasonably well, although it was always precarious and depended on the willingness of the *za'im* (clan leaders) not to abuse their power. The Lebanese state had never fully established itself and never substituted for clan and religion as the focus of citizens' loyalty. Despite this political fragility, Lebanon achieved a higher degree of prosperity than any other Arab state, and Beirut, the capital, was a tolerant though chaotic place. Until the 1970s the chief problem in foreign relations for the Lebanese state was that Syria had never

granted it diplomatic recognition because in the period of the League of Nations mandate France (the mandatory power) had transferred territory from Syria to Lebanon; but for some time this dispute had lain dormant.

Between 1970 and 1971 Palestinians escaping from Jordan moved to Lebanon, where they created the same sort of situation as had existed in Jordan. Arafat set up his headquarters in Beirut. The PLO established camps and bases, amounting to a state within a state; they made raids across the border into Israel, attracting Israeli reprisals; and they disturbed the delicate three-sided internal political balance.

In April 1975 a right-wing Christian militia, the Phalangists, attacked Palestinian camps, inflicting heavy casualties. The Palestinians were supported by Lebanese Muslims, and fighting became widespread, amounting to a civil war. In April 1976 President Suleiman Frangieh, a Maronite Christian, appealed to Syria for help – though reluctantly, and only after pressure from Damascus. On 1 June a large Syrian force moved into Lebanon, growing in strength to 40,000 over the next few months and occupying most of the country. The Israelis declared a ‘red line’ in south Lebanon, to the north of their border, beyond which they warned the Syrians not to advance. In this southern strip, the Israelis intervened clandestinely to help the Christian militia against the Palestinians.

In October 1976 the various parties achieved a ceasefire in the civil war; and from 17 to 18 October a conference of Arab states at Riyadh in Saudi Arabia agreed to set up an Arab Deterrent Force to ensure observance of the ceasefire.¹⁶ This force was largely Syrian in composition, so that the new arrangement amounted in effect to a cloaked form of Syrian occupation.

These events amounted to a drastic loss of Lebanese independence, and to a partition of the country between the Syrian-occupied north (the bulk of Lebanese territory) and an area in the south where the Palestinians, Phalangists and Israelis fought sporadically with one another. Parts of the country were reduced to anarchy and ruin. In these events the superpowers took little part. The Americans limited themselves to urging restraint on the Israelis; the Soviet Union condemned the Syrian occupation of Lebanon, but took no action to prevent it.

During 1977 the PLO established itself more firmly in southern Lebanon. On 11 March 1978 the PLO extended its operations by making a seaborne landing on the Israeli coast at Herzliyyah (a few miles north of Tel Aviv), attacking a bus and killing thirty-eight civilians. On this occasion, the Israelis reacted vigorously, seizing the opportunity to invade southern Lebanon, up to the line of

the river Litani, with a force of some 25,000 troops. They avoided the cities (leaving the coastal town of Tyre alone), but occupied the countryside, with help from the Phalange militias.

This Israeli invasion evoked only a limited response from the Arab states. The Syrians, with troops in northern Lebanon, simply stayed put, though they allowed Iraqi volunteers to pass through to help the Palestinians. The Lebanese government appealed to the Security Council, which on 19 March 1978 passed Resolution 425 requiring complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, to be supervised by a UN force. At this stage, the role of the superpowers was vital. The United States voted for the resolution, even though it was directed against Israel; the Soviet Union abstained, which was enough to ensure that the resolution passed. More important, it was put into effect. In June 1978 the United Nations Interim Force (UNIF) entered southern Lebanon, with the double task of supervising the withdrawal of the Israelis and restoring Lebanese control in the area. Neither could be entirely achieved. The Israelis withdrew as the UN troops arrived; but they continued to give clandestine support to the Christian militias, who now called themselves the South Lebanon Army. The PLO retained its bases.

The Lebanese crisis was not resolved, in short, and was to break out again in 1982, with a second, and this time devastating, Israeli invasion of Lebanon. 'Peace for Galilee', as the Israeli military euphemistically named its operation, was less of a surgical strike against terrorist provocations (although these had occurred and arguably provided a justification for reprisal attacks) than a 'shock and awe' attempt to eliminate the PLO as a force in Lebanon and to establish a friendly regime on Israel's northern border. Israeli defence minister Ariel Sharon threw the country's full military might at southern Lebanon and struck at targets with little attempt to minimize civilian casualties, which were soon numbered in the tens of thousands, with unknown thousands killed. Sidon and Tyre were bombed and shelled; Beirut was besieged from June 1982 and bombed relentlessly for two months. Yasir Arafat's boast that Beirut would be the 'Stalingrad of the Arabs' was revealed as empty. To Arafat's disgust Syrian troops prudently retreated northwards rather than engage the Israelis in battle. The PLO was on its own.

During the conflict Israel used 'some of the most lethal and barbaric weapons ever invented' – suction, cluster and phosphorus bombs – and moreover used them in defiance of an agreement with the United States (their manufacturer) to employ them only in a defensive war against two or more Arab states.¹⁷ Israel

also colluded with the Christian militias' post-war vengeance against the remaining Palestinians. In August 1982 an American envoy, Philip Habib, brokered a deal that permitted a UN force of American, French and Italian soldiers to supervise a withdrawal of the PLO's forces from West Beirut. The evacuation of the PLO's fighting forces – some 14,000 men – was completed to the UN's satisfaction by 10 September. Arafat decamped to Athens and thence to Tunis. On 14 September Bashir Gemayal, the Maronite president-elect, was killed in a bomb explosion. His death was blamed on the Palestinians, who, or so the Israelis claimed, still had 2,000 heavily armed fighters in West Beirut in violation of the Habib deal. Israel – breaching the Habib deal itself – moved into West Beirut. On 15 September the Israeli military authorized the Phalangist militias to hunt down terrorists in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps in the south-west quarter of the city. Over the next three days many hundreds of unarmed Palestinians (some accounts speak of over 3,000 victims) – mostly women and children – were raped, tortured and murdered by the militiamen with the full complicity of the Israeli army. A subsequent Israeli commission of inquiry found that Defence Minister Sharon had been negligent and bore 'personal responsibility' for the slaughter.

The Sabra and Chatila massacres outraged the government of the United States: President Ronald Reagan expressed revulsion, which was all the stronger because his personal envoy, Morris Draper, had been browbeaten into silence when he sought to persuade the Israeli leadership to intervene to stop the killings.¹⁸ In the wake of the massacre American marines were redeployed in Beirut. They stayed in the Middle East little more than a year. On 23 October 1983 the American Marine contingent was the victim of a bomb attack that cost 241 lives and compelled its withdrawal.

Bleak prospects

The character of the Arab–Israeli dispute changed considerably between 1963 and the early 1980s. First, the Six-Day War of 1967 gained Israel a larger territory with shorter boundaries, but left a legacy of greater internal insecurity through the inclusion of a large Arab population and permanent external insecurity. Israel's ruthlessness in the 1982 Lebanon War was prompted by this search for security at all costs, but it damaged the country's reputation as a progressive democracy struggling to survive in an implacably hostile environment. After 1982, Israel became Goliath, not David, in the eyes of many

outside observers. Second, the Egyptian–Israeli treaty of 1979, which breached the dike of the total refusal by all Arab states to accept the existence of Israel, meant a strategic change of immense importance: without Egypt defeat of Israel on the battlefield was impossible. The burden of uncompromising opposition to Israel was hence increasingly taken up by the PLO, which became more intransigent and achieved wider recognition in the Arab world at the same time as it tarred the Palestinian cause with the brush of terrorism. The failure of secular Arab states to defeat Israel and obtain justice for the Palestinians was, moreover, a profound blow to their reputations. It was not by chance that Sadat was killed by radical Islamists: in the future, jihad, or holy war, would replace war by conventional means.

Notes

- 1 *Oxford Economic Atlas of the World* (4th ed., Oxford, 1972), p. 169.
- 2 Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East, from World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 164–5.
- 3 Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (4th ed., New York, 2006), p. 85.
- 4 For casualties, see Chris Cook, *World Political Almanac* (3rd ed., London, 1995), p. 293.
- 5 Figures on the effect of the oil embargo in Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (London, 1991), pp. 555–7.
- 6 Resolutions of the Khartoum summit, *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1967, pp. 22,275–6.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 1968, p. 22,473. The French text of the resolution removed the ambiguity by using the definite article – ‘les territoires’.
- 8 Golan, *Soviet Policies*, p. 73.
- 9 Mehran Kamrava, *The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War* (3rd ed., Berkeley, 2013), p. 127.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- 11 Casualty figures in Cook, *World Political Almanac*, p. 294.
- 12 Kamrava, *Modern Middle East*, p. 131.
- 13 Fiona Venn, *Oil Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1986), p. 146; Yergin, *Prize*, p. 606.
- 14 Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York, 1999), pp. 349–50.
- 15 Quoted in Lloyd C. Gardner, *The Road to Tahrir Square: Egypt and the United States from the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak* (New York, 2011), p. 147.
- 16 *Keesing's*, 1976, p. 28,122.
- 17 David Gilmour, *Lebanon: The Fractured Country* (Oxford, 1983), p. 168.
- 18 Seth Anziska, ‘A Preventable Massacre’, *New York Times*, 17 September 2012, p. A23.

The geopolitics of oil, 1973–91

Oil shocks and OPEC – The oil weapon in action – Consequences of the oil shock – The Iranian Revolution and the Iran–Iraq War – The strategic significance of Saudi Arabia – Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

The improvement in relations between Israel and Egypt was only one of the major shifts in international politics that took place in the Middle East between the 1960s and the end of the Cold War. The region was the most politically volatile in the world. Yet its conflicts might have been ignored by the world's more developed countries had it not been for one uncomfortable fact: the Middle East's regimes were sitting on top of the richest and most easily extracted oil reserves in the world. The complications of Middle Eastern politics – be they religious, dynastic or ethnic – were thus compounded by the way they spilled over into the geopolitics of oil. In the last third of the twentieth century the domestic politics of Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and their tense mutual relations, were questions of global concern.

Conditions for the oil shock

This global concern was attributable to a simple fact. Since 1945 industrialized countries had grown accustomed to cheap oil to fuel their flourishing economies. At the beginning of October 1973 the price of a barrel of oil stood at a mere \$3.00 per barrel. During the October War, Arab producers of crude oil quadrupled their prices, which reached \$11.65 per barrel in December. Between 1979 and 1981 there was a revolution in Iran and war broke out between Iraq and Iran, and the price of oil soared again, peaking in 1981.

To make such increases possible, certain conditions had to prevail. There had to be dependence on imported petroleum, especially in the United States; the oil producers had to achieve sufficient unity to act together; and the producers had to develop the determination to *use* their economic power, even at risk to themselves. By the end of 1973 these conditions were all present.

In the early 1970s the industrialized world became heavily dependent on oil. By 1972 the share of oil and natural gas together had reached 64.4 per cent of the total energy used in the world, and meanwhile that total itself had *tripled* when compared to the post-war period.¹ Aircraft, diesel locomotives and oil-burning ships; the production of plastics; heating and lighting – all consumed oil in vast quantities. The private car had become commonplace, first in the United States and then in the rest of the world, which had overtaken the Americans in numbers of cars by 1970, as the figures given below indicate.²

Passenger car registrations (in millions of cars)			
Year	USA	Rest of world	Total
1950	40.3	12.7	53.0
1960	61.7	36.8	98.3
1970	89.2	104.2	193.4

These changes had vital political as well as economic consequences. Flourishing economies and growing individual wealth brought optimism and self-confidence to the West as a whole. Until the early 1970s, the United States could sustain the cost of the Cold War and grow more prosperous at the same time. Western Europe developed elaborate systems of social security, creating an attractive alternative to the appeal of communism. Oil consumption and political success went hand in hand: oil provided cheap energy, which promoted economic growth and prosperity, which in turn supported Western political stability and success.

All this increasingly depended on oil from the Middle East. As early as 1948 the United States, though still a major producer, had become a net importer of oil, with supplies coming from Venezuela, which was geographically close and strategically secure. Even so, the American government was aware of the strategic implications of dependence on imports. In March 1959 President

Eisenhower imposed a quota system, limiting oil imports to 9 per cent of total annual consumption. This system worked until the early 1970s. American domestic oil production declined from 1970 onwards, and in April 1973 President Nixon abandoned the quota system and accepted unlimited oil imports. That year, imports reached 36 per cent of total American oil consumption.³ The first condition for the oil shock was hence in place. The United States was utterly dependent on oil to maintain its consumption-driven way of life. Other Western countries, though smaller consumers of oil than the Americans, were even more vulnerable, because they had no domestic supplies at all.

Could the oil exporters exploit this situation? During the 1950s the governments of oil-producing states, notably Venezuela and the Arab countries, had begun to consult together on how best to deal with the oil companies. They were jolted into action in August 1960 when the American multinational Standard Oil announced a reduction of 14 cents per barrel in the price they would pay for Middle East oil; other oil 'majors' followed suit. A sharp loss of revenue for the producing countries ensued. Representatives of five disgruntled states (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela) met in Baghdad and on 14 September 1960 concluded an agreement to set up an Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), in order to coordinate their oil policies, protect prices, regulate production and generally combine against the oil companies. The five founders were joined by Qatar (1961), Indonesia and Libya (1962), Abu Dhabi (1967), Algeria (1969), Nigeria (1971) and Ecuador (1973), bringing the total to twelve members by the crucial year of 1973.⁴

For some years, OPEC was content with increasing governments' shares of the oil majors' profits, and by the 1970s were taking a slice of about 70 per cent.⁵ On the one hand the oil companies became more careful to consult governments about their actions and made no further attempt to reduce prices; on the other hand they refused to negotiate with OPEC as a body, only with individual governments. This balance was accepted by both sides, and neither the oil companies nor OPEC sought a confrontation.

OPEC thus provided the oil-producing countries with the means for joint action, but for some years they made only limited use of it. Then developments in Libya brought a decisive change. Oil was first discovered in Libya in 1959, and within ten years Libyan oil production had overtaken Saudi Arabia's. In 1969 a coup led by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi overthrew the Libyan monarchy, and the new Revolutionary Command Council set out to increase oil revenues by putting pressure on the oil companies to increase prices. In 1971 the Libyans

nationalized British Petroleum's (BP) operations on their territory, without resistance and with no difficulty in selling their production. The other producers grew confident that Libya was following the right strategy. Gaddafi had given a bold lead, and others were willing to follow. Across the political spectrum, from the Revolutionary Council in Libya to the monarchy of Saudi Arabia, there was a new determination to make the West pay a fair price for the oil that the Middle East was pumping.

The oil weapon in action, 1973

During the Arab–Israeli War in October 1973, the oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf agreed to use the oil weapon on behalf of the Arabs. Between October and December 1973, the Gulf states adopted a three-pronged strategy. As we have seen, they introduced two steep increases in prices, taking the price per barrel from \$3.00 to \$11.65. A selective embargo was imposed on exports, designed to strike hardest at the nations most sympathetic to Israel, and principally the United States, whose imports of Arab oil were reduced from 1.2 million barrels per day to a mere 18,000 by February 1974. Four of the six states (Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia) also undertook progressive reductions in production. The production of the four countries concerned was reduced to 15.8 million barrels a day by December – 5 million barrels per day less than in October. This fall was offset by Iran and Iraq, which increased their production by a total of 600,000 barrels per day, thus reducing the overall net loss to 4.4 million barrels per day. This amounted to only about 9 per cent of the total world oil production outside the Soviet Union; but this relatively limited figure was compounded by consumer panic, so that the effects on prices were greater than the simple figures might have indicated.⁶

The oil weapon achieved only limited success in assisting the Arab cause against Israel. The major effects of the oil weapon came too late to affect the outcome of the October War on the battlefield. In March 1974 President Sadat of Egypt, who had done much to bring the oil embargo into action, asked for it to be ended. It had served its purpose, not by defeating the Israelis in the field, but by shaking the morale of the Americans; and Sadat now wished to play the diplomatic card and bring in the United States to achieve the settlement with Israel which had always been his main aim. At a meeting on 18 March 1974, the Arab oil ministers agreed to suspend the embargo, which was formally ended in July 1974.

Eight years before these events, OPEC had established its headquarters in Vienna, where it took over a set of offices whose principal tenant had previously been the American oil company Texaco.⁷ Within a few years this change of tenant assumed a symbolic quality: the influence of OPEC supplanted that of the oil companies. In the new wave of confidence inspired by Libya, even the conservative oil states nationalized their oil industries. In 1974 the Kuwaiti state acquired a 60 per cent holding in the Kuwait Oil Company, jointly owned by BP and the Gulf Oil Company; in 1975, Kuwait simply took over the remaining 40 per cent, awarding a mere \$50 million in compensation instead of the \$2 billion demanded by BP. In 1976 Saudi Arabia took over the ownership of all Aramco's assets in the country. The oil now belonged to the governments, not to the oil companies. With the near-quadrupling of Middle East oil prices at the end of 1973, the revenues of the oil-producing states increased dramatically: 'OPEC countries were piling up reserves at the rate of \$115,000 per second.'⁸

Revenues of oil-producing states (in US\$ billions)⁹

State	1973	1978
Saudi Arabia	4.35	36.0
Kuwait	1.7	9.2
Iraq	1.8	23.6
Libya	2.2	8.8

Suddenly, the oil-producing countries of the Middle East had huge disposable incomes. They spent lavishly – on armaments, skyscrapers, airports, motor vehicles and luxury imports of all kinds. This flood of expenditure had the paradoxical effect of enabling the industrialized countries to recoup some of the losses imposed by high oil prices by selling their products – especially weapons – to the oil producers. The United States, for instance, spent approximately between \$5 and \$6 billion each year on Saudi oil in the mid-1970s. But it benefited from inward investment from the Saudis of \$10–\$11 billion each year.¹⁰ Vast quantities of so-called petrodollars became available to Western banks, which proceeded, with the unerring judgement that has characterized the highly paid masters of the global capital markets, to lend them to communist bloc and Third World borrowers who could not meet the interest payments.

The oil boom soon suffered from the law of diminishing returns. The recession caused in the industrialized countries by the oil shock reduced the demand for

oil. Non-OPEC suppliers (e.g. Mexico) increased their production. British and Norwegian oilfields in the North Sea came on stream in 1975. By the 1980s the proportion of world oil exports provided by OPEC members had fallen to about 40 per cent, as against 90 per cent at the time of its foundation.¹¹ Divisions arose within OPEC itself. Some countries (notably Nigeria, Algeria and Iran) needed revenue for their own immediate needs, while others (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya) were content to leave their oil in the ground and sell it another day – or even another decade. Saudi Arabia was a conservative monarchy, dependent on American military support and certainly not anxious to ruin the Western economy. Libya, on the other hand, was a revolutionary state and violently anti-American. Between spenders and savers, conservatives and revolutionaries, there was little common ground. The mid-1970s were OPEC's golden age, but golden ages never last, and this one was very short. Still, the oil producers flourished while the sun shone, and remained much better off even when it began to set. What was the fate of consumers of oil?

Consequences of the oil shock: The consumers

Every country in the world had to face the consequences of the immense increase in oil prices at the end of 1973. Since OPEC was using collective action, the obvious answer was collective opposition – a coalition of consumers against producers. The United States called an Energy Conference at Washington in February 1974, to discuss ways of dealing with the crisis and to prevent countries doing separate deals with the Arab states. This proved impossible. Arab oil ministers were conspicuous visitors at a summit meeting of the European Community (EC) at Copenhagen in December 1973, and western European countries moved to protect their own interests. The French foreign minister, Michel Jobert, visited Iraq to make special arrangements for French oil supplies. Britain made its own deals with Iran and Kuwait. Japan was acutely conscious that its thriving economy depended on imported oil and sought to placate the Arabs. The Americans themselves broke away from the ranks they were trying to form, and made their own approaches to Saudi Arabia.

Despite these divisions, the Washington Energy Conference met with some success. In November 1974 an International Energy Agency (IEA) was set up by the United States and fifteen other countries (France was a conspicuous absentee) to make plans to counteract the influence of OPEC and organize the distribution of oil in any future crisis. Individual countries also took their own

measures. In the United States, Congress agreed in 1974 to the building of a pipeline to carry oil from Alaska to the rest of the country, a scheme which had previously been rejected on environmental grounds. By 1978 this pipeline was carrying over a million barrels of oil per day.¹² In 1979 the Carter administration secured the passage of a National Energy Act, in a largely vain attempt to regulate the consumption of energy. In practice, despite the rise in oil prices, American oil imports continued to increase. France embarked on an ambitious nuclear power programme, which in the long run drastically reduced French dependence on oil. Britain exploited its own oilfields in the North Sea and became self-sufficient in oil by the end of the 1970s. Japan introduced so-called knowledge-intensive industries, based on computers and microchips, to replace or supplement those which were heavily dependent on oil. Brazil began a nuclear programme and in 1975 concluded a contract with West Germany for the purchase of eight nuclear reactors.

The industrialized countries thus sought to reduce their dependence on imported oil, but no one could escape the effects of the drastic rise in oil prices, which affected every country and almost every individual. Western Europe was badly hit, because it had grown accustomed to uninterrupted economic growth, accompanied by moderate inflation, since the time of the Marshall Plan. Between 1974 and 1975 countries entered a recession, accompanied by high inflation (25 per cent in Britain in 1975), producing the unprecedented phenomenon of 'stagflation' – a stagnant economy plus rampant inflation. Widespread unemployment and industrial strife followed almost inevitably. The United States suffered in the same way, though less severely, and even the Japanese economy faltered.

In this crisis, President Giscard d'Estaing of France invited the leaders of five other industrialized countries to a meeting at Rambouillet in November 1975 to discuss means of dealing with their common problems. These six states (Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States) added Canada to their number in 1976, thus becoming the Group of Seven, usually abbreviated to G-7. The Group met annually, becoming a fixed part of the international scene. Its actual achievements were limited, because despite the arrangements for consultation countries continued to fend for themselves in an emergency. In 1979, for example, the United States took its own measures to tackle inflation by a sharp rise in interest rates. This drew capital to the United States, raised the value of the dollar on the international exchanges, and in turn contributed to a worsening of the recession in Western Europe.

From these events the Soviet Union stood somewhat aside. The sharp increase in oil prices at the end of 1973 was an asset to the Soviet Union as a major oil producer and exporter, but to a lesser degree than might have been expected. The Soviet Union sold a large proportion of its oil exports to the east European countries of COMECON, at prices which were fixed in advance at the average of the previous five years on the world markets. This arrangement flattened out the effects of the sudden fourfold price increase at the end of 1973 by distributing it over five years. This shielded the east European states from the sudden shock which struck all the other oil consumers, but prevented the Soviet Union from reaping the extra profits from its oil exports. The Soviets continued to sell oil to the COMECON countries at much less than the new world price, and thus deprived themselves of hard currency which they could have earned by sales to other parts of the world.

The Iranian revolution, 1979

Iran held a unique position in Middle East politics. It is not an Arab country, and was detached both emotionally and by distance from the Arab–Israeli conflict. Geographically it faced north towards the Soviet Union and Central Asia as well as south to the Persian Gulf. Politically and strategically it could balance between the United States and the Soviet Union, though leaning more towards the former than the latter. In the 1970s Iran moved to the centre of affairs, as an oil producer, as a military power and finally as the home of an Islamic revolution.

At the end of 1973, Iran joined the Arab oil states in raising the price of oil, but declined to take part in the progressive cuts in production inaugurated by the Saudis. The shah of Iran wanted to maintain production and to exploit the increase in oil revenues, partly for his own wealth and glory, but also to turn his country into a modern state and the leading power in its area. When British forces withdrew from the Persian Gulf in 1971 (to the dismay of the smaller Gulf states, which even offered to put up the money to persuade them to stay), the shah seized the opportunity to put Iran forward as the new military guardian of the area, a claim which was quickly endorsed by the United States.

The Americans provided Iran with large quantities of military equipment, building the country up as the principal military power in the Gulf area, a solid bastion against the Soviet Union and a counterbalance to the radical Arab regimes in Iraq and Syria. This policy presented problems. Iran and the United

States held opposite views on oil prices – Iran wanted to push them up, the Americans wanted to bring them down. There was also the issue of human rights. The shah was at the peak of an autocratic regime, whose secret police force, the SAVAK, acted with no regard for civil liberties. In the early 1970s this consideration had not greatly perturbed Henry Kissinger, who thought primarily in terms of power; but it counted a great deal more when President Carter took office at the beginning of 1977 with a genuine concern for human rights.

Even so, in the late 1970s neither oil prices nor human rights spoiled close relations between Iran and the United States. Making allowances for inflation, the real price of oil was about 10 per cent lower by 1978 than it had been in 1974 – perhaps no great consolation for the motorist at the petrol pump, but reasonably satisfactory for the US government and for the shah.¹³ Iran's human rights record did not prevent the secretary of state, Cyrus Vance, from visiting Tehran in May 1977 and assuring the shah of American support. On the eve of the new year, during a visit to Tehran, President Carter egregiously declared Iran to be 'an island of stability' in the region. They were words that soon came back to haunt him.¹⁴

America's pragmatic approach to Iran seemed all the more necessary because the shah was shrewdly balancing between Washington and Moscow. From the 1960s onwards Iran had maintained generally good relations with the Soviet Union. Brezhnev visited Tehran in 1963, and promoted various trade agreements. In 1966 and 1968 the Soviet government advanced large credits to Iran, helping to build steel factories at Isfahan (which the Americans refused to finance) and to construct a pipeline to carry gas to the Soviet Union. By 1978 the Soviet Union was supporting a total of 147 projects in Iran, making the country one of the largest recipients of Soviet aid.¹⁵ The Soviets also provided substantial quantities of arms to Iran, and made no fuss when the shah arrested communists. Thus the shah steered a subtle course between the two superpowers, one of the very few regimes to achieve this feat.

What the shah significantly failed to do was to safeguard his position at home. The self-styled 'light of the Aryans' overreached himself, and showed signs of megalomania, by holding extravagant celebrations at the ruins of Persepolis, claiming to be the heir of the glories of the ancient Persian Empire. He combined severe suppression of political opposition with a fatal tolerance of dissent among religious leaders, and rampant corruption among the country's elites. He underestimated the power of Islam, putting his faith in modernization and secularism, and pressing forward with a programme of radical measures to

transform Iranian society on American or European lines. He ‘believed that material prosperity would yield political stability, and that his faith in the ancient bond between people and monarch would be justified by economic success and renewed gratitude’.¹⁶ He put too much reliance on American support, not realizing that in the last resort the Americans would abandon him.

The shah was eventually overthrown at the beginning of 1979 by a revolutionary Islamic movement inspired by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a prominent Shi’a cleric whose family traced its lineage back to the Prophet’s daughter, Fatima. Khomeini had been exiled for taking part in political disturbances in the early 1960s and had moved to Najaf in Iraq. Khomeini recorded his homilies on the situation in Iran, which were then copied onto innumerable cassettes and broadcast on sympathetic radio stations and carried into Iran itself in numbers which no border or airport controls could stop. He was ‘like an old Testament prophet denouncing a sinful world from the wilderness’.¹⁷ Khomeini was much more than a moralist, however. He was a political philosopher who advocated the principle of *velayat-e faqih*, or theocracy. For Khomeini, secular rule, be it by the shah or by anybody else, was illegitimate; the state should be guided by the principles of Islam (‘Islamic government may be defined as the rule of divine law over men’), which inevitably placed the official interpreters of holy law, namely, the Muslim priesthood, the *ulema*, in a position of great authority.¹⁸

In October 1978 the Iraqi government expelled Khomeini to Paris. He was not there long. All through 1978 Iran had been in turmoil. Day after day, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators packed the streets of Tehran, shouting ‘Death to the shah’, and calling for Khomeini’s return. It was even said that the profile of Khomeini’s face could be seen on the surface of the moon. In the face of this massive popular movement, the shah finally rejected the drastic use of force (which might well not have availed in any case), and, encouraged by the Americans, left the country on 16 January, after having appointed a new premier, Shapur Bakhtiar, with a mandate to introduce liberal democracy. The Americans hoped against hope that Bakhtiar could stem the tide of the imminent revolution. It was an implausible and probably impractical strategy; quite certainly it came too late. On 1 February 1979 the Ayatollah Khomeini arrived in Tehran on a special flight arranged by Air France. He was welcomed by enormous crowds, and at once proclaimed an Islamic Republic, with himself at its head. A new political phenomenon – radical Islam – was set loose on an uncomprehending world, although the first months after Khomeini’s return were

chaotic and violent, with power in practice often in the hands of local revolutionary committees rather than the central government. Thousands of supporters of the old regime were executed in this period, not to mention many people whose political and theological views did not coincide with those of the revolutionaries.

The shock waves were felt in all directions. The United States rapidly became Iran's prime foreign enemy – the 'great Satan', in the vocabulary of the Islamic revolution. When the American government, after much hesitation, allowed the exiled shah (who was suffering from cancer) to enter the United States for medical treatment (October 1979), there was a furious response in Tehran. On 4 November a crowd of radical students stormed the American Embassy, capturing more than sixty members of its staff and holding them as hostages to force the United States to return the shah to Iran to stand trial.¹⁹ The hostages were abused; they were blindfolded, humiliated by jeering crowds and in perennial fear of torture and death (although ultimately none was harmed seriously). A handful of hostages were released soon after they were seized, but fifty-two were kept in detention and they inevitably became the chief focus of American policy towards the new regime in Tehran. Americans tied yellow ribbons around trees as a sign of remembrance and, in general, the 'intense public and media reaction made it harder for the administration to change the subject'.²⁰

President Carter retaliated against hostage-taking by freezing Iranian assets in the United States, and by stopping all imports of Iranian oil (though the Iranians had no difficulty in finding other customers). These measures were ineffectual. In April 1980 the Americans attempted to rescue the hostages by means of a commando-style airborne operation ('Eagle Claw'), which failed tragically when three of the eight helicopters which were intended to lift out the embassy personnel broke down in the preliminary stages of the mission. One of the remaining helicopters then proceeded, while refuelling, to crash into one of the six transport planes that had also landed at the rendezvous in the Iranian desert. Several people were killed and the other helicopters were damaged in the subsequent fire. The crews of the helicopters boarded the remaining transport planes and aborted the mission, leaving behind top-secret documents, including a plan of the mission itself. The hostages were swiftly parcelled out into multiple locations and a new wave of anti-American hysteria began inside Iran. The hardliners strengthened their grip.

The Eagle Claw debacle had a touch of the absurd about it which added to the

American humiliation. The hostages were eventually released by their captors on 20 January 1981, after mediation by the government of Algeria. Their incarceration and treatment, and the inability of the Carter administration to do much about it, unquestionably conditioned the November 1980 presidential election, in which President Carter was soundly defeated by the Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan.

The new situation in Iran brought some advantages for the Soviet Union. Iran left the Central Treaty Organization, the alliance which was intended to contain Soviet power from the south; and Khomeini's government shut down American intelligence operations in Iran. But on balance the Iranian revolution was damaging for the Soviets. They had waited too long before switching their support to Khomeini. The new Islamic Republic, and the wave of religious fervour which it touched off, threatened the stability of Soviet Central Asia, where there were large Muslim populations. The new Iranian government even denounced the Soviet Union as imperialist – in this respect getting in ahead of Ronald Reagan. The Soviet Union was hesitant in its response; and indeed the Iranian revolution left both the superpowers uncertain and ineffectual in face of events which were outside their normal experience and which they did not fully understand.

Iran's neighbour to the west, Iraq, thought it could take advantage of the weakness engendered by Iran's chaotic revolution. In September 1980 Iraq launched a surprise attack, initially over the line of the frontier between the two countries along the waterway of the Shatt al-Arab. Iran was 'caught by surprise' and was 'badly shaken'.²¹ International condemnation was limited – a measure of the diffidence that the Iranian revolution had inspired. Although Iraq's action was a clear case of aggression, the Security Council of the UN merely limited itself to demanding that hostilities should cease: Iraq was not blamed and hence was not made the target of mandatory sanctions.

The causes of Iraq's actions were various. There was an ambitious new leader in Baghdad, Saddam Hussein, who had elbowed aside President Ahmad Hassan Bakr in July 1979. The Iraqi regime was Baa'thist (Nationalist Socialist) and Khomeini had condemned the regime as hostile to Islam and urged Iraq's large Shi'a minority to rebel against it. Saddam must also have thought that Iran would prove unable to mobilize coherent opposition to his forces' advance. The Iranian army had been a pillar of the former regime and thus had been purged of its senior and most experienced officers since February 1979. The army had also shrunk as conscripts absconded to join the revolution. Although Iran possessed

modern weaponry, it was mostly American or West European in origin – fighter jets, tanks, battlefield transportation were all manufactured in the West. Where would Iran buy spare parts? Iran ended up being supplied, of all countries, by Israel. Iraq, by contrast, was almost entirely equipped by the Soviet Union and could boast ample supplies.

Accordingly, the war was by many (including Saddam) expected to last only a few weeks – to be a ‘whirlwind war’. It would last in fact eight years. In some ways the war was akin to the Great War, or, even more closely, to the conflict in Korea. Iraqi forces invaded Iran, and each side bombed the other’s oil wells and refineries. The conflict became a war of attrition, one of the fiercest in modern times, with heavy casualties on both sides. Iranian nationalism and religious fanaticism imbued Tehran’s soldiers with suicidal courage: like the Chinese in Korea, the Iranians used ‘human waves’ of shock troops to attack even the most strongly defended positions. The Iraqis made unscrupulous use of weapons banned by international law; mustard and nerve gas were repeatedly used, for example. The Iraqis, in particular, bombarded civilian targets with air or missile strikes, the so-called War of the Cities. Despite these ruthless tactics the United States ‘tilted’ to the Iraqi side from 1983 onwards, opening diplomatic relations, selling non-lethal equipment and sponsoring, in July 1987, Security Council Resolution 598, which called for a ceasefire and withdrawal to ‘internationally recognized boundaries’.

The two sides made a peace of exhaustion in August 1988. At least 400,000–500,000 combatants and civilians had died by then. A deadly sideshow to the war was the genocidal campaign waged by Saddam against Iraq’s Kurdish minority, which had taken advantage of the war to seek independence. Between 1987 and 1989 tens of thousands died; hundreds of villages were destroyed, and civilians were uprooted and deported from their homes. Worse, ‘the Iraqi regime became the first in history to attack its own civilian population with chemical weapons’.²²

The strategic significance of Saudi Arabia

One important economic consequence of the Iran–Iraq War was to reduce the oil production of both countries. Iranian production was nearly 156 million tonnes in 1979 and less than 65 million in 1981; Iraqi production was 169 million tonnes in 1979 and only 43 million in 1981.²³ This fall in output speedily produced a second oil shock. At the beginning of 1979 the price of oil stood at

\$13 per barrel; in 1981 it reached \$37.²⁴ When we recall that at the beginning of October 1973 the price had been a mere \$3 per barrel, the combined effects of the two oil shocks become dramatically plain. In nine years the price of oil had increased more than tenfold.

As the war continued, attacks on each other's oil production, storage and export capacity only increased: from 1984 onwards a 'tanker war' was fought by Iraq against international vessels transporting Iranian oil: fifty-one ships were struck in 1984 and another forty-two in 1985. Kharg Island, the main Iranian shipping terminal, was in effect under siege. Iran struck back by targeting not only Iraqi production facilities, but also tankers carrying oil from Kuwait, which was one of Iraq's most generous creditors. Iran also threatened to close the straits of Hormuz, but shrewdly refrained since that would certainly have led to military conflict with the United States – the 'Carter Doctrine' enunciated after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which identified the Persian Gulf as an area of vital strategic interest for the United States, applied as much to Iran as it did to the Soviet Union. The United States was brought into the naval conflict in any case: Kuwait requested 'reflagging' of its tankers and from 1987 American warships guarded convoys through the Persian Gulf and defended them from aerial assault and mines. In April 1988, after an American ship had been damaged by a mine, the United States attacked Iranian oil platforms. In the ensuing naval battle, half-a-dozen Iranian ships were sunk; an American warship also shot down, by mistake, an Iranian airliner in July 1988, killing all 290 people on board.

One would have expected the enduring Gulf conflict to send oil prices skywards. Instead they fell back from their heights in 1981 and by the mid-1980s were around \$15 a barrel and subsequently fell as low as \$10. This slip in the price reflected the fact that OPEC countries such as Kuwait pumped oil to take up the slack in the market. Both Iran and Iraq gradually reprised their pre-war production. The key player, however, was Saudi Arabia. The Saudis had been the chief beneficiary of the oil boom and had used the wealth it had created to make themselves a force of global strategic significance. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s Saudi Arabia had bankrolled anti-communist causes in Africa (Angola, Somalia, Zaire) and had kept the American arms industry afloat with its purchases. It had also paid for much of the military aid to Islamic militants fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. Saudi largesse, in short, had facilitated American foreign policy and this had won the principal Saudi policymaker, Prince Fahd (from 1982 King Fahd), the respect and trust of Washington. This

was despite the Saudis' hostility towards Israel (hostility that Fahd diluted after becoming king by giving de facto recognition of Israel's right to exist), opposition to the Camp David accords and Israeli–Egyptian détente, and support for the PLO. By the mid-1980s Saudi Arabia had a 'special relationship' with the United States that was matched only by Israel's.

The Saudis' strategic importance only increased as a result of the Iran–Iraq War. The one certain way to guarantee that global oil prices would soar was for Saudi Arabia to cut production. It did not. The Saudis also bankrolled Iraq. By the end of the conflict with Iran Saddam Hussein's exhausted regime owed \$85 billion, three times its annual GDP. Most of this money had been provided by the Gulf states, with the Saudis and the Kuwaitis providing the lion's share. They would soon learn how much gratitude they could expect from the thug in power in Baghdad, but at the time the money seemed well spent. Both Riyadh (the Saudi capital) and Washington 'shared a strategic interest in preventing Iranian victory'.²⁵ What every strategist feared was a domino effect in which an Iranian victory would set off Shi'a insurrections in Iraq and the Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, which would create panic in the global markets and put the monarchies of the Persian Gulf in danger. The Saudi royal family was uncomfortably aware that its sybaritic lifestyle, which was a mainstay of Iranian propaganda, was despised as un-Islamic by many Sunni fundamentalists within the Arabian Peninsula, and not only by the puritans in power in Tehran.

Desert Storm

The threat of Iraqi hegemony in the Gulf was just as alarming as that of Iranian dominance. This was why many leaders in the Middle East were secretly pleased that the Iran–Iraq War dragged on so long. Mutual exhaustion was preferable to the emergence of a power capable of threatening its neighbours. But when the conflict with Iran terminated, Saddam Hussein unsurprisingly bit the hand that had fed him. The only way Iraq could resolve its economic problems and satisfy the grotesque ambitions of its ruler was to obtain greater oil revenues: 'An invasion of Kuwait started to appear as a quick fix to Saddam's dilemma.'²⁶ Wealthy Kuwait, a bordering territory which Iraq in any case had long claimed, was a logical target. If Iraq could obtain Kuwait's oil facilities, it would control close to 20 per cent of the world's output and be able, like Saudi Arabia, to act as a geopolitical actor of the first rank. Saddam accordingly demanded that the Kuwaiti royal family should forgive the considerable loans that it had made to

Iraq during the conflict with Iran.

When Kuwait refused, Saddam sent 100,000 troops over the border on 2 August 1990, catching both the Americans and other regional actors, who believed that negotiations would continue, off guard. The invasion was as clear a case of aggression as the post-1945 world has seen. Indeed, it was an act of sovereign piracy: Iraqi troops pillaged Kuwait, stealing everything of value and treating civilians with appalling brutality. Non-Kuwaiti civilians mostly fled the country. On 6 August 1990, at American behest, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 661, with Cuba and Yemen abstaining. This 'prohibited all trade with Iraq or Kuwait and any transfer of funds'. Except for medicines and essential foods, Iraq now faced a total embargo, especially of oil, which constituted 95 per cent of its exports.

Saddam responded by raising the stakes. First, Kuwait was annexed by Iraq on 8 August and one of Saddam's key henchmen, Ali Hassan al-Majid, the butcher of the Kurds, was appointed governor. Second, the Iraqi regime took hostage of Western nationals who had failed to get out of Kuwait at the time of the invasion and moved them back to Iraq, where they were used as 'human shields' for sensitive locations in Baghdad and elsewhere. All in all, some six hundred hostages, including over hundred Americans and two hundred British nationals were held against their will; hundreds more were detained in Iraq itself.

Military action against the Iraqi regime was thus overwhelmingly justified. There was just cause – aggression and illegal hostage-taking – and abundant strategic reasons to support intervention. It was widely assumed that Saudi Arabia would be Saddam's next target and even if that did not occur, the Saudis would inevitably be conditioned by a successful Saddam. Had the Iraqi dictator got away with his crime, he would have become the de facto arbiter of the global oil market. As President George Bush, who had too many other problems on his plate to desire to get involved in the Middle East, said unambiguously on 5 August: 'This will not stand. This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait.'²⁷

The Iraqi leaders hoped for an 'Arab solution', a fix that would have imposed a regime change in Kuwait in exchange for Iraqi withdrawal. They were counting upon the fact that 'the deployment of a substantial non-Muslim army would leave the Saudi government open to accusations of defiling Islam's holy places'.²⁸ They were disappointed. King Fahd, recognizing the gravity of the situation, agreed to the deployment of non-Islamic troops.

The Americans accordingly assembled a wide coalition, including several Arab

states, to oppose Iraq, and continued to use the UN to provide legitimacy for their policy. On 29 November 1990 the Security Council presented Iraq with an ultimatum, demanding withdrawal from Kuwait by 15 January 1991, with the threat that all necessary means would be used to enforce this demand.

Iraq did not withdraw, although it did permit the hostages to return as a goodwill gesture. The United States, along with twenty-seven other countries, therefore concentrated large forces in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. The Americans supplied the vast majority of the aircraft and warships, but other allies provided about half the 600,000 troops which gathered in the area under the supreme command of American general 'Stormin' Norman' Schwarzkopf. Saudi Arabia, Germany and South Korea all made substantial contributions to the financial costs of the war.

On 16 January 1991 an air offensive was opened against Iraqi targets (including the capital, Baghdad, as well as forces in the field). During this phase, the Iraqis fired a number of missiles against Israel and Saudi Arabia, but despite this the conflict did not spread to other areas in the Middle East. The allied ground forces began their attack on 24 February, rapidly defeated the Iraqi army and entered Kuwait City on 26 February. A ceasefire, ordered by the American command, came into effect on 28 February. The land war thus lasted just over four days, and was for the most part fought in the desert, in circumstances of unusual isolation. The United States deployed a crushing superiority in technology and firepower, and the allied forces suffered only light casualties. The ceasefire left Saddam Hussein in power in Baghdad, though the Americans hoped he would be overthrown by a revolt within his own country. In the event, there was a rebellion by the Kurds in northern Iraq, and another by Shiite Muslims in the south, who for a time occupied Basra. These movements received no support from outside. Turkey and Syria both had Kurdish minorities in their own countries and were not disposed to support Kurdish separatism in Iraq. The United States tended to regard Shiite Iraqis as pro-Iranian, and thus by extension anti-American. The large Iraqi armies which had survived the Gulf War were able to crush both Kurds and Shiites. On 5 April 1991 Security Council Resolution 688 condemned Saddam Hussein for persecuting his own people, and an attempt was made to provide 'safe havens' for some of the Kurds, with little success. Economic sanctions against Iraq were maintained, and occasional bombing attacks were continued, which appear to have harmed the population more than the regime.

The Gulf War was a remarkable achievement by the United States, its allies

and the UN. Kuwait was liberated and the invader driven out. The fighting was brief and restricted in geographical area. Casualties on the winning side were slight and the war was fought, as far as possible, with the maximum possible care to avoid civilian casualties; though retreating Iraqis fleeing Kuwait were hammered by the coalition's airforces on the so-called highway to hell and took very heavy casualties in a battle in which they were not able to defend themselves.²⁹ A number of Arab or Islamic states supported Iraq: Iran (even though it was Iraq's recent enemy), Jordan (King Hussein was particularly outspoken), Libya, Mauritania, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen; and so did the PLO. Public opinion in several Arab countries was apparently strongly in favour of Iraq, and there is evidence that after the war was over there was a revulsion of feeling against the West. But in spite of this, the unity of the allied side was maintained for as long as was necessary to win the war: for Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Great Britain, France and the United States to work together collectively was an unprecedented state of affairs that even Saddam's attempts to broaden the war to Israel did not undermine. This, it seemed, was how collective security had been intended to work when the UN was set up in 1945. The 'international community' had at last come into its own, if only against an authentic outlaw of truly appalling character, who was trying to seize hegemony in the market for oil.

In hindsight, Saddam could have got away with being an aggressor who used chemical weapons on his own people – President Bush's discovery in his memoirs that Saddam was 'the epitome of evil' in retrospect sounds somewhat disingenuous: the Americans, after all, had been propping him up until the weeks before he invaded Kuwait.³⁰ What Saddam could not be allowed to get away with was trying to upset the delicate balance of power in the geopolitics of oil.

Notes

- 1 Maurice Vaisse, *Les relations Internationales depuis 1945* (3rd ed., Paris, 1994), p. 105.
- 2 Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Struggle for Oil, Money and Power* (London, 1991), p. 837, note 12.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 538–9, 567.
- 4 Chris Cook, *World Political Almanac* (3rd ed., London, 1995), pp. 29–30. Gabon became an associate in 1973, and a full member in 1975.
- 5 Fiona Venn, *Oil Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1986), p. 131.
- 6 Production figures in Yergin, *The Prize*, pp. 614–16.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 633.

- 8 Rachel Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (Oxford, 2006), p. 124.
- 9 Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London, 1992), p. 421.
- 10 Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil*, p. 128.
- 11 Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (London, 1991), p. 291.
- 12 Yergin, *The Prize*, pp. 665–6.
- 13 Figures in *ibid.*, p. 646.
- 14 Quoted in Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (London, 2013), p. 103.
- 15 Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East, from World War Two to Gorbachev* (London, 1990), p. 180.
- 16 Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran*, p. 95.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 136–8.
- 19 In fact, he went first to Panama, and then to Egypt, where he died in July 1980.
- 20 Lawrence Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East* (London, 2008), p. 78.
- 21 Edgar O'Ballance, *The Gulf War* (London, 1988), p. 58.
- 22 Human Rights Watch, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign against the Kurds*; available at: <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/ANFALINT.htm>.
- 23 Venn, *Oil Diplomacy*, p. 176.
- 24 Figures in Yergin, *The Prize*, pp. 685–7.
- 25 Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil*, p. 163.
- 26 Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies*, p. 215.
- 27 Transcript of the press conference available at: <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110704>.
- 28 Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies*, p. 224.
- 29 See Michael Kelly, 'Highway to Hell', *New Republic*, Vol. 1, April 1991, pp. 11–14, for a graphic description.
- 30 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York, 1998), p. 375.

18

The rise of Asia, c.1962–1990s

Japan as an economic superpower – China in ferment – Chinese power and foreign policy – Dormant crises in Taiwan and Korea – Political change in South-East Asia – War between India and Pakistan.

By the 1960s, the countries of East Asia were well established in their new forms. There were three major regional powers: Japan, China and India, each conscious of its long history and ancient civilization as well as its modernity. Japan had recovered from the disasters of 1945 and had begun an intense period of growth which was to make it one of the world's most advanced economies. China was still full of revolutionary dynamism, and also a growing military power, capable of confronting its former ally, the Soviet Union. India was the predominant power in its own subcontinent, a leader of the non-aligned movement and an influential member of the Commonwealth. Each of these three powers was free, to a considerable degree, to chart its own course in international affairs, influenced but not dominated by the two superpowers. Pakistan was in a different position, as an influential nation in its own region, but with its horizons dominated by its rivalry with India.

Two international organizations drew together certain Asian countries. The Manila Pact (1954) had set up, on American initiative, the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), comprising Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States. This alliance was essentially American in inspiration, and only three of its eight members were Asian. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), on the other hand, was entirely Asian in membership. It was founded at a conference in Bangkok in August 1967, attended by representatives from

Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, in order to promote economic, political and cultural cooperation between its member states. A secretariat was established at once, but it was nine years before the first meeting of heads of government took place in February 1976, demonstrating a lack of urgency and drive behind the high-sounding aspirations of the association. If Asian states were to cooperate, SEATO was quite inappropriate, because it was scarcely Asian. ASEAN was Asian, but until the 1990s largely passive. In fact, leadership in Asia fell to individual states, among which Japan and China formed a striking contrast.

Japan: An economic superpower

At the end of the Second World War, the United States set out to reconstruct Japan. They held war crimes trials and also conducted a partial purge of administration, industry and education. But most of the lower levels of the administration survived, providing a basis for the workings of government. At the top, the monarchy was preserved, which was of key importance for many members of the old regime. In December 1960 the Japanese prime minister, Ikeda Hayato, proclaimed the objective of doubling the country's national income in ten years. Many a government has wished for the same sort of thing; but Japan delivered the goods, and more. In 1960 Japanese gross national product (GNP) was \$33.3 billion (about one-sixteenth of that of the United States); in 1970 it was \$203.4 billion (one-fifth), making it the third-largest economy in the world. In the post-war period Japan had achieved a real rate of growth of 10 per cent per year, the United States a still impressive 3 per cent.¹ Japanese industries produced high-quality goods, in vast quantities and at competitive prices; they were helped by a cheap yen which helped to keep down the price of Japanese goods in foreign markets.² In 1965 Japan achieved a surplus of exports over imports for the first time since the Second World War. Older industries such as steel-making and ship-building thrived, as did newer ones such as electronic goods. Car production increased at an amazing average of 29 per cent per year between 1966 and 1972. By 1979 Japan was producing more watches than Switzerland.³

The 1970s brought a slowdown in this prodigious economic growth. Nixon's 1971 decision to take the dollar off the gold standard led to a rise in the exchange value of the yen, putting up the cost of Japanese exports. Between the

end of 1973 and 1981 the two 'oil shocks' increased the price of oil tenfold. Japan was entirely dependent on imported oil, and the cost of all its products was pushed up as a consequence. Inflation rose, and the economy faltered. From 1974 to 1981 the trade balance went back into deficit. But Japanese industry responded boldly and flexibly. Car manufacturers turned high petroleum prices to their advantage by building small cars with low petrol consumption. Industries of all kinds introduced new methods of production, using computers, the microchip and automation to diminish demands on energy.

By 1982 Japan was again boasting a surplus of exports over imports. In 1987 Japanese income per head of the population was for the first time higher than that in the United States, at \$19,553 as against \$18,570. In the same year the trade surplus reached almost \$100 billion, providing Japan with vast sums to spend and invest abroad. Japanese tourists travelled in large numbers, estimated at about 4 million in 1980 and 8 million in 1988. Japanese overseas investments reached a total of \$132.8 billion in 1987.⁴ Japanese firms established themselves in Western Europe, and investment in US government bonds helped to finance the American budget deficits of the 1980s.⁵ Japanese car manufacturers competed successfully with the big American automobile firms, which complained of unfair competition. It was indeed true that American exporters found it very hard to sell in the Japanese market, partly because of formal restrictions, and partly because the Japanese simply preferred to buy their own goods.

These developments were often called the Japanese 'economic miracle', but they owed nothing to the miraculous. The government, through the Ministry for International Trade and Industry, provided some degree of central guidance (on the lines of the *dirigisme* practised in France), for example, by financing research. Many Japanese attained high levels of personal savings, which were channelled through insurance companies and banks into investment in industry. Income tax was low, partly because Japan spent little on defence and armaments. In 1983 Japanese expenditure on defence was \$11.6 billion, while that of the United States was \$239 billion, an average of \$98 per head of the population in Japan as against \$1,023 in the United States.⁶ The Japanese workforce was well educated (notably in engineering), hard-working and adaptable. The people as a whole demonstrated an extraordinary determination, which persisted far longer than the period of recovery after the Second World War, and carried Japan through the setbacks of the 1970s. In that respect there was an element in the Japanese economic success which, though not miraculous, arose from intangible

factors of traditions and national characteristics.

Japan thus achieved commercial success. But it did not become a military power. Article Nine of the Japanese constitution prohibited the country from going to war or maintaining armed forces – though in fact carefully named ‘self-defence’ forces were established. Later, the Americans claimed that the Japanese were getting a ‘free ride’, protected by American power and thus able to concentrate on attaining economic growth. They pressed the Japanese to take greater responsibility for their own defence, with some success. In 1978 the Japanese government agreed to take over the cost of maintaining American forces in Japan. During the 1980s Japanese expenditure on defence increased considerably in amount, but only slightly as a proportion of GNP – from 0.90 per cent in 1980 to 1.01 per cent in 1988.⁷ The demands of defence on the Japanese economy thus remained low.

The Japanese armed forces remained comparatively small, and were organized primarily for defensive purposes; moreover, Japan had no nuclear armaments. Pacifist, or at any rate pacific, sentiments were widespread, the inheritance of defeat in 1945 and of the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Both governments and public opinion trod cautiously in military matters. In consequence, Japan remained only partially armed and showed little desire to use the armaments it had.

Japan was largely isolated from other countries in East Asia by the legacy of the past, and especially of the Second World War in the Pacific. Japanese governments were reluctant to pay reparations to countries which they had occupied during the war. Eventually, they agreed on reparations to the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma and Vietnam, but ensured that these should partly take the form of credits which had to be spent in Japan itself. Korea, which had been annexed to Japan from 1910 to 1945, remained a sore spot, and diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea were not established until 1965. There was thus no question of the Japanese forming any kind of links with East Asian states, perhaps on the lines of the European Economic Community, to strengthen their hand against the great powers. They had to pursue their own policy, in a difficult geographical situation where the interests of the United States, the Soviet Union and China met and often conflicted.

The essential element of Japanese policy throughout this period remained the alliance with the United States. This was by no means a one-way street. Japan depended on the Americans for its security; but the United States for its part relied on Japan as an essential link in the containment of both the Soviet Union

and China. American bases in Japan, especially Okinawa, played a crucial role in Cold War strategy and were regularly used during the Vietnam War, when about three-quarters of US supplies for the war were flown from Okinawa, and Japanese industry met the needs of the US Army. The alliance had its troubles, especially with regard to China. For many years the Americans insisted that Japan should follow their lead and not recognize the communist government in Beijing. Then in 1972 Washington suddenly threw its policy into reverse. President Nixon made his dramatic visit to China, and diplomatic relations were established between the United States and China. All this was begun in total secrecy. The Japanese were neither consulted nor informed, and they had to scramble along behind as best they could. The Japanese premier, Kakuei Tanaka, visited China in September 1972, and the two governments established diplomatic relations.

The Americans thus played their own diplomatic hand in relations with China; but at the same time the Japanese increasingly held the economic cards. As we have seen, Japanese firms competed successfully in American markets, and in the 1980s the Japanese invested heavily in the United States, in industry, real estate and government bonds. In a curious combination, Japan was militarily and diplomatically dependent on the United States, but was also a successful economic rival.

Japanese relations with the Soviet Union remained difficult. The two countries resumed diplomatic relations in 1956, but did not conclude a peace treaty to put a formal end to the hostilities opened in 1945. This was partly because they were on opposing sides in the Cold War, but they were also separated by a territorial dispute. Under the Yalta agreement of February 1945, the Soviet Union had annexed the Kuril Islands (to the north of Japan) at the end of the Second World War. Japan continued to claim sovereignty over the four southernmost of these islands (Habomai, Shikotan, Kunashiri and Etorofu, under their Japanese names). The Soviet Union rejected this claim (as did the Russian Republic when the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991), and the dispute remained unresolved. Japanese relations with China slowly improved after the two states recognized one another in 1972. In August 1978 they concluded a Treaty of Friendship, including a clause agreeing to oppose any country which sought to establish its hegemony in East Asia or the Pacific – meaning the Soviet Union.

By the 1980s, Japan had become immensely prosperous and had largely re-established itself as an independent entity in international affairs. The country's status, sometimes disparagingly described as an economic giant and a political

dwarf, certainly appeared anomalous. Yet like the European Community, which was also an essentially ‘civilian power’, it was a success story. One 1979 book, which unsurprisingly enjoyed a vogue in Japan, was entitled *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America*.⁸

The Japanese, in short, had illustrated the wisdom of following Guizot’s advice to the French in the 1840s: *enrichissez-vous* – grow rich. In the 1980s, briefly, Japan’s commercial success appeared to go to the heads of a section of its political class. Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro represented a nationalist turn in Japanese politics that outside observers – especially the Koreans and Chinese – found alarming, especially when the government in Tokyo began rewriting school textbooks to make Japanese imperialism in the 1930s seem less atrocious. Various Japanese intellectuals published third-rate books boasting of the supposed superiority of Japanese culture and values; various American policy wonks wrote fourth-rate books giving them credence (or fearing future Pearl Harbors). When Japan entered a severe and lasting economic stagnation in the early 1990s, the illusion of Japan’s emerging greatness vanished like breath off a razor blade. But this did not mean that Japan’s achievements as the first and biggest of the Asian ‘tiger economies’ should be discounted. Japan’s economic growth and relative democratic stability were a huge contribution to the post-war shift in the global centre of gravity away from the north-west of the world and towards Asia.

Socialism with Chinese characteristics

China rejected the capitalist pursuit of riches, and instead followed a course of continuous revolution and upheaval. From 1958 to 1961 Mao Zedong attempted the ‘Great Leap Forward’, which was intended to attain communism in one bound, but in fact ended in disaster and famine. In 1966 Mao proclaimed the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’, in which the ‘Red Guards’ (mostly students and teachers) attacked all manifestations of Chinese tradition, but also the Communist Party bureaucracy, bourgeois revisionism, Khrushchev-style revisionism – anything that Mao chose to denounce. The Chinese later called Mao’s excesses the ‘Ten-Year Catastrophe’.⁹ It began with a period of chaos (between 1966 and 1968), amounting in parts of the country to civil war, and ended only by the use of the army to impose order. Another phase of the Cultural Revolution followed in the early 1970s. Several million students, teachers and members of the professions were sent to the countryside to live the life of

peasants.

Thanks to these upheavals, China counted far less in the world than it should have. China was (and is) an enormous country, with vast resources and potential. It occupied an area of 9.6 million square kilometres and had the largest population of any country in the world, estimated at 720 million in 1967 and over 900 million in 1978. It possessed great natural resources (coal, iron ore and other metals, and even oilfields which were coming into production in the 1960s), which conferred a high degree of economic independence. Yet these resources were not translated into production or commerce. In 1977, China produced 24 million tonnes of steel, while Japan produced 102 million tonnes. In the same year, Chinese external trade was worth \$14.3 billion, while the Japanese external trade was worth \$151.3 billion.¹⁰

China was nevertheless a strong military power. It possessed nuclear weapons, the 'Second Artillery', first publicly referred to in 1967 – which was the year that the Chinese exploded their first hydrogen bomb. By 1980 they had between thirty and forty medium-range ballistic missiles, about seventy missiles with a range of 2,500 kilometres and three intercontinental missiles with a range of 7,000 kilometres. All of these could reach targets in the Soviet Union; and the few long-range missiles could strike at either the Soviet Union or the United States. China was even so vulnerable to a Soviet first strike, not least because it did not possess submarine-borne ballistic missiles until 1988. The Chinese Army (the People's Liberation Army) was immensely strong in numbers – some 4 million men in 1977–8, including 12 armoured and 136 infantry divisions, though its supply and transport services were weak, making large-scale operations outside China difficult to conduct.¹¹ Chinese troops had a high reputation for courage and fighting spirit. They had won striking victories over the Americans in Korea from 1950 to 1951, though at a heavy cost in casualties; and in 1962 Chinese forces had inflicted a sharp defeat on the Indians in a border conflict in the Himalayas. Chinese military power was acknowledged by the Soviet Union in a thoroughly practical manner: the number of Soviet divisions stationed on the border with China rose from twenty-one in 1969 to thirty in 1970 and forty-four in 1971.¹²

Communist China was also a revolutionary power, a rival to the Soviet Union for the leadership of the communist world and an inspiration to many in the Third World. Mao Zedong proclaimed that the pattern of the communist victory in China, where revolution in the countryside had surrounded and crushed the cities, would be repeated in the world at large. The whole Third World amounted

to a vast 'countryside', which would eventually defeat the industrialized states in a sort of planetary war of liberation. The prestige of China as a revolutionary power, and of Mao as the leader of socialism in an Asiatic style, stood high, despite the terror and economic catastrophe that had accompanied communist rule in China. The 'Thoughts of Chairman Mao', gathered together in a 'Little Red Book', attained a wide circulation in many languages, and attracted many Western as well as Third World intellectuals. Maoist parties and guerrilla groups sprang up in many countries. Even after Mao's death the vision he articulated did not entirely fade away.

For China, ideology and foreign policy were closely linked. In both respects, the long-lasting conflict with the Soviet Union loomed large. In the 1960s and 1970s the Chinese continued to dispute the predominance of the Soviet Union in the communist parties of the world. On 14 July 1964 the Chinese Communist Party issued a statement denouncing Khrushchev's phoney communism. Mao criticized the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the Chinese leadership actually feared that the Brezhnev Doctrine, which asserted that no socialist state could be allowed to leave the socialist camp, might be applied against them. In April 1969 the Ninth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party adopted a report which denounced Moscow as revisionist renegades, social imperialists and social fascists, and collaborators with the American imperialists.

During the 1960s, border disputes between the two countries continued. In 1964 the Chinese government published a new map of territories which had been seized by the Russian imperialists, including the Soviet Far Eastern provinces and parts of the Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan, Kirghizia and Tajikistan. In 1969 there was serious fighting along the Ussuri River, and Chinese artillery fired on Soviet vessels on the Amur River. The Soviet government seriously considered the likelihood of war and made preparations for air attacks on Chinese bases, including nuclear installations. In October 1969 talks began between the two governments on the border problems, but the Chinese insisted that, as a prerequisite for any progress, all forces should be withdrawn from the disputed territories. Since these were all within the Soviet Union, the withdrawals would have been made solely by the Soviets; who naturally refused to comply.

The Sino-Soviet dispute extended itself into Africa. In 1963 and 1964 Zhou Enlai led the first large-scale Chinese mission to Africa, visiting ten countries, offering economic aid and also military assistance through the provision of arms and training at the Chinese military academy. Between 1970 and 1975 the

Chinese financed and helped to build the Tanzam railway, from Tanzania to Zambia, after both the Soviet Union and the United States had declined to subsidize this venture.¹³ Much of this assistance was intended to oppose Soviet influence in Africa; though it was also used to gain votes from African countries in favour of Chinese entry to the United Nations. In most cases, the Chinese did little to advance the cause of communism, preferring to support African nationalism in the belief that the continent was not yet ready for communism.

In Indo-China, the Chinese and Soviets were in principle on the same side, supporting North Vietnam against the Americans, but in practice they were often opposed. From 1965 to 1968 the Chinese stationed some 320,000 regular troops in North Vietnam, with anti-aircraft artillery and supplies.¹⁴ When Vietnam was finally unified in 1975, it nevertheless preferred the Soviet Union over China, providing a base for the Soviet fleet at Camh Ranh. The Chinese then sought to prevent Vietnamese influence from extending to neighbouring countries. They tried to maintain Laos as a neutral state, but the Vietnamese established control there in 1976. In Cambodia, the Chinese supported Prince Sihanouk against the Khmer Rouge, but again without success – with help from Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge dominated the country and set up the Republic of Kampuchea in January 1979. In February China retaliated by invading Vietnam but had to withdraw within a month, suffering some 20,000 casualties and accomplishing nothing.¹⁵

The Chinese also opposed the Soviet Union in the Indian subcontinent, by supporting Pakistan against India. This support was necessarily limited. In 1971 China was unable to intervene, other than diplomatically, in the India–Pakistan War in which Pakistan lost its eastern territories (which became Bangladesh). But during the 1970s China developed close military relations with Pakistan, and in 1989 the two countries concluded a ten-year agreement on arms supplies, under which the Chinese provided Pakistan with missiles and assistance with its nuclear programme. China also cooperated with Pakistan to oppose the Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s. China (like the United States, but less conspicuously) supplied the Afghan rebels with arms by way of Pakistan, and thus made their own contribution to the Soviet defeat.

China also dealt with the United States on a footing of equality. As we have seen, in 1971 and 1972 the United States came courting for Chinese cooperation to get them out of the war in Vietnam. Kissinger visited China in total secrecy in 1971, and President Nixon in a glare of publicity in 1972, but the purpose was the same in each case. The Americans needed Chinese help, and the Chinese made them pay. The main point at issue was the status of Taiwan. In October

1971 the United States withdrew its opposition to Beijing's membership of the UN, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) replaced Taiwan (Republic of China, ROC) on the Security Council. At the end of Nixon's visit in February 1972, the Americans promised to withdraw its garrison in Taiwan when the time was ripe (while remaining committed to its defence in case of attack). Negotiations on Taiwan continued throughout the 1970s. In December 1978 the United States agreed to break off formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan (though it retained strong unofficial ties). China meanwhile made the token concession of promising to renounce the use of force to restore Taiwan to unity with the mainland. The Americans withdrew their ambassador from Taipei in January 1979 and then resumed full diplomatic relations with Beijing. American forces were redeployed from the island by the end of the year. The Congress of the United States was less willing than the administration to privilege Beijing over Taipei. The Taiwan Relations Act of April 1979 stated that America would regard any non-peaceful intervention against the island as a matter of 'grave concern' – albeit not necessarily as a cause for war – and allowed the sale of 'arms of a defensive character' to the Taiwanese.

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the United States permitted the sale of 'non-lethal' military equipment to the Chinese, as well as certain technologies with 'dual use' (i.e. they could be used for both civilian and military purposes); the incoming Reagan administration broadened this policy to include the sale, on a case-by-case basis, of certain lethal weapons. The new American policy was ad hoc and in some ways too cautious for the Chinese, but it reflected both the degree of opening to China that had taken place and the extent to which the Soviet aggression in Central Asia had changed Washington's mindset.

In practice, in the 1970s and 1980s, there was no completely predominant power in the East Asia region. The United States controlled the Pacific Ocean by sea and air power, effectively unchallenged despite the growing Soviet fleet. The Soviets maintained powerful forces in Central Asia and Siberia, confronting the Chinese along their long frontier; and exercised considerable influence through their relations with India. Japan was by far the strongest economic power in Asia, but remained militarily weak. China did not quite fulfil its potential in any direction. It was a strong military power, within strict limits. It could hold its own in negotiation with the superpowers, without attaining the same rank.

China could not aspire to play a dominant role in East Asia so long as it was in the grip of Mao Zedong. While 'Chairman Mao' had an almost benevolent image in the West, he may well have been the most terrible tyrant of the

twentieth century – no small claim when one thinks of such contenders for this title as Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot. The ravages of the post-1949 communist terror, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, with their tens of millions of dead and scarred, were the principal reason why China had not emerged as a great power by the time the ‘Great Helmsman’ died in 1976. China was permanently being torn apart by ideologically motivated power struggles that terrorized the masses and the party, but strengthened Mao’s hold on power. To punch its weight, China needed to be both richer and more constant in its ideological line.

Mao’s death led to a three-year power struggle within the party leadership between three distinct factions. On the extreme left was the so-called Gang of Four (including Mao’s widow, the hated Jiang Qing); their followers hoped to continue the Cultural Revolution and to *intensify* Mao’s policies. On the ‘right’ (insofar as such terms have any meaning in this context), there were a group of ‘empiricists’ or modernizers led by Deng Xiaoping, the great survivor of Mao’s waves of terror. Deng advocated economic liberalization, especially in the countryside. The party should stop trying to plan every aspect of economic life – while retaining political control. In the centre were Mao’s chosen heir Hua Guofeng and the senior party bureaucrats. Hua crushed the ‘Gang of Four’ before Mao’s body was cold, and strove to eliminate Deng’s faction too. His official line was summarized as the two ‘whatevers’: ‘Whatever policies Chairman Mao decided, we shall resolutely defend; whatever instructions he issued, we shall steadfastly obey.’¹⁶

Hua was thus making a conservative defence of a catastrophic legacy. Deng’s innovative ideas and influence gradually began to prevail. By December 1978 Deng’s policy of ‘socialist modernization’ – in effect, allowing the peasants to cultivate their own land as they liked and sell most of what they grew – had become party doctrine (and had an immediate impact on farm incomes and China’s desperate rural poverty). Deng visited the United States in February 1979, where he was photographed at a rodeo wearing a ten-gallon hat. He emerged, in short, as first among equals in the Chinese leadership. Hua Guofeng was squeezed out of power by June 1981 and replaced by Deng’s two main allies – Zhao Ziyang, an economic pragmatist from Sichuan; and the popular Hu Yaobang, who became party leader. In November 1980 the Gang of Four was put on trial, and Jiang Qing was condemned to death – a sentence which was commuted to life imprisonment. Deng’s ‘empiricist’ vision had won out, and he was master of China, although his only official position was as chair of the party

military affairs committee. At the Twelfth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party on 1 September 1982 Deng proclaimed that the party ‘must integrate the universal truth of Marxism with the concrete realities of China, blaze a path of our own and build socialism with Chinese characteristics’.¹⁷ Probably the most important single development in contemporary world politics – the rise of a China keeping an ‘open door’ to the world, endorsing market economics, but still authoritarian, nationalist and anti-democratic in ideology – had begun.

Taiwan and Korea

Within East Asia two unresolved conflicts, Taiwan and Korea, remained issues of major strategic significance. The foreign relations of the United States were intimately connected with political developments in both countries.

We have just seen how, in 1979, the United States withdrew diplomatic recognition, and its armed forces, from Taiwan. The Chinese government insisted that Taiwan was part of China, but undertook not to use force to make good its claim. In 1981 the Chinese government proposed that Taiwan should become part of China, but with a special status which would include maintaining its own armed forces and separate economic and social organizations. A modified form of this proposal was advanced in 1984, when China reached an agreement with Britain that in 1997 the British colony of Hong Kong should return to China under an arrangement providing for the maintenance of two political and economic systems within one country. The Chinese then suggested that this solution (one country, two systems) could also be applied to Taiwan. Neither proposal made any headway with the government of Taiwan. The island became increasingly isolated diplomatically – in 1984 it was only recognized as a state by twenty-three governments. Taiwan was not a member of the United Nations, nor of ASEAN. It had no allies, and very few friends.

Taiwan’s most important friend remained the United States. To the dismay and anger of the Chinese, in the years following Carter’s recognition of the Peoples’ Republic as the sole Chinese state, Washington agreed to supply Taipei with armaments and aircraft, which Beijing – not unreasonably – regarded as a major infringement of its national sovereignty. In 1982 the strength of the Chinese feeling forced the Reagan administration to backtrack on a decision to sell the FX jet fighter – an advanced war plane – to the Taiwanese.

Despite Chinese hostility Taiwan nevertheless survived politically and

prospered economically. In 1991 Taiwan, with a population of just over 20 million people exported goods worth \$76 billion; China, with a population of 1.2 trillion, exported goods worth \$72 billion.¹⁸ It was a striking demonstration of what could be achieved by commercial enterprise without formal international links.

The country's status remained in dispute, however, and its future was always precarious. In the 1980s the Guomindang (GMD), or Nationalist party (the party led by Chiang Kai-shek and subsequently by his son Chiang Ching-kuo), allowed greater political pluralism. The result was the rise of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) which openly supported making a declaration of independence from China instead of, like the GMD, staking a claim to be the legitimate government of all China. The success of the DPP compelled Chiang Ching-kuo's successor as leader of the GMD, Lee Teng-hui, who was a native of Taiwan, to experiment with new formulations of his country's status. In 1995 Mr Lee gave a speech at his alma mater, Cornell University, in which he referred to Taiwan as the 'Republic of China *on* Taiwan' many times. The Chinese government responded by withdrawing its ambassador from Washington and conducting menacing naval exercises off Taiwanese shores. The same form of intimidation was repeated prior to the 1996 general elections in Taiwan. On this occasion, however, China's bullying encountered an American show of force. President Bill Clinton sent a huge carrier fleet to the area and China was forced to back down. The possibility of war remained.

In Korea, the armistice signed in 1953 at the end of the Korean War remained in force. No peace settlement was attained, or even seriously attempted. North and South Korea confronted one another across the ceasefire line, which became an almost impenetrable barrier between the two states, making the Iron Curtain in Europe seem positively porous by comparison. In North Korea, Kim Il Sung maintained a strict communist dictatorship. In the South, General Park Chung-hee established his personal autocracy, ruling from 1961, when he suppressed the 'April Uprising' that had driven from power Syngman Rhee, South Korea's first post-war autocratic ruler, until October 1979. Park's relations with the United States were troubled at times. In order to keep on good terms with Washington, he committed a large contingent of South Korean troops to Vietnam: more than 4,000 Korean soldiers were killed in South-East Asia and 11,000 were wounded.

Despite this notable Korean commitment to the Cold War struggle, Presidents Nixon and Carter both sought to draw down the American military presence in

South Korea, while the Carter administration also infuriated General Park by ostentatiously raising the human rights issue. During the 1976 election campaign, Carter openly stated that the South Korean government's 'internal oppression' was 'repugnant' to the United States and was bound to affect the decision of whether or not troops should be kept there.¹⁹ The issues of human rights and troop withdrawals spoiled relations throughout the whole Carter presidency, not least because Seoul lobbied Congress to block Carter's plans with methods that were as lavish as they were dubious: the so-called Koreagate scandal at the end of the 1970s revealed that a number of senior American legislators had been on the Asian republic's payroll.

The poor relations between Park and Carter came to a head in 1979. A visit by the American president to Seoul in June 1979 was a 'diplomatic near-disaster'.²⁰ Carter's outspokenness about human rights and his wilful ignorance of East Asian realities provoked the Korean leader to outright discourtesy. With utter disdain for American criticism, Park cracked down on dissent in the universities, in the press and in South Korea's big industrial concerns: hundreds of dissenters were imprisoned in the late 1970s. On 26 October 1979 Park was assassinated at a dinner party at the 'Blue House', the South Korean presidential residence, by the head of South Korea's intelligence services, Kim Jae-gyu. It was later acknowledged that Kim had met the American ambassador on several occasions and may have taken the Americans' expressed desire to 'get rid' of Park too literally.²¹

Any hope that Park's demise would lead to democratization was thwarted by the emergence within months of a new general with political ambitions, Chun Doo-hwan, in December 1979. Chun smothered South Korea's nascent democracy in May 1980 by arresting the 'Three Kims': Kim Jong-pil, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung, who were contesting the country's presidential elections. This action set off pro-democracy demonstrations across the country. Martial law was declared and the protests were mercilessly crushed; hundreds of mostly young protesters were killed, although the Americans, whose impotence to influence South Korea's domestic politics was starkly exposed by the crisis, did at least manage to avert the execution of Kim Dae-jung, the most radical of the 'Kims'.

In February 1981, Chun Doo-hwan was only the second foreign leader to visit the White House after the election of President Ronald Reagan, a man who was nearly as anti-communist as Chun himself. Reagan eliminated the main point of discord between the two countries by asserting unambiguously that American

ground troops would continue to be stationed in South Korea for the foreseeable future. Thereafter, the Reagan administration, especially Secretary of State George Shultz, pushed for democratic evolution in South Korea while backing the regime with both words and deeds. In September 1983, for instance, the United States strongly supported Seoul after a Soviet fighter plane shot down (by mistake, although Moscow's behaviour during the crisis was so arrogant that the Koreans could have been forgiven for believing that the act had been deliberate) a Korean airliner, killing all 269 passengers. It also backed Seoul's successful bid to host the 1988 Olympic Games.

Geopolitics aside, the Reagan administration's policy of openness to Chun's Korea was dictated by South Korea's growing economic importance. The economies of the two Koreas took very different courses, with the South developing more rapidly than the North from a level which as late as 1969 was very similar. South Korea received a great deal of American and Japanese investment. Ship-building, steel and textiles all flourished, competing successfully against their rivals in Western Europe. Trade between South Korea and the United States surged under Chun. Just \$0.94 billion in 1970, by 1988, when the Olympics were held, total commercial exchanges between the two countries had reached \$34.2 billion, with Seoul boasting a large trade surplus.²² South Korea, like Taiwan and Japan, had become one of the 'tiger economies' of Asia.

The two Koreas made tentative contact with one another through the International Red Cross in 1971, and in 1972 set up a committee of cooperation, with the declared intention of moving towards unification. These contacts were broken off by North Korea in 1973 and resumed in 1984. At that stage, North Korea proposed a form of federation between the two states, but the South prevaricated, and no change resulted. In 1990 the prime ministers of the two countries held a summit for the first time. The two governments were deeply suspicious of one another, fearing that unification would mean simply a takeover by one or the other. The population of South Korea greatly outnumbered that of the North (by 29 million to 13 million in 1967, and by 42 million to 22 million in 1992), so the danger that the North would be overwhelmed by union with the South was obvious. On the other hand, the South Korean government rightly feared the tight communist organization of the North. There were occasional outbreaks of hostilities between the two states (in January 1968 a North Korean commando unit even infiltrated South Korea with a plan to attack the 'Blue House'); and the situation remained one of unresolved crisis, with a million

North Korean troops poised on the ceasefire line. North Korea was a ‘hermit state’, cut off from the outside world, barely able to feed its people, which devoted perhaps a quarter of its total output to its giant military establishment. It would shortly discover that the best way to get the world’s attention was to start a nuclear weapons programme.

GNP per head in North and South Korea, in US dollars²³

Date	North	South
1969	216	208
1975	398	532
1984	965	1,707
1992	1,064	5,569

Political change in South-East Asia

South-East Asia was one of the most turbulent regions of the world between the 1960s and the 1990s, and in retrospect the political changes that took place there in this span of time were of great importance for the world we live in today. Leaving aside Vietnam and Indo-China (which have already been discussed at length) and even Burma (which is discussed in [Chapter 27](#)), there were two South-East Asian states whose domestic politics had important international repercussions in the 1970s and 1980s: the Philippines and Indonesia.

The Philippines was a country with a population of approximately 26 million in 1960 and more than 60 million in 1990. It had been an American colony between 1902 and 1946. The subjugation of the Philippines is one of the most brutal episodes even in the annals of colonial history: ‘The war turned into senseless, wanton slaughter,’ says one historian of the period.²⁴ In the post-war period the government and politics of the Philippines remained in the long shadow of the former imperial power. The constitution of the new state was modelled on that of the United States, with a president elected for a four-year term; the United States maintained, moreover, two vast military complexes, Clark airbase and the Subic Bay naval base, which enjoyed extraterritorial rights and were of great strategic importance. Who held political power in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, accordingly mattered very much for Washington.

Until 1972 power had alternated between various members of the country’s elite. The Philippines was corrupt, unequal and poverty-ridden, but it did have an

imperfect, but functioning democracy. In September of that year the sitting president, Ferdinand Marcos, alarmed by the rise of a young political rival, Benigno Aquino, declared martial law and turned his presidency into a de facto kingship: Marcos ruled by decree and the state 'progressively became the preserve of the Marcos family, their relatives, friends, and sycophants'.²⁵ Marcos's alluring wife Imelda, in addition to possessing the world's largest collection of designer shoes, was a political figure in her own right who took a high profile in the conduct of foreign affairs and was the political boss of Manila. Despite their murky reputation, the couple was staunchly backed by the United States and was long regarded as a force for stability.

They were, of course, quite the opposite. Their breathtaking corruption (perhaps only Zaire's Mobutu stole as much), refusal to implement meaningful social reform and intolerance of dissent generated uprisings among the country's Muslim minority and also a home-grown communist movement, the New People's Army (NPA). A communist threat, of course, *did* alarm the United States, as well as the Catholic Church and traditional elites in Manila, who formed UNIDO (United Nationalist Democratic Organization), an opposition political party, in 1980. In February 1983, the Philippines' bishops, led by Cardinal Jaime Sin, rebuked the regime from the pulpit, and urged Marcos to deal with the basic needs and rights of the poor.

The downfall of the Marcos family started with the murder of Benigno Aquino at Manila airport in August 1983. Attributed to the NPA, the killing was allegedly the work of Marcos's security services (indeed, Marcos's chief of staff, General Fabian Ver, was subsequently indicted of the crime but acquitted by a court packed with Marcos appointees). Marcos tried to tough out the ensuing crisis, clinging on to power until early 1986 in an atmosphere of growing economic turmoil as foreign investors pulled their money out of the country. In February 1986 Marcos was compelled by international public opinion to call a presidential election. He was opposed by Corazon Aquino, the dead politician's widow. In the Philippines (but not only), the poll was viewed as 'a gigantic contest between the forces of good and evil ... between the oligarchy and people power'.²⁶

The election, which Marcos 'won', was scandalously rigged; Aquino, supported by European countries and Japan, refused to abide by the result. The Senate of the United States also voted by a majority of 85–9 that the vote had not been free and fair. When Marcos sent loyalist troops to arrest General Fidel Ramos and Defence Minister Juan Enrile, who had sided with Aquino after the

elections, millions of ordinary Filipinos, urged on by Cardinal Sin, took to the streets and surrounded the defence ministry, protecting the dissident ministers with their bodies. It was a moving demonstration of what non-violent resistance can achieve. Marcos realized that the game was up. He accepted with alacrity the Reagan administration's offer of asylum in the United States and fled the country. This action cost the United States much of the goodwill that it had acquired during the February crisis. Filipino resentment would eventually spill over, in September 1991, in a refusal by the Philippine parliament to ratify a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with the United States, negotiated by the Aquino government, which would have renewed the Americans' lease on the Subic Bay base.

Indonesia ranked even higher than the Philippines for strategic importance. Between September 1965 and May 1998 it was ruled by General Haji Mohammed Suharto, who seized power from Sukarno, when the veteran leader's 'Third-Worldism' began to veer towards outright support for world communism; by September 1965, the Indonesian Communist Party was a growing force in the country. To American applause, Suharto purged Indonesia ruthlessly of the taint of communism – more than half-a-million communists or left-wing radicals were 'massacred in an orgy of violence' after he came to power.²⁷

Suharto naturally moved Indonesia firmly into the Western camp after his takeover. His ruthlessness had shown that the Indonesian domino was very unlikely to topple. It was for this reason that the West turned a blind eye to Indonesia's idiosyncratic form of 'guided democracy', which led punctually to election victories for Golkar, Suharto's political vehicle, and to the leech-like form of 'crony capitalism' that he, his family and their entourage of hangers-on developed as the Indonesian economy began to prosper in the 1970s and 1980s. It is also why the West supported Suharto when he annexed East Timor in 1976. This desperately poor, backward territory had been part of the Portuguese empire. When the 'Carnation revolution' took place in Portugal in April 1974, the leftist soldiers who took power promised to give independence to all Portugal's colonies in short order. In East Timor the local nationalists were not willing to wait for an orderly and democratic transition to independence, not least because it was clear that a Marxist party, Fretelin (Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor), would be bound to win. At the end of November 1975 Fretelin declared East Timor's independence. At the behest of Fretelin's opponents within East Timor, Indonesia – long a stalwart opponent of colonialism in all its forms – invaded the newborn country on 7 December 1975

and instituted a reign of terror. Some 60,000 people were killed in the first three months of the occupation – which when one considers that the population was less than 900,000 in 1975 is an indication of the scale of the violence employed by Indonesian forces.²⁸

It was also merely the start. East Timor became a long-running sore on the international body politic. Fretelin waged a guerilla war against the occupation; the General Assembly of the UN annually affirmed that it regarded Indonesia's annexation of East Timor as illegal; human rights abuses were rife. Hundreds of villages were 'resettled' so their inhabitants could not aid the guerillas; malnutrition and famine hit the island. Tens of thousands more died as Indonesia consolidated its hold. The United States and Great Britain, meanwhile, sold Indonesia aircraft suitable for use in counter-insurgency operations.²⁹ East Timor was, in short, the site of a 'dirty war' comparable to those experienced by Guatemala and El Salvador.

Suharto was driven from office by 'people power' only in 1998, after the 1997 Asia economic crisis had exposed the Indonesian economy's feet of clay. And it was only with his political demise that any progress could be made upon the issue of East Timor. On 30 August 1999 a UN-supervised referendum was held in which the Timorese could choose between autonomy within the Indonesian federation and outright independence. The Timorese voted for independence by 78.5 per cent to 21.5 per cent. The turnout was massive: 98.6 per cent of the electorate exercised their democratic rights. Despite an outbreak of violence after the result, which led to a three-year occupation by UN peacekeepers, East Timor became independent in 2002.

As the introduction to this chapter mentioned, Indonesia and the Philippines, together with Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, were founding members of ASEAN in August 1967. The Bangkok Declaration generally committed its signatories to accelerate economic, cultural and political cooperation. More subtly, the declaration's preamble stated that the countries of South-East Asia shared a 'primary responsibility' for 'strengthening the economic and social stability' of the region and for 'ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development'. Their common task was to 'ensure their stability and security' from 'external interference' in 'any form or manifestation' in order to 'preserve their national identities in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their peoples'.³⁰ This was easier said than done, and indeed ASEAN's role was marginal until the 1990s, but given the legacy of British rule in Malaysia, Portuguese rule in East Timor, American neocolonialism in the Philippines and

intervention in Vietnam, not to mention the looming threat of China, one can see why the then leaders of these countries wished to assert their regional distinctiveness, and why the search for a regional identity continued in the following decades. It is also true that since 1967 all five countries have become more relaxed about letting their peoples, and not their governing autocrats or generals, decide what the ideals and aspirations of their societies should be.

India and Pakistan

The Indian subcontinent (including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and after 1971 Bangladesh) formed a largely self-contained region, with its own pattern of international relations and less impact on the rest of the world than was at one time expected. India in particular seemed destined for a great role in world affairs. It was the home of ancient civilizations. It had a large and growing population – some 511 million in 1967, 600 million in 1978 and well over 800 million by the 1990s. Despite occasional turbulence, it achieved remarkable political stability, based on federal and parliamentary institutions. It possessed a strong, efficient and non-political army, built on the traditions of the old British Indian Army. India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, took a leading role in the Afro-Asian movement founded at Bandung in 1955, in the movement of non-aligned states and in the Commonwealth. In the 1970s India took the first steps towards becoming a nuclear power, carrying out a nuclear explosion in 1974.

Yet despite its high aspirations and considerable achievements, India never quite emerged as a great power on the world stage. In 1962 the Indians fought a brief but disastrous border war with China, which damaged both Nehru's reputation as a statesman and the prestige of the Indian Army. Influence in the Third World and the non-aligned movement passed to more radical leaders, like Houari Boumédiène in Algeria and Fidel Castro in Cuba. The Commonwealth diminished in importance. India devoted much diplomatic effort to its relations with the Soviet Union, leading to the conclusion of a Treaty of Friendship in 1971, providing for consultation in the event of an external threat; but in this association India was the junior partner. It developed its industries, following Soviet-style Five-Year Plans which tended to fall short of their objectives. Agricultural production increased, but did little more than keep pace with the growing population. By the early 1990s India was broadly self-sufficient in food, but only at a very low level for a large part of the population. Intense poverty

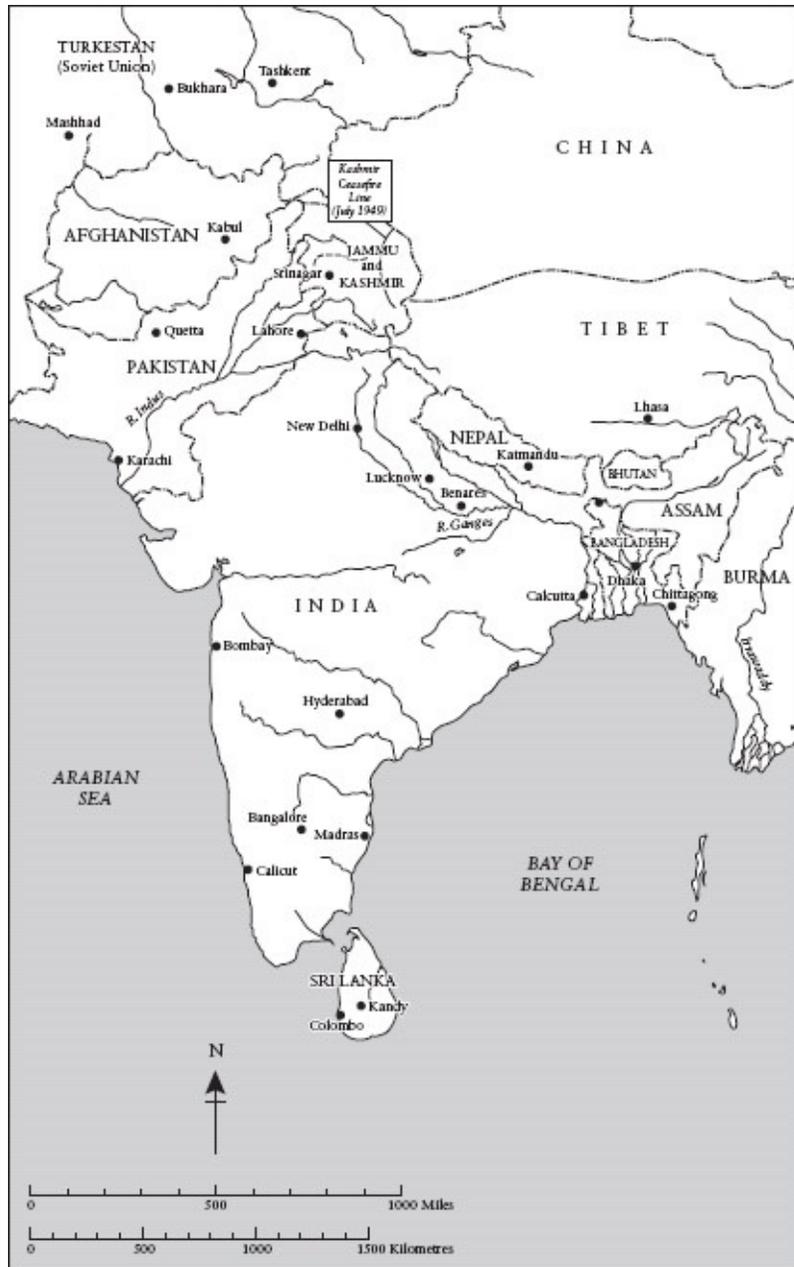
prevailed over much of the country.

India thus had its own internal problems, and became a great power only within the subcontinent. Indian foreign policy was largely taken up by the long and inconclusive conflict with Pakistan, in which Kashmir was the principal bone of contention. As we have seen, at the time of partition Kashmir was predominantly Muslim in population, but its Hindu ruler had opted to join India. After 1947, India held most of the province, and Pakistan occupied areas in the north and west. India promised a plebiscite, which never took place; and the two parts of Kashmir remained separated by a ceasefire line supervised by the United Nations. The volatile nature of this situation, and the violent emotions involved, were vividly illustrated in December 1963, when a holy relic (a hair from the beard of the Prophet Mohammed) vanished from a mosque in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. Rumours spread that the relic had been stolen by a former chief minister of Kashmir, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, and there were vast demonstrations demanding its return. The relic was in fact restored, in mysterious circumstances, on 4 January 1964; but by that time the demonstrations had changed their object to the release of Sheikh Abdullah, an important Kashmiri Muslim leader who had been imprisoned by the Indians for many years. There were attacks on Hindus in East Pakistan and on Muslims in parts of India. Nehru died at the height of this crisis and this meant the end of any hope that a negotiated settlement would be found: nobody else in India had the 'stature, courage and political support' to stand out against the 'highly emotional tide of public opinion' in India for preserving the status quo.³¹

In 1965 open warfare between India and Pakistan broke out in a different area. In April there was fighting in the Rann of Kutch, an area of salt marshes on the border between the two countries to the south-east of the Indus delta. The territory was of no value in itself, and indeed was under water for parts of the year; and the issues involved were not material but matters of prestige and national sensitivity. A ceasefire came into force from 1 July, but the conflict quickly shifted to Kashmir. Muslim irregulars attacked Indian-held territory in eastern Kashmir on 5 August; and troops of the Pakistan Army crossed the ceasefire line on 1 September. On 6 September Indian forces began a counteroffensive against the Pakistani city of Lahore (one of the features of the Kashmir conflict is that important Pakistani cities such as Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad lie close to the disputed region). China intervened indirectly in the conflict on 16 September, by choosing that moment to demand that India should dismantle certain fortifications on the Himalayan border between the two

countries, presenting the Indians with the potential threat of a war on two fronts. At that stage both the Soviet Union and the United States warned the Chinese against taking military action, and the incident passed. On 23 September yet another ceasefire was arranged by the United Nations, and the Indian and Pakistani forces withdrew to their respective positions. The Indians published casualty figures of 2,212 killed, 7,636 wounded and some 1,500 missing, testifying to the severity of the fighting.³²

After this conflict, the Soviet Union (which still maintained close relations with India) attempted the role of mediator. Alexei Kosygin, the Soviet prime minister, invited the Indian prime minister Lal Shastri and the president of Pakistan Field Marshal Ayub Khan to a meeting at Tashkent, in Soviet Central Asia, where the two leaders conferred between 4 and 10 January 1966. It was a remarkable scene. The very name of Tashkent recalled the 'Great Game' played between Russia and Britain in the nineteenth century for the control of Central Asia. Kosygin took the role of mediator in the Indian subcontinent in a way that the Tsars might well have envied. But the results were slender. Shastri and Ayub Khan cautiously agreed that their countries would not use force against one another, which seemed hopeful in principle but implausible in practice. They also undertook to resume negotiations about Kashmir, which had proved a fruitless task in the past. A final grim element of drama was added when Shastri suddenly died of a heart attack at the conclusion of the conference.



MAP 10 *The Indian subcontinent.*

One of the signatories of the Tashkent agreement thus died almost as soon as the ink was dry, and was succeeded by Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter. The other principal participant in the conference, Ayub Khan, found himself the target of discontent at home, partly because he had failed to achieve success against India, and was eventually compelled to resign in 1969. He was replaced by another military ruler, General Yahya Khan. The Tashkent agreement did not survive these changes, and by the end of 1971 the two countries were again

engaged in conflict, this time over the secession of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) from Pakistan itself.

At the time of its creation in 1947, Pakistan was a state in two 'wings', separated by about 1,600 kilometres of Indian territory. To keep the two parts of the country together was certain to be difficult, and proved to be impossible. The capital was in West Pakistan (in Karachi up to 1958, and then in Rawalpindi pending the building of a new capital city at Islamabad), which meant that the West did better in government jobs and expenditure. The army was mostly recruited from the 'martial races' of the West, where its main bases were also established. The East provided most of Pakistan's exports, principally jute, which was suffering from increasing competition from artificial fibres and was a wasting asset. Much of the territory of East Pakistan, which included about half the delta of the River Ganges, was regularly subject to severe flooding and periodical famines; and the people felt forgotten or disregarded by the distant government in the West. During the 1960s, political protest against central government neglect was organized by the Awami League, led by Mujibur Rahman, which demanded at first autonomy for East Pakistan in a new federal system, and later complete independence.

In 1970 the nagging discontent in East Pakistan came to a head through a combination of natural disasters and the calling of a parliamentary election, which was intended to bring to an end a period of military rule. Bengal suffered severe floods in the summer of 1970, followed by a cyclone on 13 November. The Pakistani government responded weakly to these emergencies, strengthening the Awami League's case for independence. In December 1970 the elections took place throughout Pakistan. In the East, the Awami League swept the board, winning 160 seats out of 162. In the West, the Peoples' Party, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, won 82 seats out of 138. The combined result gave the Awami League a majority of the three hundred members of the assembly, and Mujibur Rahman had every expectation of becoming the prime minister. In fact, the existing military government under General Yahya Khan refused to convene the new assembly and retained power for itself. In March 1971 Rahman and the Awami League called a general strike in East Pakistan, demanding independence. Troops of the Pakistan Army occupied the university in Dhaka, the principal city in the East, and attempted to suppress the Awami League. It used savage methods.

On 26 March Rahman declared the independence of the new state of Bangladesh. He was at once arrested, and the Pakistani Army attempted to

suppress the independence movement, inflicting heavy casualties among the population. Immense numbers of refugees – certainly many millions – crossed the border into India. In May 1971, at the peak of the crisis, 102,000 refugees, including many Hindus, entered India every *day*.³³ A cholera epidemic broke out and India was left to handle a humanitarian crisis of unparalleled dimensions. Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi was ‘so overwhelmed by the scale of human misery that she could hardly speak’ when she visited the refugee camps in July. She was not alone. The plight of the refugees aroused wide international indignation. The Indian musician Ravi Shankar, himself a Bengali, organized a rock concert at which some of the most famous artists of the day performed to raise money for the refugees; the American singer-songwriter Joan Baez wrote the politically charged ‘Song for Bangladesh’. For a ‘few months in 1971, Bangladesh seemed to distill all the hopes and fears of the Swinging Sixties’.³⁴

In other words, what was in principle an internal crisis for Pakistan was in fact of intense concern to India – the case of Bangladesh is, in fact, widely recognized as an exemplary illustration of how external military intervention in the internal affairs of other nations can be justified when a government wages war against its own citizens and causes a situation that ‘shocks the moral conscience of mankind’.³⁵ In the context of the long-standing conflict between India and Pakistan, the crisis also presented India with an irresistible opportunity to exploit Pakistan’s difficulties. The Indians provided arms for Awami League resistance against the Pakistan Army, but Delhi was cautious and hesitated for eight months before intervening militarily. At the end of November 1971, however, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi formally requested the Pakistan government to release Rahman from imprisonment; when this demand was rejected, Indian regular troops crossed the border into East Pakistan. On 3 December 1971 Pakistan responded by attacking India from the West and bombing Indian airfields. The next day Indian forces, about 160,000 strong, advanced into East Pakistan, and reached the outskirts of Dhaka on 14 December. The Indians set up a Provisional Government of Bangladesh, and the Pakistani forces in the territory surrendered on 16 December.

While these events were taking place, the great powers manoeuvred on behalf of the opposite sides. China had long supported Pakistan against India, and had just attained a stronger diplomatic position since its admission to the United Nations and the Security Council in October 1971. The United States had also normally sided with Pakistan, and at this very time, with Pakistani help, was in the midst of negotiations with China which were to lead to President Nixon’s

visit there in February 1972. On 4 December the United States put to the Security Council a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in East Pakistan, which would have had the effect of halting the Indian advance into the territory. The Soviet Union vetoed it. A similar resolution was then put to the UN General Assembly, where the veto did not apply, and was carried out on 7 December, with a majority of the 'non-aligned' states voting in its favour – and thus against India, which had put great efforts into forming the non-aligned movement. Behind the scenes, President Nixon put pressure on the Soviet Union by threatening to cancel his summit meeting with Brezhnev arranged for 1972. He also ostentatiously dispatched the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* to the Gulf of Bengal to show the flag and imply the possibility of American intervention against India. Henry Kissinger, as usual, saw the conflict in explicit Cold War terms: in his view, the Americans could not afford a situation in which 'a Soviet stooge, supported with Soviet arms, is overrunning a country that is an American ally'.³⁶ The Indians were not intimidated. In secret, the Chinese agreed not to open a second front in support of Pakistan, and the Soviets undertook to restrain India in West Pakistan and Kashmir, although India also had the best of the war in the West and occupied more than 13,000 square kilometres of Pakistani territory. The international pressure did bring about a ceasefire. Yahya Khan resigned in disgrace on 20 September. He was replaced by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who at once accepted the independence of Bangladesh. India thus secured an important victory, and East Pakistan became Bangladesh; but West Pakistan remained intact.

The Indian government concluded a Treaty of Friendship and cooperation with Bangladesh on 19 March 1972, guaranteeing the new state against external attack – a psychological rather than a practical assurance, since Bangladesh's only immediate neighbour was India itself. Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Bhutto met at Simla, the mountain retreat of the British viceroys, on 2 July 1972 and signed a limited agreement to maintain peaceful coexistence between their two countries, to resolve differences by peaceful means and to respect the existing ceasefire line in Kashmir. Shortly after this, Bhutto told the Pakistani assembly that Pakistan could not secure self-determination for the people of Kashmir; which in practice though not in principle amounted to a retreat from Pakistan's claims on the subject. In August 1973 India and Pakistan concluded a Repatriation Agreement, providing for the return of some 92,000 Pakistani prisoners of war and civilian internees to Pakistan, and for Pakistan to accept an unspecified number of emigrants from Bangladesh who did not wish to remain

in the new state.

Pakistan was unable to block international recognition of the new state of Bangladesh. The Commonwealth admitted Bangladesh to membership in 1972, and Pakistan resigned in protest. Admission to the UN, which was dependent on a vote in the Security Council, was held up by Chinese veto, but only until 1974. At home, Bangladeshis found that independence solved few of their problems. Rahman's attempt to combine parliamentary democracy, socialism and economic development failed. He resorted to a form of dictatorship in 1975, but was displaced by a military coup later in the year, and then murdered.

India and Pakistan both went through a period of internal difficulties in the two decades that followed the creation of Bangladesh. Between June 1975 and March 1977 Indira Gandhi suspended democracy in India (the so-called Emergency) and ruled by decree. Her policy roused India's profound democratic instincts. In March 1977 the Congress Party lost a parliamentary election in India for the first time, and Gandhi resigned. Her successor, Morarji Desai, pursued a policy less favourable to the Soviet Union. Mrs Gandhi did return to power in 1980; but was assassinated in 1984. In Pakistan democracy was a chimera. Zulfikar Bhutto was overthrown by the army in July 1977, and General Zia ul-Haq was installed as president. He imposed martial law, and set about turning Pakistan (which had long been described as an Islamic Republic) into a thoroughgoing Islamic *state*. Bhutto, charged with corruption and the rigging of elections, was executed. The two states, despite their limited agreements in 1972 and 1973, remained fundamentally at odds over Kashmir and over the whole basis of their relations in the subcontinent. Both made steady progress in manufacturing nuclear weapons, which they tested in close succession in 1998.

India also intervened, though in a very different way, in the internal struggle which wracked Sri Lanka from 1977 onwards. The Tamil people formed a minority of about 15–16 per cent of the population in Sri Lanka, mostly concentrated in the north of the country round the city of Jaffna. Rioting in Jaffna in August 1977 caused 125 deaths and marked the beginning of a conducted long separatist campaign among the Tamils, led by a guerrilla army calling themselves the 'Tamil Tigers'. The insurrection persisted into the 1980s, causing much anxiety in India, where there was a substantial Tamil population in southern India, across the Palk Straits from Sri Lanka. The Indian government feared that the movement for Tamil independence in Sri Lanka, if successful, would have repercussions in India. India therefore supported the Sri Lankan government in its long struggle against the Tamil Tigers, and also tried to find a

compromise solution to the conflict. In July 1987, the Indian prime minister (Indira Gandhi's son, Rajiv) concluded an agreement with Sri Lanka by which India would send troops to help defeat the guerrillas, and Sri Lanka undertook to establish a Tamil homeland with a large measure of autonomy. In the event, the Indian Peacekeeping Force grew to some 50,000 men, without defeating the rebels or keeping the peace; and eventually the Sri Lankan government grew weary of the presence of foreign troops and asked for their withdrawal. The Indian troops left Sri Lanka in 1990; Rajiv Gandhi was killed in October 1991 by a bomb hidden within a bunch of flowers by a suicide assassin working on behalf of the Tamil Tigers. The Tamil war continued until the winter of 2008–9, when the Sinhalese government crushed the Tamil Tigers in a ruthless military operation that cost the lives of thousands of civilians and aroused widespread international condemnation.

The conflict between India and Pakistan persisted, and by 1987 was in its fortieth year. It was still continuing in 2016, far outliving the Cold War, which the participants had from time to time exploited for their own purposes. The fundamental issue at stake in relations between India and Pakistan is one of national identity, powerfully reinforced in the case of Pakistan by religion. Pakistan was created in 1947 on the claim for an Islamic homeland, and the country has grown more strongly Islamic over the years. India has remained a secular state, with a large minority of Muslims in its population; but many Indians have continued to resent the very existence of Pakistan. Kashmir has remained the symbol of the struggle between the two states, not its cause. Over territory, compromise is usually possible; but symbols are another matter altogether.

Asia in the balance

Between the 1960s and the 1990s a global shift towards Asia began. After the end of the Cold War, the shift would pick up speed. Even so, already in the 1980s, Japan had become an economic power second only to the United States; China was experimenting with economic liberalization; South Korea and Taiwan were ready to make the leap from being developing countries with paternalistic governments, to becoming advanced industrial democracies. Filipinos had shown that Asians were willing to stand in front of tanks in order to get democratic rights. Their example would be followed (tragically) by the Chinese in 1989 and by the Indonesians and Thais in the 1990s. The role of external

forces had been diminished. India was not a Soviet stooge; communism was not exported by either Russia or China. The Americans had been diminished – the United States was no longer the colossus of the post-war years. Washington had been humiliated in Vietnam; had done China’s bidding over Taiwan; had failed to impose its agenda in South Korea; had been matched economically by Japan; had seen its local clients repudiated or replaced. What emerged in this period was a rough balance of power and interests between the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan and China, with none of them playing a predominant role and with India as a considerable force in its own right.

Notes

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- 28 See John G. Taylor, *East Timor: The Price of Freedom* (London, 1999), especially pp. 79–91, for details.
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- 30 The full text of the Bangkok Declaration is available in English on the ASEAN website at: <http://www.asean.org/>.
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19

Turmoil in Africa, c.1962–1990s

African aspirations and problems – Conflicts in Africa – Nigeria and Biafra – Chad – The Horn of Africa – Western Sahara – African economic problems – Outside powers and Africa.

African aspirations

The year 1960 was widely acclaimed as the ‘Year of Africa’, as one country after another emerged from colonial status to independence. In the few years between 1957 and 1962 the greater part of the continent was emancipated from European rule and set off hopefully towards a revived African civilization and a new role in the world. The thirty-two states whose representatives met at Addis Ababa in May 1963 to found the Organization of African Unity (OAU) set themselves far-reaching aims: to promote African unity and solidarity; to coordinate their political, economic, cultural, health, scientific and defence policies; and to eliminate colonialism in Africa.¹

The continent had strong foundations for economic prosperity. Africa possessed great mineral resources: gold and diamonds; coal, oil and uranium – the old and new fuels; copper, cobalt, chrome, iron ore, manganese, bauxite and phosphates. In the 1980s, it was estimated that Africa was producing 64 per cent of the world’s manganese, 50 per cent of its gold and 30 per cent of the uranium in the non-communist countries. African agriculture produced important crops for export – cocoa, coffee, vegetable oils and tobacco. The prospects for economic development seemed favourable.²

The new African states looked forward to a dynamic role in international affairs. The Afro-Asian congress at Bandung in 1955, though held before the

great majority of African states had attained independence, showed the way forward. The first summit conference of non-aligned countries, held at Belgrade in September 1961, included eleven African states out of a total of twenty-five in attendance. The second summit conference, at Cairo in October 1964, comprised an African majority (twenty-nine out of forty-seven). Of the ten non-aligned summit conferences between 1961 and 1992, four were held in Africa (in Cairo, Lusaka, Algiers and Harare). These meetings were frequently concerned with an African issue – the elimination of the apartheid regime in South Africa; and also with the question of how to restructure the world economy to meet the needs of primary producers and poor countries, which included most African states.

The new Africa thus began with great hopes, and made its mark in the councils of the non-aligned movement. But for the most part the period after the ‘year of Africa’ and the foundation of the OAU was a time of difficulty, disillusionment and war.

African problems

The new Africa comprised a large number of states, rising to fifty-two by 1992 (including island states in the Indian Ocean – Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles – which chose to join the OAU). Most of the new states inherited the frontiers drawn by the colonial powers in the nineteenth century, and possessed little internal cohesion, being divided along tribal or ethnic lines or by religious differences. Language, which in Europe was often the foundation of nationality, could play no such role in Africa. Africa, south of the Sahara, included an estimated 1,300 indigenous languages in a population of about 460 million in 1980. In Cameroon alone, for example, with a population of 7,663,000 in 1976, some 230 languages were spoken; though the country was held together, and communicated with the outside world, through the use of French.³ Indeed, the European languages introduced by the colonizing powers – especially English and French – maintained cohesion over large areas of the continent, though at the cost of some rivalry between the English- and French-speaking groups.

Hopes for political stability, often encouraged by the institutions left behind by the colonial powers, were quickly disappointed. In January 1963 the army overthrew the government in Togo, and the president, Sylvanus Olympio, was killed. A series of other military coups speedily followed – in Congo (Brazzaville) in 1963; Gabon in 1964 (French troops restored the government, but that only amounted to military intervention of a different kind); Congo and

Benin in 1965; the Central African Republic (CAR), Upper Volta (later Burkina Faso) and Ghana in 1966. The last of these was a particular blow to British hopes in Africa. Ghana (formerly the British colony of the Gold Coast) had been guided to independence by carefully designed stages, and its first prime minister, Kwame Nkrumah, was widely admired as a model African statesman of the new generation. But Nkrumah first made himself a dictator, and then in 1966 was overthrown by the army, dying in exile in 1972. In the late 1960s Nigeria and Sierra Leone, which had begun their independent existence with high hopes, each suffered two military coups. By 1975 it was calculated that twenty out of forty-one former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa were under military rule or military influence. In the thirty years from 1960 to 1990, there were eighty successful coups d'état in Africa.⁴ All across Africa authoritarian governments prevailed, of various kinds – military, imperial, Marxist, African socialist or simply tyrannical. A severe but well-informed observer counted twenty-five military and nineteen civilian dictatorships in Africa in 1990.⁵

It is worth describing three of these dictatorships briefly, to illustrate what was happening in large parts of Africa. Sese Seko Mobutu seized power in the Congo (later Zaire) by a military coup in 1965 and ruled the country until 1997. He was a champion of African authenticity, replacing all European place-names by African ones, and taking a new African name himself. He plunged the country into poverty by seizing foreign-owned businesses and ‘privatizing’ them for his own profit and the profit of his entourage; he also used the state treasury as a private bank. Under Mobutu the state became a giant kleptocracy, with the people at the top stealing the most, and the people at the bottom stealing to stay alive. Mobutu amassed an enormous personal fortune, some of it safely stowed in Swiss bank accounts, although he also spent recklessly. Zaire was nevertheless sustained by repeated loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, usually extended on conditions for reform which were never fulfilled. He played a significant role in African politics, becoming president of the OAU in 1967. He claimed to be anti-communist and a bastion of stability in Central Africa (‘It is me or chaos,’ he is reported to have exclaimed) in order to secure aid from the Americans; it was a gambit that clearly worked since ‘on successive visits to Washington, he was accorded star status, promised support, and constantly flattered’.⁶ He was sustained to the last by the French government, with which he played the card of *Francophonie* – he was, after all, the leader of a vast French-speaking country. When Mobutu was finally defeated and overthrown by a revolt in 1997, Zaire, potentially a wealthy country, had

been reduced to ruin and chaos.⁷

Jean Bedel Bokassa was head of the army in the CAR, formerly the French colony of Ubangi-Chari. He seized power in 1966 and declared himself president for life in 1972 and subsequently proclaimed himself emperor with an astonishing coronation ceremony partly modelled on that of Napoleon. Bokassa enriched himself by fraudulent dealings in gold and diamonds, and bought four chateaux and a fifty-room mansion in Paris with the proceeds. In the late 1970s he modelled himself less on Napoleon than on Caligula. He committed multiple murders of political opponents; in some cases feeding the victims to the crocodiles. Yet he was sustained in power by France, and was lavishly entertained in Paris by President Giscard d'Estaing, to whom he gave a present of diamonds which later became notorious. After Bokassa took part personally in the murder of a hundred schoolchildren who had had the temerity to protest against the cost of school uniforms, even the French government concluded that he was an embarrassment. He was overthrown in September 1979 by French troops, who restored the previous president, David Dacko.

In Uganda, Idi Amin (the army commander, who like Mobutu had risen from the ranks) seized power in 1971 from Milton Obote, whom he had earlier brought to power in a coup d'état against the king of the Baganda tribe, who was also Uganda's head of state. Barely literate, Amin was intellectually incapable of being president. He governed by whim and before long the Ugandan economy – which had been making rapid progress at the time of decolonization – was in a state of prostration. Amin needed a scapegoat. His choice was a shrewd one. He expelled the Ugandan Asian community, who ran most of the commercial life of the country – a blatantly racist move which was popular among much of the population, but which predictably proved an economic disaster.

Amin also attempted to turn Uganda into an Islamic country, though Muslims made up only a small proportion of the population, and to this end murdered an Anglican archbishop and persecuted the small Jewish community. The number of Ugandans killed under his regime has been variously estimated at between 200,000 and 300,000. His eight-year tyranny was arbitrary, murderous and occasionally absurd – during the October War in the Middle East in 1973, he claimed to have played a decisive role in the Egyptian victories by his own daring operations behind the Israeli lines. Amid all this, and when his record was well known, he was elected president of the OAU, and played host at its meeting in Kampala in 1975, which was attended by all member states except three. At the beginning of his rule the British government supplied Amin with arms;

Uganda remained a member in good standing of the Commonwealth. Amin finally overreached himself by attempting to seize territory from the neighbouring state of Tanzania. He was then resisted by President Nyerere and overthrown by a Tanzanian army which invaded Uganda and entered Kampala as liberators. Alas for Ugandans, Amin was eventually replaced by Milton Obote, who proceeded to govern even more incompetently and brutally than his predecessor: it is widely agreed that at least 300,000 died during Obote's five-year rule. By 1985 Uganda 'was ranked among the poorest countries on earth'.⁸ Meanwhile Amin had taken refuge in Saudi Arabia, where he lived in comfortable exile until his death in August 2003.

These three cases were extreme examples of tyranny, but they involved elements which recurred frequently across the continent: the seizure of power by the head of the army, large-scale murder and disastrous damage to the economy. Amin's actions against the Asians were also plainly racist in character. Yet each of these tyrants was accepted by other African rulers and by the OAU, and sustained to a greater or less extent by Western powers – France (Mobutu and Bokassa), Britain (Amin) and the United States (Mobutu). Together, they brought disaster on the reputation of the new Africa – though even collectively they inflicted far fewer deaths than did Mao or Pol Pot.

Strikingly, what none of them did was to conquer territory from a neighbouring country (Amin's one attempt at this was his undoing), or to lose territory from his own. Mobutu wrecked Zaire economically, but it passed geographically intact to his successor; and the same was true of Bokassa and Amin. The basic rule of African international politics, and the founding principle of the OAU, was the preservation of the territorial integrity of existing states. The cohesion of most African states was so fragile that no government wished to set a dangerous example of conquest or secession. This did not prevent Africa from becoming the scene of a large number of conflicts, between and within states.

African conflicts

In the three decades between 1960 and 1990 Africa suffered conflicts of various kinds – wars between states, civil wars and sometimes a mixture of the two. A somewhat arbitrary count arrives at a total of twenty-four such conflicts:⁹

Sudan, civil war: 1955–onwards

Congo–Zaire, civil war with outside intervention: 1960–7

South Africa, liberation struggle by African National Congress: 1961–94
Angola, war of liberation: 1961–75
Somalia–Kenya, border conflict: 1963–7
Guinea–Bissau, war of liberation: 1963–74
Algeria–Morocco, border conflict: 1963
Eritrea–Ethiopia, war of secession: 1963–91
Somalia–Ethiopia, border conflict: 1964 and 1977–8
Mozambique, war of liberation: 1964–74
Rhodesia–Zimbabwe, war of liberation: 1965–79
Chad, civil war with outside intervention: 1965–88
Namibia, war of liberation: 1966–90
Nigeria–Biafra, civil war (failed war of secession): 1967–70
Burundi, civil war, Hutu against Tutsi: 1972–onwards
Angola, civil war with outside intervention: 1975–onwards
Western Sahara (Polisario, Morocco, Mauritania): 1975–91
Mozambique, civil war with outside intervention: 1976–92
Zaire, invasion by rebels from Angola: 1977–8
Libya–Egypt, border raids: 1977
Uganda–Tanzania (resulting in overthrow of Amin): 1978–9
Somalia, civil war with outside intervention: 1981–onwards
Liberia, civil war: 1989–93
Rwanda, civil war: 1990–onwards

Among these conflicts (which were of very different scale and intensity), six were wars of liberation against a colonial power or against white governments (in Rhodesia and South Africa); twelve were civil wars, often with outside intervention; and six were wars between states, usually over borders and territory. Let us look at certain examples, which illuminate various aspects of the African situation.

Nigeria–Biafra, 1967–70

One of the most serious of these African conflicts took place in Nigeria from May 1967 to January 1970. Like the American Civil War in the nineteenth century, the conflict over Biafra was a war of secession, and therefore either a civil war or a war between states depending on the date and one's point of view. Nigeria was one of the most populous African states, and at the time of

independence one of the richest, with a thriving export trade in cocoa and vegetable oils, and growing production of crude oil, mostly from the Eastern Province.¹⁰ Britain, the colonial power, left behind a federal system of government, comprising three provinces: the north was mainly Hausa in its population and Muslim in religion; the south-west mainly Yoruba and Christian; and the east mainly Igbo and Christian (largely Catholic). The numerically stronger northerners abused their power, and resentment began to grow among the Igbo in particular. In January 1966 the prime minister, Abubakar Tafewa Balewa, and other members of the ruling elite, were murdered in a coup carried out by mostly Igbo army officers. The coup was put down by loyalist officers but the army stayed in power under the leadership of General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, who suppressed political parties and embarked on a policy of centralization. In July 1966 Ironsi himself was assassinated, and replaced by a soldier from a northern tribe, Colonel Yakubu Gowon. This new coup was followed by a pogrom: Igbos living in the north were killed by the thousand, and many took refuge in the Eastern Province, among their own people. Gowon abandoned Ironsi's short-lived policy of centralization and opted instead for greater division, setting up a federation in May 1967 consisting of twelve provinces instead of three, dividing the Igbos of the former Eastern Province between several of the new regions. Colonel Emeka Ojukwu, an Oxford-educated Igbo officer and military governor of the Eastern Province, opposed the new division of the country, which would dilute Igbo autonomy and remove the province's control over its oil revenues. Ojukwu declared the independence of the Eastern Province, under the name of Biafra, on 30 May 1967.

The subsequent war lasted two and a half years, with casualties (military and civilian) estimated at some 600,000.¹¹ For nearly a year the struggle was fairly even, but in 1968 the Nigerians began to prevail, capturing Port Harcourt, the principal oil depot, on 20 May. Biafra had become 'an encircled, embattled, enclave, bombed and strafed daily by Nigeria's air force'.¹² Biafran resistance persisted through 1969, although by now the country was a charnel house wracked with disease and starvation. Finally Ojukwu left the country on 8 January 1970, leaving his successor, General Philip Effiong, to ask for terms. The last Biafran troops surrendered on 15 January 1970. President Gowon wisely showed mercy on the defeated Biafrans, whose courage had won the admiration of the world. No genocide followed the terrible blood-letting of the war itself.

During the war, a great deal turned on the attitudes of outside states, both in

Africa and elsewhere. In Africa, only four governments (Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon and Ivory Coast) recognized Biafra as an independent state. All the other members of the OAU refused to do so, mainly on grounds of self-preservation – if the principle of secession from one of the new African states were once accepted, there was no telling where it would stop. Outside Africa, the Soviet Union and Britain were quick to declare their support for the Nigerian government and to supply it with arms and other assistance. The Soviets were trying to increase their influence in West Africa; Britain, as the former colonial power, wished to maintain its own creation in Nigeria and was also in competition with the Soviet Union – the British government was well aware that if it did not provide armaments to Nigeria, the Soviets would. The United States refused to sell arms to either side, and eventually declared its opposition to secession – but not until June 1968, after the fall of Port Harcourt showed that Nigeria was likely to win. The French government sympathized with Biafra, mainly in the hope of diminishing British influence in West Africa. In July 1968 President de Gaulle said publicly that he was in favour of resolving the conflict on the basis of self-determination, which would have met Biafran wishes. For much of 1968 the French flew supplies of arms to Biafra by way of Gabon and the Ivory Coast, former French colonies which had recognized Biafra; but France stopped short of granting its own recognition. Biafra was also supported by South Africa, Rhodesia and Israel – all opposed, for their own reasons, to the majority of African states. Biafra thus secured some recognition and outside help, but never enough to turn the conflict into an international war. It remained a war of secession which ultimately failed. The outcome was a victory for the status quo, which suited the great majority of African states. If a precedent for successful secession had been set, the consequences might have been far-reaching. For Nigeria the cost of victory was high, and the country suffered economic and political damage whose effects persisted for many years. For Africa as a whole, the attitude of other countries to the war was a striking demonstration that the principle of self-determination applied only to liberation from the colonial powers or white rule, not to separation from a new African state.

Chad

The former French colony of Chad became independent in 1960. It was a large and sparsely populated country, with some 2,675,000 people in a territory of

approximately 1.3 million square kilometres. It was a poor country, with a short life expectancy among its people, a small GNP and little foreign trade, mostly with France.¹³ There was little to be gained in Chad, though in French eyes the country had a significant place in recent history, as the first colony to join de Gaulle and the Free French in 1940. The new state consisted of two contrasting parts: the north was Arab and Muslim in population, and nomadic in its way of life; the south was black African in population, Christian or animist in religion and practised agriculture, producing cottonseed and groundnuts.

The northern Arabs were afraid of domination by the more populous south, which also included the capital, Fort Lamy (later N'Djamena), and in 1965 the National Liberation Front (FROLINAT) began an armed rebellion in the north. In 1968 French forces intervened to defeat the rebellion. In 1973 Libya, a revolutionary Islamic state under the leadership of Colonel Gaddafi intervened to support the Muslims in northern Chad. Libya also occupied the 'Aouzou Strip', a sizeable territory on the border between Libya and Chad. This territory was disputed for historical reasons dating back to the colonial period. In January 1935 the French premier, Pierre Laval, in negotiations with Mussolini, the Italian dictator, had agreed to cede the Strip to the Italian colony of Libya; but Italy never took the formal step of annexing the territory, and its exact status remained in doubt. Gaddafi considered himself the heir to the Italian colony; and his claim was inspired by the further incentive that the Strip might contain deposits of uranium. Libya was in fact a rogue state, and Gaddafi an erratic leader. He came to power in 1969, when he was only thirty-one. At different times he intervened on behalf of Muslim rebels in Chad, Tunisia, Sudan and as far afield as the Philippines. He proclaimed unions between Libya and a series of other states – Egypt, Tunisia, Mauritania, Chad and Morocco, though none of these achieved any reality. His intervention in Chad was a part of this idiosyncratic behaviour, in which economic advantage played only a small part.

In 1975 a military coup in Chad brought in a new government, supposedly of national reconciliation; but FROLINAT, now with Libyan support, continued its rebellion. French troops again intervened, confining the revolt to the northern areas. In 1979 Nigeria, which shared a short boundary with Chad and sought to counter Libyan influence, attempted mediation between the different parties, but without success.

There followed a period of sporadic conflict, from 1980 to 1988, with the civil war continuing, accompanied by Libyan intervention in the north and French in the south. In 1980 French troops withdrew from Chad, and a new government

was formed under Goukouni Oueddi, the military commander of FROLINAT. Goukouni concluded a treaty with Libya, and in October 1980 asked for Libyan troops to defeat what had now become a rebellion in southern Chad, led by Hissène Habré. Gaddafi sent a force of 15,000 men, and in January 1981 Libya and Chad announced a union between the two countries. In practice this led nowhere, and in September 1981 the Libyan forces actually withdrew from Chad without bringing the civil war to an end. In 1983 the OAU accepted Habré as head of government in Chad, but this had no effect in the country, where the conflict continued. Libyan troops returned to the north, and the French sent 3,000 men to check their advance. The United States also sent help to Habré (in order to oppose the Libyans); and Zaire, under Mobutu, also dispatched a small force. The result was a division of Chad, roughly along the 16th parallel of latitude, with a separate government in each zone, supported by different foreign backers.

In September 1984 the French and Libyans agreed on the simultaneous withdrawal of their forces from Chad. The French departed (though only as far as the neighbouring CAR). The Libyans stayed, and in 1986 the French returned. That year, Goukouni was wounded in a quarrel with Libyan soldiers, and his followers changed sides and joined Habré's forces in the south. At that point, Gaddafi appeared to lose interest, and most of the Libyans withdrew from northern Chad, though not from the Aouzou Strip. In 1987 the OAU arranged a ceasefire, and in 1988 Habré's government and Libya opened diplomatic relations with one another. Finally, in 1994, Libya withdrew even from the Strip, and acknowledged Chad's claim to the area.

In this long, futile and confused struggle no one gained any advantage whatever. Chad was even poorer in 1990 than when it became independent in 1960, partly through the effects of war and partly through the advance of desertification. Yet determined groups in Chad itself had sustained the conflict, and at various times no fewer than *five* outside countries intervened in the war. French intervention, which lasted longest, arose mainly from motives of prestige. Africa offered France the opportunity to play at being a great power, and to check the advance of Libyan power in Africa seemed a fine gesture. Libyan intervention itself lasted for fifteen years (and in the Aouzou Strip for twenty), inspired by motives part religious, to some degree economic, and perhaps ultimately as the result of Gaddafi's own restless and volatile personality. The United States intervened briefly, in order to oppose Libya. Nigeria opposed the growth of Libyan influence for the sake of its own security,

not least because the large Muslim population of northern Nigeria might attract Gaddafi's attention. Mobutu sent troops to demonstrate his own importance, and to please the French and Americans.

Chad thus provided, in small compass, a striking example of Africa's international problems. It was a desperately poor country, made up of two halves with almost nothing in common, prone to internal dissension and unable to sustain a stable government. Outside powers (African as well as Western) intervened for their own purposes, helping to keep the conflict going without bringing it to a decisive conclusion. Even the conflict's end appeared to come through Gaddafi losing interest rather than anything more positive.

The Horn of Africa: Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea

In East Africa, the so-called Horn of Africa protrudes in a great promontory between the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. In 1960 the area was dominated by two principal states, Ethiopia and Somalia. The ancient Empire of Ethiopia, ruled by Haile Selassie, had retained its independence for almost the whole of the colonial period, and had a large population (estimated at 22.7 million in 1961, rising to 51.5 million in 1992). Somalia was a new country, formed in 1960 by a union between the former colonial territories of Italian and British Somaliland (Djibouti, the former French Somaliland, became independent only in 1977). It had a thinly scattered population of nearly 3 million, mostly nomadic; and a large number of Somalis lived in Kenya and Ethiopia, across frontiers which were often ill-defined on the ground. The new Somali government laid claim to neighbouring territories with Somali populations; and a commitment to recover these 'lost territories' was written into the constitution.

There was a minor conflict between Somalia and Kenya over the northern frontier districts of Kenya, beginning in 1963 and ending in 1967, when the two countries came to an agreement to accept the existing frontier. The Somali claims to the Ogaden province in Ethiopia produced a much more serious and lengthy conflict. Somali forces first moved into the Ogaden in 1964; but the OAU scored one of its early successes, in which President Abboud of Sudan, acting on behalf of the OAU, arranged a ceasefire along the line of the existing frontier.

Somalia's aspirations then lay dormant until February 1977, when a guerrilla organization called the Front for the Liberation of Western Somalia began an uprising in the Ogaden, openly supported by the Somalis. At that stage, Somalia

was a protégé of the Soviet Union, which since 1974 had been training and arming the Somali army, and using Berbera as a naval station. Colonel Mengistu Hailè Mariàm, the left-wing military ruler of Ethiopia (who had deposed Haile Selassie in 1974), appealed for help from the United States, but was turned down. Mengistu then turned to the Soviet Union, in the first instance for diplomatic assistance. The Soviet Union and Cuba tried to mediate, without success. At the end of July 1977 Somali forces entered the Ogaden province and advanced towards the important city of Harer. The Soviet Union, aware that Ethiopia was the bigger prize, then abruptly changed sides, supplied arms to Mengistu and flew Cuban troops into the country. By November some 18,000 Cubans had arrived, along with Soviet tanks, aircraft and missiles, to join the fight against the Somalis. Somalia retaliated by breaking off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and Cuba, and expelling its Soviet military advisers. On the ground, the Somalis were defeated, and withdrew from the Ogaden by March 1978.

The Soviet Union then established Ethiopia as a client state and the main base for its influence in East Africa. On 20 November 1978 the Soviet Union and Ethiopia concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation. Some 2,000 Soviet advisers set to work in Ethiopia. Large quantities of Soviet military equipment were shipped into the country. Mengistu embarked on a Soviet-style programme of forced collectivization of agriculture.¹⁴ The United States, however, remained largely inactive, until President Reagan embarked on his policy of confrontation with the Soviets during the 1980s. In 1982 the Ethiopians moved outside their own territory by supporting a rebellion against the Somali government; the Somalis appealed for American help, which was provided at once. The revolt was defeated, and the Americans established a foothold in Somalia.

But at that stage the conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia faded away, and the American foothold proved useless and even dangerous, because Somalia itself disintegrated. During the 1980s the Somali National Movement fought a guerrilla war in the north of the country (the former British Somaliland). Another group, the Somali Patriotic Movement, began a revolt in the south in 1989. The Somali National Congress (formed in 1990) also opposed the existing (though by then largely powerless) Somali government headed by Siad Barre. The three groups briefly cooperated to drive out Siad Barre in January 1991, but speedily resumed fighting among themselves. The northern territory declared itself independent in May 1991. Somalia ceased to have any effective administration, warlords ran their own territories and famine spread through the

land, caused by a combination of warfare, the breakdown of order and drought. By the end of 1991 deaths from starvation ran into hundreds of thousands. At that stage, the UN and the United States attempted to intervene, but with little success.

There was another lengthy conflict in the Horn of Africa – the Eritrean war of secession against Ethiopia. Eritrea, formerly an Italian colony, was administered by the British after the Second World War, until it was incorporated into Ethiopia in 1952. In 1963, the Eritrean Liberation Front began a guerrilla campaign against the Ethiopians, which continued at low intensity for many years. In 1977, with Ethiopian forces distracted by the conflict against Somalia, the Eritrean separatists took control of most of the country except for Asmara, the capital. In 1978, the Ethiopians and their Cuban allies restored control, but without finally defeating the Eritreans. Fighting continued through the 1980s, and the Eritreans were assisted by the outbreak of a separatist revolt in the Tigray Province of Ethiopia. The two guerrilla movements, Eritrean and Tigrean, gained increasing successes. The Soviets and Cubans pulled out as the Soviet Union, now led by Mikhail Gorbachev, reduced its foreign commitments. Mengistu's government in Ethiopia fell in May 1991, and Eritrea declared its independence later that year. The new state was accepted as a member of the UN in 1993. Eritrea thus succeeded where Biafra had failed from 1967 to 1969, and fought the only successful war of secession in postcolonial African history. The independence of Eritrea marked the only departure from the principle that, whatever else happened in Africa, boundaries remained intact. Even this apparent exception, however, did no more than *restore* the old colonial boundary between Eritrea and Ethiopia; so in practice it may be that the rule was not so much broken as reinforced. The boundary itself remained in dispute, and was the scene of heavy fighting at the end of the 1990s. Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a peace treaty in 2000, but relations between the two states remain tense.

The two long wars together (Somalia against Ethiopia, Ethiopia against the Eritreans) showed the difficulties which could arise when boundaries were arbitrary, or imposed the rule of one people upon another. The wars were fought with great tenacity (especially by the Eritreans), and at colossal cost, in direct casualties and because warfare contributed to famine. Large-scale Soviet and Cuban intervention proved decisive against the Somalis but not against the Eritreans. Of the two wars, one ended in the virtual disintegration of an African state (Somalia) and the other in the emergence of a new one (Eritrea).

Angola: A war of succession

Portugal possessed two vast African colonies, Angola and Mozambique; and though the Portuguese were in many ways the weakest among the old imperial powers, they clung on to their empire the longest. Only in 1974, with a left-wing military revolution in Portugal and the fall of the authoritarian regime founded by Salazar, did the Portuguese government decide to give up its African colonies. The new government agreed in January 1975 that Angola would become independent by November; and the specific date was set for 11 November 1975.

Angola duly became independent, but there was no clear successor to the Portuguese to govern the new state. Since 1961 nationalists had fought guerrilla campaigns against Portuguese rule, led by three separate organizations: the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The MPLA was of Marxist inspiration, with its main strength in the centre of Angola, including the capital, Luanda. As well as its campaign in Angola, it aimed at liberating Namibia (Angola's southern neighbour) from South African control. In 1975, before the Portuguese departed, the MPLA asked the Soviet Union for direct military assistance. The Soviets declined, but brought in the Cubans to act on their behalf. The first Cuban troops arrived in July 1975, building up to about 3,000 by September, with some Soviet advisers. The FNLA was strong in the far north of Angola, and was supported at various times by the United States, Zaire (with Mobutu acting, as in Chad, to demonstrate his own importance and to please the Americans) and the Chinese, who were as usual ready to help anyone who opposed the Soviets. UNITA drew its strength from the Ovimbundu people, which made up perhaps 40 per cent of the total population; it received assistance from the United States and (more important) South Africa, which in August 1975 sent about 2,000 troops into southern Angola to assist UNITA and to protect the northern border of Namibia.

In November 1975, as the Portuguese left, two governments claimed the succession: the MPLA, and a combination between the FNLA and UNITA. The MPLA, supported by Cuban troops (whose numbers amounted to perhaps 20,000 by January 1976), controlled the capital, Luanda, and most of the country. It was recognized as the government of Angola by the Soviet bloc, and by about one-third of all African states. In February 1976 Portugal, the former colonial power, also recognized the MPLA government; and in the same month the OAU

accepted it as a member. The rival government, set up by UNITA and the FNLA, achieved no foreign recognition at all. On 27 January 1976 the US Congress, in a post-Vietnam mood of withdrawal from foreign entanglements, ended all assistance to the FNLA and UNITA by the 'Clark Amendment' to legislation under which foreign aid was provided. The furthest the United States would go in formal opposition to the MPLA government was to refuse recognition as long as Cuban troops remained in the country. The South Africans also withdrew their forces from Angola. The issue seemed decided, with the MPLA as the clear winner.

It was not. UNITA continued to hold out and wage a guerrilla war against the new government. The South Africans sent troops back to Angola in 1978. When Ronald Reagan became president of the United States in 1981, the Americans resumed clandestine intervention in Angola. In 1985 Congress repealed the Clark Amendment, and the Americans were free to assist UNITA openly.

By 1988, after many years of sporadic fighting, the situation in Angola had reached stalemate. The Angolan MPLA government, even with help from the Soviets and the Cubans (about 50,000 troops in the late 1980s), had failed to defeat UNITA. Equally UNITA, with South African and American assistance, had failed to defeat the government. The two sides were both exhausted. In one curious set of circumstances, the MPLA and the Cubans were willing to work with the Americans. In Cabinda, a province of Angola separated from the rest of the country by a strip of Zairean territory, the American oil company Chevron continued to work its oilfields. Neither the Angolan government nor the Soviets made any attempt to stop them; and on occasion Cuban troops actually guarded the American oilmen as they went about their work. It was an odd arrangement, but seems to have worked to everyone's satisfaction; and doubtless even a Marxist government was glad of the oil revenues.

By 1988 relations between the United States and the Soviet Union had been transformed out of recognition, and the Cold War was almost over. Neither side had anything to gain from keeping it going in the forests of Angola. Gorbachev was particularly anxious to end Soviet foreign entanglements. In December 1988 the external countries most directly involved in Angola reached an agreement in New York, in the corridors of the UN building. South Africa agreed to grant independence to Namibia, which ended its principal reason for intervening in Angola; and Cuba agreed to withdraw its forces from Angola by July 1991. Both were as good as their word: Namibia became independent in March 1990, and the Cuban troops left Angola by May 1991. Meanwhile, the opposing leaders in

Angola (the president, Eduardo Dos Santos, and the UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi) concluded, after Portuguese mediation, an agreement at Estoril on 31 May 1991, which provided for an amalgamation of the military forces of the MPLA and UNITA into a single Angolan army, and for elections to be held under UN supervision in 1992. Elections were held in September 1992; UNITA lost, claimed that the elections had been fraudulent and resumed guerrilla warfare.

By that stage, foreign intervention in Angola had ceased. The Cubans had left, the Soviet Union had ceased to exist, the Americans had lost interest, the South African troops had long gone home and the regime which sent them was crumbling. But the war in Angola went on. The country had known no peace since 1975, and it appeared that warfare had become a way of life. Only the death in battle of Jonas Savimbi in February 2002 brought the bloodshed to a precarious halt.

Western Sahara: A war of succession and a wall of sand

In Western Sahara (formerly the Spanish colony of Rio de Oro, later Spanish Sahara) there developed a dispute of remarkable complexity and longevity, which has brought African states into conflict with one another, divided the OAU and ultimately brought about UN intervention. The territory concerned has an area of over a quarter of a million square kilometres, with a population estimated in 1967 at 48,000 and in 1992 at 200,000, mostly nomadic. Its only economic asset lies in deposits of phosphates which were discovered in the north of the territory in 1963.¹⁵

When Morocco became independent in 1956, its government revived a claim dating back to the sixteenth century, to the whole of the Spanish Sahara, and parts of Algeria and Mauritania – all at the time under European control. In 1957 the Moroccans tried to invade part of the Spanish Sahara, but were driven back. Spain continued to hold the territory, and in 1973 an independence movement called the Polisario Front was formed (an abbreviation for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia-el-Hamra and Rio de Oro). In 1974 Morocco and Mauritania (a former French colony, now independent) secretly agreed to partition the territory when the opportunity arose. Their chance came in 1975, when Spain decided to withdraw from its Saharan colony. On 14 November

1975 Spain, Morocco and Mauritania together signed an agreement providing for Spanish withdrawal, and the partition of the Western Sahara between Morocco and Mauritania. This was implemented in 1976, with Morocco taking the northern two-thirds of the country and Mauritania the remainder.

The Polisario Front rejected this partition and declared the independence of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, a move supported by Algeria, which opposed Moroccan claims in the area. The Democratic Republic was recognized quickly by ten African states and by North Korea – but no other communist states.¹⁶ Mauritania, with help from the French air force, maintained its occupation of the southern territories for three years, but in August 1979 dropped its claims and concluded a peace agreement with the Polisario Front. Morocco, on the contrary, continued the war, and now laid claim to the whole of Western Sahara, including the southern sector formerly allotted to Mauritania. Between 1980 and 1985 the Moroccans (with some help from the Americans, who maintained a small base at Kenitra in Morocco) built a series of walls to protect the areas which they had occupied. One of these walls was 2,700 kilometres long, from Zag in Morocco to Dakhla on the Atlantic coast, mostly built of sand and loose stones, but fortified with barbed wire, landmines and watchtowers, enclosing about half the territory of the Western Sahara, including the phosphate deposits, the frontier with Morocco, most of the coastline and nearly all the population. This fortification, variously called the Hassan Wall (after King Hassan of Morocco) and the Sahara Wall, marked a striking reversion to the frontier strategies of the Roman and Chinese empires.

Morocco thus established a military position which the Polisario Front could not break. Diplomatically, on the other hand, Polisario secured some successes. They maintained a government in exile in Algeria, and in 1982 the OAU accepted the membership of this government, under the name of Western Sahara. It took up its place in 1984, when Nigeria became the thirtieth member of the OAU to grant recognition. Morocco withdrew from the OAU in protest, and in August 1984 sprang a surprise by signing a Treaty of Union with Libya. This was a somersault by Gaddafi, who had previously supported Polisario. The union, like others formed by Libya, had no substance, but it was of advantage to Morocco because it provided a link with a radical, left-wing and wealthy regime.

Both Morocco and the Polisario Front advocated a referendum to decide the future of Western Sahara, but they could not agree on how such a vote should be conducted. Polisario insisted that the Moroccans must withdraw their forces before a referendum took place; Morocco refused. Polisario demanded that a

referendum should be conducted by the OAU; Morocco insisted that it should be organized by the UN. In 1988 direct negotiations between Algeria and Morocco achieved an agreement for a ceasefire and for a referendum to be conducted by the UN – a partial success for Morocco and an illustration of the important role played by the Algerians. The ceasefire was frequently broken, and preparations for the referendum moved very slowly. Only in April 1991 was a United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (abbreviated obscurely to MINURSO) set up, to conduct a referendum choosing between independence and integration with Morocco. When the UN Mission arrived, it found great difficulty in compiling a list of voters in a largely nomadic population. To this day no referendum has been held and the Western Sahara exists in a state of limbo; it is neither nation nor colony.¹⁷

What lay behind this lengthy dispute? Morocco has clung tenaciously to the occupied territory, and put a vast material and military effort into the Hassan Wall. Polisario has shown equal determination, winning diplomatic successes at the OAU and claiming to deploy an army of 10,000 men. Casualties on both sides, over the sixteen years from 1975 to 1991, were estimated at 10,000 dead. Yet the territory is barren and the population tiny. The only economic stake is the phosphate deposits, which Morocco has controlled throughout the dispute; but it is by no means certain that the profits from the phosphates (of which Morocco already held large resources) repaid the costs incurred in the conflict. There was some ideological element in the dispute; but it does not appear to have been decisive. Polisario was left-wing and ‘progressive’, as it signalled by calling itself a Popular Front and setting up a Democratic Republic; and its supporters were mostly left-wing African states. Morocco on the other hand was a conservative monarchy – though King Hassan did not shrink from a partnership with Gaddafi, a revolutionary militant. Strict Cold War divisions appear to have counted for little. By 1984 a total of sixty-one states had recognized Polisario as the government of an independent Western Sahara; but neither NATO nor Warsaw Pact members were among them. China too remained aloof.¹⁸ For African states, there was an important issue of principle at stake, and the OAU debated the respective merits of precolonial claims to territory (on which Morocco insisted) as against self-determination by the population. However, even when both sides in the Western Sahara dispute agreed on the principle of self-determination they were no nearer to a solution, because they could not agree on how that principle should be applied.

The most enduring, and probably the most important, element in the dispute

has been a struggle of wills between Algeria and Morocco, in which both countries have committed their prestige. Morocco claimed the Western Sahara as soon as the country became independent in 1956; and the Moroccans later invested an immense effort in building the Hassan Wall. In these circumstances, Morocco could not afford to fail, for reasons of prestige rather than economics. Similarly, Algeria committed itself to support the Polisario, and remained reluctant to see its protégé lose.

One point is worth emphasizing. In this long and intractable dispute, which still has not been definitively resolved, there was at least almost no intervention from outside the continent. The whole affair has been African in character.

From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe

The British colony of Southern Rhodesia presented serious problems in the rush to independence by African colonies in the early 1960s. Southern Rhodesia included a substantial European minority in its population (221,000 out of a total of 3,800,000 in 1961) which controlled the internal politics of the country.¹⁹ In the 1950s, the British government had tried to bring together Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in the East African Federation; but this broke down in 1963. When Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland became independent in 1964, as Zambia and Malawi, respectively, Southern Rhodesia was left alone as a colonial territory. The British government tried to negotiate a settlement leading rapidly to majority rule (the electoral system was rigged to guarantee a white majority). The white population, long accustomed to internal self-rule, refused. On 11 November 1965 the Rhodesia Front government, led by a former Royal Air Force pilot called Ian Smith, defiantly issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) rather than accept transition to black rule:

To us has been given the privilege ... to say 'so far and no further'. ... We Rhodesians have rejected the doctrinaire philosophy of appeasement and surrender. ... We have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilization and Christianity.²⁰

After UDI, a problem of decolonization became a complicated internal and international conflict. Inside Rhodesia, two nationalist guerrilla movements took shape: the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), led by Joshua Nkomo, using bases in Zambia; and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), led by Robert Mugabe, using bases in Mozambique. Britain, as the colonial power,

had no choice but to stay involved, although the issue was a bane for successive governments. The Labour government under Harold Wilson, which held office in 1965, opposed Rhodesian independence under white rule, because to accept it, even tacitly, would have offended Labour Party sentiment, broken up the Commonwealth, and created endless difficulties in the Third World. But Wilson's government also ruled out the use of force against Rhodesia as being difficult in military terms and virtually impossible politically, because a large part of British public opinion, including people opposed to Smith's racism, would have detested the thought of intervening militarily against fellow Britons (which is how Smith and the Rhodesian whites were perceived).

Britain therefore adopted the limited policy of imposing economic sanctions upon Rhodesia (cutting off supplies of oil and armaments, and restricting trade in other commodities); and at the same time appealed to the UN to take similar measures. In 1966 the British claimed that the Rhodesian situation presented a threat to peace (though so far there was virtually no sign of violence), and requested the Security Council to impose mandatory sanctions, that is, measures binding upon all UN member states. After some delay, mandatory sanctions were introduced in May 1968 under Security Council Resolution 253. A British naval blockade was set up off the port of Beira, in what was then the Portuguese colony of Mozambique, to prevent oil supplies reaching Rhodesia by that route.

For some time, these measures had only limited effects. Militarily, the Rhodesian forces (which included large numbers of black troops) held their own against the guerrillas. Support from South Africa and Mozambique meant that Rhodesian trade with the outside world continued, even with countries which in principle were imposing sanctions. Successive British governments (of both parties) offered steadily improving terms to Ian Smith for a negotiated end to independence. This situation changed radically in the mid-1970s. The first oil shock at the end of 1973, by increasing the price of oil fourfold, imposed a great strain on Rhodesia's besieged economy. In 1975 the Portuguese left Mozambique, which greatly facilitated the task of ZANU guerrillas. In 1976 the United States put pressure on South Africa to reduce its support for Rhodesia, in return for American concessions in other directions.

Cumulatively, these events wore down the resistance of the white Rhodesians. The guerrilla war grew steadily more costly in resources and casualties. Sanctions created a sense of isolation which proved in many ways more damaging than their economic effects. The departure of the Portuguese from Africa and slackening of South African support were decisive. The introduction

of so-called power-sharing, and the replacement of Smith by an African premier, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, did not stop the guerrilla war. In December 1979 the newly elected government of Margaret Thatcher convened a conference at Lancaster House, in London, and contrived an agreement on the end of UDI, a short interim period of British rule, and then independence under universal suffrage, though with a proportion of parliamentary seats reserved for whites. Elections took place in February 1980, with Mugabe and ZANU victorious; and the new state of Zimbabwe became independent in April.

Mugabe soon proved to be an African Stalinist. Showing a ruthless command of salami tactics (i.e. defeating one's enemies slice by slice) Mugabe first eliminated Joshua Nkomo as a rival. In early 1982 Nkomo was expelled from the government, and ZAPU's political activities were restricted. Mugabe's North Korean-trained '5 Brigade', a military police unit loyal to Mugabe himself rather than to the army, was then unleashed on the Matabeleland, home to Nkomo's Ndebele tribe. For four years the territory was ravaged: 'At least 10,000 civilians were murdered, many thousands more were beaten and tortured, and an entire people had been victimised.'²¹ Nkomo, like the socialists of Eastern Europe in 1948, was compelled to merge ZAPU into ZANU-PF in December 1987. These brutal acts of ethnic and political intimidation attracted much less international condemnation than had previously been reserved for Smith's racist regime.

Mugabe then turned his energies to the question of land distribution, which became an authentic international issue. Zimbabwe unquestionably had a land problem: hundreds of thousands of Africans, including many veterans of the war for independence, farmed poor land while a relative handful of white farmers held most of the best land. Redistribution was just. Mugabe, however, on this question behaved less like Stalin than Mobutu. By the late 1980s the government was stuffed with Mugabe's cronies and land – bought from white farmers with money provided by international donors – was being grabbed by well-connected members of the prime minister's inner circle. In the 1990 election campaign, facing mounting criticism from his own supporters because of the land issue, Mugabe announced that he would expropriate half of all white-owned land without compensation. By now Zimbabwe's whites were fleeing the country and selling their land to the government for the best price they could get. Zimbabwe's export income from cash crops collapsed and the country, like Ghana, Zaire, Uganda and Nigeria before it, became a basket-case economy. In 1980 the president of Mozambique, Samora Machel, had told Mugabe that 'you will face ruin if you force whites into precipitate flight'.²² His warning had gone

unheeded.

South Africa

The fate of Zimbabwe was a sobering one for South Africa as the Pretoria regime slowly came to realize in the late 1980s that it could not hold out for ever. South Africa was unique in Africa in a number of ways. Its population was unusually mixed, with a black majority, a large white minority and substantial numbers of ‘Cape coloured’ (mixed race) and Asians. The white population was made up principally of Afrikaners and British.

Population of South Africa (millions) ²³

Year	Total	Black	White	Coloured	Asian
1970	21.5	15.1	3.8	2.0	0.8
1992	38.4	29.1	5.0	3.3	1.0

The Afrikaners had been in the country for centuries. Their links with the Netherlands had long been severed, and unlike other Europeans in Africa, they had no other homeland to go to. They were sometimes described as ‘the white tribe of Africa’. To ensure their own political, cultural and economic supremacy, the South African Nationalist governments had set up the system of apartheid, imposing separation of the races and white domination.

South Africa had substantial assets. Its economy was the most varied and developed in Africa, and one of the richest. Mining yielded gold, diamonds and coal; manufacturing industry produced steel, cars and armaments; agriculture raised cereals, livestock, fruit and wine. In 1975 the gross domestic product (GDP) of South Africa amounted to over \$35 billion, or \$1,353 per head. The only other African countries which could match this were two oil producers, Libya and Gabon. The figure for average GDP per head was distinctly misleading, because most of the wealth was in white hands; but the wealth itself was real enough. Despite apartheid, many Africans from neighbouring countries were willing to work in South Africa and to gain at least something from its prosperity. Finally, South Africa maintained the strongest armed forces in Africa south of the Sahara – a disciplined and organized army of 50,000 men in 1978, together with an efficient naval fleet and a powerful air force.²⁴ South Africa could defeat any state in Africa in war (though the issue never in fact arose) and

could intervene in other countries to great effect. The regime, like others, was vulnerable to occasional guerrilla attacks and sabotage, but was in no danger of being overthrown by the African National Congress (ANC), the South African equivalent of Mugabe's ZANU. The country could manufacture its own armaments and even (with help from Israel and France) developed its own nuclear bomb, carrying out a successful test in 1979.

The South Africans needed all their strength, because their international situation was extremely difficult. The South African government and the system of apartheid became the targets of intense hostility from all Third World countries, the Soviet bloc, China and most governments and a majority of public opinion in the Western world. This hostility was focused on in meetings of the Commonwealth (where the vast majority of members pressed Britain to impose severe sanctions upon South Africa); in conferences of non-aligned states, where South Africa was always high on the agenda; and above all at the UN. Article 2 paragraph 7 of the UN Charter specifically excluded intervention in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of member states; but this provision was increasingly disregarded, on two main grounds: that the issue of human rights overrode all other considerations, and that the situation in South Africa was a threat to peace. Behind these arguments lay the deep emotions stirred by questions involving race and colonialism – which in South Africa were rolled into one.

In December 1960 the General Assembly adopted Resolution 1514, declaring that all peoples had the right to self-determination. In November 1962 the General Assembly set up a Special Committee on Apartheid, which in time produced a whole network of subsidiary organizations – for example, to deal with apartheid in sport. In December 1963 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 182 imposing a non-mandatory embargo on the export of arms to South Africa. In 1974 the General Assembly deprived South Africa of its seat, on a technicality arising from its credentials; a resolution in the Security Council to expel South Africa from the UN altogether was accepted by a majority of members but vetoed by the United States, Britain and France. In 1977 the Security Council imposed a mandatory arms embargo on South Africa, specifically including assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons. For the vast majority of the United Nations' member states South Africa was a pariah and the focus of intense hatred.

The practical effect of all these measures was for a long time very limited. South Africa was able to manufacture its own armaments, and was indeed

stimulated to greater efforts by the arms embargoes. In December 1984 the Security Council had to admit the failure of its own policies by passing a resolution requesting UN members to stop *importing* arms from South Africa. The South Africans became skilled at evading sanctions, and were assisted by Western governments and companies willing to invest in and trade with South Africa. British investment was of long standing; the French government (under the socialist president Mitterrand) supplied two nuclear power plants; the Japanese would export anywhere on the right terms. American firms traded with South Africa, and American governments recognized the strategic importance of the Cape route for shipping, especially the supertankers carrying oil from the Middle East to Europe and America.

International hostility to South Africa thus produced much sound and fury, but signified little in practical terms. The country's immediate situation was reasonably strong. South Africa was at first protected by buffer states to the north. Portugal maintained its colonies in Angola and Mozambique. Rhodesia, from 1965, was controlled by Ian Smith's white regime. South Africa itself occupied Namibia, the former German colony of South-West Africa, which South Africa had held as a mandate under the League of Nations and continued to administer despite UN opposition. This protective ring eventually crumbled. In 1975 the Portuguese withdrew from Angola and Mozambique. In 1980 Zimbabwe replaced Rhodesia. A new zone of 'front-line states' opposed to South Africa took shape – Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Angola and Mozambique. In practice, these 'front-line states' were more hostile in word than in deed. South Africa at first made trouble in Angola and Mozambique by supporting rebels there; later Pretoria made agreements with the governments of both countries. By the Lusaka agreement with Angola (16 February 1984), South Africa undertook to withdraw its troops (about 1,000 in number) from Angola. By the Nkomati accord (16 March 1984) with Mozambique, the two countries came to a form of non-aggression agreement and undertook not to allow the use of their territories as bases for guerrilla activities by the ANC. These agreements allowed South Africa to emerge from its isolation among neighbouring African states, and reduced the ANC's power to strike across its borders. At the same time, South Africa made common cause with other outcast states, notably Israel, which was also the target of widespread hostility at the UN.

In these circumstances, South Africa was able to survive, even to prosper. Yet, like the Soviet Union, its internal contradictions were destined to bring it down. The apartheid system was *intensified* in the 1960s and 1970s, with Africans

being physically excluded from white areas and displaced (the policy was known as 'forced removal') into 'Bantustans' in the countryside or into squalid urban townships. Only those with the appropriate 'pass' could travel to white areas to work. Tribal areas were given 'independence', which satisfied their elites' longings for the trappings of power, but which robbed their inhabitants of South African citizenship. Educational opportunities were denied to Africans, as were opportunities to build businesses or possess property. Those who sought to organize resistance to this pervasive system of racial injustice were hunted down: the case of Steve Biko, an activist in the townships who was brutally tortured to death in September 1977 by the security services, was only the tip of a vile iceberg.

President P. W. Botha, who became premier in 1978, tried to take some pragmatic measures to relax the most visible features of apartheid; for instance, he promoted a new constitution that gave the Indian community and 'coloured' people the vote and allowed Africans a greater say in local administration. Segregation laws were relaxed. But such concessions merely inflamed the African majority, which rightly saw them as window dressing. From 1984 onwards the townships were the site of continual violent protest. The anti-apartheid campaign took its toll: many white South Africans hated being treated as international pariahs.

By the late 1980s it had become obvious that the white tribe of Africa would have to deal with the leader of the African majority: Nelson Mandela, the imprisoned head of the ANC. International pressure to 'Free Nelson Mandela' had been building since the end of the 1970s. Mandela was imprisoned in Robben Island prison until 1982, when he was moved to a prison near Cape Town. In July 1989 Mandela met the then president Botha in Cape Town.

It was Botha's successor, President F. W. de Klerk, who took the decisive step of deciding to negotiate with Mandela. The chances seemed good to the white leader that the ANC, which had been associated with the Soviet bloc, and some of whose leaders were communists, would be weakened by the Soviet Union's collapse: Gorbachev, in fact, was anxious to scale down Soviet assistance to African liberation movements. De Klerk knew, too, that the Reagan administration had come to regard the ANC as primarily a nationalist, rather than a communist, organization, and therefore as one that offered openings for negotiation. The ANC leadership itself now doubted whether it would ever defeat the South African government by force of arms. For the ANC too, therefore, negotiation appeared as a possibility.²⁵ Last but not least, Mandela's

statesmanship, personal charisma and lack of hatred for whites also impressed de Klerk. He was not a Robert Mugabe – though his loathing for the apartheid *system* was absolute. On 2 February 1990 de Klerk astonished the world by publicly announcing that the ban on the ANC would be removed and that he would be releasing Mandela and working with him to build a South Africa in which all citizens would be equal under the law. Apartheid would end.

Mandela was released on 11 February. Even by the standards of 1990, a year that was hardly lacking in important moments, his liberation stood out as an event of obvious historical significance for world politics. His speech, which began by thanking South Africa's Communist Party (a key component of the ANC) for its 'sterling contribution to the struggle for democracy' and which stressed that 'the factors which necessitated the armed struggle still exist today. We have no option but to continue,' was *not* a message of national reconciliation. 'We have waited too long for our freedom. We can no longer wait. Now is the time to intensify the struggle on all fronts,' said Mandela. Having reassured the ANC's hierarchy that he had not sold out the cause to regain his freedom, he nevertheless underlined that de Klerk was a 'man of integrity' who was willing to negotiate seriously and appealed to his 'white compatriots' to join with the ANC in building a democratic and just nation.²⁶ It was to the enormous credit of both men (whose personal animosity grew as the strains of finding a path to peace took their toll) that they proceeded to do precisely that. In 1993, the year before free elections were held in South Africa, the two men shared the Nobel Prize for Peace.

The African malaise

Mandela's release and the beginning of the process of racial justice in South Africa gave a tinge of optimism to the world's perceptions of Africa as the 1990s began. But it was only one straw in the wind. As a whole, the record of the continent since the 1960s had been a human tragedy. The hopes of the 1950s that postcolonial Africa as a whole could look forward to a favourable economic future, based on its mineral resources and a thriving agriculture, had been disproved. Political upheaval, the greed and incompetence of postcolonial elites, superpower meddling and racism had combined to leave Africa much further behind the rest of the world than it had been in the 1950s: the 1980s, in particular, were regarded as a lost decade.

This failure was compounded by demographics and the failure to develop the

economy. For some thirty years Africa combined a high birth rate with a diminishing death rate, producing the highest rate of population growth in the world. The rate of population increase rose from an average of 2.7 per cent per year (1965–80) to 3 per cent per year (1980–90) – a rate which means, other things being equal, that the population doubles in twenty-three years.²⁷ Africa remained predominantly agrarian in its economy, and in many areas agricultural methods were not sufficiently developed to feed the rapidly growing population. In the 1960s there was a rough balance between production and consumption across the continent as a whole, but by 1990 there was a deficit estimated at about 20 per cent, and Africa became increasingly dependent on the receipt of food aid from outside.²⁸

African countries remained for the most part primary producers of crops or minerals – for example, coffee (Uganda), cocoa (Ivory Coast, Nigeria), copper (Zambia) and oil (Nigeria). Most of their products were subject to fluctuations in market prices, which were largely out of the producers' control, and which in the case of cocoa and coffee fell sharply in the 1980s. The rising price of oil, which benefited a handful of African countries (or their elites; the proceeds of Nigeria's oil bonanza, for instance, were largely stolen or wasted by the political class) cost the vast majority dear. Nearly every African country south of the Sahara fell deeply into external debt, estimated at a total of \$55 billion in 1980 and \$155 billion in 1988.²⁹ This debt did not come from private sources (few Western financial institutions were willing to invest their money long term in Africa), but from the IMF, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other such institutions: 'Western donor institutions took over as Africa's bankers.'³⁰ These donors strove mightily to persuade African countries to liberalize markets and shrink the cost of the state; fewer licences and fewer bureaucrats meant fewer bribes and more economic activity. But this request ran into a rubber wall of tacit opposition. Most African political leaders' client networks, and hence their political power, depended on government largesse; corruption was often the *raison d'être* of being in politics in the first place. African leaders were simply 'unaccustomed to restraint'.³¹ As the 1980s went on, hundreds of loans from international donors were just rolled over, while structural economic reforms languished, or were put off to the Greek kalends. The continent was, in effect, being kept afloat by a tacit form of international charity.

Sub-Saharan Africa also became heavily dependent on direct foreign aid, to a far greater degree than any other part of the Third World. Sometimes this aid

took a disguised form, as in most of the former French colonies, where the French government maintained convertibility between the French franc and the CFA (*Communauté Financière Africaine*) franc, which in a free market was worth only a fraction of the French currency. This involved a French subsidy to the countries concerned, but also a high degree of dependence by those countries on French influence. Mostly, however, the aid influx was open. Western aid agencies, both private and public sector, increasingly provided health care, education and famine relief: their efforts were laudable, but they were undeniably doing governments' jobs for them.

The African countries made occasional efforts to diminish their economic dependence by cooperation with one another. The OAU adopted as one of its aims the coordination of economic policy, but with very little practical effect. The Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO), formed in 1974 by seven Francophone states in West Africa, sought to promote trade between its members, but with limited effect, attaining no more than 10 per cent of their total external trade. A second organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), made up of fifteen countries, similarly made very little progress in economic cooperation, despite having the strong support of Nigeria, the largest and most populous state in the region. The Southern African Development Community, set up by the 'front-line' states against South Africa to redirect their trade towards one another rather than towards South Africa, was a complete failure – the magnetic pull of the South African economy was simply too strong to be resisted.

Failing cooperation with one another, African states looked outwards to the non-aligned movement and to the United Nations, working through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which was established as a permanent organ of the UN in 1964. A series of conferences between the developed countries and the rest of the world tried to secure the transfer of resources from the rich countries to the poor, or to create arrangements to stabilize commodity prices to the advantage of primary producers. These efforts, which met with little success, are part of a wider story.

On the whole, African economic dependency increased rather than diminished between the 1960s and 1990s, despite the continent's attainment of political independence. Africa's political turmoil, the ending of apartheid aside, remained immense and ensured that Africa was left out of the emerging tendency towards globalization of economic production. Post-communist Eastern Europe, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Turkey, Taiwan, above all China looked

better bets for investment than even the best-run African states. In the three first postcolonial decades, predatory politicians ruined the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of Africans and, in effect, cut them out of a new phase in the world's economic development. Again and again in the postcolonial period Africa generated human catastrophes that shocked the moral conscience of mankind. In the post-Cold War epoch, worse was to come.

Notes

- 1 Chris Cook, *World Political Almanac* (3rd ed., London, 1995), p. 22.
- 2 Chris Cook and David Killingray, *African Political Facts since 1945* (London, 1983), pp. 221–4; G. B. N. Ayittey, *Africa Betrayed* (New York, 1992), pp. 2–3.
- 3 Robert Chapuis and Thierry Brossard, *Les quatre mondes du Tiers Monde* (Paris, 1997), p. 187.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 191; Paul Johnson, *A History of the Modern World: From 1917 to the 1980s* (London, 1984), p. 518.
- 5 Ayittey, *Africa Betrayed*, p. 116.
- 6 Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa* (New York, 2005), p. 294.
- 7 See the obituaries of Mobutu in *Le Monde* and *The Times*, 9 September 1997.
- 8 Meredith, *Fate of Africa*, p. 238.
- 9 Cook, *Almanac*, pp. 291–6; 299–308.
- 10 *Oxford Economic Atlas* (4th ed., Oxford, 1974), p. 193.
- 11 Cook, *Almanac*, p. 304.
- 12 Meredith, *Fate of Africa*, p. 204.
- 13 Cook and Killingray, *African Political Facts*, p. 204; *Oxford Economic Atlas*, p. 136. Life expectancy, 1963–4: 29 years men, 35 women; national income, 1963: US\$192 million; GNP per head: US\$70; foreign trade, 1965: exports US\$27 million, imports US\$31 million.
- 14 Ayittey, *Africa Betrayed*, p. 272.
- 15 Cook and Killingray, *African Political Facts*, p. 222.
- 16 The African states recognizing the Democratic Republic of Sahara were: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Bissau, Burundi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles and Togo.
- 17 George Joffé, 'Sovereignty and the Western Sahara', *Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 15, 2010, pp. 375–84 gives a useful short analysis of the crisis.
- 18 J.-B. Duroselle, *Histoire diplomatique de 1919 à nos jours* (11th ed., Paris, 1993), p. 870. They comprised thirty African states, eight Asian, sixteen Latin American, six Oceanian and one European – Yugoslavia.
- 19 Cook and Killingray, *African Political Facts*, p. 220.
- 20 Quoted in Meredith, *Fate of Africa*, p. 134.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 625.
- 22 Quoted in Andrew Norman, *Robert Mugabe and the Betrayal of Zimbabwe* (Jefferson, NC, 2004), p. 83.
- 23 J. A. S. Grenville, *History of the World in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1998), p. 781.

- 24 Cook and Killingray, *African Political Facts*, pp. 188, 227.
- 25 For the Cold War dimension, see Chris Saunders and Sue Onslow, 'Southern Africa', in *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. III, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 239–41.
- 26 Text of the speech available at: <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/>.
- 27 Chapuis and Brossard, *Les quatre mondes*, pp. 165–7.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 168–9. By contrast, external food aid to Asia was reduced by one-half in the same period.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- 30 Meredith, *Fate of Africa*, p. 369.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 370.

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Latin America in world affairs, 1970s–1990s

The debt crisis – Argentina: from dictatorship to democracy – The ‘third wave’ of democracy – Interventionism of the United States.

As we saw in [Chapter 12](#), the political development of Latin America after 1945 was heavily conditioned by the perceptions and preoccupations of the United States. Washington reserved the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of its southern neighbours whenever they veered too far to the left – which often meant when they had governments whose principal goal was to reduce rural poverty and class privilege. It is not unfair to accuse American policymakers of having at times been blind to shades of red in Latin American politics and of having acted as if the only alternatives before Latin America were the opposing poles of Pinochet and Castro.

Between the 1970s and the 1990s relations with the United States naturally dominated Latin America’s attention, but the relationship between the two halves of the American continent became more complex and more extensive. Latin America developed both economically and politically. It became wealthier and more democratic, though its progress in this regard was anything but linear and experienced many setbacks. As a result, the relationship with the United States became much more one of interdependence. The political choices made by Latin American states had a real impact on the security and economic prosperity of the United States; one far greater than the scare-mongering of the Cold War hawks. If, for instance, a Latin American country borrowed too much from American banks and then found it could not pay what it owed, and if that

loan default meant that the banking system of the United States was overextended, then America had a problem, too. Also, as Latin American countries became more democratic – however shaky and imperfect some of those democracies may have been – they became more confident in distancing themselves from Uncle Sam.



MAP 11 *Latin America.*

The debt crisis: Causes and international

consequences

In the 1960s and 1970s Latin America, while still poor, enjoyed strong economic growth – which is one major reason why the Cuban model was less attractive than it might otherwise have been. In the area as a whole, the gross national product (GNP) increased on average by about 6 per cent a year; and some of the large Latin American countries did much better, and for a longer period: between 1950 and 1980 the Brazilian GNP grew sixfold, that of Mexico fourfold and that of Argentina threefold.¹ This growth came from a rapidly developing economy. Some sectors of agriculture flourished – coffee in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Central America; cattle-raising in Brazil and Argentina; and the less reputable crop of coca in Bolivia, Peru and Colombia, to feed the North American drug habit. Mineral prices were generally good. Brazil diversified its economy by developing manufacturing industry; and several countries established rapidly growing tertiary sectors in banking, administration and office work of all kinds. This economic growth was both patchy and volatile, but it was real, and sometimes dramatic.

At the end of 1973 came the oil shock, when the price of Middle East oil suddenly quadrupled. The oil-importing countries of Latin America (which meant all of them except Venezuela, since even Mexico was no longer a net exporter) were faced with a rise in the cost of living: imports became more expensive. In this new economic climate Latin America needed to reform its economic model to broaden the base of taxation, combat tax evasion, improve the efficiency of the state, educate more of their people to higher standards, attract inward investment in jobcreating industries, reduce protectionism, boost exports and improve infrastructure. Instead they chose to maintain high levels of public and private consumption and to keep the military happy with lots of hardware.

They were able to do this because they borrowed money. In the mid-1970s Latin American states were a target for Western banks, especially the big American banks, which were awash in liquidity. The flood of petrodollars had to be recycled somehow. Without asking too many questions about the utility of the loans they were making, the world banking sector poured money into middle-income developing countries, as well as into the Soviet bloc. Latin America, which had a large number of such countries, took the jaguar's share of this money. In consequence, the total external debt of Latin America more than tripled between 1975 and 1980, rising to approximately \$240 billion. By 1988

the figure had risen to almost \$450 billion. In the meantime long-term sovereign debt increased from about \$28 billion in 1970 to \$384 billion at the end of the 1980s; about three-quarters of the whole, and several times more than the total capitalization of the nine biggest American banks, who were Latin America's main lenders.² Bankers on Wall Street and elsewhere thought these loans were safe investments since they believed that sovereign states would not default on their debts. It is because they take such risky – or ill-judged – decisions that bankers are so lavishly paid.

The debts were mostly incurred in US dollars at a time when the dollar was weak, and when interest rates were low. Between 1978 and 1980 these conditions changed radically. In 1978 the US government began to tackle domestic inflation by putting up interest rates; by 1980 the dollar had begun to strengthen, and interest rates reached 15 per cent. This proved ruinous for the Latin American countries which had mostly borrowed at variable rates, and demonstrated again the heavy dependence of Latin America on the United States. The whole of Latin America plunged into crisis. The continent as a whole slipped into recession in 1982 and 1983, and some countries (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay in 1982; Mexico, Venezuela, Peru in 1983) had depression-like slumps in output. Hyperinflation took off: Argentina was the undisputed champion with an average annual inflation rate of 340 per cent between 1982 and 1988, although Brazil, Mexico and Peru were no slouches either. Government deficits soared across the region and so did capital flight as wealthy Latin Americans sought to put their money in currencies that were maintaining their value.³ In these circumstances, Latin American states could not raise exports fast enough to bring in the dollars necessary to pay the interest on their debt; nor could they afford to borrow money at the newer higher rates. They were stuck. In 1982 Mexico declared itself unable either to repay or to service its loans. The US government intervened with a credit of \$3.9 billion dollars to relieve the immediate crisis and encouraged private banks to contribute another \$5 billion.⁴

This dependence, though apparently one-way, was in fact mutual. The possibility of a widespread default on debts, threatening the security of the commercial banks and thus the whole system of international credit, meant that the United States was every bit as dependent on the Latin American countries as the other way about. Indeed, the United States took the lead in addressing the sovereign debt question. Secretary of the Treasury James Baker in 1985 proposed measures by which debtor countries promised to make structural reforms to their economies in exchange for further loans from both commercial

banks and international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. The plan failed for two main reasons: first, except for a few countries like Mexico where there was a solidly established political system that, while less than democratic, did at least enjoy legitimacy, it was politically impossible to transform the structure of Latin American states so fast; second, the banks, having been bitten, were understandably shy of investing more. Debt write-offs compelled American banks, in particular, to raise a large amount of new capital in the 1980s. In March 1989 Baker's successor, Nicholas Brady, promoted a plan that allowed creditors, in exchange for a 'haircut' on the face value of the debt they owned to swap developing country debt for new, collateralized debt, the so-called Brady bonds, that they could trade on the financial markets. A limited and inadequate reduction of the debt mountain weighing down Latin America was thus achieved.

Latin America nevertheless remained with a hangover from its binge in the 1970s and early 1980s. In December 1994, during the so-called tequila crisis, the administration of President William J. Clinton was forced to make a \$50 billion loan to bail out Mexico, after its neighbour, no longer able to preserve its currency 'peg' against the dollar, experienced a crash in the value of the peso.⁵ The American move was impelled by foreign policy and economic strategy considerations. In the 1990s leaders from both countries had sought to build closer relations than had ever existed in the past. In 1990 President Carlos Salinas of Mexico announced that he intended to seek a free trade agreement with the United States, and received a favourable response from the administration of George H. W. Bush, Ronald Reagan's successor. After tense negotiations – for many Americans, notably Ross Perot, a billionaire who ran as an independent in the 1992 presidential election, feared that free trade with Mexico would cost millions of American jobs – Mexico, the United States and Canada signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on 17 December 1992. The agreement came into operation on 1 January 1994. Its objective was that of removing all tariffs and other trade barriers between the three countries over a period of twenty years (the onus of the agreement thus fell on the Mexicans, who had much higher tariffs). In December 1994 the Clinton administration thus had to stabilize the value of the Mexican peso as best it could, if it did not want Mexico's terms of trade to be greatly enhanced (as it was, the peso lost half its value in the year after December 1994, which made manufactures from Mexico cheaper and encouraged foreign investment in the provinces bordering the United States). The 'tequila crisis', and the debt crisis in

general, reminded both Latin America and the United States that they were inescapably bound up with one another.

Argentina and the Falklands/Malvinas crisis

The debt crisis exploded at a challenging moment in international relations that involved one of Latin America's most important countries: Argentina, which in April 1982 embroiled itself in a war with Great Britain, in some ways still the most important of the United States' allies. Argentina discovered during its conflict with Britain that the United States was a fickle friend. When the chips were down (and the United States did everything possible to keep them up), Washington sided with London, not Buenos Aires.

Argentina had been governed since 24 March 1976 by a military junta that had taken power after the abysmal failure of Perónism in the 1970s. Juan Perón, a former general turned populist politician who had been in exile in Spain since the mid-1950s, returned to Argentina in 1972 and promptly won the September 1973 general elections. His vice-presidential candidate was his third wife, Isabel de Perón, a 'former cabaret entertainer with whom he had hooked up on his way into exile'.⁶ This mattered since Perón died almost immediately and the country found itself in the hands of a president who was hopelessly out of her depth. Inflation surged, touching 700 per cent in the mid-1970s; strikes swept the country – even though organized labour had historically been Perónist – and 'Isabelita' authorized paramilitary death squads to strike against so-called subversives.

When the army took over, the dirty war was intensified. In the person of General Jorge Rafael Videla, Argentina found a Pinochet willing to introduce a reign of terror. Tens of thousands of political activists, unionists and intellectuals 'disappeared' in the next few years. In Washington DC Henry Kissinger, as Gerald Ford's secretary of state, quietly expressed his comprehension for the junta's tactics to Videla ('what is not understood in the United States is that you have a civil war. We read about human rights problems, but not the context') and said that 'our basic attitude is that we would like you to succeed'.⁷ Under the presidency of Jimmy Carter, the United States changed its policy towards Latin America, and Argentina in particular. Carter's watchword was respect for human rights, and he set out to make American assistance (economic and military) to Latin American countries dependent on their human rights record. In the case of Argentina this shift in American policy pushed the regime to make arms

purchases from France, which had fewer qualms about selling the junta weapons.

In December 1981 General Leopoldo Galtieri ousted Videla's successor, General Roberto Viola, to become head of the junta. The new caudillo enjoyed the support of the Reagan administration, but was facing simmering popular resentment caused by the mounting economic problems and the heavy-handedness of the military repression. Galtieri, urged on by Admiral Jorge Anaya, began looking for a popular adventure that would ignite nationalist sentiment and shore up his rule. The cavalry officer – confirming suspicions that he was not the sharpest bayonet in the junta – proceeded to charge his horse at the Iron Lady, Britain's Margaret Thatcher.

On 2 April 1982, ignoring American warnings, Argentine troops occupied the Falklands, South Atlantic islands which the British had colonized in 1833 at the expense of the young Argentine republic. The islands were inhabited by some 2,000 crofters and fishermen who were determined to remain British nationals. Geography seemed to tell against this desire, however, and the British Foreign Office had long been convinced that a 'lease-back' arrangement, whereby nominal sovereignty was transferred to Argentina, but the islanders were able to maintain their autonomy while enjoying greater economic links with Argentina, was the most sensible outcome to the territorial dispute. The islanders and their supporters in the House of Commons rejected this hypothesis, however, which meant that for the British 'the only negotiating position left was prevarication'.⁸

This stall was deeply unsatisfactory to the military junta in Buenos Aires, which became strident in its claims for the Malvinas – to give the islands their Spanish name – from 1980 onwards. Despite this Argentine pressure, Britain downgraded the islands' defences in a 1981 review of military expenditure. When Argentine troops landed, the Falklands' main town, Port Stanley, was defended by only a handful of marines. The Argentines unquestionably thought that Britain no longer cared about the fate of the islanders and were also strong in their belief that the new Reagan administration, anxious not to upset South American opinion, would mediate on their behalf.

The Argentines' calculations were mostly wrong. On 3 April 1982 the House of Commons boiled over with rage. Speakers from all parties demanded retribution for the invasion. Opposition leader Michael Foot's lifelong antifascism took precedence over his pacifism and he made a passionate speech asserting that the government must 'now prove by deeds ... that they are not responsible for the betrayal'. A feeble response would have caused Mrs

Thatcher's downfall.

Her response, however, was anything but feeble. A war cabinet was formed; a task force of forty-four warships and forty-five support vessels was put together and 28,000 troops, including elite commando and Gurkha units, were readied for battle. UN Security Council Resolution 502 backed Britain's demand for an immediate withdrawal of Argentine troops, while the European Community agreed to a one-month embargo of Argentine goods. On 12 April, Britain announced a 200-mile 'exclusion zone' around the Falklands. Any Argentine vessels entering the zone would be sunk by Britain's fleet of nuclear submarines, which had been swiftly deployed to the area.

The remainder of April was occupied by the task force sailing south and by urgent diplomacy as Secretary of State Al Haig and, subsequently, UN general secretary Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, a Peruvian, strove to find a negotiated solution. As the junta had expected the Americans did indeed attempt to mediate between its two allies. But Haig's efforts were fruitless. Thatcher's government rejected any solution that left the islanders in Argentina against their will, though it was willing to contemplate Argentine participation in the running of the islands; the Argentine junta was simply intransigent throughout. Its inflexibility, indeed, in the highly charged atmosphere of the time, was transformed into fury against the United States for its equivocal attitude towards Britain. Argentina appealed to the OAS at the end of April, asking it to condemn the impending act of aggression by an extrahemispheric power and deploring the European Community's imposition of sanctions on Argentina; the organization voted 17–0 to do so on 28 April, with the abstention of the United States, which argued in favour of the dispute being settled at the UN. Whatever had happened to the Monroe Doctrine, many Latin Americans wondered, if a European power was to be allowed to attack the American continent? The truth was, as Gaddis Smith has remarked, that Washington's benign neutrality towards Britain during the Falklands crisis 'was entirely consistent with the larger principle that since 1945 the Monroe Doctrine had meaning only as it applied to the confrontation with the Soviet Union and the dread spectre of "international communism"'.⁹ The United States openly sided with Britain at the end of April, imposing economic sanctions on Argentina and assisting with logistics and intelligence. In London, the American action was seen by many as belated.

The military campaign ended in bloody disaster for Argentina. On 2 May, a British submarine sank an Argentine cruiser, the *Belgrano*, with the loss of 323 lives, even though the ship was outside of the exclusion zone. Landings began

on the islands on 21 May 1982 amid attacks of almost suicidal courage by Argentine aircraft. Several British ships were hit by French-made Exocet missiles and sank with tragic loss of life. Several other missiles hit ships but failed to explode. Once crack British troops were ashore, however, there could be no doubt as to the final end of the conflict, although fighting was fierce in several locations around the islands. On 4 June, Britain used its veto in the Security Council to block a motion proposing a ceasefire: by now only absolute victory would suffice. On 14 June 1982 the Union flag was hoisted above Port Stanley.

All told, 255 British servicemen were killed in combat (three civilian women also died). Approximately seven hundred Argentines perished. Several thousand soldiers and sailors on both sides were maimed, many for life. The campaign had cost Britain £1.5 billion at a time of stringency in the public accounts; replenishing lost equipment would subsequently cost nearly £1.3 billion more. Garrisoning the Falklands would cost £200 million per year from then on.¹⁰

‘Operation Corporate’ had nevertheless been a remarkable demonstration of British national will, political leadership and military prowess. No other European nation would or could have undertaken a campaign so costly in blood and treasure. Mrs Thatcher’s standing as a stateswoman soared. On 3 July 1982, Thatcher skilfully linked her government’s dedication to changing the country’s economic fortunes with the triumph of the armed forces in the South Atlantic, saying, ‘We have ceased to be a nation in retreat. We have instead a newfound confidence – born in the economic battles at home and tested and found true 8,000 miles away. ... Britain has found herself again in the South Atlantic and will not look back from the victory she has won.’¹¹ This was not just rhetoric by a politician who had gambled and won. In an indefinable but real way the Falklands campaign did restore post-imperial Britain’s morale and consecrated Mrs Thatcher’s reputation as a leader who brooked no compromise.

For the Argentine junta, by contrast, the defeat was a humiliation that robbed it of all legitimacy – generals who cannot win wars are not much use to anybody, especially when they have terrorized the people and brought about economic breakdown. Galtieri was removed and the country moved back towards civilian government. On 30 October 1983 free elections were held and the presidency was won by Raúl Alfonsín Foulkes of the Radical Party, which defeated the Peronists by a solid margin. Argentina has since had one of the world’s more flamboyant and unstable democracies. Nobody would ever mistake it for Switzerland. But it has never again experienced the trauma of military rule.

Latin America and the ‘third wave’ of democracy

Argentina’s transition to democracy was part of a broader shift towards democratic forms of government that took place across southern Europe, Latin America and to some extent Asia and Africa from the mid-1970s to the end of the 1980s. This process has been characterized by an American political scientist, Samuel P. Huntington, as the ‘third wave’ of democracy. Huntington identified several major causes of the transition from authoritarian government to popular sovereignty. First, and arguably most important, authoritarian regimes were suffering from ‘performance legitimacy’. In a world where democratic values and beliefs were ever-more widely accepted they could only stay in power if they delivered the goods in terms of national prestige and economic success. Argentina, by this count, was a paradigm case of a regime whose performance had condemned it to fail. Second, economic growth had brought greater education opportunities and created a large middle class in many nations where elites had traditionally ruled: the new middle class wanted its rights. Third, the Catholic Church had shifted from supporting to opposing authoritarian regimes. The attitude of the European Community, the United States and the Soviet Union towards authoritarian states had made a difference, as had ‘snowballing’ – the power of imitation. Once one country had turned democratic, its neighbours were not satisfied until they had matched it.¹²

These causes, or some of them, did indeed lie at the heart of Latin America’s shift towards democratic government, although, of course, each individual case presented its own national peculiarities. Since the 1970s large parts of Latin America had been moving away from Third World status, as defined by demographic and economic criteria. The Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay) by 1990 showed statistics for infant mortality, life expectancy, GNP per head and numbers of motor vehicles in proportion to the population that were close to those of prosperous industrial states. Despite the turmoil caused by the debt crisis, some of Latin America’s nations boasted considerable economic heft: Brazil and Mexico stood at ninth and eleventh, respectively, in the world rankings for GNP. In 1993, Latin America *as a whole* had an average GNP per head of \$3,100 – well above that in Russia, supposedly one of the ‘core’ industrialized states.¹³ Averages of this kind concealed wide differences between countries and between individuals within countries; but while Latin America still had many millions of desperately poor people, especially in rural areas, it also had a growing aspiring middle class that wanted

to share in political power. Carlos Menem, who became president of Argentina in 1989, was reported as saying, 'I don't want to belong to the Third World. Argentina has to be in the First World, which is the only world that should exist.'¹⁴ He probably spoke for many.

Last but not least the church took a more progressive position towards politics. The '1960s were a period of great turmoil in the Catholic churches of Latin America'.¹⁵ Following on from the innovations of the Second Vatican Council, Catholic bishops in Latin America began to espouse a different interpretation of the Gospel: instead of defending the political status quo, the church began to emphasize the rights of the poor and dispossessed. The September 1968 Medellín (Colombia) conference of bishops declared that it could not 'remain indifferent in the face of the tremendous social injustices existent in Latin America, which keep the majority of our peoples in dismal poverty, which in many cases becomes inhuman wretchedness'.¹⁶ The so-called theology of liberation that emerged from the church's debates in the 1960s galvanized tens of thousands of parish priests and Catholic activists across Latin America. Many priests even became Marxists – a development that the church condemned as an overinterpretation of the new theology. Even moderates became convinced, however, that promoting social justice was an integral part of Christian witness, even if it should not become an overtly political project. One such priest, a then young Argentine Jesuit called Jorge Bergoglio, has since March 2013 made that mission the central theme of his papacy.

For all these reasons, Latin America's transition to democracy was rapid and sweeping. In 1979 there were only three democratic countries in Latin America: Colombia, Costa Rica and Venezuela. By 1989, most of the continent was governed by democratic or democratizing regimes, even though the stability of some of these states was often somewhat fragile. Most important of all, three key states were managing the transition to democracy: Brazil and Mexico, its two most populous states; and Chile, whose symbolic importance was immense.

Mexico, which had been ruled by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) since the 1920s, remarkably overcame its deep economic problems and shifted towards greater political pluralism through the technocratic leadership of three Ivy League-educated experts: Miguel de la Madrid (president 1982–8), Carlos Salinas (1988–94) and Ernesto Zedillo (1994–2000). Zedillo won an election which was entirely above board – an important innovation in Mexico. In 2000, Vicente Fox, of the opposition National Action Party (PAN), emerged victorious at the polls and Mexico experienced a crucial event in its history:

authentic alternation in power after a free and fair election. The PRI was forced by the voters to acknowledge that it was not coterminous with the Mexican state, but one of a plural number of parties competing to run the state.

Brazil's transition to democracy also owed a lot to a brilliant technocrat, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, one of the world's leading sociologists. Latin America's largest and most populous nation was subjected to a military coup in April 1964, when the army, pressed by the country's wealthy elites and the United States, deposed its left-wing president, João Goulart (see [Chapter 12](#)). The crucial result of the coup was that Brazil continued to be one of the most unequal nations in the world; a nation where the wealthy enjoyed European standards of living, while the poor rotted in violent favelas without running water, electricity or education for their children. The debt crisis in the mid-1980s brought home to the Brazilian middle class how incompetent the military had been at running the economy – the poor already knew.

The military permitted free congressional and gubernatorial elections in 1982, but it was not until 1985, as the economy fell apart, that Brazil followed the lead of the Iberian nations and Argentina and shifted to civilian rule. A new constitution suborning the military to civilian rule was introduced in 1988. But the Brazilian economy's catastrophic state, plus the poor quality of Brazil's first elected representatives (President Fernando Collor de Mello was forced to resign to avoid being impeached for corruption), plus the indisciplined character of the political parties prevented democracy gaining a genuine foothold in the political culture of Brazil. In 1993, however, Cardoso was made finance minister and de facto premier. Faced with 3,000 per cent inflation, Cardoso introduced the so-called Real Plan, a serious attempt to stop the government spending more than the country earned. By 1998 inflation had fallen to 2 per cent, and the *real* had replaced the cruzeiro as the country's currency. Cardoso was elected president in 1994 (and re-elected in 1998) as a reward for his efforts to defeat inflation. Under his leadership democracy consolidated, Brazil's dysfunctional constitution was reformed and free market reforms caused the economy to grow – though tens of millions continued to live in abject poverty.

Chile embarked on its transition to democracy at the end of the 1980s, along with the states of Eastern Europe. In 1980 the Pinochet regime had introduced a new constitution which provided for a plebiscite in 1988 that would give the military's junta's candidate a further eight-year term. Pinochet, in short, wanted to go on until 1996 at least. The people thought otherwise, voting 55–34 per cent against the ageing dictator. Elections were called and the anti-Pinochet parties,

led by Eduardo Frei's Christian Democrats, formed a coalition behind the candidacy of Patricio Aylwin Azocar. On 14 December 1989, as walls fell in Europe, Aylwin narrowly defeated the rightist parties' candidate. Pinochet remained in charge of the army and held the powerful role of senator for life, but his threatening presence in politics at least had the useful effect of keeping the centre-left parties united and preserving the narrow 55 per cent majority that had voted against Pinochet in the referendum. In 1993 Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, the son of former President Frei, took the presidency with the same share of the vote. Chile was very well governed under both Aylwin and Frei junior; the ghosts of Allende's misguided socialization of the economy were laid to rest.

Pinochet retired from active politics in 1997 but his past came back to haunt him in October 1998 when he was arrested by British authorities on the request of a Spanish prosecutor carrying out an investigation into the murder of Spanish nationals during Pinochet's reign of terror. Pinochet was trapped in Britain for over five hundred days while the courts wrangled over whether he should be extradited to Spain. After representations from the Chilean government, which considered its sovereignty to be at stake, Pinochet was eventually declared unfit to stand trial and returned to Chile. The whole affair was a cause célèbre for international human rights. As Amnesty International exulted, Pinochet's seizure 'sent a powerful message: nobody is above international law'.¹⁷ The Pinochet case also provided a potent stimulus for the process of historical remembering in Chile. People suddenly felt free to talk about the past. Subsequently Pinochet was stripped of the immunity from prosecution guaranteed him by his senatorial rank; he spent his last years answering for (some) of his many crimes against humanity. He died, unrepentant to the last, in 2006.

In general Latin America's uncertain, fragile transition to democracy was a major event in contemporary world politics. Apart from the greater freedom enjoyed by the citizens of its new democracies, democratization represented an important evolution in the continent's relationship with the United States, which was less able to treat the territories south of the Rio Grande as an informal empire.

American intervention in Latin America

The United States nevertheless remained a potent force in Latin American politics throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The Reagan administration (January 1981 to January 1989) intervened repeatedly in Central America (Nicaragua, El

Salvador, Grenada) to subvert politically radical regimes, or, in the case of El Salvador, to back incumbent elites (see [Chapter 21](#)). Nicaragua, in particular, became the recipient of much solidarity from progressive opinion around the world (and within the United States itself; Nicaragua, like North Vietnam before it, became an icon for campus radicals). The US government used all kinds of clandestine means to support the ‘Contra’ guerillas who were trying to overthrow the ‘Sandinista’ regime in power in Managua. Between 1984 and 1986 this aid even continued in defiance of a ban imposed by the Congress. The struggle in Nicaragua continued, without decisive success for either side, until the Cold War itself faded away. In 1989 the Americans and Soviets withdrew their support from the Contras and Sandinistas, respectively. The Sandinistas agreed to hold elections, and the Americans undertook to accept a Sandinista government provided the elections were fairly conducted. The elections took place in February 1990; the opposition won; both the Sandinistas and the Soviet Union accepted the verdict. Reagan had made Nicaragua a test case for American determination, and eventually (though after Reagan’s presidency had ended) the United States achieved its objective. Whether the same objective could have been obtained with less heavy-handed means and less loss of life remains an open question.

America’s habit of intervention in Central America did not end with Reagan’s presidency, and nor did the end of the Cold War completely change its behaviour. The case of Panama is an instructive one. There was no reason for Panama and the United States to fall out: In 1977 President Jimmy Carter had ended the most contentious issue between the two countries by agreeing that the Panama Canal Zone, which was administered by the United States and where American soldiers enjoyed extraterritorial rights, would become sovereign Panamanian territory in the year 2000. The principal problem was the military boss of Panama, Manuel Noriega Moreno, who had come to power in August 1983 and who was very much his own man. Noriega proceeded to establish a regime which facilitated trafficking in narcotics and provided a home for ethically challenged banks – venal sins so long as he also facilitated CIA activities in Central America.

In February 1988 Noriega was indicted for drug trafficking by an American grand jury – a highly unusual step to take against a foreign leader, although the evidence that Noriega, in exchange for hard cash, had been allowing Colombian drug lords to use his country as a jumping-off point for cocaine distribution in the United States was compelling – indeed, a Senate inquiry subsequently

slammed the American government for turning ‘a blind eye to [Noriega’s] corruption and drug dealing, even as he was emerging as a key player on behalf of the Medellín cartel’.¹⁸ In an attempt to destabilize Noriega, the American government froze all Panamanian assets in the United States, and cut off the supply of banknotes to Panamanian banks, which used the dollar as the national currency. Noriega stood firm, cloaking his actions in anti-Yankee rhetoric. In May 1989 Noriega’s hand-picked candidate for the presidency, Carlos Alberto Duque Jaén, was clearly defeated in the presidential election by the opposition leader Guillermo Endara. Noriega declared Duque the winner anyway and crushed the opposition. He even briefly imprisoned former President Carter who was in Panama as an electoral observer and had been outspoken about the irregularities he had seen.

In the following months an increasingly hysterical Noriega became more and more bellicose in his anti-Yankee position; the Americans instigated, from behind the scenes, a failed coup against him in October 1989. On 15 December 1989 Noriega took the title of ‘maximum leader’ and announced that a state of war existed between Panama and the United States. An American marine officer off duty from the Canal Zone was killed at a roadblock the following day. The Bush administration, by now at the end of its tether, used this event as a pretext for intervention. It was something of a snap judgement: President George H. W. Bush had lots of other things on his mind in December 1989.

An American invasion (using the grandiose code name of ‘Operation Just Cause’) began on 20 December 1989. Panamanian opposition ceased in January 1990, after stiff fighting in which 26 Americans were killed and 323 wounded; the Panamanians lost 314 soldiers, plus many hundreds of casualties among the civilian population – substantial figures for only ten days of combat.¹⁹ Endara was installed as president. Noriega took refuge in the Vatican legation, where the US Army, in an unusual move, sought to unhinge him by playing loud rock music outside the building. He surrendered on 3 January 1990, was taken for trial in Florida on drugs charges, convicted in 1992 and sentenced to forty years in prison.

The episode was part Hollywood in character, and part sheer farce; and yet its implications were serious. The Americans seem simply to have assumed that the government of Panama was less the representative of a sovereign state than a criminal organization; this may actually have been true, yet the Americans also continued to observe the 1977 treaty on the Canal Zone, which assumed that Panama was a responsible state. To all appearances, the Americans had reverted

to the practice of Theodore Roosevelt, of carrying a big stick and treating Central America as their own backyard. It had done so, moreover, just as the Soviet bloc was being peacefully liquidated by people power and commentators around the globe were expressing the hope that a new era of greater global cooperation and respect for international law might be on the horizon.

It was for this reason that international condemnation of the American action was so sharp in tone. The OAS, which the United States had involved in negotiations over the summer of 1989 to persuade the Panamanian tyrant to step down, expressed its 'deep regret' for the invasion of Panama, although it stopped short of demanding American withdrawal. The strength with which some Latin American nations condemned the American action, moreover, belied the OAS's compromise stance. Rarely in the post-1945 world had the United States been so publicly taken to task by its southern neighbours. The General Assembly of the UN also condemned the American action, voting by 75–20, with 40 abstentions, to describe the intervention as a flagrant abuse of international law. These votes did nothing to change the situation on the ground in Panama, but they were serious blows to American prestige and reputation at a delicate moment in history.

Noriega's original offence – facilitating cocaine distribution – was the source of another major aspect of American intervention in Latin America, the so-called war on drugs, which was launched by President George H. W. Bush in an address to the nation on 5 September 1989. An American 'war' on drug production and commerce necessarily involved Latin America since the main problem drugs – cocaine and its derivative, crack – were produced from coca leaves grown, for the most part, in Colombia, where it was often the only way that small farmers could make a living. Colombian drugs gangs controlled the transformation of paste made from coca leaves into cocaine and transported the refined drugs to the United States, using several Central American countries, but notably Mexico, as a key depot in the supply chain. The political class and police forces of both Colombia and Mexico were by 1989 deeply corrupted by the drugs trade; drugs were also financing the uprising of the 'Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia' (FARC), which by the mid-1990s controlled large tracts of southern Colombia.

Bush stated in his address that 'American cocaine users need to understand that our nation has zero tolerance for casual drug use. We have a responsibility not to leave our brave friends in Colombia to fight alone.'²⁰ In practice, in the decade and a half that followed Bush's speech, the first of these promises was not

maintained by the United States, while the second was – the United States intervened to assist Colombian governments’ struggle against drugs, arguably with devastating results. Drug use in the United States – the root of the trouble, as Bush honestly recognized in his speech – remained extensive. Cocaine was the drug of choice for many professionals in the financial sector and the media, while cheaper ‘crack’ blighted poor neighbourhoods across the United States and intensified their (already huge) social problems. Yet few Wall Street bankers languished in jail as a result of the American government’s ‘zero tolerance’ of recreational drug consumption.

Colombia, meanwhile, degenerated into near anarchy. The drug lords terrorized the country in the early 1990s, turning it into the murder capital of the world. Right-wing death squads terrorized peasants, unionists and all sympathizers with the FARC, killing thousands. The FARC itself ran a large part of Colombia with brutal cynicism. By the 1990s ‘the FARC’s actions had more to do with plunder and self-sustaining militarism than any residual social grievances’.²¹ It had become, in short, just another gang, albeit one with which the elected president of Colombia, Andrés Pastrana, felt obliged to come to terms in 1998. Pastrana withdrew the Colombian armed forces from most of southern Colombia and initiated a peace process with the guerillas.

The United States was not prepared to accept such a policy of attempted reconciliation. Its ‘Plan Colombia’, launched in 2000, militarized the conflict. Vast sums of money (as much as \$700 million per year; the highest aid payments ever given by Washington to a Latin American country) were poured into Colombia to fund the government’s efforts to combat the FARC and to eliminate coca production. A dynamic right-wing president, Alvaro Uribe, in 2002 launched a military counteroffensive against the FARC. This led to massive internal displacement as the peasants fled the territories being reoccupied by the state, but it did do major damage to the guerillas. Plan Colombia ‘predictably proved to be far more effective as a counter-insurgency plan than as an anti-drug plan’.²²

In the meantime Plan Colombia had caused great environmental damage (from the spraying of crops with defoliant) and immense harm to the lives of millions of small farmers. Yet the number of people ingesting cocaine in the rich world, especially the United States, had if anything increased. The street price of cocaine in 2002 was half of its 1989 price and it stayed flat for the rest of the decade. This fall in price was not due to lack of demand, but to abundant supply. The war on drugs had been lost – and its principal casualties had been the rural

poor of Colombia (and the many Americans who were the victims of crack cocaine).

In Colombia at least, but not only, the influence of the United States, its habits, preferences and commands, remained of crucial importance. The United States still dominated Latin America's northern horizon; feared, disliked, but also envied and admired and offering a magnet for Latin America's citizens. The two halves of the Americas could not live apart, but as the 1990s drew to an end the question of how they would live together still had not been resolved.

Notes

- 1 Robert Chapuis and Thierry Brossard, *Les quatre mondes du Tiers Monde* (2nd ed., Paris, 1997), p. 75.
- 2 David Knox, *Latin American Debts: Facing Facts* (Oxford, 1990), p. 7.
- 3 Figures from Robert Kaufman and Barbara Stallings, eds, *Debt and Democracy in Latin America* (Boulder, CO, 1989), pp. 214–15.
- 4 J. P. T. Dunbabin, *The Post-Imperial Age: The Great Powers and the Wider World* (London, 1984), pp. 426–7.
- 5 For the 'tequila crisis', see Aldo Musacchio, 'Mexico's Financial Crisis of 1994–1995', Harvard Business School Working Paper, No. 12–101, May 2012.
- 6 Ronald M. Schneider, *Latin American Political History: Patterns and Personalities* (Boulder, CO, 2007), p. 324.
- 7 For Kissinger's conversations with General Videla, see <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB104/>.
- 8 Lawrence Freedman, *Britain and the Falklands War* (Oxford, 1988), p. 32.
- 9 Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945–1993* (New York, 1994), p. 178.
- 10 Figures from Freedman, *Britain and the Falklands War*, p. 88.
- 11 Margaret Thatcher, *Downing Street Years* (London, 1993), p. 235.
- 12 Samuel P. Huntington, 'Democracy's Third Wave', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, Spring 1991, p. 13.
- 13 Figures in Chapuis and Brossard, *Les quatre mondes du Tiers Monde*, pp. 77, 90–1.
- 14 Quoted in Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America* (4th ed., Oxford, 1997), p. 113.
- 15 Ronaldo Munck, *Contemporary Latin America* (3rd ed., Basingstoke, 2012), p. 182.
- 16 Text of the final resolution of the Medellín conference; available at: <http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/medpov.htm>.
- 17 Quoted in Andrew Rawnsley, *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour* (London, 2001), p. 191.
- 18 'Drugs, Law Enforcement and Foreign Policy', Senate of the United States, Committee on Foreign Relations (Washington DC, December 1988), p. 3.
- 19 Chris Cook, *World Political Almanac* (3rd ed., London, 1995), p. 326.
- 20 George H. W. Bush, 'Address to the Nation on the National Drugs Control Strategy', available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17472>.

- 21** Michael Reid, *Forgotten Continent: The Battle for Latin America's Soul* (New Haven, 2009), p. 258.
- 22** *Ibid.*, p. 262.

Reflection

Where is Europe?

The study of international relations was once the history of the wars, alliances, treaties and betrayals of the states of Europe. Any history of the world from c.1500 to 1945 would have to put the affairs of the states and empires of Europe at its core. Yet this book has not. European states have been depicted as the supporting cast to the two principal actors in the Cold War; they have been depicted as post-imperial powers doing their best (or worst) to extricate themselves from Africa and Asia. In one or both of these roles Great Britain, France, East and West Germany, Portugal, Belgium, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia all played an important part in world events between 1945 and the 1990s – although, in the case of decolonization, we should remember that imperial withdrawal was a two-sided process in which peoples were attempting to obtain national self-determination, and not just an episode in European diplomatic history. All the same, it cannot be denied that the material that once gladdened the heart of diplomatic historians – the struggles between the great nations of Europe for power and dominance over the continent – has simply not featured in this volume.

The reason for this narrative choice is the perfectly reasonable one that such struggles have not occurred. Between 1945 and 1990, no major wars were fought between European nations. The Red Army intervened in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, but waged no aggressive wars outside of the confines of its empire. Between the mid-1950s and 1976 Great Britain and Iceland fought no fewer than three ‘Cod Wars’ over the North Atlantic island’s pretensions to extend its territorial waters and protect its fish stocks – but this conflict featured ships cutting fishing nets and sailing perilously close to one another, not bombardments and missile strikes.¹ Otherwise, the cupboard of warfare between

European nations is bare (as were British cupboards of fish in the early 1970s).

Some European countries experienced domestic conflicts that spilled over into international affairs. Cyprus is the most striking case. Turkey intervened in Cyprus in the summer of 1974 to safeguard ethnic Turkish inhabitants of the island after Greek irredentists carried out a coup d'état against the government of Archbishop Makarios. The Turkish invasion was the nearest two NATO member states have come to outright warfare since the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in 1949. Turkey's action humiliated the military junta that had ruled in Greece, with overt American support, since the coup d'état of April 1967. The junta fell and Greece returned to democracy under the guidance of Konstantinos Karamanlis, a former premier who returned from exile in Paris amid scenes of national jubilation. Turkey proceeded to violate international law by expelling more than 200,000 Greeks from the Turkish enclave in the east of the island. Neither the British, the former colonial power who possessed two military bases on Cyprus, nor the Americans were willing to clash with Ankara over this issue. As one contemporary commentator wrote, the United States made a 'cold-blooded strategic decision that Turkey was more important to U.S. national security interests and to the NATO community than the new and unpredictable Greek government and its volatile electorate'.² Greece suspended its membership of NATO in a huff and only rejoined in October 1980.

Northern Ireland is a second case where internal divisions spilled over into international affairs. The so-called troubles between the nationalist and 'loyalist' communities of Northern Ireland were the longest-lasting and bloodiest conflicts in any European state during the Cold War. Between 1969, when the British Army was deployed to maintain order in the province, and 1993 over 3,000 people died as a result of politically motivated violence; about half of these deaths came in the period between 1972 and 1976 – years when it was not misleading to talk of the conflict as a civil war. In all, there were nearly 10,000 bombings connected to the conflict between 1969 and 1998. The violence spilled over to mainland Britain: the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and other nationalist groups carried out numerous terrorist bombings in England, and twice (in 1984, when the IRA blew up a hotel in Brighton where Margaret Thatcher was staying; and in 1991, when they fired a mortar at No. 10 Downing Street while John Major was presiding at a cabinet meeting) attempted to assassinate a British prime minister.

Quite apart from their implications for domestic policy, the 'troubles' were a constant thorn in the side of relations between the Republic of Ireland and

Britain. In 1972, following the 'Bloody Sunday' incident in the town of Londonderry, when British paratroopers opened fire on a nationalist civil rights march, killing fourteen people, the British Embassy in Dublin was set ablaze by a large crowd. Northern Ireland was also the source of American interference in the internal affairs of Great Britain. The Irish-American community in the United States raised money on a large scale to help the nationalist cause; some American politicians were loud in their condemnation of the British Army's 'occupation' of Northern Ireland.

Indeed, it was always clear that there was no hope of a political solution to the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland in the absence of a broader Anglo-Irish understanding. The IRA operated largely from the Republic of Ireland and the Irish government was bound by its constitution to lay claim to the whole of Ireland, including the six counties of Ulster that had remained in Great Britain when Ireland achieved independence. The Thatcher government signed the Anglo-Irish agreement (November 1985), which gave the Republic of Ireland a consultative role in the domestic affairs of Northern Ireland in exchange for recognition that Ulster would remain in Great Britain unless a majority of its inhabitants voted to adhere to the Republic. The Irish government, especially the premier, Bertie Ahern, and the Clinton administration, which nominated Senator George J. Mitchell as presidential special envoy to Northern Ireland, were also intimately involved in the Ulster peace process begun by John Major and brought to a conclusion by Major's successor, Tony Blair, with the 'Good Friday Agreement' signed in Belfast on 10 April 1998. The agreement established a Northern Ireland Assembly with a 'power-sharing' executive designed to ensure that both the 'loyalist' and nationalist communities were represented in power, cross-border institutions formalizing the Republic of Ireland's consultative role in Northern Ireland's affairs and a renunciation by the Republic of Ireland of its constitutional claim to the six counties. The agreement was ratified by large popular majorities in both Ulster and, especially, the Republic of Ireland.

Cyprus and Northern Ireland were important crises for the Greeks and Turks, the British and the Irish. They both achieved a certain international resonance. The Basque question in Spain and, in Italy, the issue of minority rights in the mostly German-speaking province of Alto Adige (Süd Tirol) were also matters that provoked terrorist violence (in Spain on a large scale). Nevertheless, for the most part, between 1945 and 1990 Europeans lived at peace, or, at any rate, not at war. They also enjoyed rising standards of living and, in Western Europe, stable, multiparty democracies that delivered the highest levels of social justice

ever attained by human societies anywhere.

Europe's peace was guaranteed by the balance of terror – by the certainty that much of Europe would be reduced to radioactive wasteland if a conflict between the superpowers broke out – but except at moments of great tension it proved surprisingly easy to live in the shadow of the bomb and to forget that the continent's biological existence depended on decision-makers in Washington and Moscow remaining rational, and on there being no accidents.

The fact that Europe was at peace after 1945 made it possible for West Europeans, who also enjoyed the advantages of democracy, to experiment with arguably the most important innovation in the concept of national sovereignty of modern times: the European Community (EC). As Joschka Fischer, a German foreign minister, argued in a historic speech in Berlin in May 2000, the 'core of the concept of Europe after 1945 was and still is the rejection of the European balance-of-power principle and the hegemonic ambitions of the individual states that had emerged following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648'.³ More precisely, for there is no recorded instance of the Dutch or Belgians trying to establish their hegemony over Europe, France and Germany stopped struggling for supremacy and undertook to cooperate together. Beginning with the six nations (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and West Germany) that established the Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community in 1952 and 1958, respectively, an increasing number of West European nations sought to decide an increasing number of questions collectively. National sovereignty, in short, was pooled by the member states in a way that had no precedent in international history.

The member states also constructed supranational institutions that played a role in the collective decision-making process, although these institutions did not supersede the intergovernmental institutions of the Community as fast as European federalists would have liked. Many European intellectuals and politicians, especially in Germany and Italy, were powerfully committed to the idea of a federal 'United States of Europe' during the Cold War; others, most notably French president Charles de Gaulle, remained staunch defenders of the nation state. The EC is the compromise that emerged between these two extremes. For almost all West European politicians recognized extensive political and economic cooperation essential, even if they shrank from establishing an overtly federal state. The smaller nations of the Community also saw the process of European integration as a way of achieving greater democracy between the large and small states of Europe: long victims of French

or German expansionism, it was in their interests to establish limits on the unilateral actions of the regional big powers.

European integration is often presented as a teleological process; that is to say, as if the past were tending inexorably towards the present. This is a mistake – there was nothing inevitable about the construction of the EC and many other paths might have been taken – but it is an understandable one. The accrual of new members and new powers by the Community was persistent and the member states showed a remarkable tenacity in pursuing the ‘European ideal’ of pooling national sovereignty even in moments when both history and the theory of international relations might have predicted that they would put their immediate national interests first.

The European Economic Community, which began operations in 1958, was chiefly concerned with building a customs union in industrial and agricultural goods between its member states, hence with reducing tariffs and other trade restricting practices. It was also committed to establishing a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that would guarantee farm incomes and protect West European farmers from external competition. Its three main institutions were the European Commission, which acted as a civil service, with the exclusive right to propose legislation; a Council of Ministers, composed of ministers from the member states that acted as the EEC’s legislature voting (at any rate initially) by unanimity; and the Court of Justice, whose sentences by the mid-1960s had established the principle that European law took precedence over national law: the decisions of the Community’s institutions, in legal jargon, had ‘direct effect’ on domestic legislation. An assembly of national parliamentarians, with mostly consultative powers (although it did have the power to sack the Commission; this was known as its ‘nuclear option’ since it was too big to use) completed the roster of institutions. In 1965 the so-called Merger treaty brought the Coal and Steel Community into the EEC, and from then on commentators typically spoke of the EC as a single entity.

The EC’s achievements were considerable. In the first twelve years of its existence it abolished internal tariffs, which caused a huge acceleration in trade between the member states. It also established the CAP, which was phenomenally expensive and an act of European economic nationalism towards the rest of the world, but which did preserve the structure of European rural life more or less intact and prevent outright depopulation, even if it meant keeping ‘farmers on welfare’.⁴ The Commission also represented the member states of the EC in the Kennedy and Tokyo trade rounds. In general, the Community gave

extra impetus to the post-war economic boom that had brought about economic 'miracles' in West European states. Thanks to the EC, countries such as Italy, hitherto much poorer than its North European peers, enjoyed a spectacular increase in the prosperity of its inhabitants, and commitment to 'Europe' was, indeed, as a result one of the few things that united its querulous political class. Christian Democrats, Liberals, Social Democrats and Radicals were divided by most things, but shared a profound faith that gradually building a federal, democratic Europe within the wider community of collective defence created by the United States was the highest goal European leaders could pursue. Even Italy's communists came to share this position by the 1970s.

This combination of 'Europeanism' with 'Atlanticism' was not a purely Italian preference. It was widely shared across the political elites of the Community. It was for this reason that Belgian, Dutch and Italian leaders sabotaged attempts in 1961 and 1962 by De Gaulle's France to subordinate the European project to a 'Union of States', whose primary task would be to coordinate the foreign, defence and cultural policies of the six. The EC's member states were intent on becoming a 'civilian power', like Japan, beneath the American umbrella. Even the tensions caused by the Nixon and Carter administrations, with their benign neglect of the dollar, their tendency to negotiate with the Soviet Union over the Europeans' head and their Cold War mongering in the Third World, did not ultimately shake the centrality of the United States in the West Europeans' calculations, although there is a large and growing academic literature on the chaotic state of the so-called Western Alliance during the 1970s.⁵ Nevertheless, when the Soviet Union began to install SS-20 missiles in the mid-1970s, a European leader, Helmut Schmidt, sounded the alarm and appealed for the United States to counteract the Soviet move; when American medium-range missiles were actually deployed, four centre-right politicians of weight – Ruud Lubbers of the Netherlands, Francesco Cossiga of Italy, Margaret Thatcher of Britain and Helmut Kohl of West Germany – braved the opposition of a vocal section of public opinion to back the Americans' decision. 'Europe' relied explicitly on American hard power. It was never willing to take the 'Gaullist' option and invest hard cash and human resources into becoming militarily self-sufficient.

In truth, despite its many achievements the EC did not have the coherence to be a global force. Briefly, it had the ambition. A major summit at Paris in October 1972, proclaimed the intention of the 'Nine' (for Great Britain, Denmark and Ireland were set to join the Community in 1973) to construct a 'European Union'

by 1980. This Union would have its own democratically elected parliament and a common currency and would be a 'distinct entity determined to promote a better international equilibrium'.⁶ The Community instead became bogged down in its own internal affairs. Absorbing Britain was no easy task, not least because the British ended up paying for a substantial part of the absurdly expensive CAP and objected strongly to doing so. This issue was only resolved in 1984 when Prime Minister Thatcher negotiated an annual 'rebate' on the sums contributed by Britain to the Community's budget. The democratization of Greece, Portugal and Spain between 1974 and 1977 provided the conditions for the entry of these three relatively poor countries into the Community: negotiations were quite quick with Greece, which entered the Community in 1981, but tangled and acrimonious with the two Iberian states, largely for reasons of French agricultural protectionism, but also because Spanish democracy was not safe from a military coup until after the 1982 general elections. Portugal and Spain accordingly became members only in 1986. In general, agriculture was the chief bugbear of the EC. About 80 per cent of the EC's budget was spent on subsidizing (inefficiently) a small and decreasing share of the EC's population, and agricultural questions took up an inordinate amount of the EC's time. As one economist has written, the CAP 'can hardly be defended from any point of view. ... [It] can really be called the worst agricultural policy of the late twentieth century.'⁷

The EC did not become a federal state. If anything, it became more intergovernmental. In December 1974 the member states decided to create a European Council: a regular meeting of heads and states or of government that would take strategic decisions. The Council swiftly became the key governing body of the Community. The assembly was turned into a directly elected parliament in 1979, but the institution was given no new powers until 1986, and even then they were limited in scope. The EC's legislature remained the Council of Ministers. The EC's foreign policy coordination was weak and instead of a common currency it could boast only a 'European Monetary System' (EMS) which, like the Bretton Woods system, fixed the price of member states' currencies against the anchor of the system, in this case the German Deutsche Mark (DM), not gold. The EMS was established with much pomp and ceremony in 1979, but it only began to function seriously after 1984 when the Germans bailed out a French government facing chronic economic problems. The French were allowed to devalue drastically; in return the Germans demanded (and got) tough austerity measures.

The EC only made a dramatic move forward in 1986 with the passage of the first major revision of the Treaty of Rome, the so-called Single European Act (SEA). This treaty's crucial function was to provide the institutional fix whereby the EC could move forward to achieve a genuine single market in goods, capital and people. Although the EC had been a functioning customs union since 1968, a host of non-tariff barriers remained. The SEA was essentially a commitment to eliminate these barriers by December 1992. To get round the national veto, the EC adopted so-called qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers for all legislation concerning the single market. The almost concurrent 'Schengen' accords also made free movement of people throughout the Community easier. These reforms were seen as pitifully small beer by the EC's federalists (the Italian socialist Altiero Spinelli derided the SEA as 'a mouse, a miserable, still-born mouse'), but they did in fact represent a huge qualitative leap towards greater integration.⁸

Prime Minister Thatcher, who had been strongly in favour of market liberalization, and was one of the main sponsors of the SEA, drew the line at getting rid of border controls. When, in the summer of 1988, the head of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, a French socialist, persuaded the European Council to agree to contemplate monetary union, and further predicted that Brussels would soon be making 80 per cent of the legislation regulating the lives of the EC's citizens, Thatcher spoke out. In the so-called Bruges speech in September 1988 she warned:

We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain only to see them re-imposed at European level, with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels.⁹

Thatcher's admonition was a clearly articulated reminder (though Delors was a poor listener) that at least one nation state was alive and kicking. In fact when one looks back over the history of Western Europe in the Cold War one is struck by how little headway Europe made towards genuine political unity. Europe's long peace after 1945 made European integration possible (it is often claimed that European integration is responsible for having brought peace to Europe, but the causal relationship is clearly the opposite), but the American security guarantee absolved it from having to take the hard steps towards a common foreign and defence policy, or common education, welfare and tax policies, that would have given the EC a political identity. It remained an association of nation states, albeit one that had shown an unprecedented willingness to pool

sovereignty on major economic questions. It was significant, however, that no matter how much the Community grew in size, voting by majority never took root. Most votes in the Council of Ministers even on technical questions were by unanimity, after a compromise had been painstakingly reached; the big decisions on important questions of trade deals, treaty revision, agricultural policy, foreign policy were always by unanimity. Europe's national governments did not like the idea of laws regulating their citizens' lives being made by foreigners.

The EC was nevertheless an extraordinary achievement; a blooming 'Kantian paradise' in the most warlike continent in the world. The comparison with the blood-stained post-war histories of Africa, the Middle East and Asia is striking. The great wars of the post-war age were for once not fought in Europe, but in Afghanistan, Algeria, Korea, Iran, Nigeria and Vietnam. The European paradise, guarded by American sentries on its walls, had been authorized to take a sabbatical from history.¹⁰ Oddly, however, its leaders were imbued with the sense that they were *making* history and constructing a postmodern form of political organization that would act as a model for the rest of the world. In the post-Cold War world they would be abruptly disillusioned.

Notes

- 1 We should not make too light of the 'Cod Wars'. During the second 'Cod War', Iceland threatened to leave NATO in September 1973 unless the Americans took action against British warships; Iceland also broke off diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom in February 1976. Thousands of British jobs were lost when Iceland got its way and established a 200-mile limit on its territorial waters.
- 2 Laurence Stern, 'Bitter Lessons: How We Failed in Cyprus', *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 19, Summer 1975, p. 74.
- 3 Joschka Fischer, *From Confederacy to Federation; Some Thoughts on the Finality of European Integration* (Humboldt University, Berlin, 12 May 2000), p. 1.
- 4 This is a reference to Ann-Christina L. Knudsen, *Farmers on Welfare: The Making of Europe's Common Agricultural Policy* (Ithaca, 2009).
- 5 For a review of the academic literature, see Mark Gilbert, 'Partners and Rivals: Assessing the American Role', in *European Union History: Themes and Debates*, ed. Wolfram Kaiser and Antonio Varsori (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 169–89.
- 6 'Statement from the Paris Summit', *Bulletin of the European Communities*, No. 10, October 1972, p. 15.
- 7 Giovanni Federico, 'Was the CAP the Worst Agricultural Policy of the Twentieth Century?', in *Fertile Ground for Europe? The History of European Integration and the Common Agricultural Policy since 1945*, ed. Kiran Klaus Patel (Baden Baden, 2009), p. 271.
- 8 Quoted in Bino Olivi, *L'Europa difficile* (Bologna, 2000), p. 301.

- 9 See website: <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107332>. Last accessed 21 April 2016.
- 10 This paragraph borrows its analysis from Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York, 2004). Kagan is a neoconservative, but that does not necessarily mean that he is wrong.

PART FIVE

The Ending of the Cold War



PHOTO 7 *Two men, two flags, one hope: an electric moment as Gorbachev and Reagan meet at Geneva, November 1985. The Cold War was coming to an end (Getty Images. Credit: Dirck Halstead).*

21

Renewed Cold War, 1980–5

The enigma of Ronald Reagan – The Soviet paradox – Confrontation in the Third World – New arms race and Strategic Defence Initiative – Soviet–American relations in the early 1980s.

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there followed a period of some five years in which relations between the superpowers fell into a state of severe and sometimes acute hostility. The United States and the Soviet Union confronted one another at various points across the globe: in Central Asia, in Africa, in parts of Central America and the Caribbean and even in Europe, where seeming stability had been achieved in the 1960s and 1970s. Competition in nuclear armaments, which had been checked though not halted by arms limitation agreements in the 1970s, assumed new dimensions. There was also a marked change in the atmosphere of relations between Washington and Moscow, and in the tone of their exchanges, which reverted to denunciation and denigration.

This period of truculence has sometimes been described as a Second Cold War, or at least a revival of the old Cold War after the armistice represented by détente.¹ For sure, there was a new arms race, involving competition in medium-range nuclear missiles stationed in Europe. The deployment of these missiles, both Soviet and American, and the protests against the American missiles in Western Europe, produced heightened tensions between governments and sharpened the fear of war in some sections of public opinion. There was a marked cooling in diplomatic relations between the superpowers, with no Soviet–American meetings at summit level and only difficult discussions between foreign ministers and ambassadors. In the United States, a new and militant right wing in domestic politics – the so-called neoconservative

movement – revived ideological and emotional hostility to communism and the Soviet Union. The early 1980s was a time of sharp confrontation between the superpowers, whether we call it a Second Cold War, or not.

The enigma of Ronald Reagan

The dates of this period of confrontation, from the end of 1980 to early 1985, coincided with the election of Ronald Reagan as president of the United States, his first term of office, and the opening of his second term. Reagan's election as president was a turning point in international affairs. His impact was crucial, yet the man himself remains a mystery, one of the unresolved enigmas of modern politics. The superficial elements of his life and character are simple enough. He had been a popular film actor, with a folksy style and the standard appeal of the hero in old-fashioned Westerns or films about sport. As a politician, he was to exploit this appeal to the full – 'Win one for the Gipper', the key line from a film about American football, became one of his catchphrases.

He emerged as a political figure, as governor of California, from 1967 to 1974. As a Republican candidate for presidency in 1980 he was easily categorized as embodying 'the attitudes and mindset of small-town America' towards the Soviet Union. Observers could collect many examples of his ignorance of history, errors as to current facts and naive exaggerations.² He was an advocate of a strong line in foreign and military policy, claiming that détente had been a one-way street to the Soviet Union's advantage. Reagan openly called for the abandonment of SALT II (the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, which had not been ratified by Congress but was being observed by the government). He proposed large increases in military expenditure and an end to what he saw as the vacillation and weakness of the Carter administration. In the presidential election he defeated Carter soundly, and proceeded by his first appointments to show that he meant business – for example, the new secretary of state, Alexander Haig, was a former general who took an even sterner line towards the Soviet Union than did Reagan himself.³

All this seems straightforward enough, and may well be so – it is always possible that the sphinx has no secret behind its weather-beaten face. Yet Henry Kissinger, himself worldly wise and sophisticated almost to excess, noted that 'Reagan's bland veneer hid an extraordinarily complex character' and that by treating everyone with the same bonhomie he kept his own counsel and retained a free hand. The result, in Kissinger's view, was 'an astonishing performance –

and, to academic observers, nearly incomprehensible'.⁴ Anatoly Dobrynin, the experienced Soviet ambassador in Washington, who knew six American presidents, was intrigued by Reagan's contradictory personality and wrote that he 'grasped matters in an instinctive way but not necessarily in a simple one'. On reflection, Dobrynin was sure that 'opponents and experts alike clearly underestimated him'.⁵

Dobrynin also reflected (with some bitterness, because he was himself a believer in secret diplomacy) that Reagan turned foreign policy into a matter of public relations. Yet this was one of the president's great assets. André Fontaine, longtime editor of *Le Monde* and himself a notable communicator, wrote that Reagan was 'un personnage formidablement médiatique' – a master of the media and of communication, certainly among his own American people.⁶ One vital element which Reagan communicated was a sense of *optimism*, at a time when the Americans were anxious for hope and reassurance. His optimism was genuine, not assumed; and there lay one important key to his success, abroad as well as at home. He was prepared to attempt the impossible, in the belief that it could be achieved; and though he was sometimes astonishingly inconsistent, he could carry his contradictions off.⁷

The risks were high. The Soviet leadership was baffled and exasperated by Reagan's early moves. In his first press conference as president, Reagan declared that the Soviets were prepared to commit any crime, to lie and to cheat in order to promote world revolution. Yet at the same time he conveyed a private message to the Soviet ambassador to explain that he did not mean to give offence, but was only expressing his own deep convictions. It was hard to see whether this was an act of breathtaking naïveté or outright insolence. Dobrynin reflected later that he had thought it impossible to find anything worse than Carter's blundering; but this was indeed worse.⁸ In Moscow, the Politburo discussed Reagan's press conference and found his words intolerable.

Reagan's rhetoric, on this and other occasions, was hurtful to Soviet pride and self-esteem. One of the most important results of détente in Soviet eyes had been American acceptance of the Soviet Union as an equal, to be treated with respect. Reagan appeared to be treating the Soviets as delinquents. The most spectacular example of this was his speech on 8 March 1983 to the National Association of Evangelical Christians at Orlando, Florida, in which he referred to 'the aggressive impulses of an evil empire'.⁹ This was not intended to be a speech of any particular importance; the secretary of state (George Shultz, who succeeded

Haig) had not seen the text; and the circumstances of an address to a particular religious group were singularly American. But a president of the United States cannot be simply a speaker at a religious convention; and once the speech was reported it immediately became famous. If any one of Reagan's remarks is still remembered, it is 'an evil empire'. Reagan himself seemed surprised by the stir he had caused; and the Soviet leaders for their part were unduly sensitive in their reactions – after all, their own propaganda against American capitalism and imperialism was by no means mealy-mouthed. But the hazards of conducting foreign policy by this sort of speech-making were great.

It was shortly before this speech, on 15 February 1983, when he had been in office for two years, that Reagan had his first private meeting with the Soviet ambassador – in itself a sign of the new frost in American–Soviet relations. In their conversation, Reagan made one specific request: that the Soviet government should grant exit visas to seven Pentecostal Christians, who had taken refuge in the American Embassy in 1978 and were still there, unable to leave the country. He claimed that this would be more welcome to the American people than anything else, adding: 'It may sound paradoxical, but that's America.'¹⁰ The Soviet leaders found this a strange and not wholly welcome request; but in April the Pentecostals were allowed to leave the embassy without fear of arrest, and they were permitted to leave the country in June. It was an odd episode, and together with the 'evil empire' speech is illustrative of Reagan's priorities and methods. In both cases, he had a feel for what would appeal to American opinion. In the one case, he used the bludgeon of strong language, in the other the persuasion of a quiet request; and he used them virtually simultaneously. This might well have proved self-defeating, but in the event Reagan was able to carry it off. He believed that confrontation could lead to conciliation.

Reagan's policy was to pursue apparently contradictory courses. He set out to demonstrate that the United States was prepared to confront the Soviet Union at any point in the world where it was necessary (and at some points where it was not, as in the case of Grenada). He was resolved to show that the long retreat and uncertainty caused by the Vietnam catastrophe were over. In this way he took the initiative in reviving the Cold War. Yet at the same time he believed that he could persuade the Soviets that the United States was in earnest about making peace and meant them no harm. Eventually he was able to make these two apparent contradictions come together. Because no one in America could doubt his anti-communism or his devotion to his country, he was able, when the

opportunity was offered, to go further in negotiation with the Soviet Union than anyone else would have dared to do, and certainly further than any Democrat could have done.

The Soviet paradox

The Soviet Union which faced the challenge of the Reagan enigma was itself in a paradoxical situation of manifest strength and largely hidden weakness. In territory and zones of influence, the Soviet sphere (which was an empire; in this Reagan was right) was at its most extensive. The East European bloc (Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria) remained intact and under the control of Moscow. Mongolia was firmly in the Soviet camp, with Soviet troops and missiles stationed on its territory. Far afield lay Cuba in the Caribbean and Vietnam in South-East Asia (where Soviet warships had replaced American in the Cam Ranh Bay naval base). Assorted Marxist regimes held power in South Yemen, Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique. The prestige of the Soviet Union also stood high over a large part of the Third World, and the Non-Aligned Movement, or so the joke went, was usually ‘non-aligned against the United States’ and in sympathy with the Soviet Union. The communist parties of Western Europe remained strong in France and Italy.

Yet this formidable structure had its weaknesses. In Eastern Europe, Poland was by 1980 in open revolt. The Marxist regimes in Africa were challenged by internal and external opposition. A number of Third World countries which had once been close to the Soviet Union had slipped away – notably Egypt, Iraq and India. The West European Communist Parties were growing increasingly independent, in the movement called ‘Euro-communism’. China maintained a constant challenge as an alternative leader of the socialist camp, a rival in the Third World, and as a military power, forcing the Soviet Union to station large forces in Asia. At home, the Soviet leadership was suffering from atrophy. In his first term as president, Reagan faced three different Soviet leaders: Brezhnev, who was largely incapacitated by illness long before his death in 1982; Andropov, who was under treatment for a kidney disease and in failing health for most of his short term as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party (1982–4); and Chernenko, who was appointed Soviet leader in 1984 at the age of seventy-three, almost because he was ‘a man without qualities’.¹¹ Foreign affairs were mostly in the experienced but elderly hands of Andrei Gromyko, who had been ambassador in Washington as long ago as 1943 and foreign minister since

1957.

These decrepit, and in Chernenko's case almost senile, leaders continued to speak the language of communist ideology, in private as well as in public, with a doubtful degree of conviction but quite enough to colour their view of the outside world and of their own actions. They suffered markedly from the isolation imposed on the Soviet Union by Stalin and were uncertain in their understanding of the outside world – and not least of the workings of American public opinion. They enjoyed a position of great military strength, with a preponderance of land forces in Europe and ample numbers of nuclear weapons to maintain a balance of terror with the United States.¹² This military power conferred both security and prestige in international affairs; it also placed considerable influence in the hands of the government's military advisers, and the defence minister, Marshal Dmitri Ustinov, could normally ensure that his requirements were met. But at the same time these strong military forces had to be maintained by a struggling economy. It has been estimated that in the early 1980s the Soviet Union spent about 14–15 per cent of its gross national product on the armed forces; while in the United States the proportion in the 1970s and 1980s varied between 4 and 6 per cent.¹³

The true state of such affairs is almost impossible to ascertain, because no one in the Soviet Union knew with any precision how big the economy was, nor how much of it was consumed by defence. Soviet statistics normally exaggerated economic growth, partly through falsification by those anxious to show that they were fulfilling their norms, and partly because the figures took no account of inflation, which officially did not exist. The Politburo had no reliable information about the state of the economy. In principle, the whole of production was centralized, so that there were some 25 million types of goods being produced under central control; which in practice led to confusion and waste. The system was far too complicated, and a combination of bureaucracy, inefficiency, lack of incentive and corruption meant that there were never enough consumer goods available, and queues were an inevitable part of life. In Khrushchev's time, the declared aim of the Soviet Union was to catch up and overtake the United States, but by the early 1980s such rhetoric had mostly disappeared from Soviet propaganda. In fact, the gap between Soviet and United States gross national product grew steadily wider, after being at its narrowest in 1958.¹⁴

The Soviet Union was also slow in developing computers and their accompanying technology. The government invested heavily in agriculture, and

yet the small plots of land cultivated privately by peasants produced far better yields than the collective farms. The Soviet Union imported cereals from the United States and Canada, and dairy produce from the European Economic Community (which thus unloaded a part of its unwanted 'butter mountain'). The imported cereals went largely to cattle, for the production of meat, because Brezhnev set meat consumption as an indicator of the standard of living; nevertheless in 1988 meat was rationed in twenty-six out of fifty-five regions in the Russian Republic. To pay for its imports, the country was heavily dependent on the export of oil and natural gas, which by 1984 made up 54 per cent of all exports, as against only 18 per cent in 1972.¹⁵ At the same time, oil production was falling, and Soviet technology proved inadequate to exploit the new oilfields discovered in the frozen tundra of northern Siberia.¹⁶ It was difficult to retain superpower status while labouring under such grave economic handicaps: in everything except defence, the Soviet economy was more similar to the primary goods exporters of the Third World than it was to the increasingly 'post-industrial' societies of the West.

Behind these economic difficulties lay ominous demographic trends. Life expectancy was diminishing, in contrast to the situation in all other industrialized countries. In the mid-1960s, average male life expectancy was about sixty-six years; in 1986 it had slumped to sixty. Infant mortality was rising, and the birth rate was declining, especially among the Russians. In 1980, Russians formed only 52 per cent of the population of the Soviet Union, a proportion which was in decline because of higher fertility rates in the Central Asian Republics.¹⁷

All this added up to a very considerable political and economic crisis within the Soviet Union. There were also accumulating difficulties in the Soviet-controlled zone in Eastern Europe. In some respects the countries of Eastern Europe had become an economic burden to the Soviet Union – in the words of a contemporary film, the empire was 'striking back'.¹⁸ For example, in order to stave off unrest in its satellites the Soviet Union sold oil to Eastern Europe at lower rates than it would have received on the world markets. The military contribution of the East Europeans through the Warsaw Pact was of uncertain value, because the morale and reliability of the various armies were doubtful. Politically and in all kinds of other ways, often painfully visible to the eye of a visitor, the countries of Eastern Europe were 'not a showcase but an eyesore'.¹⁹

The most immediate danger lay in Poland. The influence of the Catholic Church as a religious force and a focus for national feeling had remained strong

throughout the period since 1945, and received a tremendous impetus from the election in October 1978 of a Polish pope: Karol Wojtyła, John Paul II. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Austrian statesman Metternich lamented in relation to Pius IX that he could have foreseen anything but a liberal pope; similarly, the Soviet leaders were dismayed and baffled by a pope from a communist country. In June 1979 John Paul II visited his native land, celebrating Mass before crowds numbered in millions and, without overstepping the mark, appealed at one and the same time to the Christian faith, to Polish patriotism and to human rights.

The pope's visit came at a time of economic difficulty in Poland, with savage cuts to living standards in industry and agriculture, and was followed in August 1980 by strikes in the shipyards at the Baltic seaport of Gdansk. Led by an intrepid electrician with a gift for earthy rhetoric, Lech Walesa, the Polish workers formed the trade union *Solidarność* (Solidarity), independent of the state and the Communist Party, and hence exposed the breach between the great majority of Polish industrial workers and the communist regime – which, of course, theoretically ruled in the working class's name. By mid-1981, Solidarity had 9 million members.

The ideological challenge of Solidarity, not only in Poland but in the whole of Eastern Europe, was grave. The Soviet government seriously considered military intervention in 1980. Only a passionate intervention by Stanisław Kania, the leader of the Polish Workers' Party, who told his Warsaw Pact colleagues that 'even if angels entered Poland ... they would be treated as bloodthirsty vampires and socialist ideas would be swimming in blood' stopped a repetition of the Czech events of 1968.²⁰ In the event, they found a domestic intermediary to impose an internal solution. On 13 December 1981 General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who had replaced Kania only a few months earlier, declared martial law, arrested Walesa and other leading members of Solidarity and revoked most of the concessions earlier granted to the new trade union. The operation was carried out with remarkable efficiency and caught Solidarity's leaders by surprise. It nevertheless could not disguise the breach between the majority of the Polish people, led by Solidarity and the church, and the regime in power. It could also not disguise the bankruptcy of communist ideology. The Polish crisis had been suppressed but not resolved, and represented a harbinger of further turmoil in the rest of Eastern Europe.

In the early 1980s, therefore, the Soviet Union faced a number of enemies. China was still hostile, and made a powerful opponent in the Third World. In Poland, Lech Walesa and Solidarity had effectively taken over the leadership of

the working class, alongside the moral authority of John Paul II. Outside the Soviet zone, Ronald Reagan, not to mention his British equivalent, Margaret Thatcher, were opponents all the more dangerous because they were flexible enough to talk as well as resolute in their opposition.

Confrontation in the Third World

These Soviet difficulties were by no means obvious to the United States when Reagan was inaugurated as president at the beginning of 1981. Soviet military power was visible and formidable; and for some years the Soviets and their Cuban allies had been scoring a series of successes in Africa. The United States was itself suffering economic problems. At the end of 1980 inflation was running at 17 per cent per year; the federal budget was in deficit by \$59.6 billion over the year; there was a substantial excess of imports over exports. In the next few years, so-called Reaganomics (increased military expenditure and lower income taxes) led to even greater budget deficits (\$195.4 billion in 1983, \$202.8 billion in 1985), and continued to incur high deficits in overseas trade, both of which had to be covered by borrowing from abroad, mainly Japan and Western Europe.²¹

Reagan was therefore taking considerable risks, economically as well as politically, in turning to a strategy of confronting the Soviet Union. He was not deterred and responded with tough, combative language to show that he meant business. The days of soft talk to avoid offending the Soviets were over; Reagan went into action to oppose Soviet influence right across the globe.

The most vulnerable point for the Soviet Union was Afghanistan. By May 1980 the Soviets had put some 80,000 troops into the country, without subduing Afghan resistance. Large armoured forces and heavy tanks proved to be unsuitable for the terrain. Tajik and Uzbek troops, who were able to communicate freely with the Afghan population, proved unreliable and had to be withdrawn. By the end of 1980 there were over a million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, many of them Pashtuns, who had no intention of remaining quietly in camps, but were anxious to secure weapons to resume the fight.

Initially, the Afghan exiles received weapons from Pakistan and China. Under Reagan, the CIA began to supply weapons, but was careful to provide only arms originating from the Soviet Union itself or from Warsaw Pact countries, so that the Soviets could not immediately trace them to the United States. The Israelis proved a valuable source, because at various times they had captured large

quantities of Eastern European weaponry from their Arab opponents. Saudi Arabia was willing to put up money from its oil revenues. Even Egypt joined in the supply of armaments. A very curious informal coalition thus took shape to harass the Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

The crucial link between foreign sources of money and arms, and the fighters in the Afghan mountains was the government of Pakistan. The president of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq, sought to 'keep the pot boiling, but not boiling over' in Afghanistan.²² By supporting the holy war against the Soviet Union, Zia hoped to benefit from an inflow of resources but also encourage religious zeal, which would shore up his support among the general population. At the same time he had to be careful not to provoke the Soviet Union into aggression. The Pakistani secret services hence took over the sensitive task of acting as a conduit for cash, weapons and ammunition to the six major emigré parties that they backed – all of which were Islamic fundamentalists.

The result of the guerilla war was a savage form of stalemate. The Soviets could not win the war, at any rate with the scale of force they were prepared to use – they never employed more than 115,000 troops in Afghanistan, and the number was usually lower than that. In 1983 Brezhnev's successor, Yuri Andropov, indicated that he was looking for a negotiated conclusion to the war; after Andropov's death, the Soviet forces tried another tack and launched a big offensive against the guerrillas, with some success. Armoured helicopters were used to pursue the guerrillas far into the hills without fear of reprisals. Victory seemed within sight, but was never quite achieved. On the other hand there was no danger that the Soviets would lose the war, in the sense of being driven out of Afghanistan. They held Kabul and the country around it, they had a strong base near Herat, and they normally controlled the main roads. Neither side could win – yet both were being drained by the attrition of prolonged warfare.

In March 1985, after his triumphant re-election to the presidency in 1984, President Reagan began to increase the scale and change the methods of American intervention. The United States, via the Pakistanis, began to supply the Afghan 'mujahideen' directly with American weapons, and also with hundreds of Tennessee mules – though most of them fell sick and died. In 1986 the Americans provided Stinger shoulder-fired missiles, light enough to be carried by one man, and deadly accurate against helicopters. The new missiles enabled the Afghans to strike back against the Soviets' best weapon.

The war in Afghanistan also had the political effect of drawing the hostility of Islamic countries down upon the Soviet Union, instead of the United States,

which had previously been their principal target. The Organization of the Islamic Conference, which had been formed by twenty-five Muslim states at a conference in Rabat in September 1969, suspended Afghanistan from membership in January 1980, and gave support to the mujahideen. Every autumn, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed, by large majorities, a resolution calling for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan – on 23 November 1984, for example, the vote was 116–20.²³ These votes dealt a severe blow to Soviet prestige and influence in the Third World, which could normally be relied on to be broadly pro-Soviet in its sympathies.

Western onlookers were quick to interpret Afghanistan as the Soviet Union's Vietnam. There were obvious parallels. The Soviets, like the Americans, found themselves fighting an unsuccessful guerrilla war against tough, elusive opponents. Their morale suffered, and there were problems with drugs and desertion (though troops wisely did not desert in Afghanistan itself). There were also differences between the two campaigns, though these proved more superficial than real. The Soviet government, unlike the Americans, maintained a close control over the news media; but nothing could prevent soldiers from talking after their tour of duty, and memorials stood mute in cemeteries – 'Died, fulfilling his internationalist duty'.²⁴ The Soviet leaders faced no demonstrations in the streets or university campuses; but even so there was an undercurrent of dismay and gloom in public opinion. The Soviets engaged fewer troops in Afghanistan than the Americans in Vietnam, and suffered fewer casualties – just over 14,000 killed (and 54,000 wounded) as against some 58,000; but the debilitating effects of the conflict, the loss of confidence and unity at home and damage to prestige abroad, were strikingly similar.

The parallels were certainly close enough to encourage the Americans, and offer them a piquant pleasure in watching their enemies become involved in problems similar to their own a few years earlier. Intervention in Afghanistan was by no means confrontation on the cheap – it has been estimated that in eight years the Americans spent more than \$3 billion;²⁵ but it involved no American casualties, and consisted largely of ensuring that the Soviets suffered the full consequences of their own mistakes. There was a bill that would come due in the future, however. The struggle against communism in Afghanistan radicalized the young across the Muslim world – Osama bin Laden, a man who needs no introduction, was only one of many young Muslims who took part in the partly American-financed holy war against the Soviet 'infidels'. It also destabilized Pakistan by accentuating the gap between Westernized elites and the tribesmen

infused with a new religious fervour.

In Africa, the Americans had done little to combat Soviet influence during the late 1970s. In 1976 American involvement in Angola had been stopped by Congress, which ruled out any further assistance to opponents of the Soviet-backed government, for fear that Angola should become another Vietnam. Reagan reversed this policy, pursuing active and widespread intervention to combat Soviet influence, secure strategic positions and if possible establish American predominance south of the Sahara. Chester Crocker, appointed by Reagan to control African affairs in the State Department, announced the new American intentions in a speech to ex-servicemen in Honolulu on 29 August 1981, declaring that although the United States had no desire to act as the policeman of Africa, the United States would combat the Soviet Union's influence in the continent. He added that though the apartheid regime in South Africa was repugnant to American principles, the Americans would not permit the destabilization of South Africa. This marked an important change from President Carter's emphasis on human rights and made clear that strategy and economics would predominate. The new emphasis was on the strategic importance of the Cape and the South African production of gold and other minerals, which must not be allowed to fall under Soviet control. The Americans, it is true, hoped to use their support (e.g. in the supply of arms) to encourage internal reforms in South Africa, but they did not press the matter very hard.

The principal results of the new policy were felt in Angola, where the Americans resumed clandestine help to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which was in revolt against the existing government, itself supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba. The United States also provided secret assistance to South African intervention in Angola. Eventually, in 1985, Congress went back on its earlier restrictions, and direct American assistance to UNITA was resumed. American intervention in Angola achieved stalemate, not victory; and prolonged the civil war until the Soviet government became anxious to end its own involvement.



MAP 12 *The Caribbean.*

In Central America and the Caribbean, Reagan resumed an active policy against various left-wing regimes and movements which he considered a threat to the United States. His first move was to offer economic assistance, announcing on 24 February 1982 an Initiative for the Caribbean Basin, proposing a programme of financial aid to Caribbean countries, tax incentives for American investors there and preferential tariffs for exports to the United States. His language was forthright, denouncing ‘the poverty and repression of Castro’s Cuba, and the tightening grip of the totalitarian left in Grenada and Nicaragua. ... If we do not act promptly and decisively in defence of freedom, new Cubas will arise from the ruins of today’s conflicts.’²⁶ But in the event Congress could not be persuaded to provide the trade preferences and tax incentives, so the Caribbean Initiative had little practical effect. Most American energy accordingly went into direct action, usually clandestine but on occasion blatant, to remove leftist governments and shore up oppressive regimes.

There was even a ‘theoretical’ justification for this policy. Jeane Kirkpatrick, a right-wing intellectual who became Reagan’s ambassador to the UN, had written a notorious article in 1979 called ‘Dictatorship and Double Standards’. In this piece Kirkpatrick argued that whereas traditional dictators did not try to revolutionize society and at most tried to keep the lid on social reform, Marxist movements attempted to revolutionize the whole of society and hence were prone to ‘totalitarian’ abuses that were more far-reaching.²⁷ Her conclusion was

the same that Kennedy had reached when dealing with Trujillo (see [Chapter 12](#)): the United States, while it should strive to encourage democratic reforms, should prefer men in uniforms over left-wing radicals of the Allende type. The Carter administration, with its penchant for human rights at all costs, had been sending the wrong signals.

The most dramatic example of clandestine intervention was in Nicaragua, where the long-standing corrupt, brutal and pro-American dictatorship of the Somoza dynasty had fallen in July 1979. The far-left Sandinista movement, whose leadership did objectively contain Marxists, supporters of Castro and many authoritarian communists, took power. The new regime followed mistaken, even oppressive policies, aided other national liberation movements in El Salvador and Guatemala, and bought arms from Cuba, Algeria and, eventually, the Soviet bloc. So far as the Reagan administration was concerned the Sandinistas were building a bridgehead for the Soviet Union in Central America. Overthrowing the regime in Managua (the capital of Nicaragua) became an obsession, even a crusade, for many 'Reaganites'.

Specifically, the Reagan administration intervened against the Sandinistas by forming, in December 1981, the 'Contra' guerrilla organization (whose formal title was the Nicaraguan Democratic Front), recruited from Nicaraguans who had taken refuge in Honduras. Starting from a few hundreds, the Contras were built up to a force of some 15,000 by the mid-1980s, armed and supplied by the CIA. The Contras failed to overthrow the Sandinista regime, but waged a guerrilla war which wrought havoc. In June 1984 the US Congress cut off assistance to the Contras, but the CIA continued its support, securing money from various other sources, including the governments of Saudi Arabia and Brunei, which had no interest in Central America at all, and even from the proceeds of secret arms sales to Iran – the so-called Iran–Contra or 'Irangate' affair. The major significance of this imbroglio, which led to a major public scandal, is that it shows how far Reagan was prepared to go in his Nicaraguan intervention. At the time, Iran was bitterly, even fanatically, hostile to the United States, and for Reagan to provide the Iranians with weapons seemed unthinkable – it was as though 'John Wayne had been caught selling rifles to the Indians'.²⁸ In 1986 Congress changed its mind on funding for the Contras, and more orthodox methods of supply were resumed. The Contras never won the guerrilla war, but kept it smouldering until a ceasefire was arranged in 1989. The key to the American intervention in Nicaragua did not lie in any remote threat to American interests, but in Reagan's desire to make the country an example of his

own determination to repel the communist peril; events illustrated that he was prepared to use extraordinary methods to do so.

A concurrent effort to stop the spread of Marxism–Leninism was also waged in El Salvador, a small Central American state only 21,000 square kilometres in size, with a population of some 5 million, which the Reagan administration chose to invest with a crucial significance in East–West relations. In El Salvador the Americans stepped in to support the ruling oligarchy against a rebellion by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMNL). The United States claimed that the Front was sustained by supplies of arms from Cuba, which itself was acting as a transit station for the Soviet Union – an assertion which was never proved. Archbishop Oscar Romero was killed while saying mass in March 1980; his public appeals to the armed forces and the ruling elite to remember Christian values were the immediate cause of his death. After the election of Reagan in November 1980 the Americans greatly increased their assistance to the Salvadoran army's battle against the guerrillas, which was pursued with a ruthless disregard for civilian casualties and for what in other circumstances the United States would have regarded as the requirements of human rights. By 1983, 11,000 'disappeared' had been recorded by human rights groups; operations in rural areas had led to tens of thousands of deaths. Under the leadership of Roberto D'Aubuisson, death squads composed of off-duty police or army officers tortured and killed at will, leaving disfigured corpses in public squares as a reminder to the populace of the dangers of speaking or acting out of turn. While American troops were not formally deployed, quite a number of Americans were killed while 'offering advice in combat conditions' to El Salvador's military.²⁹ Above all, the United States provided money: El Salvador became the third-largest recipient of American aid after Israel and Egypt. The victory of D'Aubuisson's political party, ARENA, in 1989 made no difference to good relations between Washington and the by-now cowed Central American country.

A more absurd case of confrontation in the Caribbean, involving the direct use of force by the United States, took place in Grenada, a tiny island with a population of about 90,000, formerly a British colony and still a member of the Commonwealth. In 1979 a Marxist party led by Maurice Bishop and calling itself the New Jewel Movement (which had nothing to do with precious stones, but took its name from an acronym for 'Joined for Welfare, Education and Liberation') seized power in Grenada. Bishop undertook a programme of social reform; he was also an acquaintance of Fidel Castro, and he concluded a number

of agreements with Cuba and the Soviet Union, including one for the building of an airport. The American government asserted that the new regime in Grenada represented an extension of Cuban and Soviet influence, and claimed that the airport on the island was designed for military purposes. In the summer of 1983 Bishop visited Washington in a vain attempt to persuade the Americans of his good intentions. In fact this visit led to his overthrow and murder by members of his own party, who accused him of petty-bourgeois tendencies.

The actual danger to the United States from a small island some 2,400 kilometres from Florida was miniscule; but the Grenadan coup presented the Reagan administration with an opportunity for a show of force. The six members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (probably not wholly on their own initiative) appealed to the United States for military intervention. There ensued an operation that was on a remarkable scale in proportion to its object. The Americans dispatched to Grenada a 79,000-ton aircraft carrier, two helicopter vessels, a dozen other warships and a landing force of some 7,000 elite troops – marines, paratroops and rangers. To add respectability, this enormous force was accompanied by about three hundred soldiers and police from eastern Caribbean islands. Resistance to the invasion was provided by 1,000 Grenadan soldiers and 800 Cubans, who were variously described as either construction workers or paramilitaries.

The Americans landed on 25 October 1983, and the fighting lasted three days – about as long as the Battle of Gettysburg. Casualties were variously estimated at 100–200 Grenadans, 50–100 Cubans and only 20–30 Americans killed.³⁰ On 27 October President Reagan made a television broadcast declaring that Grenada had been becoming a Soviet–Cuban colony and a base to export terror. At home in America this explanation seemingly carried much conviction. Elsewhere, Reagan’s message was conveyed by the sheer weight of the American assault. The disproportion between the tiny Grenadan forces and the mighty American armada seemed surreal, and it aroused much anti-American feeling abroad. Even Margaret Thatcher, one of Reagan’s firmest supporters, wrote later that she had felt ‘dismayed and let down by what had happened’.³¹

The invasion did however avoid the error of half-heartedness associated with the attack on Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. The intervention against the would-be Fidels in Grenada undoubtedly used a sledgehammer to crack a nut; but if there were any other potential nuts in the area, they had been warned. Operations in Nicaragua and El Salvador were stepped up after the Grenada incident. More than 30,000 people were killed during Reagan’s presidencies in

the Contra War in Nicaragua, while the death toll in El Salvador was 70,000, not to mention social breakdown as death squads roamed the countryside. Relative to population they represented two of the worst human rights tragedies of the whole post-war era.³²

The thinking behind American confrontation with the Soviet Union in the Third World was set out by Secretary of State Shultz, in a speech on 22 February 1985, at the beginning of Reagan's second term as president. The United States aimed to roll back the gains made by the Soviet-supported regimes in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola and Ethiopia (Shultz passed over Cuba in silence). This was a deliberate challenge to the Brezhnev Doctrine, which had claimed that when a country had joined the communist camp it could not be allowed to leave; and Shultz asserted that in the new balance of forces in the world, this challenge could be successful.

This policy came to be called in common parlance, though not officially, the 'Reagan Doctrine'. It scored some successes, notably in Afghanistan. It also had reputational costs. Clandestine warfare can involve dirty dealing. The Iran–Contra affair, whose idiocies were legion, damaged Reagan's own reputation, divided American opinion and bewildered America's allies. Intervention in Afghanistan meant supplying religious fanatics with weaponry which could later be used against anyone. The invasion of Grenada involved an overwhelming use of force against a tiny opponent. Above all, during the Reagan years the United States confirmed its arrogance and tolerance of brutality towards small countries in its own 'backyard'. Confrontation served its purpose, but the chickens came home to roost for many years to come, in American domestic opinion and in the distaste of America's allies.

Euro-missiles and the Strategic Defence Initiative

At the time of this confrontation in the Third World, the United States also undertook two new competitions in nuclear armaments: the deployment of medium-range missiles in Europe, and a completely new defensive programme, the Strategic Defence Initiative.

The situation regarding nuclear missiles in 1980 was that the SALT II had been signed in Vienna in June 1979, but not ratified by the US Senate as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. However, the American and Soviet governments had both opted to observe the treaty's terms even though it was not formally in force; which meant that they accepted a rough balance in

intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). The Soviets held about two-thirds of their warheads on land-based missiles, which were accurate in their targeting but vulnerable to a pre-emptive attack. The Americans deployed about two-thirds of their warheads in submarines, meaning that they were less accurate but largely safe from attack. The Soviet Union thus had the more powerful first strike, but the Americans had an almost invulnerable second strike – a true balance of terror.

The SALT II agreement covered missiles with a range of over 5,500 kilometres, leaving open the development of missiles with a lesser range. In 1977 the Soviet Union had begun to deploy SS-20 missiles in Central and Eastern Europe, each armed with three nuclear warheads and with a range of 5,000 kilometres. This opened the possibility of separating the West European NATO countries from their American allies, because the SS-20s could attack targets in Western Europe but not in the United States. As we have seen, in 1979 the NATO powers had agreed on a two-stage policy with regard to these medium-range missiles: first, to attempt negotiations with the Soviets for the withdrawal of the SS-20s; and second, if that produced no results, to modernize their own weapons in Western Europe – which meant installing American intermediate-range missiles, in the shape of Pershing or cruise missiles.

Negotiations produced no result. At one stage the Soviets proposed a freeze on intermediate-range missiles, which would have left them with their existing superiority, which was unacceptable to the Americans. Then in November 1981 Reagan proposed what he called the ‘Zero Option’, under which the Soviets would withdraw their SS-20s in return for the Americans *not* dispatching Pershings and cruise missiles to Europe; but this was not acceptable to the Soviets. In July 1982 the principal American and Soviet participants, in the course of a ‘walk in the woods’ away from the negotiating table, agreed informally to accept seventy-five missiles on each side, only to find this rejected by the US government.

The first part of the NATO policy – negotiation – was thus tried and failed. The United States therefore proposed to go ahead with the second part, and deploy their medium-range missiles in Western Europe. This step was ardently opposed by nuclear disarmament groups across Western Europe, especially the Netherlands. In Britain the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), which had been quiescent during the 1970s, sprang into renewed life to protest against the arrival of the missiles. A group of women encamped on Greenham Common airbase, where the first cruise missiles were to be stationed. In West Germany,

pacifist movements mobilized strongly. A quarter of the population of the Netherlands signed a petition against its government's support for the deployment of the missiles. Huge crowds protested throughout Western Europe against a visit to Europe by President Reagan in June 1982. In part, these protests were dominated by the usual suspects: left-wing socialists and, in Italy, the Communist Party. However, there is no doubt that in the Netherlands and Germany especially, the anti-deployment movement successfully united church groups, pacifists, feminists, socialists, environmentalists and many liberals in a broad coalition. There were even some dissident soldiers. Irrespective of their political beliefs many Europeans fundamentally agreed with the eminent British social historian E. P. Thompson, who wrote that Europe was 'pig-in-the-middle while an interminable and threatening argument between born-again Christians and still-born Marxists goes on over our heads'.³³ The protests were reflecting increasing European frustration with the Cold War.

In the event, the British, Dutch and Italian governments disregarded the demonstrators and accepted the missiles (France was not in NATO's command structure). In West Germany, which was the key player, Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats won the Bundestag elections in March 1983, ensuring a majority in favour of receiving the American missiles. Public opposition continued, culminating in a week of demonstrations, from 15 to 20 October, in which Social Democrats led by Willy Brandt joined hands with the Green Party in opposition to a deployment that Helmut Schmidt's Social Democrat-led government had demanded back in 1977. Despite the public furore, the Bundestag gave its approval on 22 November, by 286 votes to 226, and the first nine Pershing missiles arrived in West Germany the very next day.

While these negotiations and internal Western disputes on medium-range missiles were going on, the American and Soviet governments had agreed to attempt a new series of negotiations on long-range missiles, this time under the new acronym START: strategic arms reduction talks. This title included the hopeful notion of reduction in numbers of weapons, whereas earlier negotiations had only aimed at limitation. Negotiations began in June 1982, and proved very difficult, because the Americans aimed at cuts in land-based ICBMs, where the Soviets had a marked superiority. The talks had made little progress when the Soviets broke them off in November 1983 in protest at the arrival of the first Pershing missiles on European soil.

The nuclear arms race, checked during the 1970s by the two SALT agreements, was thus resumed. A completely new element was added to it by President

Reagan’s announcement, on 23 March 1983, of a new Strategic Defence Initiative (known by the acronym of SDI, and often popularly called ‘Star Wars’). This was an extraordinary plan to introduce a comprehensive system for anti-missile defence, using all the resources of space technology (including laser beams and such apparently far-fetched devices as mirrors in space – which helped to confirm the ‘Star Wars’ image) to provide complete security against nuclear attack. Enemy missiles were to be destroyed at any one of four stages: launch; the start of their trajectory; in flight; or on descent. The aim was to achieve complete destruction. If successful, this would have nullified the existing balance of terror by rendering the United States immune from attack while leaving the Soviet Union exposed; and SDI thus threatened to dissolve all the assumptions which had governed nuclear relations for some thirty years. In practice such an outcome was highly unlikely. There could be no certainty of total success in the destructive process, and since the Soviets had nearly 10,000 warheads, even 99 per cent success would mean that 100 would get through – which would be quite enough. Many experts thought the SDI was a complete waste of effort and money. But it posed the Soviets with an almost impossible dilemma. Strategically, they could not afford to ignore the American programme; economically, they could not afford to match it except at unbearable cost. It therefore became a major Soviet objective to persuade the Americans to drop the initiative, or at any rate to limit work on it to the purely theoretical. When the two sides resumed talks on arms limitation in March 1985, the Soviets insisted that any progress must be linked to restrictions on the SDI; the Americans refused, and the talks stalled almost at once.

In 1986 therefore the nuclear balance remained roughly equal:³⁴

	US	USSR
ICBM-borne warheads	2,118	6,420
Submarine-launched warheads	5,536	2,787(+)
Aircraft-borne warheads	2,520	680
Total	10,174	9,987(+)

But the assumptions which lay behind this balance had now been challenged by the SDI, and new uncertainties loomed ahead.

Soviet–American relations in the early 1980s

In general, the Soviet response to Reagan's strong rhetoric and unrelenting confrontation was restrained. Moscow had troubles enough. Soviet leaders repeatedly asked the Americans to resume the dialogue of earlier years. Andropov, not long after he assumed power, publicly asserted (22 November 1982) that the policy of détente was not yet finished – 'The future belongs to it.' In June 1983 the American secretary of state, Shultz, responded in a statement to Congress which combined a strong line with a degree of flexibility: 'We now seek to engage the Soviet leaders in a constructive dialogue.'³⁵

In 1983 Raymond Aron, a perceptive analyst of international relations, looked back at his own verdict on Soviet–American relations, pronounced in 1947: 'War improbable, peace impossible.' He thought that this still held good.³⁶ Why was this? Both powers were in immediate material terms satisfied and secure. Neither needed or wanted more territory. The Soviet Union sought no further territorial gains in Europe, and the intervention in Afghanistan was not directed towards any annexations. The United States had no wish whatsoever to extend its own territory. Both were world powers, with assets that partly balanced one another: ocean-going fleets, foreign bases, allies or protégés in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. As nuclear powers, each could destroy the other but had no intention of doing so.

For all these reasons, war was improbable. Why then did peace appear impossible? For the Soviet Union, this was partly a matter of ideology. It was a key element in Marxist–Leninist belief that ultimately the whole world would become communist, and that the Soviet Union must assist this process. They no longer thought that war between the two camps was inevitable (indeed they recognized that it would be suicidal), but the existing order could not be accepted as permanent. Moreover, the Soviet Union could never *feel* secure, because it faced two enemies, the United States and China, and was therefore, despite its own vast territory and enormous strength, an encircled country.

The United States for its part was secure in its own territory and yet felt vulnerable and endangered by the ideological threat of communism. In practice, there was not the slightest physical threat, and little commercial loss in proportion to the whole American economy, from, for example, a Marxist regime in Nicaragua; but the Americans were afraid of contagion. They were conscious of their own recent errors, for example, in Iran, and dismayed by the hostility they suffered in much of the Third World. Moreover, the American economy was less overwhelmingly strong than it had been. The United States no longer controlled the world monetary system, as it had done under the Bretton

Woods system.

Therefore neither superpower felt fully secure, despite all its territory, resources and military strength. In these circumstances, their mutual hostility became in a curious way a source of stability. The two opponents propped one another up, like heavyweight boxers after fourteen rounds of a gruelling contest. They had lived with the balance of terror so long that they found it almost reassuring. The lines drawn between East and West in Europe, embodied in the iron curtain and the Berlin Wall, were accepted by both sides, despite their regular toll in death and suffering. There was a sense in which a peace settlement which involved changes in any of these structures seemed more dangerous than the existing tension.

The confrontation of the renewed Cold War therefore proved to be less dangerous than it sometimes appeared, and relations between the superpowers retained much of their earlier stability. They did not achieve peace, but they stopped well short of war. The two countries still regarded one another with a deep suspicion. The Soviets disliked the ingrained American habit of lecturing others on morality while assuming complete freedom of action, regardless of principle. The Americans tended to regard Soviet leaders as either fanatics or cynics, and invariably as intractable in their dealings.³⁷

In these circumstances, war remained improbable despite the constant confrontation of the early 1980s, and peace remained, if not impossible, at least unlikely, because neither side wanted it and there seemed no sufficient reason to change the existing situation. It is a mistake however to think that systems never change; that human beings are powerless in the face of settled circumstances. Political leaders in Moscow, Washington, but also Europe, were about to show that taking a resigned attitude to the Cold War's permanence was too pessimistic.

Notes

- 1 See Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War* (London, 1983), and especially the analysis of the characteristics of the Second Cold War, on pp. 11–19.
- 2 Quotation in Peter G. Boyle, *American–Soviet Relations: From the Russian Revolution to the Fall of Communism* (London, 1993), p. 199; comments in Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American–Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington DC, 1994), pp. 8–13.
- 3 John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the End of the Cold War: Implications, Reconsiderations, Provocations* (New York, 1994), pp. 120–1.
- 4 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London, 1995), pp. 766, 764.

- 5 Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents, 1962–1986* (New York, 1995), pp. 594, 608; see also generally pp. 594–5, 606–9.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 478; André Fontaine, *Après eux, le déluge: De Kaboul á Sarajevo, 1979–1995* (Paris, 1995), p. 86.
- 7 Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 772. Kissinger commented that other presidents had tried confrontation and conciliation by turns; Reagan tried both at once.
- 8 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp. 484–5.
- 9 Quoted in Garthoff, *Great Transition*, p. 9. It is worth recalling that John F. Kennedy made very similar remarks in 1960, though as a presidential candidate, not as president.
- 10 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 518.
- 11 Seweryn Bialer, *The Soviet Paradox: External Expansion, Internal Decline* (London, 1986), p. 100, borrowing the title of Robert Musil's novel, *The Man Without Qualities*; Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (London, 1997), pp. 404–5, 433.
- 12 In the mid-1980s, the main forces of the Warsaw Pact were estimated at about 6.4 million men, and those of NATO at about 5 million – Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London, 1989), p. 508.
- 13 Gabriel Partos, *The World That Came in from the Cold* (London, 1993), p. 127.
- 14 Bialer, *Soviet Paradox*, p. 165.
- 15 Partos, *World*, p. 131; Service, *Twentieth-Century Russia*, pp. 467, 470.
- 16 Fontaine, *Déluge*, p. 239.
- 17 Kennedy, *Great Powers*, p. 497.
- 18 For this thesis, see Valerie Bunce, 'The Empire Strikes Back: The Evolution of the Eastern Bloc from a Soviet Asset to a Soviet Liability', *International Organization*, Vol. 39, 1985, pp. 1–46.
- 19 Bialer, *Soviet Paradox*, p. 198; see generally pp. 196–9.
- 20 Cited in Vojtech Mastny, 'The Soviet Non-invasion of Poland in 1980–81 and the End of the Cold War', *Cold War History Project Bulletin*, No. 5, Spring 1995, p. 6.
- 21 Kennedy, *Great Powers*, p. 527.
- 22 Lawrence Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East* (London, 2008), p. 115.
- 23 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1984, p. 32,825.
- 24 Partos, *World*, p. 153, quoting an interview with Artyom Borovik, a Soviet journalist whose articles about the war were not published until 1987.
- 25 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996), p. 247.
- 26 *Keesing*, 1982, p. 31,568.
- 27 Jeane Kirkpatrick, 'Dictatorship and Double Standards', *Commentary*, No. 68, November 1979, pp. 34–45.
- 28 A remark by a Chicago lawyer, quoted in Fontaine, *Déluge*, p. 339.
- 29 Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945–1993* (New York, 1994), p. 191.
- 30 Differing casualty figures in Chris Cook, *World Political Almanac* (3rd ed., London, 1995), p. 326; Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: US Policy toward Central America in the Reagan Years* (Oxford, 1991), p. 112.

- 31 Margaret Thatcher, *Downing Street Years* (London, 1993), p. 331.
- 32 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 347.
- 33 E. P. Thompson, *Beyond the Cold War: A New Approach to the Cold War and Nuclear Annihilation* (New York, 1982), p. 37.
- 34 Kennedy, *Great Powers*, p. 503, citing IISS, *The Military Balance, 1985–86*, p. 180.
- 35 Garthoff, *Great Transition*, pp. 85–6, 108.
- 36 Raymond Aron, *Les dernières années du siècle* (Paris, 1984), pp. 165–6.
- 37 See Bialer, *Paradox*, pp. 346–51, 356–60, for an analysis of American and Soviet misconceptions of one another in the mid-1980s.

Gorbachev and Reagan, 1985–8

The advent of Gorbachev – Soviet retreat from Afghanistan – The Gorbachev–Reagan summits – Peace in sight.

The advent of Gorbachev

On 10 March 1985 Konstantin Chernenko, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the effective ruler of the Soviet Union, died at the age of seventy-three. By then he was ‘an enfeebled geriatric so zombie-like as to be beyond assessing intelligence reports, whether alarming or not’.¹ Perhaps for this reason the next day the Politburo nominated Mikhail Gorbachev, its youngest member at the age of fifty-four, to replace him. Gorbachev was the first general secretary to have been born in the Soviet Union rather than in Tsarist Russia. He was educated at Moscow University, where he took a degree in law; entered the Communist Party bureaucracy in his home region of Stavropol; and became a member of the Party Central Committee in 1971. In 1978 he became a member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, with responsibility for agriculture; and was promoted to full membership of the Politburo in 1980. This was a rapid rise, but it was achieved through the normal structures of the Party, and under the patronage of Chernenko’s predecessor, Yuri Andropov, a longtime head of the KGB. He showed remarkable success as a bureaucrat and politician in the Soviet style; but it was by no means obviously the making of a vigorous reformer.²

Gorbachev, writes Robert Service, was ‘a Marxist–Leninist believer’. Archie Brown puts it more cautiously: ‘He thought of himself as a Marxist – and indeed as a Leninist – but his Marxism was flexible and undogmatic.’³ He was also an

optimist – a vital trait which he shared with Reagan, with whom his relations were to be so important. He thought that the Soviet Union provided a number of services for its citizens (e.g. in health and education) which were superior to the equivalents in capitalist countries, and that it was his task to bring other aspects up to scratch. Just as Churchill declared in 1942 that he had not become the king's first minister in order to preside over the dissolution of the British Empire, so Gorbachev 'had no intention of presiding over the dissolution of the Soviet Union' or of dismantling the communist system.⁴

He set out instead to reform it. His personal experience and some of his academic studies had persuaded him that reform was necessary. When he had been in office for just over a year, the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in April 1986 convinced him that reform must be drastic and rapid – Chernobyl revealed a state of affairs which demanded root and branch transformation. Gorbachev therefore pressed forward his twin domestic programme of perestroika and glasnost. 'Perestroika' means restructuring, and it began as an attempt to invigorate the stagnant Soviet economy by decentralization and the introduction of some market forces. But it went further than that. Gorbachev described it as a complete renewal of all aspects of Soviet life, economic, social, political and moral – a sweeping programme. 'Glasnost' means openness in the expression of opinion, relating to current events, contemporary society and Soviet history. Perestroika and glasnost together raised the fundamental question of whether the system was capable of reform at all, or would have to be abandoned. In Gorbachev's own words: 'Just like reformers before me, I thought we had a system that could be improved. Instead, I learned that we had a system that needed to be replaced.'⁵ We may recall what Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* in 1856 – that the most dangerous moment for a bad government is usually when it begins to reform.

Internal changes on this scale were bound to have implications for foreign policy. Gorbachev knew that reform at home required a durable peace abroad. He signalled his intention to change foreign policy soon after he took office, by replacing Andrei Gromyko as foreign minister by Eduard Shevardnadze on 2 July 1985. Gromyko had served in the post since 1957 (and had also been one of Gorbachev's principal backers for the leadership), but he suddenly found himself 'kicked upstairs' to become president of the Soviet Union. Shevardnadze, like Gorbachev, was a comparative youngster (born in 1928), and virtually without experience in foreign affairs. He represented a new start, and brought to the Foreign Ministry a flexibility which Gromyko could never have provided.

The essential link between reform at home and a new foreign policy lay in the deployment of resources. Gorbachev wanted to reduce the cost of supporting communist regimes in the Third World and set out to disengage from Soviet commitments in Africa and Afghanistan. More important, he sought to control the defence budget by negotiating arms limitation agreements with the Americans, and if at all possible persuading them to give up or modify the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), Reagan's astonishing scheme to create a total defence against nuclear attack.

These were questions of policy and diplomacy. Gorbachev also took a crucial ideological step. In 1985, not long after he became general secretary, a new party programme was prepared for adoption by the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, due to be held in February 1986. Gorbachev deliberately took this opportunity to redefine the concept of 'peaceful coexistence', which was to become an end in itself, and part of a genuine policy of cooperation with the United States. The change was accepted by the Party Congress; and though it may have appeared to be no more than the redefinition of a doctrinal point, it marked a fundamental transformation in the basis of Soviet foreign policy.

Gorbachev was adventurous, with a keen and flexible mind. He knew parts of Western Europe as a private traveller as well as a party representative, and was open to its influences. Western leaders – and, as rapidly appeared, the Western public – proved equally open to him. Margaret Thatcher, the British prime minister, invited him to England in December 1984, before he became general secretary, and after long private conversations came to the conclusion that he represented something new in Soviet politics. As she remarked to the press at the end of Gorbachev's visit, she liked him and thought he was a man she could do business with.⁶

Would Reagan think Gorbachev could do business with the Americans? The omens did not seem favourable. Reagan had committed himself to a policy of confrontation with the Soviet Union, and had not minced his words about the 'evil empire', though he had never entirely closed the door to negotiations in the future. When Gorbachev came to power, he was advised to play for safety until Reagan left office. Gorbachev himself thought otherwise. He believed that he had no time to spare, and that he had a good chance of coming to terms with Reagan precisely *because* he had a strong conservative reputation, rather than in spite of it. Nobody would think Reagan was soft on communism if he made an agreement with the Soviet Union. Gorbachev came to think that a personal

meeting with Reagan was urgent. There was no need and no time to make all the careful preparations which would be necessary to ensure that a summit meeting would produce solid results, which was the conventional wisdom nurtured by the diplomats on both sides. Arrangements were made behind the scenes, and in July 1985 it was agreed that a summit meeting should take place in November. This was to be the first of four summit meetings which transformed relations between the two countries.

Before discussing these fateful meetings, we must turn to the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan, which was achieved during the same period and was an essential accompaniment to the negotiations at the summit. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in December 1979 had been the final blow to the détente between the superpowers, and the Soviet withdrawal was an important element in the restoration of good relations.

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan

When Gorbachev took office, he rapidly decided to reduce Soviet commitments abroad. As early as October 1985 he had decided in principle to get out of Afghanistan, though he had not yet worked out how to do it, and he still hoped to save something from the wreck. In particular, he sought to retain at least a neutral (and preferably not Islamic) government in Afghanistan, in order to limit the effects of withdrawal on the Soviet republics in Central Asia.

In May 1986 Gorbachev removed Babrak Karmal, the secretary-general of the Afghan Communist Party, and replaced him with Mohammad Najibullah, the head of the Afghan equivalent of the KGB. Najibullah, under Soviet instructions, offered concessions to the Afghan resistance, proposing to set up new political parties and introduce a new constitution, but to no avail. In November 1986 Gorbachev resolved upon drastic action. He told the Politburo that the Soviet Union had been fighting in Afghanistan for six years, and unless they changed course they might still be fighting in another twenty or thirty years. He therefore proposed to bring the Soviet troops out within two years, leaving Afghanistan as a neutral state. On 1 January 1987 the Afghan government announced a unilateral ceasefire by its own forces, and declared that it was ready to talk to the resistance. The Afghan militias replied that they would continue the armed struggle, and demanded the total, immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Soviet troops. The Soviets wanted a compromise, but the mujahideen were determined on victory – another parallel with the situation in Vietnam, where the

Americans had tried for a compromise and the North Vietnamese had been set on victory.

So the war dragged on, though Gorbachev strove to bring it to an end. On 16 September 1987 Shevardnadze gave the American secretary of state, George Shultz, a firm private assurance that Soviet forces would withdraw from Afghanistan, probably within a year. Complicated secret exchanges took place between the United States, the Soviet Union and Pakistan, in which the Pakistanis tried to insist that any agreement should involve a new Afghan Provisional Government, rather than the existing government nominated by the Soviets. On 8 February 1988 Gorbachev tried to cut through the tangle by announcing on Soviet television that the Soviet Union would withdraw its troops, starting on 15 May that year, if a political agreement was reached by 15 March. He hoped for, but did not set as a condition, the establishment of an independent and neutral Afghan government.

In March 1988 indirect negotiations between the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan began in Geneva, using the good offices of the United Nations. On 14 April the Pakistani and Afghan representatives concluded three agreements: the first on non-interference and non-intervention in Afghanistan; the second on the voluntary return of refugees; and the third on the settlement of the situation in Afghanistan. There was to be a phased withdrawal of 'foreign troops' to begin on 15 May and to be completed within nine months. These troops were understood to be Soviet, and this was the key to the whole arrangement.⁷ These agreements were guaranteed by American and Soviet representatives, and signed in the presence of the secretary-general of the United Nations, Pérez de Cuéllar, but the documents were somewhat opaque and made no explicit reference to the end of hostilities or to the political future of Afghanistan; and referred only to a 'positive symmetry' in the reduction of outside aid to the two sides in Afghanistan. The American State Department, in a commentary, specified that the Soviet Union had agreed to a complete withdrawal of its forces, and added that if Moscow continued to provide military assistance to its Afghan protégés, Washington would do the same for theirs.

The mujahideen were not directly represented at these negotiations (though Pakistan claimed to represent their interests). They refused to accept the agreements and declared that they would fight on until the government in Kabul was overthrown. The agreement therefore had only limited effect on the ground (or in the mountains). Its importance lay in the fact that it gave the Soviet Union a way out of the conflict. The Soviet troops began to withdraw on time, on 15

May 1988. The Pakistanis for their part kept up their assistance to the mujahideen, and the Americans continued to channel supplies through Pakistan. Gorbachev turned a blind eye to these events, making threatening remarks about halting the withdrawal of Soviet troops, but taking no action. The Soviet withdrawal was virtually complete by 15 February 1989, nine months after the Geneva agreement. They left some troops at their embassy in Kabul, at Kabul airport and at their military base near Herat; but that was all. Just over nine years after it began, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan came to an end.

The political consequences of withdrawal were far-reaching. Gorbachev had carried out an unprecedented retreat and had abandoned the claim made in the Brezhnev Doctrine that a communist takeover of power, once achieved, was irreversible. Afghanistan was doubtless an exceptional case, but the example was dangerous. In the Third World, Soviet prestige was badly damaged, as hostile votes in the UN General Assembly showed. More serious still, nationalist sentiment within the Soviet Union was stirred and encouraged by the Afghan resistance, which thus played a part in the dissolution of the Soviet state between 1990 and 1991.

Afghanistan also paid a heavy price. There are no reliable figures for Afghan casualties, although hundreds of thousands certainly died.⁸ The Soviet withdrawal was followed by continued fighting. Najibullah's government, which was almost universally expected to vanish when the Soviet troops left, clung on for another three years (the Americans had been so sure that the government would collapse that they closed their embassy in Kabul when the Soviets pulled out). The resistance, whose only unifying element had been opposition to the Soviet occupation, rapidly fell apart into conflicting religious and tribal factions. In 1992 an Islamic Provisional Government was proclaimed, but civil war continued. The great powers were no longer interested – until in 1996 Afghanistan was seized by a radical sect called the Taliban and became a safe haven for terrorists who hated the decadent West as much as the godless Soviet Union.

The Geneva and Reykjavik summits

While these protracted and often obscure events were taking place in Afghanistan, Gorbachev and Reagan held four summit meetings in a blaze of publicity. These took place in less than three years, following a period of almost six years during which there had been no Soviet–American summits at all. The

two statesmen met in Geneva (from 19 to 20 November 1985), Reykjavik (from 11 to 12 October 1986), Washington (from 7 to 10 December 1987) and Moscow (from 29 May to 2 June 1988).⁹

These meetings were in the long run so successful and had such far-reaching consequences that it is easy to forget the difficult circumstances in which they began. At the beginning of 1985 confrontation was still the order of the day in American policy. Reagan, in his State of the Union message to Congress in February 1985, declared that the United States had the right and duty to help everyone fighting for freedom across the globe, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua, and would not betray their confidence. To support them was an act of self-defence.

This was strong stuff. Yet only the next month, in March 1985, George H.W. Bush, the American vice president, attended the funeral ceremonies for Chernenko in Moscow, bearing an invitation from Reagan to Gorbachev to hold a summit meeting in the United States. For Reagan, this was not out of character. He had from time to time mixed his denunciations of the Soviet Union with expressions of willingness to talk to Soviet leaders. He had written personal letters to Brezhnev and Andropov. This time his simultaneous practice of confrontation and conciliation produced far-reaching results.

Gorbachev, who had himself been looking for a meeting, took up Reagan's proposal for a summit without insisting on agreements being reached in advance on specific issues. He suggested Moscow instead of Washington as the venue, but then both sides agreed on the neutral ground of Geneva. This first Reagan–Gorbachev summit was an extraordinary affair. Reagan's 'evil empire' speech was still widely remembered. Diplomats and academics doubted his knowledge and judgement in matters of foreign policy. Gorbachev was himself a product of that same 'evil empire', with his thought shaped by Marxism–Leninism; and he was still a beginner in the conduct of foreign affairs. By the standard of earlier summits, when Nixon and Brezhnev had met largely to put the seal on agreements previously drawn up by their officials, the meeting was informal. No joint documents were drafted in advance, and only a very broad agenda was agreed, yet both leaders wanted their meeting to be a success; and it appears that of the two Gorbachev, despite being twenty years younger and with no fixed term of office to confine him, was the more hurried and the keener that there should be no breakdown.

During the two days of the meeting, Gorbachev and Reagan met four times in private talks, with only interpreters present, instead of the one session of fifteen

minutes which had been envisaged. They largely ignored their agenda, and instead 'engaged in a free-form discussion'. Put more simply, they talked to one another.¹⁰ In the event, this worked out rather well. The talk sometimes grew heated, particularly when Gorbachev raised the possibility of the Americans abandoning the SDI, which Reagan brusquely refused to consider. But they did not press their differences of opinion to breaking point, and all in all they got on well together. Reagan had prepared carefully for the summit in his own way. He had rehearsed personal meetings, with a State Department official taking Gorbachev's role. He had even ensured that one meeting would take place in a room with a log fire, so that he and Gorbachev could hold a 'fireside chat'. This scenario was duly used, and the TV cameras conveyed a striking image of cordiality and mutual respect to audiences across the world. One of Reagan's advisers thought they were 'like a couple of fellows who had run into one another at the club and discovered that they had a lot in common'. Gorbachev thought Reagan 'a complex and contradictory person'; Reagan formed a positive impression of Gorbachev, who was clearly very different from any previous Soviet leader.¹¹ They readily agreed to meet again. Reagan invited Gorbachev to visit the United States; Gorbachev at once accepted and reciprocated with an invitation for Reagan to go to Moscow, which was accepted with equal alacrity.

The result was a triumph of style over substance. Gorbachev's principal substantive objective had been to check the progress of the SDI but on this Reagan yielded nothing. Reagan for his part insisted on discussing trouble spots in the Third World and human rights in the Soviet Union, but effectively got nowhere. And yet the meeting was an undoubted success. At the end, the two sides issued a joint communiqué, declaring that a nuclear war could not be won and should never be begun; that they recognized the importance of preventing any war between the two countries, whether nuclear or conventional; and that they would not seek to obtain a military superiority over one another. In retrospect this may appear to state the obvious, but after the confrontation of the past five years it was strikingly positive; and it went further than the statements of the previous era of détente by referring to preventing conventional as well as nuclear war. The two sides also agreed to resume strategic arms limitation talks, aiming in principle at a reduction of 50 per cent in their strategic nuclear weapons; which at least held out the hope of substantial progress in the future.

After his return home, Reagan wrote a long letter to Gorbachev in his own hand, recording his warm impressions of the meeting; and Gorbachev replied in similar terms. On New Year's Day 1986, six weeks after the summit meeting,

Reagan and Gorbachev broadcast televised messages of goodwill to the Soviet and American peoples respectively – an unprecedented display of public amity and warmth.

Too much can be made of warm impressions. Churchill and Roosevelt in their day both thought that they were on good terms with Stalin, to find that the vision faded in the cold light of dawn. All depended on what was to follow this first contact. In fact there ensued a distinctly rough passage in American–Soviet relations. On 5 April 1986 a bomb exploded in a West Berlin club, killing two American servicemen and a Turkish civilian. There was evidence of Libyan involvement in this attack, and on 15 April American aircraft bombed Tripoli and Benghazi, attacking mainly military targets but also trying to strike at Gaddafi in person. Thirty-seven Libyans were killed, and the Americans lost an aircraft. At the time, Libya was still a protégé of the Soviet Union (though Gaddafi himself was a maverick in international affairs, and did much as he liked). The Soviet foreign minister, Shevardnadze, was due to make a visit to the United States to prepare for the next summit meeting; but he cancelled his journey to demonstrate Soviet disapproval of the American raids. At the same time, the arms race looked set to resume. On 27 May Reagan announced that, before the end of the year, the United States would cease to observe the limits set by SALT II on numbers of intercontinental ballistic missiles and warheads. The Soviet government replied that if the SALT agreements were not observed, it would take all necessary measures to maintain parity in nuclear armaments.

All this looked very unfavourable for hopes of a new détente. But Gorbachev was growing increasingly anxious about nuclear weapons, perhaps as a result of the shock of the Chernobyl disaster in April 1986. On 15 September he sent a detailed and thoughtful letter to Reagan proposing that the two leaders should hold, as soon as possible, what he called a ‘one-on-one’ summit meeting, to engage in a ‘strictly confidential, private and frank discussion’ with the aim of cultivating the political goodwill that might lead to a breakthrough on a range of nuclear disarmament issues.¹² Reagan agreed, and between 11 and 12 October 1986 the two leaders met at Reykjavik, in Iceland, for what proved an astonishing conference.

At Reykjavik, Gorbachev offered a number of concessions that American policymakers had simply not anticipated when they briefed the president in anticipation of the meeting. On intermediate-range missiles in Europe, he proposed to revive Reagan’s ‘zero option’, suggested in 1981, exchanging Soviet withdrawal of SS-20 missiles for American withdrawal of Pershing II and cruise

missiles. On long-range nuclear weapons, he proposed a 50 per cent reduction on both sides over a period of five years, and agreed to omit the British and French nuclear weapons from the calculation of totals for these purposes (whether or not to count the British and French missiles in with the American totals had long been a point of friction in arms limitation talks). In return, he asked the Americans to adhere to the provisions of SALT I with regard to limitations on anti-ballistic missile defences, that is, to restrict such defences to the capitals and one other area, which by implication would have prevented the development of the SDI, which was to cover the whole territory of the United States. The American delegation countered by proposing to reduce intercontinental missiles to zero within ten years, but to retain the right to install strategic defences against the intermediate-range missiles and bombers which would remain. Gorbachev then made the astonishing proposal of abolishing all nuclear weapons within ten years. Reagan was taken aback, but he had long cherished the apparently impossible aim of doing away with all nuclear weapons; and for a moment he accepted the proposal. But again the SDI proved the stumbling block. Gorbachev set, as a condition for the abolition of nuclear weapons, a condition that work on the SDI should be limited to laboratory and theoretical studies only.¹³ Reagan rejected this condition, and when Gorbachev persisted, the president took a dramatic and unprecedented step. In Kissinger's words, Reagan 'responded in a way no foreign policy professional would have advised: he simply got up and left the room'.¹⁴

The result was confusion and the total collapse of the summit meeting, in a way which would earlier have been considered a complete disaster. The conventional wisdom had always been that failure could not be admitted, and some pretence of success must always be maintained, for fear of the damage to Soviet-American relations. Yet the Reykjavik summit failed, without fatal consequences. Gorbachev himself did much to save the situation. When he appeared at a press conference before an audience of bewildered and worried journalists, he improvised an explanation of what had happened and managed to sound hopeful – something which his predecessors neither would nor could have done. Reagan too simply chose to disregard the failure; and it is striking that Gorbachev trusted Reagan more after Reykjavik than before, and his references to the president in private became much more respectful.¹⁵ In retrospect, the failure at Reykjavik was almost certainly fortunate, because the sweeping changes which were almost agreed were improvised, without careful thought as to how they could be achieved, or what their consequences would be. For

example, if the United States and Soviet Union had given up their strategic nuclear armaments irrespective of what other powers did, they would have voluntarily reduced their strength in comparison with Britain, France and China, and other nuclear, or would-be nuclear, powers such as India, Pakistan, Israel and South Africa. It may well have destabilized world affairs.

The Washington Treaty and the Moscow summit

The immediate aftermath of Reykjavik appeared ominous. The United States carried out two nuclear tests on 3 and 11 February 1987; and on 26 February a Soviet nuclear test ended a moratorium which had lasted since August 1985. But immediately after this explosion, on 28 February 1987, Gorbachev proposed to the Americans a new and separate negotiation on intermediate-range missiles, intended to lead to their dismantling within five years. This represented a marked change in the Soviet approach, which had previously been to link all nuclear issues together. Among these high-level contacts there occurred an extraordinary event that threw doubt on the much-vaunted efficiency of the Soviet military machine. On 28 May 1987 an eighteen-year-old West German pilot, Matthias Rust, flew a light Cessna aircraft across the Finnish–Soviet frontier all the way to Moscow, where he circled round the Kremlin before landing near Red Square. The news of this astonishing flight broke on the eve of a meeting of communist leaders in Warsaw, much to Gorbachev’s embarrassment. ‘It is even worse than Chernobyl,’ he exclaimed. ‘It is an absolute disgrace.’ In the event, Gorbachev was able to turn the event to his own advantage, by dismissing General Sokolov, minister of defence, and replacing him with a minister more amenable to his reformist agenda in foreign policy. Dobrynin, indeed, wrote that he carried onto a quiet reshuffle, which allowed negotiations with Reagan to go ahead more easily.¹⁶

Reagan showed himself to be very capable at raising the bar and prodding Gorbachev to offer more. In June 1987 he visited West Germany and in a speech before the Brandenburg Gate upped the ante with one of the most memorable speeches of modern times: ‘General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization; Come here to this gate! Mr Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall!’ This rhetorical tour de force ‘fell flat’.¹⁷ Nobody in the Kremlin could as yet imagine opening borders. Nevertheless, disarmament talks began at Geneva, and in September 1987 Secretary of State

Shultz and Soviet foreign minister Shevardnadze announced that they had agreed in principle on a 'zero option' on intermediate-range missiles, meaning not withdrawal but actual dismantling; they also announced that they would pursue the aim of a 50 per cent reduction in long-range strategic weapons.

The success of the talks in Geneva led in turn to the third summit meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev, held in Washington from 7 to 10 December 1987. By this time, Gorbachev was at the height of his remarkable popularity in the Western world ('Gorby-mania' was the term in vogue), and he received a rapturous welcome in the American capital. The visit was an immense public relations success, and a striking example of Gorbachev's talents as a communicator, which flourished more abroad than at home. All that was required by way of formal business was for the two leaders to sign, at 1.45 pm precisely, the Treaty of Washington (8 December), which provided for the destruction within three years of all land-based missiles deployed in Europe and Asia with a range of between 500 and 5,500 kilometres. The odd timing, which was at the White House's insistence, was as much a mystery to the American negotiators as the Soviets. It turned out to be a time regarded as propitious by Mrs Reagan's astrologer.¹⁸ This slightly flakey aspect aside, the treaty was a landmark in the Cold War. It provided, for the first time, for an actual *reduction* in the number of missiles and weapons, as distinct from earlier agreements which had *restricted* numbers. A whole category of weapons was to be eliminated. The treaty involved substantial concessions on the part of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev dropped his earlier insistence that the SDI should be abandoned or restricted as a condition for other agreements. In terms of numbers, the Soviets would give up twice as many missiles as the Americans; though the Soviet SS-20s were becoming obsolete, so the concession appeared more significant than it really was. The specific mention of the elimination of intermediate-range missiles based in Asia meant that SS-20s could not be redeployed in Siberia. The treaty specified detailed procedures for verification of the destruction of the weapons – a success for Reagan's constant repetition of the slogan 'trust but verify', which he learnt to say in Russian and which gradually made a strong impression on Gorbachev. The procedure for destruction, before the very eyes of inspectors from the other country, marked a concession by both sides, but more for the Soviets than the Americans, who had been less rigid on this issue. Finally, about 4,000 American tactical nuclear weapons would remain deployed in West Germany. These could not reach Soviet territory, but represented a considerable threat to Eastern Europe and the

Soviet forces stationed there.

Despite these substantial concessions by the Soviets, which represented a real advantage for the United States, the treaty was heavily criticized by a number of American senators, including Dan Quayle (later to be Republican vice president under George H.W. Bush) and Bob Dole (the Republican candidate for the presidency in 1996), on the grounds that its terms were too dangerous. It was plain that only Reagan, with his immense prestige in the Republican Party and unrivalled popularity among the American people, could have achieved such a result. Gorbachev too had his difficulties at home with those who thought he had given away too much; but like Reagan he had the authority to carry the agreement through. Indeed, over the next two years he was able to use the international prestige won by his foreign policy successes to push ahead, in the teeth of strong opposition from the hardliners within the Politburo, with a partial but nevertheless significant move towards more glasnost and, eventually, towards a degree of political pluralism.

The Treaty of Washington was in short a striking achievement. It was true that the missiles to be eliminated made up only a tiny proportion (4 or 5 per cent) of all the nuclear weapons held by the United States and Soviet Union together; but even so the missiles concerned were those which for a decade had been the most prominent and controversial of all. It was in 1977 that the Soviet Union had announced the deployment of its SS-20s in Eastern and Central Europe. This had been followed by the arrival, amid intense controversy, of the American Pershing II and cruise missiles. Now in 1987 all were to be eliminated. Lord Carrington, who was British foreign secretary and later secretary-general of NATO for nearly all this period, reflected with wry humour that 'half the time I was trying to get them [the missiles] there, the other half trying to get them out. Much better out than in.'¹⁹

Only six months after the Washington summit meeting, President Reagan visited Moscow from 29 May to 2 June 1988. The business aspect of this meeting was limited to the formal exchange of ratifications of the Washington Treaty on intermediate-range nuclear forces, and the opening of negotiations for a reduction of 50 per cent in the two powers' principal nuclear arsenals. The visit's main achievements were in the realms of publicity and propaganda, now exploited by the two leaders working together, not in opposition. Gorbachev and Reagan strolled together through Red Square, talking to passers-by and smiling at babies (if not quite kissing them). Reagan addressed a large audience at Moscow University (where Gorbachev himself had been a student), producing

the astonishing picture of the president of the United States speaking beneath an enormous bust of Lenin and before a background of red banners emblazoned with the hammer and sickle. During the visit a ghost from the recent past was laid. Reagan was asked whether he still thought the Soviet Union was an 'evil empire', and he replied: 'No. I was talking about another time, another era.'²⁰ Such comments were not mere trimmings or cosmetic touches. If wars begin in the minds of men, in the striking phrase of the historian Sir Michael Howard, so also may peace begin there. The images of the Gorbachev–Reagan meeting in Moscow spoke directly to the minds of men and women in both countries. It was not the first visit of an American president to Moscow, but it was the first to achieve a thorough transformation in feelings and attitudes.

While these dramatic summit meetings were in progress, agreements of a less spectacular kind crept up almost unobserved. The United States progressively abandoned the embargoes on trade with the Soviet Union which had been imposed after the invasion of Afghanistan. The Geneva agreement leading to Soviet withdrawal from that country was signed in April 1988, with the United States and Soviet Union as its sponsors and guarantors. An agreement was reached in New York (December 1988) providing for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and South African forces from Namibia. In 1989 Vietnam, under pressure from the Soviet Union, withdrew its forces from Kampuchea. This did not mean that peace suddenly prevailed in these areas (civil war continued in Angola and Kampuchea, for example); but the confrontations and wars by proxy between the Americans and Soviets came to an end.

Gorbachev did not limit his new foreign policy to relations with the Americans. 'Gorby-mania' was even more intense in Europe than in the United States – unsurprisingly, given the fears generated by Gorbachev's predecessors' decision to site the SS-20 missiles – and Gorbachev's diplomacy towards his West European neighbours was in many ways even more assiduous than towards the Americans. Between March 1985 and December 1989 Gorbachev met Margaret Thatcher six times and made two high-profile visits to the United Kingdom. He met French President François Mitterrand even more frequently. He made official visits to practically every West European capital and formed friendships with some European leaders, notably Spain's Felipe Gonzalez. Only with West Germany was there any frostiness. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl made the unfortunate gaffe of comparing Gorbachev's gifts as a propagandist with Joseph Goebbels' in 1986, and the comparison unsurprisingly rankled. Gorbachev nevertheless visited West Germany several times.

During the Washington summit of December 1987, Reagan said that he could see the possibility, not just of détente, but of peace. For a man who had once regarded détente itself as a one-way street in favour of the Soviet Union, this was a remarkable vision. By 1988 it appeared to be true, or very nearly so. In December 1988 Gorbachev visited New York to address the General Assembly of the UN, and received his usual rapturous reception from Western crowds. In his speech to the UN he announced a unilateral reduction of 500,000 troops in the Soviet Army, and the withdrawal and disbanding of six armoured divisions stationed in Central Europe, thus extending the scope of arms reduction to conventional as well as nuclear forces.²¹ By the end of 1988 the end of the Cold War was in sight; though it was not formally and publicly acknowledged until the end of 1989 and early 1990.

The great transformation

The end of the Cold War will be discussed in the next chapter. Meanwhile, what brought about the astonishing transformation which took place between 1985 and 1988? The importance of personalities stands out from the events we have just examined. Gorbachev and Reagan achieved a *rapprochement* not attained by any of their predecessors, and the successes achieved by 1988 would have been inconceivable without them. But relations between modern states are rarely decided by personalities alone. Other forces were at work, though they are hard to assess with any certainty. In the background to the success of the Reagan–Gorbachev summit meetings lay the legacy of détente from the early 1970s, which secured gains that were not entirely lost even in the years of renewed confrontation. Among these gains were a notable improvement in diplomatic and personal relations; and a change in atmosphere which was strongest at the top, during the Nixon–Brezhnev summit meetings, but permeated the relations between the two countries.

There was also a slow and subtle change of generations. Dobrynin, the long-serving Soviet ambassador in Washington, wrote in his memoirs that if in the late 1980s the Soviet leadership had decided to batten down the hatches and continue the arms race, whatever the cost, the Soviet people would have responded as they did in the Second World War and would have patiently endured the necessary hardships.²² It may be so. But by 1985 the generation which was hardened in the fires of the Second World War had largely passed away, and their successors had a different outlook. There was a slackening of the

ideological impulse, even among party members. Gorbachev's redefinition of 'peaceful coexistence' to allow for the possibility of permanent reconciliation with the United States was no mere formality. In the United States, Reagan's first term as president had shown that anti-communism was very much alive; but this may well have been more a matter of emotion than ideology, a straw fire rather than a fixed determination. The Americans had sustained the long haul of the Cold War with remarkable persistence; yet Vietnam had shown how near they were to cracking in the early 1970s. They rallied, but if there was a chance of peace they were ready to take it.

The revived Cold War between 1980 and 1985 had focused principally on a new arms race in medium-range nuclear missiles, and on the expansion of Soviet influence in Africa and Afghanistan. But arms control was still in the basic economic interest of both the superpowers, and especially of the Soviet Union, which had fewer resources to take the strain. In this area the United States was able to step up the pressure to a degree which the Soviets found it hard to match – though Washington also had to respond to European public opinion, which was in no doubt about the merits of Gorbachev's policy. As to Afghanistan, it soon became clear to the Soviet leadership that they had made a disastrous mistake. In Africa, the Soviets became disillusioned with the regimes they were supporting. It appeared that the Cold War was not after all going to be won or lost in Africa; it merely lost its way there, which was something very different.

Last, but not least, the transformation owed much to the power of ideas: to the capacity to 'think outside the box'. Reagan, whose qualities as an intellectual were not exactly renowned, proved able, in a way many foreign professionals were too timid to do, to adapt his most cherished preconceptions to changing circumstances and to see the virtues of negotiation with a regime that he had regarded as the embodiment of evil. Gorbachev's 'new thinking' on foreign policy was a radical break from what the Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov had called 'the empirical-competitive' method in international affairs, whereby nation states aim at the 'maximum improvement of one's position everywhere possible' and, simultaneously, at creating the 'maximum unpleasantness to opposing forces without consideration of common welfare and common interests'.²³ Gorbachev consciously broke with this quintessentially 'realist' (or Machiavellian) approach to foreign policy, which was certainly the one practised throughout the Cold War by his predecessors as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

Gorbachev and Reagan thus seized upon favourable circumstances to work

their apparent miracle of transformation. They made a friend of fortune. From 1989 to 1991, however, the pace of events would quicken, and governments of all kinds would be forced to improvise solutions to unexpected challenges of historical dimensions.

Notes

- 1 John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London, 2005), p. 228.
- 2 For a biographical sketch of Gorbachev's career, see Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 24–52.
- 3 Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (London, 1997), p. 443; Brown, *Gorbachev Factor*, p. 32.
- 4 Service, *Twentieth-Century Russia*, pp. 446–7.
- 5 Quoted in Brown, *Gorbachev Factor*, p. 95.
- 6 Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London, 1993), p. 463. See also Archie Brown, 'The Change to Engagement in Britain's Cold War Policy: The Origins of the Thatcher–Gorbachev Relationship', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 2008, pp. 3–47.
- 7 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1988, pp. 35,970–1.
- 8 Patrick Brogan, *World Conflicts* (London, 1992), p. 117, notes that estimates of Afghans killed vary from 100,000 to 1 million, and considers the latter figure too high.
- 9 Gorbachev and Reagan also met in December 1988, during Gorbachev's visit to New York to address the General Assembly of the United Nations; but this was not a summit conference. Reagan was in the last month of his presidency, and his successor had already been elected. Gorbachev had to cut short his stay in order to visit the scene of a disastrous earthquake in Armenia.
- 10 The phrase is from Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York, 1995), p. 592.
- 11 Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American–Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington DC, 1994), pp. 324–5; John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the End of the Cold War* (paperback ed., New York, 1994), p. 217; Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 592.
- 12 Svetlana Savranskaya and Thomas Blanton, eds, *The Reykjavik File*; available online: <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB203/>, document 1.
- 13 *Ibid.*, document 16.
- 14 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (paperback ed., London, 1995), p. 783.
- 15 Brown, *Gorbachev Factor*, p. 233.
- 16 Jonathan Haslam, *Russia's Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven, CT, 2011), pp. 360–1; Archie Brown, 'Gorbachev', in *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. III, ed. Odd Arne Westad and Melvyn Leffler (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 250–1.
- 17 Gaddis, *The Cold War*, p. 235.
- 18 Brown, *Gorbachev Factor*, p. 237.
- 19 Quoted in Gabriel Partos, *The World That Came in from the Cold* (London, 1993), p. 235.
- 20 J. P. D. Dunbabin, *The Cold War: The Great Powers and Their Allies* (London, 1994), uses this

remarkable picture as the book's front cover; see Garthoff, *Transition*, p. 352, for Reagan and the 'evil empire'.

21 Ibid., p. 366.

22 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 611.

23 Andrei D. Sakharov, *Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom* (London, 1969), p. 33.

23

Three years that shook the world, 1989–91

1989: lull and landslide – US–Soviet relations – Tiananmen Square and repression in China – The collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe – 1990: precarious balance: the Soviet Union in crisis – 1991: the end of an era: the break-up of the Soviet Union and the end of Soviet–American relations – The end of the Cold War.

The years from 1985 to 1988 had seen an authentic transformation in Soviet–American relations. The next three years brought Soviet–American relations to an end, because the Soviet Union itself disappeared. It was a period of tumultuous change, in which events themselves seemed to take charge, with governments scrambling along in their wake. The peoples of Eastern Europe suddenly seized control of their own destinies and swept aside the regimes that had oppressed them for so long. For much of the time the normal machinery of diplomatic relations continued to work. The American secretary of state and the Soviet foreign minister met frequently (six times in 1989 and nineteen times in 1990), and with ever-increasing cordiality.¹ Summit meetings between George Bush (who was inaugurated as president at the beginning of 1989) and Gorbachev took place each year. Yet for much of the time this machinery appeared to be turning in a void, with the real events taking place in Eastern Europe or inside the Soviet Union. It was as though a mighty engine had suddenly been disengaged from the vehicle which it was intended to drive, and the vehicle itself moved under its own volition.

Each of these three extraordinary years had a character of its own. The year

1989 started quietly, as the new president of the United States took stock of the situation; but it finished with a sudden deluge of changes which saw the end of six communist regimes in Eastern Europe in less than six months. The next year, 1990, saw a precarious balance. The Soviet Union was in crisis, on a knife-edge between survival and death, while relations between the Soviet and American governments worked with increasing smoothness. In 1991 the Soviet crisis was resolved: the state broke up. The last Soviet–American summit meeting took place in Moscow, and proved almost irrelevant; the decisive events were taking place elsewhere. Let us follow this pattern, and take one year at a time.

The year 1989: Landslide

The year began with the inauguration of George Bush as president of the United States. He had been Reagan’s vice president and set out to distance himself a little from his predecessor. Bush feared that in the last year of his presidency Reagan had been somewhat carried away by the warmth of his relations with Gorbachev. In his memoir (written together with his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft), Bush stated:

The real question was: were we once again mistaking a tactical shift in the Soviet Union for a fundamental transformation of the relationship? ... I was suspicious of Gorbachev’s motives and skeptical of his prospects. ... To oversimplify, I believed Gorbachev’s goal was to restore dynamism to a socialist political and economic system and revitalize the Soviet Union ... to compete with the West. ... [Gorbachev] was attempting to kill us with kindness, rather than bluster. He was saying the sort of things we wanted to hear, making numerous seductive proposals to seize and maintain the propaganda high ground in the battle for international public opinion. ... My fear was that Gorbachev could talk us into disarming without the Soviet Union having to do anything fundamental to its own military structure and that, in a decade or so, we could face a more serious military threat than ever before.²

Bush accordingly began his conduct of foreign affairs by ordering a review of policy towards the Soviet Union. This took four months, and ended inconclusively in what Bush described as a policy of ‘status quo plus’ – a phrase which no one fully understood, but which at any rate erred on the side of caution. Gorbachev, on the other hand, was anxious to move ahead. In the early part of 1989 he visited Britain, France and West Germany, drawing admiring

crowds everywhere he went; but these were only the lower slopes – he wanted to get to the summit.

Bush, for his part, gave no sign of going to Moscow. It was only in July 1989, after communist rule had ended in Poland, that tentative moves towards a summit meeting began. The meeting itself took place in December, on naval vessels off the Mediterranean island of Malta, by which time the Berlin Wall had fallen. Even then it was carefully called an ‘interim summit’, to prepare for more serious business the following year. As late as December 1989, Bush and his team were worried that Gorbachev was no more than the human face of ‘a Brezhnev system with a humanitarian paint job’ whose true colours might be shown at any moment. Gorbachev might be overthrown by the hard men in the Politburo and the military panicked by the implications of his reforms.³

The Bush administration’s caution was criticized at the time. But in many ways it was reasonable. Gorbachev faced mounting opposition to his reforms at home and in the Eastern bloc. In March 1988 he had had to fight off a major challenge to his authority from Kremlin foot-draggers led by Yegor Ligachev. In January 1989 the Politburo decided to retain the system of central price controls; and in March the Central Committee of the Communist Party postponed a decision on the question of land ownership. This resistance led Gorbachev to conclude that renewal of the political class was a sine qua non for progress. In March 1989 elections were held to constitute a Congress of People’s Deputies (a new body designed to replace the Supreme Soviet, the Soviet Union’s rubber-stamp parliament). In this election, 80 per cent of the Communist Party candidates won – which meant that 20 per cent lost; no fewer than thirty-eight provincial secretaries of the Communist Party were defeated.⁴ Carefully selected opposition candidates were allowed to run for election and turnout was excellent: Soviet citizens relished the opportunity to go and vote. These were unprecedented events in the history of Soviet elections, which normally produced the ‘correct’ results. This exercise in low-key democratization was watched with horror in places such as East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, and by the diehards in the Soviet Union – though by then the Poles and Hungarians were getting ready to go further and faster down the road to democratization. Bush could not have been sure in the spring of 1989 that Gorbachev would prevail.

The Americans’ caution was alimented by events in China. Deng’s ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ had caused inflation and rampant corruption among the Communist Party’s cadres, for whom liberalization gave great opportunities to get rich; worse, in the eyes of the Chinese leadership’s hardliners, it had

brought about ‘spiritual pollution’ – a euphemism for the spread of notions of democracy and human rights. Party leader Hu Yaobang had resigned in January 1987 as his fellow Politburo members attacked him for tolerating criticism of the regime, especially in the universities. He was replaced by Zhao Ziyang, although great power continued to reside in the hands of Deng and a clique of old revolutionaries who had survived the Mao years. The old guard’s preferred figure among the younger generation was Zhou Enlai’s foster child, Li Peng, a tough bureaucrat.

In 1989 China’s dissidents became more outspoken. The death in April of Hu Yaobang – who was widely portrayed in wall posters as the only true liberalizer (and only honest man) in the leadership – led to an outburst of grief which turned quickly into political protest. From mid-April to early June the central square in Beijing, Tiananmen Square, was taken over by a pro-democracy movement of students; their protests, which began as quite low-key, grew bolder as the weeks went on and as it became obvious that they enjoyed real support on campuses, but also among workers and ordinary citizens. The Chinese leadership mishandled the situation, allowing the protests to swell in size while issuing pompous rebukes through the press. The students responded by going on hunger strike: more than 3,000 were soon fasting, and pledged to starve themselves to death if elementary freedoms were not introduced. What had started out as an exercise in 1968-style idealism was becoming deadly earnest.

In mid-May the regime was humiliated when Soviet leader Gorbachev visited China for a long-awaited summit aimed at reviving Soviet–Chinese relations. Hundreds of thousands of people turned out to protest against the government and a showpiece event had to be cancelled. Deng himself was publicly criticized. The protests discredited Zhao, who had pleaded with the students to withdraw and had promised dialogue. Hardliners such as Li Peng, who had been insulted by the students, demanded immediate action.

On 20 May martial law was declared. Soldiers encircled the square and attempted to remove the protesters. Suddenly ‘people power’, Manila-style, came to China. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens (though there was nothing ordinary about their courage) took to the streets and blocked the way with buses, cars and their bodies. Three hundred thousand people massed in the square alone. The protest was no longer a few students, but a movement of the whole Chinese people. The troops withdrew. In the following days a Styrofoam ‘Goddess of Liberty’, which bore a striking resemblance to the Statue of Liberty, was erected on the Square.

On the night of 3–4 June the authorities again sent in the army, this time with explicit orders to clear the square and crush any opposition, with bloodshed if necessary. Hundreds – perhaps thousands – were killed or wounded before the soldiers even arrived at the Square; there a massacre was only avoided after tense negotiations between the military and the protest’s leaders. By 5 June protests in dozens of other cities had been silenced. Thousands of arrests, and many executions, were carried out in the following weeks. Zhao Ziyang, who had argued throughout the crisis for negotiation rather than brute force, was disgraced and was replaced as party leader by Jiang Zemin, an outsider from Shanghai. Though condemnation of the outrage was universal, China’s position in world politics shielded it from serious disapproval. President Bush was embarrassed when the scientist and prominent dissident Fang Lizhi and his wife sought sanctuary in the American Embassy. He ruefully confessed to his diary that the Americans had ‘no choice but to take him in, but it is going to be a real stick in the eye for the Chinese’.⁵ The Bush administration imposed only symbolic economic sanctions, despite being urged by overwhelming votes of both chambers of the Congress to do more.

What the Tiananmen Square events showed was that the Chinese leadership, when its back was to the wall, was ruthless and committed enough to fight to retain its hold on power. Probably the biggest reason for the Bush administration’s caution in 1989 was that they did not want anything like Tiananmen to occur in Europe. Instead, in Europe ‘people power’ met with much less opposition. The communist regimes of Europe, despite their long record of brutality, surrendered with surprising ease in the second semester of 1989. In truth, they themselves were tired of ‘living in the lie’ of their own propaganda. They had lost the will to hold power.

As early as April 1985, during the funeral ceremonies for Chernenko, Gorbachev had told the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries that in future they were to take control of their own internal affairs. There would be no more Soviet interventions like those in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. They had not believed him.⁶ When Gorbachev delivered his message in 1985 the Warsaw Pact states were ruled by the following individuals: Todor Zhivkov had commanded in Bulgaria since 1954; Janos Kádár in Hungary since 1956; Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania since 1965; Gustav Husák in Czechoslovakia since 1969; Erich Honecker in East Germany since 1971; and Wojciech Jaruzelski in Poland since 1981 – the only recent arrival, and even he had been a top official for decades.⁷ None of these men wanted to face the question of

whether they could survive without the support – military if necessary – of the Soviet Union.

Throughout the 1980s there were stirrings in various parts of Eastern Europe. In Poland, Solidarity (though legally dissolved) continued its activities underground; in Hungary in 1987 two non-communist political organizations, the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the Alliance of Free Democrats, were founded and environmentalists campaigned against the construction of a dam on the Danube. In Czechoslovakia the small Charter 77 group (one of whose founders was the playwright Václav Havel) demanded, in the face of overt persecution, that the government should observe its own laws and its commitments under the Helsinki Final Acts.⁸

In the spring of 1989 the pace of change accelerated. The Poles, naturally, were in the vanguard. In March the Polish government stated publicly that the Soviet Union had been responsible for the massacre of Polish officers at Katyn in 1940 – something which the Soviet government had long denied, and which was of intense symbolic importance. In April, facing the need to impose austerity measures, ‘Round Table’ talks began between Solidarity, other organizations from civil society and the Communist Party. The table used for the talks’ plenary sessions was indeed round – 29 feet in diameter. Lech Walesa subsequently joked that this was because the world spitting record was 28 feet.⁹ The talks ended with a lifting of the ban on Solidarity, which could now act as a fully fledged opposition party, full legal recognition of the Catholic Church, and the cancellation of the May Day parade – a matter of high symbolic significance.

In June 1989 free elections were held in Poland for the first time since 1945 (the elections of January 1947, which brought the communists to power, had not been remotely free or fair), with half the seats reserved for government candidates but the other half open to contest. Solidarity won all but one of the contested seats; in the reserved section, only a small minority of the candidates gained the 50 per cent vote necessary for election. Many top officials were excluded by gleeful voters who could at last indicate what they thought about the system that had oppressed them for nearly half a century. The elections amounted to ‘a humiliating, definitive repudiation’ of the communist regime.¹⁰ George Bush, at last finding the right rhetorical tone, told a huge Gdansk crowd that ‘it is Poland’s time of destiny, a time when dreams can live again’ when he visited the country in July.¹¹

Victory brought its own problems. Solidarity was able to prevent the election by the Sejm (the Polish parliament) of Jaruzelski as president of the republic, a

situation that even Walesa had not expected. It did not take advantage of his weakness, however. Solidarity allowed their oppressor to take the presidency in July, but the national mood did not permit a communist to run the government. A coalition government was formed on 24 August 1989 under the premiership of a Catholic intellectual, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who had been associated with Solidarity from the first. He was the first non-communist premier of a Central European state since 1948. The day before Mazowiecki took office, a million people had joined hands in a human chain across the Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to protest against the Nazi–Soviet Pact of fifty years before, which had led to the absorption of the three countries into the Soviet Union. This demonstration signalled an ominous revolt against the Soviet state. Last but not least, in Hungary, the Communist Party also used the device of ‘round table’ discussions with other organizations (July–September 1989), leading to the rapid disintegration of communist authority. On 18 October a democratic constitution was promulgated, opening the way for multiparty politics and elections the following year. Gorbachev showed no sign of resorting to ‘socialist solidarity’ to stop these events. On 6 July 1989, in the immediate aftermath of the Polish elections, Gorbachev told an audience of West European politicians in Strasbourg that ‘any interference in internal affairs, any attempts to limit the sovereignty of states ... are inadmissible’.¹²

The one country where political change was not expected to take place was East Germany. Erich Honecker was set in his ways and unafraid to use force. East Germans, banned from voting freely, accordingly voted with their feet. Already in 1988 thousands of East Germans had taken a roundabout route to the West by spending their holidays in Czechoslovakia or Hungary and then crossing into Austria, which was less dangerous than trying to cross directly from East to West Germany. In August 1989, at the height of the holiday season, thousand more East Germans took advantage of this route. On 10 September the Hungarians opened the border with Austria, and the following day a staggering 125,000 East Germans crossed from Hungary to Austria.¹³ Desperate East Germans occupied the West German embassies in Budapest and Prague. It was a strange and impressive movement of people, characterized by the East German Trabant cars which were the common mode of transport.

Inside East Germany demonstrations against the regime began around Lutheran churches, particularly in Leipzig, where tens of thousands of protesters gathered every Monday evening. Honecker’s initial thought was to tough out the crisis: when Gorbachev visited East Berlin, to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the

foundation of the GDR on 7 October, the East German dictator refused to listen to the Soviet leader's arguments for the introduction of reforms. After Gorbachev left, Honecker resolved to suppress the Leipzig meetings by force, but he was overruled by his own Politburo.

On 18 October Honecker resigned, and was replaced by Egon Krenz, who was swiftly swept away by the torrent of events. Left to its own devices by the Soviet Union (the 375,000 Soviet troops stationed in East Germany stayed resolutely in their barracks, with orders not to intervene), the GDR floundered and fell in November 1989. On 9 November the regime, hoping to appease the demands for greater liberty, announced that requests to leave the country could be presented without giving reasons, and that authorizations would be granted rapidly. During the night of 9–10 November crowds swarmed to the checkpoints, where the frontier police, overwhelmed by sheer numbers, reluctantly conceded free passage to West Berlin. Parts of the Berlin Wall were knocked down, and jubilant East Berliners wandered freely around the other half of their city. These astonishing scenes were broadcast live on television across the whole of Europe and most of the world. In the next few days the East German authorities issued over 7 million visas to their citizens, and it seemed as though half the population was on the move. On 13 December Hans Modrow, the party leader from Dresden and the only presentable member of the Socialist Unity Party left, formed a government that included twelve non-communist ministers.¹⁴ At the beginning of December, the Socialist Unity Party's monopoly on power was ended, and Krenz resigned as party leader, along with the rest of the Politburo.

These events proved fatal to the communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe. On 10 November Zhivkov was deposed as ruler of Bulgaria. On 17 November a large-scale demonstration (mainly by students) in Prague marked the beginning of what became known as the 'velvet revolution' in Czechoslovakia – 'people power' came to Prague and Bratislava, too. A widely circulated joke was that the Poles had taken ten years to have a democratic revolution; the Hungarians ten months. The Czechs took ten days. By the beginning of December the Communist Party's authority had collapsed, and at the end of that month Václav Havel, a dissident no longer, had been appointed president of the Republic. The peroration of Havel's New Year address summed up matters perfectly: 'People, your government has returned to you!'¹⁵ These sweeping changes, moreover, took place without the use of force. Only in Romania did revolution against communism take violent form and that was because it was less a revolution than a coup d'état. The 'National Salvation

Front' which seized power in Bucharest between 22 and 23 December 1989 after bloody street fighting against Ceaușescu's secret police was full of opportunists linked to the dictator's regime. The revolt ended on Christmas Day with the capture, 'trial' and instant execution of Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena.

The speed and scale of these events beggared belief, though the underlying causes had obviously been building up for years. The Helsinki Accords of 1975 had encouraged movements for human rights (especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia) which gradually undermined government authority. Economic hardship increased during the 1980s, when living standards declined over large parts of Eastern Europe. The influence of Western radio and television was all-pervasive, and especially strong in East Germany, where viewers received West German television in their own language, driving home the contrast in prosperity between the two parts of the country. The relentless change of generations, in contrast to immobile political regimes, affected every country. But behind everything lay the change in Soviet policy. It is possible that Gorbachev could have prevented, or at any rate delayed, the collapse of communist governments by threatening to use force on behalf of the beleaguered regimes. But he showed no sign of doing so. He had made up his mind and did not go back on his decision. Reform within the Soviet Union would have to be accompanied by reform in the Eastern bloc. Perhaps Gorbachev could not have done otherwise even if he had wished, because he had gone so far in his relations with the Americans that he could not afford to offend them by using the old methods and bringing out the tanks. In 1979 the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan had brought the détente of the 1970s to an end. In 1989 Soviet repression in Eastern Europe would surely have destroyed the good relations built up since 1985, and taken the Soviet Union back to the days of confrontation – which Gorbachev could not afford to face.

The principal spokesman for the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Gennady Gerasimov, made light of the new situation, telling journalists at the beginning of November 1989 that 'the Brezhnev Doctrine is dead. ... You know the Sinatra song "My Way". Hungary and Poland are doing it their way. We now have the Sinatra Doctrine.'¹⁶ It was a joke which would have been inconceivable even in the previous period of détente; especially on a subject which was no laughing matter. Gorbachev appears to have believed that he could let Eastern Europe go and still maintain the Soviet Union intact. Events were to prove otherwise.

These extraordinary developments in Eastern Europe took place in the interval between the announcement on 31 October 1989 that an 'interim summit' was to

take place at Malta, and the actual meeting between Bush and Gorbachev from 2 to 3 December. Bush, who made an ‘avalanche’ of concrete proposals for giving the Soviet Union ‘most-favoured nation’ status for trade, for restrictions on chemical weapons, and on the reduction of conventional forces in Europe, was carefully restrained in his reactions to the collapse of the communist regimes and pointed out to the Soviet leader that he had deliberately not ‘jumped up and down on the Berlin Wall’.¹⁷ Gorbachev for his part went out of his way to assure Bush that ‘we don’t consider you an enemy any more’; to which he added at another point: ‘The world is leaving one epoch, the Cold War, and entering a new one.’ He all but ridiculed American fears about the Marxist regimes in Nicaragua and Cuba, saying, ‘We don’t want bridgeheads in Cuba and Central America. ... You must be convinced of that.’ Gorbachev nevertheless told Bush that German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who had only a few days before made a speech in the German parliament advocating a ‘10-point’ plan for the gradual unification of Germany, was moving too far, too fast.¹⁸ In fact, the year 1990, which would be dominated by the question of German unity, would show that Kohl was simply being prescient. The Malta summit ended in the first-ever joint press conference by Soviet and American leaders and in a mood of genuine détente: the ever-lively Gerasimov told journalists that ‘we have buried the Cold War at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea’.¹⁹

The year 1990: Balancing on a tightrope

Gorbachev was staking everything on the reform of the Soviet system, in the hope that he could somehow pull off the success of introducing a socialist market economy without letting the market predominate, permitting greater freedom to the nationalities without conceding independence and delegating power in a centralized system without leading to disintegration. In 1989 there had already been signs of danger, but he could not stop. He said of himself on one occasion: ‘I’m doomed to go forward, and only forward. And if I retreat, I myself will perish and the cause will perish too.’²⁰ It was like riding a bicycle on a tightrope. In 1990 it grew increasingly unlikely that he could succeed, as a threefold crisis developed within the Soviet Union – ideological, economic and nationalist.

In February 1990 Gorbachev prepared a document to be put to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, entitled ‘Towards a Humane, Democratic

Socialism’, which obviously contained the unhappy (but accurate) implication that the variety of socialism which had existed in the Soviet Union for the past seventy years had been neither humane nor democratic. In this paper, Gorbachev proposed to repeal the article in the Soviet constitution (Article 6 in the Constitution of 1977) that proclaimed the directing role of the Communist Party in the state, and thus secured its political monopoly. In March 1990 the new Congress of Peoples’ Deputies approved this recommendation; and soon afterwards elected Gorbachev to the new post of president of the Soviet Union, which was to take precedence over that of general secretary of the Communist Party – though for some time Gorbachev held both posts together. These changes produced a profound ideological crisis, involving the identity and purpose of the state. Since 1917 the Communist Party had provided the framework of the state, and the *raison d’être* of the Soviet Union had been the building of communism. These underpinnings were now removed, with nothing solid to replace them. At the same time the Soviet economy fell into actual decline, as distinct from its earlier situation of feeble growth. American estimates put the decline in gross national product in 1990 at between 2.4 and 5 per cent; Soviet estimates were more optimistic, but still indicated actual decline.²¹

The movement of nationalities towards independence or separation also gathered pace in 1990. The Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) took a leading role in the collapse of the Soviet Union, even though they were small in size and marginal in their geographical location. They had a recent history of independence, lost only in 1940, and they showed great daring in organizing public demonstrations, which were followed in other countries in the former Soviet Union. Lithuania declared its decision to make a transition to independence on 11 March 1990; Estonia followed on 30 March; and on 4 May Latvia more cautiously declared its intention to become independent. Lithuania suffered a setback. On 18 April the Soviet government cut off oil supplies, and on 30 June Lithuania agreed to suspend its independence for hundred days, though not to give it up. But in June a more serious set of events took place. On 12 June 1990 the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Republic declared its ‘sovereignty’, that is, the primacy of its own government over that of the Soviet Union. This action by the largest single Soviet Republic rapidly set off similar declarations by others: Uzbekistan on 20 June, Moldova on 23 June, Ukraine on 16 July, Belorussia on 27 July with more to follow. As one scholar has written: ‘By the fall of 1990, the once-mighty Soviet Union was being transformed from

a hierarchically controlled superpower into a mere space hosting competing territorial jurisdictions, only some of which were experimenting with democratic institutions.’²² The precise meaning of ‘sovereignty’, as against independence, was uncertain, but the existence of the Soviet Union could scarcely be left dependent on such a refined point of semantics. Gorbachev was still trying to hold the line against unilateral secession from the Soviet Union, and to retain the primacy of the Soviet Union in questions of foreign and defence policy, but in practice disintegration was setting in.

Against this background, it is almost startling to see Soviet–American relations developing as though nothing much was happening within the Soviet Union. The long-awaited formal summit meeting between Bush and Gorbachev took place in Washington, 31 May to 3 June 1990. The two statesmen signed a total of fifteen agreements, useful rather than spectacular in nature, providing for an 80 per cent reduction in the two countries’ chemical weapons; for American exports of grain to the Soviet Union; for a new trade agreement (though this would not be approved by Congress until the Soviet Union had changed its regulations on emigration); and for cooperation on other matters which appeared almost routine, for example, on measures against drug trafficking. Privately, Gorbachev made an important concession. He had previously sought to prevent a unified Germany (which was already rapidly approaching) becoming a member of NATO; he now assured Bush that the choice as to membership of NATO should be one for the Germans themselves to make – which by implication decided the matter, because the Germans’ choice was not in doubt. After the summit, Gorbachev visited Minnesota and California, almost on a social basis, greeted warmly by vast crowds and showing once again his golden touch with Western audiences. On 4 June he made a speech at Stanford University, declaring that ‘the Cold War is now behind us’.²³

The truth of this statement was demonstrated in the frequent meetings between the secretary of state, James Baker, and the Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, to discuss a range of problems across the world, with the two increasingly acting as partners even in such sensitive areas as Afghanistan, Southern Africa and Korea.²⁴ The new state of Soviet–American relations was put sharply to the test at the beginning of August 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait, opening what was to prove a severe crisis in the Persian Gulf, eventually leading to the Gulf War from January to February 1991. Baker and Shevardnadze hastily met again on 3 August, and issued a joint statement to the press condemning the aggression by Iraq. They thus took up a common stance

on an issue which in the days of the Cold War would almost certainly have divided them bitterly. Moreover they maintained their common front in difficult circumstances during the next few months. On 9 September Bush and Gorbachev met in Helsinki to discuss the crisis, and affirmed their unity in demanding an Iraqi withdrawal (in line with Security Council resolutions). They declared their preference for a peaceful route to withdrawal, but left the way open for other measures to ensure that aggression did not pay. The Soviet Union had long developed close ties with Iraq, and Gorbachev appears to have believed that he could persuade the Iraqi ruler, Saddam Hussein, to withdraw from Kuwait without fighting. The Soviet government made prolonged attempts to bring about such a withdrawal, but without success. Eventually, on 23 February 1991, Gorbachev reported to Bush that his efforts had failed. Meanwhile the United States, at the head of a 29-member international coalition including Britain, France and Saudi Arabia, had built up powerful forces in the Gulf; on 24 February ground operations were launched to drive Iraq out of Kuwait by force. The Soviet Union supported this action, though without taking part in it. It was a striking proof of the new relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In Europe, too, the United States and the Soviet Union cooperated to bring about German unification, which occurred with unexpected speed and smoothness. The driving force towards unification was the exodus of people, especially the young, from former East Germany, which on top of its other woes was now bankrupt. Chancellor Helmut Kohl realized that if West Germany wanted to 'prevent the citizens of Leipzig from moving towards the Deutsche Mark (DM), it was necessary that the DM should go to them'.²⁵ On 7 February 1990 Kohl proposed that Germany should form a monetary and economic union: in effect, a Marshall Plan for the beleaguered East. In March 1990 free elections took place in East Germany for a new People's Chamber. Politicians from West Germany (Chancellor Kohl, Foreign Minister Genscher and former Chancellor Brandt) campaigned as though they were on their own home ground (which, of course, they were; it just seemed strange after forty years of division) and drew great crowds. A massive 93 per cent of the electorate voted. Parties linked to the West won a major victory. The conservative Christian Democrats, with some minor allies, won 48 per cent of the votes and 192 of the 400 seats. The Social Democrats, who were reluctant to speed up unification, gained 22 per cent of the vote, and 88 seats. The former communists (campaigning under the name of the Party of Democratic Socialism) won 16 per cent and 66 seats – a drastic fall after

their forty-year political monopoly.

After this election result, unification was certain, though the specific steps presented some difficulties. Bonn presented its plan for economic union in May 1990. The state treaty on economic unity, which was depicted as a first step towards political unity, in effect incorporated East Germany into the West German economy. From 1 July 1990 wages, salaries, pensions and other payments would be made in Deutschmarks, not East German marks, at a 1:1 rate. This represented a huge transfer of resources to the East, since the black market rate was only a small fraction of parity (it also had the effect of pricing East German industry, which was already uncompetitive, out of the market: unemployment rates soared in post-unification East Germany). Savings were also converted into Deutschmarks at generous rates of exchange.

For economic union to become political union the assent of three bodies was needed. The European Community (EC) had to accept East Germany as part of Germany; the wartime powers had to make a treaty with Germany; the Soviet Union had to acknowledge that the new Germany could be part of NATO – the United States, even in 1990, was not prepared to countenance German neutrality. On 24 February 1990 President Bush and Chancellor Kohl jointly declared that a unified Germany would remain a full member of NATO, including its military structure, and that American troops would continue to be stationed on German soil.

The EC backed German unification at the Dublin meeting of the European Council at the end of April 1990. The Community's leaders expressed their 'confidence' that unification would be 'a positive factor in the development as a whole, and of the Community in particular'. This warmth was in sharp distinction to the frostiness with which the same body had greeted Kohl's ten-point plan and was ultimately due to Kohl's intensive diplomacy with President Mitterrand of France, who overcame his initial doubts and grasped that unification could give a kick-start to the broader political and monetary unification of Western Europe. Over the summer of 1990, officials of the European Commission worked tirelessly to ensure that Germany could be absorbed into the EC without disruption to its signature '1992' single market project.

The Soviet Union sought for some time to insist that a united Germany should not be a member of NATO; but as we have seen Gorbachev partly yielded this point during his visit to the United States in June 1990. At a meeting in the Crimea with Chancellor Kohl of West Germany in July, Gorbachev definitively

abandoned his opposition to membership of NATO for a unified Germany, and undertook to withdraw Soviet troops from East Germany. In return Kohl took out his chequebook and made an immediate gift of cash to the Soviet Union and committed himself to paying 12 billion Deutschmarks towards the costs of relocating the Soviet forces on German soil.

With this obstacle removed, the two Germanies and the former occupying powers (United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France) were able to conclude a treaty that they had been negotiating since the spring. The 'Final Settlement with Respect to Germany', signed on 12 September, laid down that the united Germany would consist of the two former Germanies, within their present borders, and the city of Berlin (the Oder–Neisse line was thus confirmed as the frontier with Poland). Germany was to be free to join an alliance of its own choice (i.e. NATO). The new Germany would be bound by the existing limitations on armaments observed by the Federal Republic (namely, the renunciation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons). The Soviet Union undertook to withdraw all its forces from the former East Germany by the end of 1994; after that date no foreign forces or nuclear weapons were to be stationed in the former East German territory. 'Only peace will emanate from German soil,' pronounced Article 2 of the treaty. For Europeans, it is fair to say that this represented a major historical development.²⁶

On these terms, the unification of Germany took place on 3 October 1990. In effect, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) ceased to exist, and its territory was absorbed into the Federal Republic, whose constitution now applied to the whole country. Berlin was to become the capital of the new state. German leaders, especially Kohl, were anxious to underline that European integration would continue, and that German unity would be achieved within the framework of a united Europe.

The division of Germany between 1946 and 1949 had marked the beginning of the Cold War. The Berlin blockade between 1948 and 1949 and the Berlin crises between 1958 and 1961 had brought some of its tensest and most dangerous moments. The unification of Germany, by the free will of the German people and the consent of the former occupying powers, marked the end of the Cold War in Europe. While the final steps towards German unification were being taken, a meeting of the NATO powers in London from 5 to 6 July 1990 issued the Declaration of London, which amounted to an avowal of peaceful intent towards the 'defeated' Russians. The Declaration invited the Warsaw Pact powers to join in reciprocal undertakings of non-aggression and to agree that the

two sides were no longer adversaries. It also undertook to reduce nuclear forces and to adopt a new strategy for NATO making 'nuclear forces truly weapons of last resort'. At the same time, the meeting invited Gorbachev to address the NATO Council, and proposed that the Warsaw Pact should establish formal liaison arrangements with NATO. The two alliances would thus discuss the state of their forces, armaments and military doctrines, and reach agreement on the reduction of forces in Europe. The declaration concluded, 'We are determined to make enduring peace on this continent.'²⁷

The Declaration of London marked a profound change in the strategy and spirit of the North Atlantic Alliance. The invitation to Gorbachev to address the NATO Council was not mere window dressing but a real change of direction. Yet there was no question of NATO being dissolved. The security which it had preserved for forty-one years, the structures and habits of cooperation which it had established and the crucial links which it provided between the United States and Europe were so valuable that all members agreed that it should be preserved.

Earlier in 1990 the Soviet government had proposed reconvening of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). This body had been set up by the Helsinki Conference of 1975, in order to oversee the agreements reached there. Gorbachev now proposed to revive the CSCE, to provide a meeting place and framework for the new Europe which was coming rapidly into being. At first, NATO was wary of allowing the Soviet Union too much of a role in the political organization of Europe; yet again the NATO conference in London marked a departure. The NATO powers proposed to provide the CSCE with permanent structures and new functions, along the lines of Gorbachev's suggestions. On the basis of these proposals, a CSCE meeting took place in Paris from 19 to 21 November 1990, attended by the United States, the Soviet Union, 31 European states and Canada (in nearly every case by heads of government). The conference agreed to meet every two years, and to set up permanent organizations – a small secretariat, a body to observe elections in member states, a centre for the prevention of conflicts and a representative body to act as an 'Assembly of Europe'. This meeting served as a symbolic peace conference after the Cold War in Europe. There had been no declaration of the Cold War and no direct military conflict between the two main antagonists; it was therefore fitting that there was no great peace treaty to stand in line of succession to Utrecht, Vienna and Versailles. To a Cold War there had succeeded an unofficial peace.

In a striking manner, the membership of the CSCE represented the idea to

which Gorbachev had once appealed, of a 'common European home'; also, even more pertinently, it echoed Charles de Gaulle's concept of a Europe 'stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals'. The United States and Canada added a reassuring trans-Atlantic presence – Europe had not always been good at conducting its own affairs. One great virtue of the conference was its inclusiveness: even Albania, for so long isolated among European states, attended, though it did not immediately join. Its limitation was that it could operate only by consensus; and its good intentions were later to be severely tested (e.g. by conflicts in Yugoslavia) and found wanting. That was in the future. Meanwhile, the Paris Conference offered a hopeful end to another extraordinary year. Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990. It is undeniable that he deserved it.

The year 1991: The end of the Soviet Union and the end of an era

In some respects in 1991 relations between the United States and the Soviet Union continued along what had become their normal, cooperative course. In January and February 1991 the Americans and their allies fought the Gulf War against Iraq with the diplomatic cooperation of the Soviet Union. From 30 to 31 July President Bush visited Moscow for a summit meeting with Gorbachev. They signed the START I treaty on strategic arms reduction, bringing the totals of long-range nuclear weapons down to roughly the same levels as in 1982, when the negotiations for this agreement had first begun. This was now becoming an issue from the past, as the strategic rivalry between the two countries died away. The same was true of rivalry in the Third World. The two governments had already brought to an end their disputes in Angola and Nicaragua; and at the summit meeting they agreed to convene jointly an international conference on Middle East problems. Bush and Gorbachev also shifted their attention to economic issues and to the formidable problems involved in the integration of the Soviet Union in the international trade system. On this, Bush's approach was notably cautious; he offered little assistance and did not run the risk of being criticized for interfering in Soviet internal affairs. The president was careful to say in public that the transformation of the Soviet economy must come from within.

At the same time, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) and the Warsaw Pact came to an end. The COMECON had been founded in

January 1949 as a counter to the Marshall Plan in Western Europe. It had not been entirely one-sided in its workings, and the Soviet Union had supported the East European economies as well as exploiting them. But its main purpose was always to promote socialist economic integration, and when the East European states adopted market economies after the collapse of their communist regimes COMECON lost its *raison d'être*. It was formally dissolved on 28 June 1991. The Warsaw Pact, which dated from 1955, was wound up at almost exactly the same time, on 1 July 1991. The Soviet government had hoped to preserve some of the political aspects of the pact, though not its military structures which had subordinated the East European armies to Soviet command. But the new governments in Eastern Europe would have nothing to do with half-measures, and the only course was complete dissolution. On the other side, NATO remained in being, but a NATO Council meeting in Rome from 7 to 8 November 1991 adopted a new document on strategy declaring that the threat of a large-scale attack no longer existed. The NATO powers also invited the Soviet Union and eight other countries (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) to send their foreign ministers to a meeting in Brussels on 20 December to formulate a declaration on partnership.²⁸ Thus on the one side the structures of the Cold War (COMECON and Warsaw Pact) vanished, leaving not a wrack behind; on the other NATO remained in existence but declared that peace had arrived and partnership with the east could begin.

At one time, these events would have been of far-reaching importance. In 1991 they were of small account. The Soviet Union was breaking up. The Gorbachev–Bush meeting in Moscow in July 1991 was the last Soviet–American summit.

At the beginning of the year nothing was certain. The future of the Soviet Union still depended on the attempt at headlong reform which Gorbachev had launched. Various possibilities were still open. Gorbachev might succeed and preserve the Soviet Union in a new form. Or he might be defeated by internal opponents who wanted a return to sterner measures and a form of Stalinism – after all, Gorbachev was offending all kinds of vested interests, in the Communist Party, in the bureaucracy, in the armed forces and in the KGB. Or there might be some other outcome, which no one could fully foresee, but whose outlines were already visible in the movements towards national independence. In the threefold crisis which the Soviet Union was undergoing – ideological, economic and national – it was the nationalities issue which proved fatal.

In January 1991 it appeared that the Soviet government might act to preserve the Soviet state by force. Soviet troops occupied the centres of Vilnius, the

capital of Lithuania, and Riga, the capital of Latvia, opening fire against civilians and killing at least eighteen people in the two cities. Western condemnation was vociferous and the troops were withdrawn. Gorbachev countered separatist feeling by announcing that an all-union referendum on the maintenance of the Soviet Union would take place on 17 March. The governments of the Baltic states anticipated the poll. On 9 February 1991 the Lithuanians, on an 85 per cent turnout, produced a 90 per cent vote in favour of independence. On 3 March, Latvia and Estonia voted for independence by 74 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively.²⁹ When Gorbachev's referendum was held a majority of 76 per cent voted in favour of maintaining the Soviet Union. But this apparently solid result also revealed weaknesses. Six republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova) flatly refused to take part; in the Ukraine, meanwhile, an additional question showed a majority of 80 per cent in favour of Ukrainian 'sovereignty'.³⁰ How these votes were to be reconciled remained to be seen. Meanwhile, even to submit the preservation of the Soviet state to popular vote was a sign of uncertainty and weakness.

On 12 June 1991 Boris Yeltsin, who had been emerging for some time as a political rival to Gorbachev, was elected as president of the Russian Republic by universal suffrage, winning 57 per cent of the votes cast. Yeltsin thus dominated what was by far the largest republic in the Soviet Union, and with an electoral mandate which Gorbachev could not match. One of Gorbachev's weaknesses, as he introduced democracy to the Soviet Union, was that he was far less popular at home than he was abroad – 'Gorby-mania' was a foreign temptation, to which the Soviet peoples proved mostly immune.

In the event, Gorbachev was fatally undermined by a dramatic combination of events. Between 18 and 21 August 1991 a group of conspirators attempted to overthrow Gorbachev by a coup d'état, and restore the authority of the Communist Party – the repressive scenario which had always been one of the possible conclusions of the Gorbachev enterprise. Gorbachev himself, who was on holiday in the Crimea, was held under house arrest, while the conspirators declared a state of emergency, claiming that Gorbachev was too ill to exercise his responsibilities. The coup was defeated, partly because Gorbachev himself resolutely refused to sign any documents, partly by the public resistance of Yeltsin –who defied the rebels' tanks in Moscow – and partly through the hesitations of its own leaders.

The coup failed, but it altered, or accelerated, the whole course of events. Gorbachev lost all authority, which passed to Yeltsin. On 23 August 1991

Yeltsin announced the suspension of all activities of the Russian Communist Party, whose principal members had all supported the coup d'état. The next day Gorbachev resigned as secretary-general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the post which had for so long been the key position in Soviet politics. His only remaining official function was that of president of the Soviet Union, which was in itself in the process of disintegration. The timing of the attempted coup had been designed to prevent the signing of a new Treaty of Union between the republics, scheduled for 20 August. In fact, while the outcome of the coup was still uncertain, between 20 and 21 August 1991, the Balts declared their independence. The three Baltic republics were accepted as members of the UN in the first week of September. They were soon followed by the Ukraine, Belorussia (later Belarus), Moldova and Azerbaijan. On 8 December 1991 the presidents of Russia, the Ukraine and Belorussia met in conference at Minsk and declared that the Soviet Union had ceased to exist. They proposed to replace it by an ill-defined Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). On 21 December, by the Alma-Ata Declaration (the then capital of Kazakhstan – a choice symbolic of the new era) a majority of the former Soviet republics agreed to join this Commonwealth. The signatories at that stage were Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Georgia refused to join, although Georgia changed its mind in 1993.³¹

On 25 December 1991 Gorbachev resigned from the post of president of the Soviet Union, which no longer had any functions. He left the Kremlin, and Yeltsin moved in as president of Russia. The red flag with the hammer and sickle, once a symbol of loyalty for communists across the world as well as for the people of the Soviet Union, was lowered. The new Russian flag, a tricolour with white, blue and red horizontal stripes, was raised in its stead. It was the end of an era.

Formally, the Soviet Union ceased to exist at midnight between 31 December 1991 and 1 January 1992. One of the two superpowers which had dominated international relations in the second half of the twentieth century disappeared from the map, from the life of states, and from the whole web of world affairs. The consequences of this prodigious event would take a long time to become clear. But one point was plain at once. The end of the Cold War had been announced on a number of previous occasions. A death certificate could now be issued. In 1998 the United States government, under the authority of an Act of Congress, decided to award Cold War Recognition Certificates to all who had

served faithfully and honourably during the Cold War era, which was defined as ending on 26 December 1991 – the day after the red flag was lowered over the Kremlin.³²

Notes

- 1 Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American–Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington DC, 1994), p. 382.
- 2 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York, 1998), pp. 12–14.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 4 Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (London, 1997), pp. 472–3; Garthoff, *Transition*, p. 390.
- 5 Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 99.
- 6 See the vivid account by Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, pp. 442–3.
- 7 Listed by Gabriel Partos, *The World That Came in from the Cold* (London, 1993), p. 243.
- 8 R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1994), pp. 384–5; see generally pp. 379–85.
- 9 Lech Walesa, *The Struggle and the Triumph* (New York, 1992), p. 174.
- 10 Joseph Rothschild and Nancy M. Wingfield, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East–Central Europe since World War II* (Oxford, 2000), p. 230.
- 11 Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 122.
- 12 Address by M. S. Gorbachev to the Council of Europe, 6 July 1989, Centre Virtuel de Connaissance sur l’Europe (CVCE); available online: http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/20/4c021687-98f9-4727-9e8b-836e0bc1f6fb/publishable_en.pdf. Last accessed 14 April 2016.
- 13 Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, p. 394.
- 14 Andre Fontaine, *Après eux, le Déluge* (Paris, 1995), p. 414. See also M. E. Sarotte, *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall* (New York, 2014), pp. 85–126, for a detailed account of the breaching of the Wall.
- 15 Václav Havel, *Open Letters* (London, 1991), p. 396.
- 16 Quoted in Peter G. Boyle, *American-Soviet Relations: From the Russian Revolution to the Fall of Communism* (London, 1993), p. 230; cf. Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford, 1996), p. 240.
- 17 Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 165.
- 18 *Ibid.* p. 167.
- 19 Garthoff, *Transition*, pp. 406, 408; Brown, *Gorbachev Factor*, p. 240.
- 20 Quoted in Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p. 486.
- 21 Garthoff, *Transition*, p. 419, n. 20.
- 22 Mark Gilbert, *Cold War Europe: The Politics of a Contested Continent* (Lanham, MD, 2015), p. 282.
- 23 *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 June 1990, quoted in Boyle, *American–Soviet Relations*, p. vii.
- 24 Baker and Shevardnadze actually used the word ‘partners’ during their meeting at Irkutsk, 1–2 August 1990, according to Garthoff, *Transition*, p. 434.
- 25 Helmut Kohl, *Je Voulais l’Unité de l’Allemagne* (Paris, 1997), p. 216.

- 26 Summary of terms, Henry Ashby Turner Jr, *Germany from Partition to Unification* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 251–2.
- 27 *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1990, p. 37,599.
- 28 *Keesing's*, 1991, p. 38,600.
- 29 Garthoff, *Transition*, p. 453; *Keesing's*, 1991, p. 38,419.
- 30 Garthoff, *Transition*, pp. 455–6; *Keesing's*, 1991, p. 38,079.
- 31 *Keesing's*, 1991, p. 38,654.
- 32 Cold War Recognition Website:
<https://www.hrc.army.mil/TAGD/Awards%20and%20Decorations%20Branch%20-%20Cold%20War%20Certificate%20Program>. Last accessed 16 April 2016. We are grateful to Dr J. R. D. Bell for this reference.

Reflection

The Cold War in retrospect

Historical debate about the end of the Cold War is in its early stages. If historians are still in dispute about the decline and fall of the Roman Empire after some 1,500 years, we can expect no firm conclusions about the collapse of the Soviet Union for some time to come. But even in these early stages, two broad questions have emerged. Why did the Cold War end as it did? And what does the end tell us about the nature of the Cold War itself?

The Cold War ended in a decisive result. At the end of 1991 the United States stood firm, with its territory and institutions intact and its way of life flourishing. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had disappeared. In 1990 the directing role of the Communist Party had been removed from the constitution, leaving the country in an ideological vacuum; and by the end of 1991 its territory had been divided among numerous successor states. There is no doubt about the outcome; and it is natural to ask why.

One simple answer is that the United States had won because Reagan's policy of confrontation had placed the Soviet Union under intolerable strain. Broadly speaking, the argument is that the United States had opposed Soviet influence strongly and at every point – in Afghanistan, in Africa and in Latin America. The Americans had embarked on a new build-up of nuclear weapons, notably medium-range missiles in Europe. They had begun the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), involving sophisticated technological developments and enormous expense. The Soviet Union was thus involved in the twofold effort of conducting several conflicts in Asia, Africa and Latin America and competing in an arms race of immense complexity. At the same time the United States cut off some of the advantages extended to the Soviets under détente – exports of cereals, and access to advanced technology. The cumulative pressure of all these actions proved too much for the Soviet economy and Soviet willpower, and the

whole edifice collapsed. The likelihood of this collapse was already visible in 1989, when one observer wrote: 'The Soviet Union is crumbling from within at the same time that its leaders have lost their faith in their revolutionary mission and are preparing to withdraw from the outposts of empire.'¹

Against this stands a completely different view: that the Soviet Union simply stopped competing in the Cold War, for internal reasons which had little to do with external pressure from the United States. Dobrynin, the long-serving Soviet ambassador in Washington, claimed that the challenge of a new arms race, and even of the SDI, could have been met by the determination of the Soviet people and a bearable increase in defence expenditure. The military burden was not the most important cause of Soviet economic problems, whose roots were to be found in low investment, lack of innovation and the difficulties of running a closed command economy. 'The fate of the Soviet Union was decided inside our country,' concludes Dobrynin.² Shevardnadze, the Soviet foreign minister for most of the Gorbachev period, also argued that the decisive changes came from *within* the Soviet Union. He looked back to the Second World War, claiming that it was impossible to break up the Soviet Union from the outside – 'neither Reagan nor Hitler could do it', he said.³ A careful American analyst, Raymond Garthoff, has reached very similar conclusions, arguing that the Cold War was not won by Reagan's policy of confrontation, the arms build-up and the SDI. The key change came within the Soviet Union, when a new generation of Soviet leaders realized that their system had failed at home and that they were not achieving their objectives abroad. Moreover, Garthoff goes a stage further and argues that in the last analysis only a Soviet leader could have ended the Cold War, because the conflict arose essentially from the Marxist–Leninist assumption of a 'struggle to the end' between two social, economic and political systems. Gorbachev, though remaining a communist, abandoned the idea of inevitable conflict, and so brought the Cold War to an end.⁴ Using the metaphor of a race, the Soviet Union stopped running.

These views are not wholly incompatible, and it may well be that some synthesis between them will emerge.⁵ External pressures did have substantial effects on the Soviet Union. The renewed arms race provided an extra problem for the Soviet economy, which was already in deep trouble. American help for the Afghan guerrillas contributed something to the Soviet defeat in that long-drawn-out war, and thus to a weakening of Soviet morale. Moreover, Reagan's policy was not confined to confrontation. He produced a disconcerting mixture

of toughness and conciliation, of confrontation and détente – a hard–soft technique familiar in interrogation (and a standard method in Stalin’s diplomacy). The effect was to sharpen the choices which Gorbachev already faced: he could take up the American challenge and face the internal consequences of higher military expenditure, or he could seize the chance of détente, improve relations and reap the benefits at home.

There was no doubt that he would take the second course. Once Gorbachev had embarked on summit meetings, he found that Reagan’s unexpected flexibility gave him an opportunity to pursue his domestic reforms with a dash which he might not otherwise have attempted. It may be, therefore, that Reagan’s adaptability played as large a part as his rigidity in the final dénouement.

Moreover, external pressures on the Soviet Union were by no means limited to American government policies. Other influences, more important in their effects on individuals, were at work. The attractions of Western prosperity, as against the shortages, queues and general penury of the socialist economies, became increasingly obvious. The contrast was pointed up by the influence of the mass media, with corrosive effects, especially in Eastern Europe. The peoples of Eastern Europe themselves had never been reconciled to the communist system and had rebelled against it on several occasions. In 1989 their desire to live in a freer society became overwhelming: Poles, Czechs and Hungarians, at any rate intellectuals in those societies, had always regarded communism as an alien imposition on their sophisticated societies. They looked down on communism as intellectually crude. Unexpectedly, the pull of material wealth and the desire for political freedom were buttressed by spiritual influences. The impact of Pope John Paul II, first in Poland and then among all the Catholics of Eastern Europe, was not strictly measurable, but no less powerful for that.

American pressure, Reagan’s flexibility and contrasting influences of materialism and religion thus all played their part in the end of the Cold War; but the essential point still seems to be that they contributed to a drama which started *within* the Soviet Union. Gorbachev’s changes at home, on which he decided before taking any serious steps in foreign or defence policy, were crucial in both the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Without Gorbachev, it is hard to see the Cold War ending in the way, and at the time, that it did; and without the headlong pace of Gorbachev’s reforms, the Soviet Union would surely have lasted longer than it did. It was Gorbachev who became the sorcerer’s apprentice, unleashing forces over which he had no control. Perhaps, above all, two aspects of his policy came together, with disastrous results. By

redefining the policy of peaceful coexistence, and accepting the reality of good relations with the United States, he deprived the Soviet Union of that permanent enemy which had justified the economic hardships imposed upon its people. But Gorbachev could not relieve the economic hardships themselves. At one and the same time the enemy vanished and the economy fell into decline. The combination proved fatal.

The likelihood thus far is that the Soviet Union collapsed primarily through internal failures, exacerbated but not created by external pressures. The Cold War ended because the Soviet Union first stopped competing, and then disintegrated, leaving only one of the former antagonists still standing.

Let us turn to the second question: what does the end of the Cold War tell us about the nature of the Cold War itself?

Historians have offered a number of different dates for the beginning of the Cold War, mostly concentrated in a six-year period between 1943 and 1949. The date of its conclusion is almost as uncertain. As early as the Washington summit in December 1987 Reagan said he could see the possibility, not just of détente, but of peace. The Moscow summit in May–June 1988 marked a transformation of attitudes. Gorbachev, at his meeting with Bush at Malta in December 1989, publicly said that the era of the Cold War was over. He repeated the message in his speech at Stanford on 4 June 1990. The NATO summit meeting in London on 5–6 July 1990 issued a sort of ‘declaration of peace’, offering friendship to its former enemies of the Warsaw Pact. The meeting of the Conference on European Security and Cooperation in Paris on 19 November 1990, attended by the two major antagonists and every European participant in the Cold War (as well as some neutrals) sketched out a new framework for European cooperation. It was almost a peace conference, of a symbolic kind. Throughout 1990 there was close American–Soviet cooperation, testifying to a new relationship which went further than the earlier state of détente. Finally, at the end of 1991, the Soviet Union itself was dissolved, and the Cold War could definitively be declared at an end. There was thus a period of some four years during which the Cold War was visibly drawing to a close (though successive reports of its demise were self-contradictory), and the Soviet Union was changing its nature and finally found itself in the course of disintegration. The coincidence of these two processes leaves a cloud of uncertainty. How far can we pierce the cloud, and what can we learn from the end of the Cold War?

The Cold War itself was not one but several; or at any rate one conflict with several different aspects: an ideological conflict; frozen diplomatic relations in

which the American and Soviet governments scarcely spoke to one another; a confrontation between hostile alliances; arms races, both nuclear and conventional; competition in the Third World; and a bitter conflict of propaganda and cultural rivalry. All these aspects were drawn together in a confrontation of two superpowers unrivalled in strength and the leaders of opposing ideological camps.

By 1990, most of these aspects of the conflict had either ceased to exist or markedly diminished. Leaving the ideological aspect aside for a moment, diplomatic and personal relations had improved out of recognition. The change which had begun with the thaw of the late 1950s, and then intensified with the Nixon–Brezhnev summits in 1972–4, reached its apogee with the four Reagan–Gorbachev summits in 1985–8. The great freeze of earlier times was forgotten in the warm sunshine of May 1988, when Reagan and Gorbachev strolled together through Red Square. The great alliances no longer confronted one another in 1990, when NATO offered its friendship to the Warsaw Pact; though it was not until 1991 that the Warsaw Pact actually ceased to exist. Competition in nuclear armaments, checked by the Arms Limitation treaties of the 1970s before being revived in the early 1980s, had now been halted and put into reverse. One category of weapons, the intermediate-range missiles, had been eliminated, and the two superpowers had agreed to reduce their main nuclear armaments by half. This still left them with ample weaponry to destroy one another, but they were no longer competing to add to their stockpiles. Competition in conventional forces had also been halted by Gorbachev’s announcement of a unilateral reduction of 500,000 in Soviet land strength. The naval race had always been one-sided, though the Soviet Union retained a large ocean-going fleet. Competition in the Third World had come to an end, as Gorbachev withdrew from Soviet commitments in Afghanistan, Africa and Central America, and the United States lost interest, except in Latin America – and Latin America had been an American sphere of influence long before the Cold War was ever thought of.

All these aspects of the Cold War were over by 1990. What about ideological conflict and two-power confrontation, which were after all the crucial issues? Even by the end of 1989 the ideological conflict was much diminished. On the Soviet side, the formal redefinition of ‘peaceful coexistence’ in 1986 was of crucial importance in principle. The Soviet Union could now conceive of peace with the capitalist world, and not merely a continuation of the class struggle by other means. The abandonment of the Brezhnev doctrine, first in Afghanistan in

1988 and then (much more important) in Eastern Europe in 1989, marked a profound change in practice as well as principle. Under the 'Sinatra Doctrine' countries which had been within the socialist camp were allowed to leave it. The Soviet Union remained the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, but its view of the ideological struggle had changed radically.

American attitudes and ideology had never been strictly laid down after the Soviet fashion. (Despite the American fondness for the word 'doctrine', their thinking was not strongly doctrinal in form.) American opinion was subject to swings of mood, from hostility towards the Soviets to warmth and back again.⁶ But the welcome by American crowds to Gorbachev in 1987 and 1988 (part of the 'Gorby-mania' which swept the whole Western world) and Reagan's public change of mind on the 'evil empire' marked a significant and lasting shift of opinion. For the Americans, Gorbachev represented a new and different Soviet Union.

At that stage in the Gorbachev–Reagan relationship, neither the Soviet nor the American leader had ceased to believe in their respective ways of life. Gorbachev's intention was to reform the Soviet system and revitalize socialism. Reagan exerted a powerful appeal in small-town America, and was elected (and re-elected) to restore confidence in American values. There was still a deep ideological *difference* between the two men, the two countries and the two systems; but in a way which is hard to define it had ceased to be a *conflict*.

The fundamental characteristic of the Cold War was that it was a struggle involving both ideology and power. The ideological aspect had diminished markedly by the end of 1989, with the Soviet abandonment of the old definition of peaceful coexistence and of the Brezhnev Doctrine. It appeared that both sides had come to accept a genuine peaceful coexistence of two different ways of life. At that stage, the United States and the Soviet Union still remained two superpowers, though with the former as the stronger of the two. If the normal pattern of two-power rivalry in the past (Athens and Sparta, Rome and Carthage, Hapsburg and Valois, England and France, Germany and France) had prevailed, the United States and the Soviet Union might well have resumed some form of hostility even after the Cold War had ended. There can be no certainty about this. Ancient rivalries have come to an end in the past. Franco-British rivalry ended with (or at least was much diminished by) the Entente Cordiale; and Franco-German hostility dissolved in a half-century of close cooperation from 1950 onwards. What would have happened to American–Soviet relations remains unknown, because the matter was never put to the test. By the end of

1991 the Soviet Union had ceased to exist, and the United States was left alone as the single remaining superpower. Russia, as the largest successor state to the Soviet Union, was still a great power, with nuclear weapons and large armed forces; but not on the scale of the former Soviet Union; it was also racked by internal disorder and immense economic difficulties.

The Cold War thus came to a blurred end, much in character with its uncertain and fluid shape while it was in progress. By the end of 1989 and early 1990 most of the elements in the Cold War had ceased to exist or diminished in importance. Ideological differences remained, and the potential opposition between two superpowers presented a possible source of difficulty in the future. By the end of 1991 both these elements had also disappeared. In March 1990 the Soviet constitution was amended so as to remove the directing role of the Communist Party, thus removing the state's ideological *raison d'être*. The Soviet Union itself ceased to exist at the end of 1991. Therefore the *ideological* and the *power-political* elements in the Cold War drew (almost staggered) to an end over the same period of time, making it hard for us to distinguish whether one of them was more decisive than the other in the nature of the Cold War itself. We are left with the conclusion that the Cold War was about *ideology plus power*. This is confirmed by a glance at relations between the United States and the remaining communist countries. After 1991, communism still existed in China, Vietnam and Cuba, so there was still an ideological division in the world. But no one called (or calls) relations between the United States and Cuba, or even the United States and China, a Cold War – although relations between the United States and China may yet deteriorate to the point that a neologism is coined to characterize their rivalry. Ideological conflict alone, it appears, is not enough to make a Cold War.

Notes

- 1 For a clear statement that the United States won the Cold War, see Robert Conquest, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century* (London, 1999), pp. 183–4. The quotation is from Patrick Brogan, *World Conflicts* (London, 1989), p. xv.
- 2 Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York, 1995), p. 611.
- 3 Quoted in Gabriel Partos, *The World That Came in from the Cold* (London, 1993), p. 239.
- 4 Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition; American–Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington DC, 1994), pp. 753–4.
- 5 Partos, *World*, pp. 240–1, gives a sketch of such a synthesis. The essays in Michael J. Hogan, ed., *The*

End of the Cold War: Its Meaning and Implications (Cambridge, 1992), show the difficulties involved in reconciling widely different points of view.

- 6 See Peter G. Boyle, *American–Soviet Relations: From the Russian Revolution to the Fall of Communism* (London, 1993), pp. 272–3.

PART SIX

After the Cold War



PHOTO 8 *The skyline of a central business district in Beijing (Getty Images. Credit: Wang Zhao).*



PHOTO 9 *The Complexo do Alemão pacified community, or 'favela' in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Getty Images. Credit: Mario Tama).*

Global issues

Demographic trends in the post-Cold War world – Global economic shifts – Climate change – Global injustices and the millennium goals – Global governance.

Since the end of the Cold War, issues that require collective international action for their resolution have taken an ever higher profile. Climate change, world poverty, the fight against deadly diseases such as AIDS and human rights abuses are all areas where world leaders have striven to negotiate agreements that constrain states – especially the biggest and most powerful – to meet targets that will improve human life on this planet.

The results of these efforts have been mixed. The gap between the rich world and the world's poorest peoples remains huge. Squalor is still the norm for most of the world's population. Commitments to eradicate poverty by increasing aid budgets and assisting the fight against disease have been met only in part. It would be wrong to paint too bleak a picture, however: the rapid industrialization of China, Indonesia, Thailand, Turkey and other developing countries has taken hundreds of millions of people out of poverty since the end of the Cold War.

The rising prosperity of the developing world has brought problems in its wake. Emissions of human-generated 'greenhouse gases' are blamed by scientists for the indisputable fact that the earth is running a fever. The millions of tons of carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere by factories and power stations in the developing nations, when added to the pollution already belched by the rich world's lavish use of energy, present international statesmen with hard challenges: who will cut back on their lifestyles? The haves or the have-not-enoughs?

The competitiveness of manufacturers in the developing world has moreover caused disruption to the rich world's economies. Chinese or Vietnamese workers now make Europe and North America's garments, gadgets and solar panels. But with well-paid manufacturing jobs shifting to the 'emerging economies', the wealthier nations are seeing alarming increases in inequality as the gap between knowledge workers and manual workers widens. They nevertheless remain havens for the planet's poorest people, who risk arrest and often death to migrate from their own lands to places where there are better opportunities. The question of migration has been one of the major issues in international relations in the past twenty years. A massive transfer of populations has been occurring, and unless predicted demographic trends are wildly wrong, the political questions posed by mass migration will be at the top of international agendas in future years.

There is a growing recognition, in fact, that unless states act collectively for the common good, the future of humanity is bleak. It is not entirely fanciful to imagine that the world might soon resemble Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, a hedonistic dystopia where highly urbanized societies live in a carefully manipulated consumerist bliss, in an artificially controlled environment that is fenced off from the ancestral squalor of the rest of the world.

Demographic trends

Let us put flesh on the bones of the aforementioned assertions. The world's population has grown from 4.4 billion people in 1980 to well over 7 billion today. Moreover, the poorer countries of the world have experienced much faster population growth than richer nations. India's population, for instance, has grown from an already huge 699 million in 1980 to 1.3 billion today. India, in fact, is poised to overtake China (whose own population has expanded from almost 1 billion to nearly 1.4 billion) as the world's most populous country. Sub-Saharan Africa's population has exploded: in 1980, 380 million people lived in the region; today the population is just shy of 1 billion. Nigeria alone has added 100 million people since 1980, and the West African giant currently has a population of 174 million, making it the world's seventh most populous country, closely tracking Pakistan, whose own population increased from approximately 80 million in 1980 to 180 million today. In South Asia, Indonesia has all but matched Nigeria and Pakistan's feat. There were 145 million Indonesians in 1980; there are 250 million today. Brazil, meanwhile, has expanded from 120

million in 1980 to its present population of slightly over 200 million. Both Iran and Egypt have doubled their populations since 1980: both countries today have approximately the same number of citizens as Germany, as do Vietnam and Turkey.

In general, the 'global South' has gained in population relative to the rest of the world. Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, and South Asia have significantly increased their share of the world's population. The rich countries' share, by contrast, has stagnated. The countries constituting today's European Union (EU) had a collective population of 464 million in 1980; today, they have just over 500 million. Countries like Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain and Germany have had negligible population growth since 1980, and without migration from the developing world some would have suffered outright population decline. Japan's population (approximately 127 million) has increased by just 10 million since 1980 and is now actually shrinking. Russia's has increased by a mere 4 million to reach 144 million and has diminished since the end of the Cold War. Among the countries of the Cold War 'West', the United States alone bucks the trend: its population (316 million) is 90 million people more than in 1980, although migration has played a large role in this increase.¹

Migration from the developing world to the industrialized nations has in fact been one of the characteristic features of the post-Cold War period. The United States has added an average of over 1 million new permanent residents every year in the new millennium and about 1.5 million temporary residents. These migrants have primarily been drawn from the developing world, with Mexico, China, India, Vietnam and Central America being the chief 'exporters' of people to the United States. In addition to these legal immigrants, millions of undocumented 'aliens' have also moved to the United States.

In Europe, migration has taken place on a major scale from Europe's poorer post-communist half to its richer countries, and from the imploding economies of North Africa. Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and France have all absorbed very large migration flows from these two sources. Literally millions of Albanians, Bulgarians, Poles, Romanians and people from the former Soviet Union have left home and sought work elsewhere in the EU since 2000. Romanians, in particular, decamped from their country en masse in the years immediately before and after 2007, when Romania entered the EU. Germany, for instance, which was admitting 20,000–30,000 immigrants a year from Romania until 2007, has seen dramatic growth in numbers of incoming

Romanian citizens: 120,000 moved to Germany in 2012, up from 97,000 in 2011. Romania is the largest exporter of people to Italy, too. In 2007, a startling 271,000 Romanians migrated to Italy; 175,000 followed in 2008. Spain received over 100,000 Romanians every year from 2004 to 2007, when 197,000 arrived.²

Migrants from North Africa and the Middle East have also made Europe their destination, despite tough legislation in most EU nations to restrict the number of immigrants from outside its borders. Would-be migrants often pay their life's savings to unscrupulous 'people traffickers' who then pack them into unseaworthy boats and sail them from Libya or Tunisia towards the rocky coasts of Italy, or from Morocco to Spain. Refugees escaping the Syrian civil war (see [Chapter 27](#)) have sought in huge numbers to enter Europe via Greece and the Balkans. On many occasions, such voyages have ended tragically, with single shipwrecks costing hundreds of lives: *Espresso*, a prominent Italian magazine, estimated in 2015 that at least 23,000 people had died while trying to get to Europe since the year 2000.³ Nevertheless, by this means or more conventional ones, migrants from North Africa constitute a significant and growing percentage of the inhabitants of Europe. Migrants know where they want to go: Germany, Sweden and other Nordic countries are the destinations of choice.

The phenomenon of migration from the poor world to the rich has been fraught with political consequences in the rich world. Populist movements such as the Tea Party in the United States, the Front National in France, the Lega Nord in Italy, the People's Party in Denmark, Greece's Golden Dawn or the Dutch Freedom Party have all exploited anti-migrant feelings. By openly campaigning against mass immigration and against the political elites that have permitted migration to happen on such a scale, such movements have become forces to be reckoned with in both Europe and the United States.

There is no question, either, that migration often amounts to brain drain, in which the best-educated citizens of developing countries flee their homelands to seek a better life elsewhere. The South American country of Guyana holds the world record: over 90 per cent of its tertiary-educated citizens are currently living in an OECD country.⁴ Nations such as Jamaica, Togo and Zimbabwe also lose a disproportionate number of their best brains. Southern European nations such as Greece and Italy are starting to reproduce this tendency. It is a development that bodes ill for their future.

Yet in historical terms, the most important movement of people since the end of the Cold War has arguably taken place *within* the giant societies of the developing world. The rapid growth in the global South's share of the world's

population has been accompanied by extremely rapid urbanization. The rate of urbanization has outgrown even the notable rise in population as a whole. India's cities were home to 160 million people in 1980, 288 million in year 2000, and more than 400 million today. Less than 80 million Brazilians lived in cities in 1980; the figure reached 140 million in 2000 and now totals 170 million. A mere 16 million Nigerians lived in cities in 1980; 80 million do today. Compared with 1980, 100 million more Indonesians live in cities today.

Although two of the world's largest cities by any standard (Tokyo and Seoul) are in highly developed nations, and cities such as Moscow, London, Los Angeles and New York remain among the world's major cities, the list of giant urban conurbations is now dominated by countries of the developing world. Mexico City, Manila, Karachi, Delhi, Mumbai, Istanbul, Shanghai, Beijing, Jakarta, Cairo, Dhaka, Bangkok, Lagos and São Paulo are all metropolitan areas that have populations of 15 million or more, although many of these cities' inhabitants live in conditions of abject poverty. In today's world, nearly 900 million people live in slums; that is, housing that has poor access to sanitation, clean water and other conveniences that the rich world takes for granted.

The trend towards urbanization reflects, of course, economic opportunities. People move from the city from the countryside to find work. Instead of tilling the fields, they look for better-paid jobs in factories, retail outlets and the service sector. Despite the 'great recession' of 2008–11 in the rich economies, the period since the end of the Cold War has overall seen one of the greatest economic expansions in all human history. One of the great characterizing facts of the post-Cold War world, indeed, has been the dramatic shift in the balance of world economic output from Europe and the United States to the new 'emerging nations'.

Global economic shifts

At the heart of this transformation in the world's economic geography is China, whose economic growth in the last two decades has some claim to be the most fundamental shift in the global balance since 1945. When the Cold War drew to a close, China was poor, rural and outclassed economically by its capitalist neighbours – Japan (which was then seen as the principal economic rival to the United States) and the rapidly industrializing South Korea and Taiwan. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China turned its back in the 1980s on a model of communist development that relied on collectivized agriculture and state-

controlled heavy industry (see [Chapter 18](#)). Peasants were encouraged to produce for the market, and special enterprise zones, notably at Shenzhen, in Guangdong province opposite Hong Kong, were established to encourage foreign manufacturing investment, and individual entrepreneurship was stimulated. Shenzhen, a rural backwater in the 1980s, is now a futuristic landscape of skyscrapers (China today has more skyscrapers than the United States; in 2000, it had none), giant factories and multi-lane highways. Millions of people work there, doing increasingly sophisticated jobs.

In the immediate aftermath of the protests in Beijing in the spring of 1989, which featured demands for democratization and the bloody suppression by the Chinese army of the nascent pro-democracy movement, some Chinese leaders sought to slow down the pace of economic liberalization. Deng fought off this challenge at the 1992 congress of the Chinese Communist Party. His successors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, party leader from 2002 until 2012, continued and accelerated his radical deviation from Maoist economic orthodoxy. China today is a communist state in name only, although the Communist Party retains absolute power and pluralism of opinion and political activity is strictly controlled. Economic development has thrived within the confines of an authoritarian (albeit no longer totalitarian) state.

The wealth generated by China's industrial revolution has been staggering. According to the World Bank, China's economic output (in 2013 dollars) amounted to less than \$200 per head in 1980. This meant that China was poorer than Bangladesh (\$230) and India (\$270), and significantly poorer than Egypt (\$510), Indonesia (\$540) and many African states. Its output per head was a small fraction of middle-income nations such as Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, Turkey or Iran. As late as 2000, China's economic output per head was still under \$1,000 per year. In 2013, its per capita product had reached \$6,800, a 35-fold increase in just over thirty years. Apart from 1989 to 1990, when China's annual growth rate dipped to 4 per cent, the Chinese economy's expansion has typically been of the order of 8–9 per cent per year, and between 2003 and 2007 it recorded double-figure growth every year. China has not yet caught up with Brazil, Turkey and Mexico, whose own growth rates have been far from lethargic, but it has surpassed South Africa, Indonesia and Iran and has left India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, not to mention all of Africa, far behind. The average Chinese produces four times as much as the average Indian, and approximately half as much as the average Russian – facts that are laden with obvious geopolitical significance.⁵

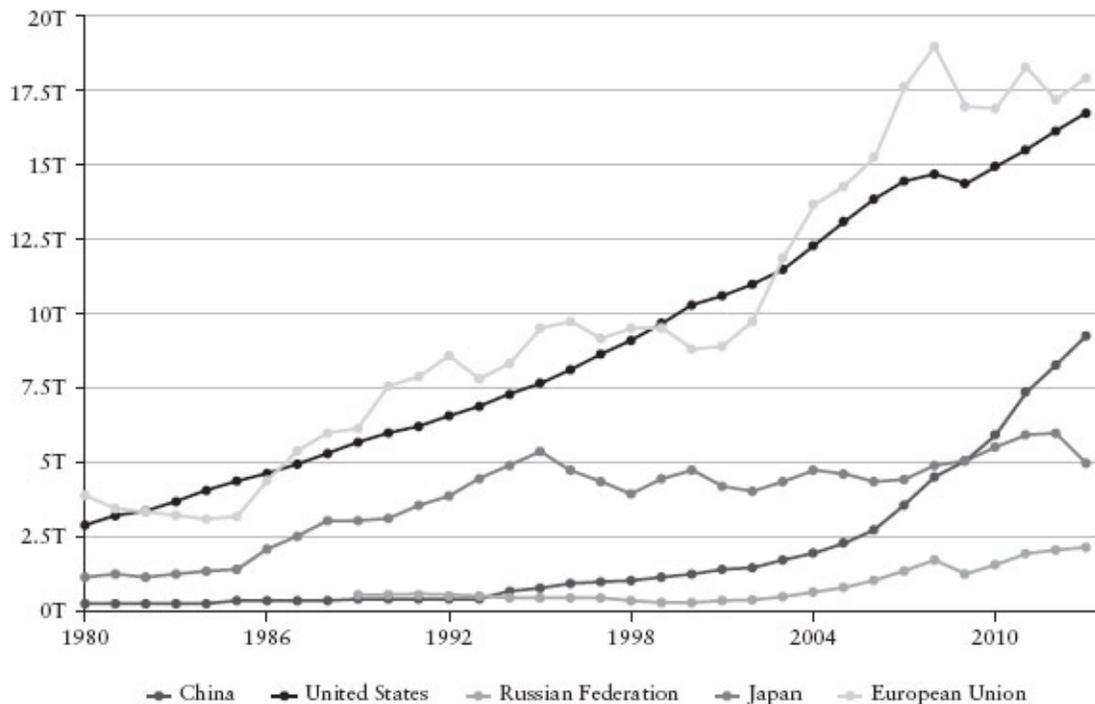


CHART 1 Global economic growth since 1980 (in 2013 US dollars).

Source: World Bank Data Base.

China is not the only country whose post-Cold War economic growth has been spectacular. South Korea, whose output per head was about \$2,500 in the mid-1980s, now produces \$25,000 per head – a feat that in some ways is even more of an achievement than China’s because it departed from a much higher base. South Korea was actually poorer than many African nations in the 1950s. Vietnam, which in 1990 had an output per head of under \$100, was producing nearly \$2,000 per person by 2013. When one thinks of the toll in lives and infrastructure of the two major wars fought on Vietnamese soil in the post-1945 period, its achievement is remarkable. There are, however, success stories outside of Asia. Botswana is the outright world growth champion: its per capita GDP has grown a hundredfold since it became independent in 1966.⁶

The wakening giant of the world economy is India, which despite remaining a very poor country, with output per head of under \$1,500 in 2013, has become a \$2 trillion economy like Italy’s. If India’s GDP per head rose even to current Vietnamese levels – hardly a dramatic increase and one that India should be easily capable of achieving with even limited economic liberalization – its economy would rival Germany’s in size. In general, there has been a dramatic shift in global output from North to South, and from West to East. Countries from the developing world are much larger in terms of population and often

much richer. The so-called BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) boast, when added together, an economy not much smaller than that of the United States.

As [Chart 1](#) shows, the rich world has nevertheless also grown considerably. The United States, Germany, France, Japan, the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian nations all produce far more than they did in the 1980s, as do Spain and the countries of the former communist bloc. Countries with an output per head of over \$30,000 per person remain overwhelmingly European or North American, with the two giant economies of North America having expanded relatively more than either Western Europe or Japan. Australia, whose economy has been fuelled by insatiable Chinese demand for iron ore and other raw materials, has grown most of all.

Increased trade, and not only in raw materials, has been one of the principal consequences of the rapid industrialization of certain developing countries. Trade flows have increased consistently since the 1950s, owing to the liberalization of markets promoted by the various ‘rounds’ of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Decades of patient negotiation enabled the average tariffs on imports to fall significantly between the 1950s and the 1990s, and this facilitated trade between the traditional economic heavyweights in Europe and North America. From the late 1960s onwards, Japan emerged as an exporting powerhouse, and since 1990 growth in world trade has come primarily from (and to) Asia, with China and South Korea leading the way.

The most vivid illustration of this transformation in the pattern of world trade is the dramatic increase in bilateral trade between China and the United States: in 1979, when Deng’s economic reforms began, total trade (imports plus exports) between the two countries was \$2 billion. China was the United States’ twenty-third-largest market for exports and its forty-fifth-largest source of imports. In 2014, total bilateral trade had reached \$592 billion; China had become the United States’ second-largest trading partner; after Canada, its biggest source of imports; and the third-largest destination for exports. The size of the trade deficit in merchandise (i.e. the difference between China’s exports of manufactures to the United States and the United States’ exports of products to China) had become a major political issue in Washington, with many US politicians charging that China was manipulating its currency to win market share in the United States. The disparity is, in fact, disconcerting, and brings home the astonishing rise of China, especially since 2000, to the status of an economic superpower. In 2000, the United States exported \$16 billion of merchandise to

China and imported some \$100 billion, a gap of \$84 billion. In 2007, at the height of the global economic boom, the deficit had reached \$256 billion. The subsequent global recession temporarily depressed the size of China's surplus (\$227 billion in 2009), but since then the gap has widened further and has quickened its rate of increase. In 2014, the United States exported a record \$124 billion of goods to China, but imported nearly \$467 billion – a \$343 billion shortfall.⁷

A large part of Chinese exports, moreover, was made up of advanced technology products (ATP). In short, in addition to its low-tech exports of clothing, shoes and household appliances, China was exporting iPhones and iPads to the United States, the country that actually provided the intellectual capital for the creation of these iconic devices. It was inevitable that some American politicians should demand that the terms of trade between the two countries be changed in order to allow the United States to manufacture such high-value added items and to allow the benefits of their production to be shared more widely. At the moment, customers aside, the chief beneficiaries are Apple shareholders, many of whom have more money than the average American.

The trade deficit between China and the United States, despite some tense moments, has not burst into open conflict because China, rather than raise its domestic consumption levels, has reinvested much of its accumulated surplus in the United States. It has become the world's biggest holder of American government bonds, for example (holding over 7 per cent of the \$17.5 trillion national debt). The economies of the United States and China are thus intricately interwoven. China invests its wealth in the US economy and the whole intricate trading and financial relationship is nurtured by an endless array of banks, global law firms and other intermediaries who provide credit, market analysis and advice. Asian city states like Hong Kong and Singapore owe their high standards of living to their key role in the service economy that has sprouted on the spreading trunk of the Asian manufacturing economy.

China has similarly become a locus for the export of European goods – Germany, whose share of global merchandise trade is scarcely inferior to China's, has enjoyed a millennium export boom as its machine tools, luxury cars and industrial products have found Asian buyers. Italian and French providers of luxury goods – Armani, Gucci, Hermès, Louis Vuitton – have enjoyed soaring profits as they catered to the tastes of Chinese consumers. The devil may or may not wear Prada, but investment bankers and company lawyers in Shanghai and Hong Kong do, and by so doing, they also add another ingredient to the complex

mixture of trade, investment, cultural awareness and shared tastes that intellectuals and journalists have taken to calling ‘globalization’.

The economic growth of East Asia, and the enormous expansion of personal wealth that has accompanied it, has generated an élite that not only dresses in fashionable European brands and drives sporty European cars, but is educated at universities in the United States (in 2014, 886,000 foreign students were enrolled in US universities; the largest nationalities represented were the Chinese, followed by Indians and South Koreans). The long-term political implications of this intellectual exodus are immense for a still nominally communist country like China. But economic growth cannot continue without well-paid lawyers, engineers, financial analysts and managers who speak and write English (not to mention other key languages such as Spanish) and who have the necessary cultural background to work in the global economy.

Heating up

Major population growth plus greater wealth has led to greatly increased consumption, which has had negative consequences as well as positive ones. Climate change, which potentially has vast costs for the world as a whole, has been induced, or at any rate worsened, by human economic activity. Scientists agree that the world is getting warmer because of the vast quantities of ‘greenhouse’ gases, notably carbon dioxide, emitted into the atmosphere by human beings and this fact – one disputed only by the most ideological sceptics – poses significant political and ethical challenges.

The Australian philosopher Peter Singer has in fact argued that the world is faced with a ‘global problem of the commons’. That is to say, for years the industrial economies of the West have been – to use Singer’s metaphor – treating the atmosphere as a sink down which they could pour waste with blithe disregard for the consequences. Just as the sink began to show signs of blocking, other countries, whose carbon emissions had hitherto been relatively small, began slopping waste down the sink, too.⁸ Across the developing world, people who once rode bicycles now drive cars and trucks. Peoples who once ate rice and vegetables now devour hamburgers and other food products that have significant environmental costs associated with producing them. Hundreds of millions now crank up the air conditioning instead of enduring the summer heat. Deforestation has greatly reduced the number of trees, which absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, while the breakneck urbanization of the

developing world has stimulated the production of cement, which is a major source of carbon emissions. Chinese economic growth, in particular, has mostly been fuelled by power stations burning coal, by far the least environmentally friendly energy source.

China today belches more pollution than even the United States – nearly 30 per cent of the world's total emissions of approximately 36 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide per year – and Chinese citizens have a larger carbon footprint (i.e. they emit more carbon into the atmosphere) than citizens of the EU: 7.2 tonnes per person to 6.8 (the United States emits 16.5 tonnes per person; the biggest polluters of all are the wealthy city states of the Persian Gulf). India is catching up with Europe fast. The world as a whole emits a staggering 60 per cent more carbon than it did in 1990.⁹

Scientists broadly agree that if developing nations emit carbon into the atmosphere on the same scale as developed ones, catastrophic climate change must occur. For three decades now, climate scientists have warned that human emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases were raising the temperature of the planet beyond safe limits (limits that they somewhat arbitrarily fixed at an increase of 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures). If temperatures continue to rise, the likelihood of severe weather events (hurricanes, droughts, floods, heatwaves) will increase significantly. Sea levels have already risen across the globe – causing understandable disquiet in low-lying countries such as the Netherlands, the Maldives and Bangladesh – and the ice caps at both the North and South Poles are diminishing at a rate that surpasses scientists' most pessimistic predictions. If the ice caps melt entirely, or even substantially, the effects would be immense.

Climate change is clearly a problem requiring collective action. It is a challenge for the world as a whole, not for individual nations. If its effects are to be mitigated, there must be international cooperation to reduce emissions. But in a world whose principal political actors are sovereign states, international cooperation is hard to achieve. Rich countries, notably the United States, have balked at paying the costs of reducing emissions. Newly industrializing countries have been reluctant to impose any brake on their economic growth.

The world began taking global warming seriously in November 1988 when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established. Its first report was issued in 1990, and it warned that 'emissions resulting from human activities are substantially increasing the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases'. In June 1992, the United Nations Conference on

Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro. Over 170 countries sent representatives to the Rio 'Earth Summit', which was also attended by some 2,400 representatives of concerned non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Seventeen *thousand* people attended a parallel NGO forum; thousands of journalists and television crews from all over the world flocked to the event. The delegates to the Rio conference solemnly agreed to adopt a 'Convention' that acknowledged that legally binding restrictions on carbon emissions were necessary to check climate change.

No figures are available for the quantity of carbon pumped into the atmosphere by the Earth Summit and the events that surrounded it. All the same, a few more million kilos of soot would have been a small price to pay had the Rio meeting laid the groundwork for a real, lasting agreement. Instead, the Earth Summit marked the beginning of a laborious negotiating process that was characterized by international disharmony. On 11 December 1997, the Kyoto Protocol, the world's first emissions reduction treaty, was signed at a global summit in the ancient Japanese city. The protocol, which eventually entered into force in 2005, committed the world's industrialized nations – though not industrializing ones – to reducing their emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to 5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012. The Kyoto agreement, in short, tried to stabilize total global emissions by imposing cuts on the countries who could most afford it – a solution most found fair.

One of the most prominent brokers of the Kyoto Protocol was then US vice president Al Gore, a committed environmentalist. In the November 2000 presidential elections, Gore, a Democrat, was controversially defeated by the Republican candidate, George W. Bush, who swiftly took a more isolationist approach to emissions policy. At the outset of his first term of office, on 13 March 2001, Bush stated in a letter to the Senate of the United States, which had voted 95–0 to reject the Kyoto agreement:

I oppose the Kyoto Protocol because it exempts 80 per cent of the world, including major population centres such as China and India, from compliance, and would cause serious harm to the U.S. economy. ... The Kyoto Protocol is an unfair and ineffective means of addressing global climate change concerns.¹⁰

Led by the EU, which launched an emissions trading scheme in January 2005, the Kyoto signatories pursued implementation of the Kyoto Protocol even in the absence of the United States. The Bali climate change conference – another

high-profile jamboree involving tens of thousands of participants – adopted, in December 2007, an action plan theoretically designed to intensify the reduction of global emissions. At Bali, the EU publicly urged cutting emissions to 15–20 per cent below 1990 levels: a target that it was confident it could achieve, and which it has indeed since met.¹¹

Yet, in a sense, President Bush was right. All such appeals for substantive reductions in carbon emissions were meaningless until the big new polluters were prepared to clean up their act too. The December 2009 Copenhagen climate conference, where the United States was represented by a president, Barack Obama, who was actively prepared to reduce the United States' emissions sharply, offered ample proof that the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs), especially China and India, put growth in output ahead of reducing emissions.

The highest-profile meeting hitherto on climate change, the Copenhagen conference was attended by tens of thousands of government advisers, experts and diplomats, and many world leaders. The Copenhagen Accord, which emerged from the final hours of the two-week conference, was negotiated behind-the-scenes between the United States, China, Brazil, India and South Africa, and was widely regarded as a lowest-common-denominator agreement. It somewhat blandly reaffirmed the necessity of keeping rises in the world's temperature below 2°C, and committed the rich countries to cash transfers to the developing world of \$30 billion by 2012, rising to \$100 billion per year by 2020, to subsidize the economic dislocation these countries would experience as they implemented emissions targets. The summit's more ambitious proclaimed goals, such as reducing the industrialized world's emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, and an overall global cut in emissions of 50 per cent by the same date, were jettisoned in the face of the intransigence of the Chinese government. China's objectives at the talks were manifestly to ensure that its emergence as a major industrial power would not be compromised by possible future restrictions on its emissions and to assert itself as a great power. It brusquely succeeded in doing both.¹²

Since Copenhagen, China's breakneck economic growth has slowed, and this has reduced the rate of growth in its emissions. Its government, taking note of rising public disquiet at dangerous air pollution levels, has also begun to promote cleaner energy policies. The year 2014, not by chance, was the first year that total global emissions stabilized, with no increase being recorded over 2013. The United States has also begun to clean up its act. In November 2014, the United States and China jointly announced that they would make long-term cuts

in emissions. Washington promised to make cuts of at least 25 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025. China pledged that its carbon emissions will peak in 2030: a commitment that most experts regarded as too little, too late. On 12 December 2015 yet another summit on climate change in Paris continued the trend towards tougher standards on emissions. At Paris the world's governments committed themselves to striving to keep temperature rises down to 1.5°C by submitting nationally determined five-year emission reduction programmes, which will become steadily more rigorous every time they are renewed. These programmes will not be legally binding, but nations will be compelled to monitor and report on their emissions: it will at least be clear who is evading the accord. Developed nations reaffirmed their commitment to provide \$100 billion per year to less-developed nations to help them with costs of reducing environmentally degrading policies.

The history of the climate change issue since the end of the Cold War – and it has been one of the key questions in international relations in this period – teaches that all such promises should be taken with a large pinch of salt. Economic growth is a powerful symbol of national prowess and achieving it confers legitimacy on governments and political systems. It also brings opportunities for consumption that billions of human beings in the developing world want. The rich world, which has enjoyed a century of affluence, will not be able to tell the world's poorest nations that affluence is not for them; and it is very unlikely to cut its own consumption patterns drastically.

Global injustices

Poverty reduction has in fact been a high political priority in international affairs since the end of the Cold War. In particular, it was the core theme of the so-called Millennium Summit, a special meeting of the United Nations (UN), which took place in New York on 6–8 September 2000. Nearly 150 heads of state or government attended the meeting. The 'Millennium Declaration' issued by the summit argued for greater international cooperation, for greater respect for legality and human rights and, above all, for greater global fairness. The economic growth of the 1990s had led excited theorists to talk of a new age of globalization, in which the world's economies were becoming more closely entwined, but peoples were not sharing equally from the world's economic boom. Rather, the summit argued, globalization's benefits were 'very unevenly shared' and its costs were 'unevenly distributed'. In the words of the Millennium

Declaration:

Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.¹³

It was necessary, in short, to allow more countries to share in the benefits of the expanding world economy by liberating them from the constraints of absolute poverty. Peoples cannot prosper if they are oppressed by debt, by disease, by defective infrastructure or by lack of basic education. The richer peoples of the world, the Declaration contended, had a moral obligation to ensure that these minimum conditions for a dignified life were met across the globe.

Accordingly, the Millennium Summit established eight 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) to guide international efforts to diminish global poverty. These goals were:

- Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

It is widely agreed that this short list of clear objectives has helped governments, international institutions, NGOs and private charitable associations to target and alleviate some of the root causes of global poverty. Some prominent world leaders, notably Tony Blair, the British prime minister from 1997 to 2007, have turned the MDGs into something of a crusade. As Blair told the General Assembly of the UN on 14 September 2005, the 'struggle against global poverty will define our moral standing in the eyes of the future'.¹⁴

Since the Millennium Summit, global poverty has in fact been significantly reduced, though this has been due less to the developed world's efforts than to the productive surge of China and South-East Asia. The number of people living on less than \$1.25 per day – the rule of thumb indicator for extreme poverty – has fallen from 1.9 billion to 1.2 billion since 1990, despite population increase. Such people, moreover, live overwhelmingly in a handful of countries: India,

China (despite its economic boom), Nigeria and its northern neighbours (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger), Bangladesh and the Congo. Extreme poverty has been substantially eliminated elsewhere. If India or Nigeria were to reproduce China's pace of economic growth – an eventuality that cannot be discounted – then the number of the world's citizens subsisting on the edge of calamity would be cut dramatically.

The developed world deserves modest congratulations for delivering on some of its millennium promises. Development aid from the rich world reached \$134 billion in 2013, although only a few northern European nations give the 0.7 per cent of national income that has been promoted by the UN since the 1970s; trade barriers to imports from developing countries have mostly been removed, although the least developed countries have benefited little from this rich world concession; the debt burdens of the world's poorest states have been slashed by the coordinated action of the G8 group of the world's most industrialized nations, with nearly forty highly indebted countries, almost all of them African, benefiting most. Debt repayment as a percentage of developing countries' exports has fallen sharply and is now manageable – although it still often represents a crushing burden on the poorest peoples in the world.

Obtaining debt relief for the world's poorest countries became a major transnational cause in the first decade of the twenty-first century, with civil society groups from all over the world uniting around a British initiative to 'make poverty history'. The days preceding the 6 July 2005 summit of the G8 in Gleneagles, Scotland, were characterized by a huge anti-poverty rally in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The principal reason for this groundswell of public feeling about the debt question was that so much of the debt accrued by African nations in particular was 'odious'. That is to say, it was debt incurred by the arrogant, indeed often megalomaniac, leaders of Third World countries, most of which was then wasted on vanity projects, cost-overruns, corruption and pork barrel spending of every kind. In effect, as we saw in [Chapter 19](#), international lenders both private and public made large loans to African nations in the 1980s and 1990s (the total debt stock, when measured in today's dollars, peaked in 1995). However, a huge proportion of this money was siphoned off by corrupt elites and recycled to the West in the form of capital flight. In other words, the developed world's taxpayers' money was being spent on loans to African states whose elites 'privatized' it through theft and then deposited it in the banking system of the rich world, which was then free to loan it out and make money on it (or lose

money on it; but once again, the taxpayer provided). The whole process amounted to a colossal failure of due diligence on the part of the international lending agencies that financed this vicious circle: a 1998 study by the World Bank glumly concluded that its staff had seen its role as ‘dishing out cash’ rather than following up to ensure that loan money was spent properly.¹⁵ The anti-debt campaigners were asking why ordinary Nigerians, Ugandans, Gabonese and Congolese (to name four countries whose elites were particular offenders) should go without basic health care and schools because their rulers had stolen most of the money that was supposed to pay for them. It was a fair question.

Many global celebrities – musicians, film stars and television personalities – have been closely associated with the anti-poverty campaign. Bono Vox (the stage name of Paul Hewson, the frontman of the Irish rock group U2) has been perhaps the most influential and committed of such individuals. He was the founder of the international anti-poverty lobbying group ONE, which currently has more than 6 million members and which has stirred the social conscience of many global corporations. Thanks to the work of civil society groups and outspoken wealthy activists such as Bono, the elimination of poverty and the fight against diseases such as AIDS and malaria have become good public relations for world leaders and the chief executives of the world’s biggest companies. Action has duly followed.

The point is not a trivial one. Celebrities familiar to hundreds of millions of people around the world are, in a media-driven society, certainly more influential than traditional intellectuals or even newspaper proprietors. Their convictions can become items on the global political agenda if, like Bono, they are politically savvy and knowledgeable about the issues.

Bill Gates, the founder of the software company Microsoft, is another high-profile individual that has made his mark on the poverty debate. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has committed billions of dollars to the struggle against HIV/AIDS and other diseases and has played a major part in ensuring that genuine progress has been recorded towards attaining the MDGs. Child mortality has in fact been cut drastically since the Millennium Summit. Inoculating against measles has alone saved 14 million infant lives. The global struggle against tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS has saved millions more lives: in 2012 alone nearly 10 million people benefited from the antiretroviral drugs that combat AIDS. In May 2012, the World Health Assembly approved the Global Vaccination Action Plan (GVAP), an ambitious attempt to strengthen routine immunization, to accelerate the fight against vaccine-preventable

diseases and to introduce new and improved vaccines. By 2020, it is hoped that diseases such as polio and meningitis will have been all but eradicated.

Many more of the world's children are attending primary school; outside of war-affected territories, elementary schooling is now the norm. Sub-Saharan Africa has made particular progress in this area, although its population growth means that it will be difficult to maintain its success. Donor aid for education nevertheless remains disconcertingly low: about \$15 billion per year, of which a mere \$6 billion is spent on basic education – to put this figure in perspective, it is worth reflecting that media rights to the National Basketball Association alone cost American broadcasters \$2.6 billion per year, while the rights to screen English Premiership soccer matches put £1.7 billion per season into the pockets of a few hundred star players and their entourages. The rich world is at least giving twice as much as it donated for basic education at the beginning of the millennium, but is still a drop in the ocean of the developing world's needs. There are still an estimated 900 million illiterates in the world, and well over 100 million of them are under the age of fifteen.

Last, but certainly not least, gender equality has made great strides since the end of the Cold War – though that does not mean that there is not a great deal to do. The *World Bank Development Report* for 2012 prefaced its contents with the statement:

Although many women continue to struggle with gender-based disadvantages in their daily lives, things have changed for the better – and at a pace that would have been unthinkable even two decades ago. Women have made unprecedented gains in rights, in education and health, and in access to jobs and livelihoods.¹⁶

There are several causes for this progress. First, women's access to education has grown and is growing. More women have become literate, and many more, even in developing countries, are attending university. Such women marry later, have fewer children and work. This enables them to contribute to family incomes, and greater income enables the family to educate daughters as well as sons, thus giving an impulse to further improvements. Bangladesh is a good example of a country where the condition of women has been radically changed. In the 1970s, upon independence from Pakistan, Bangladeshi women on average gave birth to seven children; nowadays, the number has fallen to just over two. More than half of Bangladeshi women now attend school, and labour market participation rates are much higher. These statistics represents a massive gain in

freedom for tens of millions of South Asian women. In part, these changes have been driven by economic growth, in part by policy choices that have given a priority to women's issues. Similar successes have been obtained in many other countries around the globe, though it remains true that in many of the world's poorest countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, little has been done to change the condition of women, who remain the most disadvantaged members of very disadvantaged societies.

Having pointed to the real increases in liberty and equality that have accrued to women, especially in the past two or three decades, it is also essential to point out that the oppression of women remains a scar on the international conscience. Violence against women is ubiquitous. Deliberate abortion and infanticide of girls ensure that some countries – notably China and India – have a significantly skewed gender balance. Domestic violence can only be described as a global pandemic: in this area, some rich countries, notably the United States, are often little better than countries with a small fraction of their income per head. Reliable statistics in this area are for obvious reasons hard to obtain. It is nevertheless estimated that approximately a third of the world's women have been the victim of domestic violence, which very often leads to rape and murder. In some societies, this figure rises to over two-thirds. Across the globe, more than 40,000 women were killed in the course of domestic violence in 2012, and that year was by no means an outlier.

Another major source of violence against women is female genital mutilation (FGM). As many as 150 million women alive today in developing countries (or among immigrant communities in Western nations) have been subjected to this psychologically and physically damaging practice, which is usually carried out on young girls as a way of controlling their future sexuality. Numerous international campaigns by NGOs are attempting, with some success, to raise awareness of the evils of FGM, which is not without its defenders in the developing world. Supporters of the practice argue that FGM is an essential part of their societies' traditions and cultural identity, and suggest that the repugnance it inspires among Western liberals is simply a form of intellectual imperialism. Some of the most prominent opponents of FGM, notably Ayann Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born Muslim who fled to the Netherlands to avoid a forced marriage (and subsequently to the United States to avoid being murdered by radical Muslims who regard her as an apostate), or Emma Bonino, a prominent Italian feminist and politician who has been one of the leading figures in the movement to abolish FGM, dismiss such arguments with vehemence.¹⁷ It is

estimated that 3 million girls every year continue to be victims of this form of sexual aggression.

Nevertheless, critics of FGM have succeeded in creating an international consensus for change. On 20 December 2012, the General Assembly of the UN, led by several African countries where the practice of FGM is widespread, voted overwhelmingly to recommend its members to prohibit the practice. The global struggle for women's rights, like the parallel struggles against global warming and poverty, is, in fact, a very good example of international relations from the 'bottom-up'. Instead of world affairs being exclusively conducted by diplomats on behalf of states, the agenda of the world's leaders is increasingly being influenced – even set – by campaigners determined to right manifest wrongs.

There remain plenty of wrongs left to right. The world is less abysmally unjust than it was at the end of the Cold War, but it remains a place where a small percentage of its population annually spends hundreds of billions of dollars on luxuries and entertainment, while billions of people live in violent slums or backward villages, have haphazard or negligible health care and education, limited access to electricity and sanitation, and exist – women perhaps especially – in a state of permanent precariousness unimaginable in the developed world. On 15 January 2015 Oxfam, a global charity of unimpeachable reputation, warned the World Economic Forum, at its annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, that the richest 1 per cent of the world's population owned 48 per cent of the world's wealth, and that this figure was destined to surpass 50 per cent in 2016. The richest fifth of the world's population own 80 per cent of the world's wealth. The eighty wealthiest individuals alone owned as much as the poorest 3.5 billion.¹⁸ Common sense suggests that such glaring disparities are a recipe for future global strife and are bound to encourage mass migration.

Global governance

The theme of this chapter has been that world economic development and population increase have multiplied the number of problems that are genuinely global and that demand comprehensive political solutions. Poverty and climate change, not to mention the ebb and flow of trade and investment, pose questions to which no single nation can elaborate answers. Yet world government remains the dream of a relative handful of idealists. Even after the end of the Cold War, which polarized every issue, the UN has not become the 'parliament of mankind' that its supporters had hoped for.¹⁹ If one were gifted with a very

fertile imagination, one might imagine that the General Assembly of the UN could be transformed into an authentic legislature, with votes being weighted according to population and GDP, and with some form of qualified majority voting being employed for decision-making. But such a step is unlikely to happen any time soon. Nation states, unlike citizens in domestic society, are chary of surrendering their sovereign right to act as they see fit to external international bodies, or even to arbitration. The big states, especially, have become more, not less, prickly over the question of their sovereign rights since the end of the Cold War. China has become more assertive as it has grown stronger. India is following in its footsteps. Russia, the defeated power in the Cold War, has substituted an uncompromising form of nationalism for communism, and brooks no external interference in its actions, however brutal.

The United States, one is sometimes tempted to say, is in favour of limitations upon the sovereign powers of nations so long as the United States itself is exempted from them. In the new millennium, it has consistently refused, for instance, to become a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC), an international tribunal founded in 2002 and based in The Hague (Netherlands), for fear that American soldiers or citizens might be indicted and arraigned for war crimes or for crimes against humanity. As a prominent German journalist and international relations theorist has remarked: 'Prudence was the better part of goodness' in the United States' decision to exclude itself from the ICC. American troops were by far the most likely ones to be 'embroiled in violence' outside national borders and US policymakers have shrunk from exposing its soldiers to international prosecution.²⁰ India and China, among other states, have also refused to accept that their nationals can be arraigned before the ICC. The ICC has so far had twenty-three individual cases and ten 'situations' brought to its attention. The cases investigated by the ICC that have concluded in prosecutions for abuses of human rights or genocide have been drawn overwhelmingly from Africa.

There has been one reasonably successful experiment in the limitation of national sovereignty: the EU. The EU is discussed at greater length in [Chapter 25](#), but since the end of the Cold War, this regional organization of states has extended the range of areas over which its constituent member states make decisions collectively; has extended the number of issues for which voting is by qualified majority, rather than unanimity; has established judicial review over the actions of its member states and of the Union's own institutions; and has even strengthened the powers of its supranational legislature. It has also greatly

extended its membership.

Other regional associations of states, of which the best known is the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), have satisfied themselves with remaining purely intergovernmental forums that enable their member states to retain their core sovereign rights. ASEAN, whose original members were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, was formed as long ago as August 1967, when the Bangkok Declaration committed its signatories to accelerate economic, cultural and political cooperation (see [Chapter 18](#)). Since the end of the Cold War, it has expanded its membership to include Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Its activities are now intense and wide-ranging, with regular meetings of the member states' finance, foreign and culture ministers, and with regular summits of its leaders. ASEAN's decisions are by consensus only, however, and its major initiatives are embodied in treaties that have to be ratified by all the member states. This is not to dispute that some of its initiatives have been bold: a 1995 treaty banning nuclear weapons from South-East Asia was ratified by the Philippines in 2001, and thereafter became fully operational. ASEAN has also negotiated free trade treaties with its neighbours in East Asia and Australasia, is the forum for coordinating its member states' efforts to achieve the MDGs in the region and by the end of 2015 expects to become a fully fledged economic community. ASEAN is an officially recognized observer at the UN. There is no doubt that by acting collectively the ASEAN states count for more in the world than they possibly could as separate states.²¹

Both the EU and ASEAN have grown out of the desire to stimulate interregional commerce. Trade, indeed, because of its growing importance for the global economy, has been the policy area that has seen the largest encroachments upon the pure doctrine of national sovereignty. Since the end of the Cold War, world trade has been administered and adjudicated by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO was established in 1995 and it has two core tasks. The first of these is negotiating reductions in tariffs and other obstacles to free trade. Since November 2001, the WTO has been engaged in promoting the 'Doha Round' of trade talks, so-called because the process was launched in the capital city of Qatar. The Doha Round, in keeping with the principles of the Millennium Declaration, has sought to integrate less-developed countries into the global trading system, by giving them 'special and differentiated treatment', and has particularly concentrated upon eroding protectionist barriers in the field of agriculture. Rich countries protect their

farmers excessively, or so economic theory asserts.

It has proved very difficult to make progress during the Doha Round. Since all the WTO's member states must agree before any final package can be signed (the principle of national sovereignty intervening again), nearly fifteen years have passed without the talks being brought to a conclusion (although it is true that many bilateral trade deals have been cut by member states frustrated by the slow pace of the Doha negotiations and that trade liberalizations has accordingly continued). Many nations continue to be recalcitrant about cutting tariffs on agricultural products or opening national markets to the providers of services from other countries.

The WTO has also run into the problem of national sovereignty in its second key task: the settlement of trade disputes between its member states. As of March 2015, nearly five hundred trade disputes have been referred to the WTO for arbitration. Unsurprisingly, the United States was a major initiator of complaints against protectionist behaviour by other nations, but it was also the main recipient of such protests. The process of arbitration is complex, politically sensitive and potentially disruptive of good relations between states. Nevertheless, that nations have in principle agreed to allow the WTO's arbitration procedure to decide where right lies in trade disputes is a significant divergence from the doctrine of pure national sovereignty. In a number of cases WTO rulings have led member states to remove protectionist barriers; in others, the WTO has authorized nations that are the victims of protectionist measures by fellow WTO members to levy retaliatory tariffs on offenders' exports.

The most intriguing development in global governance, however, is the growth, since the end of the Cold War, in the importance of summitry. Some of the key decisions on combating world poverty, climate change, management of macroeconomic policy and a host of other issues have been taken in the regular summit meetings of the G7 (Russia joined the group in 1998, making it the G8, but was suspended in 2014), whose gatherings have stopped being informal chats between world leaders and have become set-piece attempts to promote global governance. The finance ministers of the G7 nations meet four times a year to coordinate policy action. Each year, the member state holding the presidency organizes a work package of topics for discussion at the mid-year summit of the member states' heads of government, which is also attended by the EU, and, on occasion, by the so-called Outreach 5 (Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa). Taken together, these countries encompass nearly all the world's leading exporters, producers, polluters and consumers.

The task of global economic governance has been aided since 1999 by regular meetings of the so-called G20. Until 2008, the G20, whose membership comprises the G8, the EU, the Outreach 5, Argentina, Australia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Turkey, was an annual meeting of finance ministers and central bankers. Under the leadership of the American and British governments, the G20 became the locus of the industrialized world's response to the world economic crisis in 2008–9, with summits being held in Washington DC, London and Pittsburgh of its member states' heads of government. The G20 also now meets once a year to discuss the principal issues facing the global economy.

The rise of summitry has raised interesting questions of global democracy. Opponents of summitry charge – not entirely without reason – that decisions affecting hundreds of millions of lives are being taken behind closed doors by an international élite that is promoting the agenda of international capitalism. Several G8 and G20 meetings, notably the July 2001 meeting of the G8 in Genoa, Italy, and the June 2010 summit of the G20 in Toronto, Canada, have been disrupted by street protests and urban guerrilla warfare. The global élite now has to meet, typically, in carefully protected locations that cannot be assaulted by disenchanting radicals. The violence employed by so-called black bloc anarchists and anti-global activists is both futile and nihilistic. The notion, advanced by the Italian Marxist Antonio Negri and the American social theorist Michael Hardt in their international bestseller, *Empire*, that the institutions of global governance discussed here constitute a kind of international oligarchy, not to mention 'the global extension of the internal U.S. constitutional project', may strike one as overwrought.²² But there is no doubt that one of the major developments of the post-Cold War world has been an increase of technocratic governance at the expense of democratic government. Ensuring that the peoples of the world can get their voices heard in the forums of global governance is an issue that is unlikely to go away.

Notes

- 1 World Development Indicators, 'Total Population 1980–2013'; available at: http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?Report_Name=Total-Population-1980-2013&Id=a4d715d9. It should be added that the trend is overwhelmingly towards a relative rise in the population of Africa. Almost all the countries whose women have more than five children are in Africa. On current trends, Congo, Tanzania, Niger and Ethiopia will join Nigeria in the ranks of the ten most

- populous countries by 2100 and Africa will host 40 per cent of the world's population. See 'The Young Continent', *The Economist*, 12 December 2015, pp. 21–3.
- 2 OECD, *International Migration Outlook* (Paris, 2014), pp. 324, 326 and 333.
 - 3 Fabrizio Gatti, 'Migranti, la guerra del Mediterraneo', *L'Espresso*; available at: <http://speciali.espresso.repubblica.it/interattivi-2014/migranti/>.
 - 4 OECD-UNDESA, *World Migration in Figures 2013*, p. 4; available at: <http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/World-Migration-in-Figures.pdf>.
 - 5 World Development Indicators, 'GDP per Capita (in 2013 US Dollars) 1980-2014'; available at: [http://databank.worldbank.org/data/GDP-per-Capita-\(in-2013-US-Dollar\)-1980-2014/id/5bd90efa](http://databank.worldbank.org/data/GDP-per-Capita-(in-2013-US-Dollar)-1980-2014/id/5bd90efa).
 - 6 Patrick Love and Ralph Lattimore, *OECD Insights: Free, Fair and Open?*, 19 May 2009, p. 124; available at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/trade/international-trade_9789264060265-en.
 - 7 Wayne M. Morrison, *China-US Trade Issues* (Washington DC, 2015), p. 3.
 - 8 Peter Singer, *One World* (New Haven, 2002), p. 28.
 - 9 Global Carbon Project, *Global Carbon Budget 2014*, p. 6; available at: http://www.globalcarbonproject.org/carbonbudget/14/files/GCP_budget_2014_lowres_v1.02.pdf.
 - 10 George W. Bush, 'Text of a Letter from the President to Senators Hagel, Helms, Craig, and Roberts', 13 March 2001; available at: <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/03/20010314.html>.
 - 11 European Commission, 'EU Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Targets'; available at: http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/g-gas/index_en.htm.
 - 12 N. N., 'COP15 Ends with "Meaningful," but Contentious, Agreement', *Business and the Environment*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, January 2010, p. 2.
 - 13 Quotations are from the Millennium Declaration, General Assembly Resolution 55/2, 18 September 2000.
 - 14 For Blair's speech, see <http://www.un.org/webcast/summit2005/statements/uk-blair050914eng.pdf>.
 - 15 Quoted in Léonce Ndikumana and James K. Boyce, *Africa's Odious Debts: How Foreign Loans and Capital Flight Bled a Continent* (London and New York, 2011), p. 24. This book is a brilliant popularization of serious academic research in development economics.
 - 16 World Bank, *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, p. 2; available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/Complete-Report.pdf>.
 - 17 See Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *Caged Virgin: An Emancipation Proclamation for Women and Islam* (New York, 2008).
 - 18 Winnie Byanyima, 'Richest 1% Will Own More Than All the Rest by 2016', *Oxfam International*, 19 January 2015; available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2015-01-19/richest-1-will-own-more-all-rest-2016>.
 - 19 This is a reference to Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present and Future of the United Nations* (New York, 2006).
 - 20 Josef Joffe, *Überpower: The Imperial Temptation of America* (New York, 1996), pp. 41–2.
 - 21 For ASEAN, see Michael G. Plummer and Siow Yue Chia, *ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Integration: Progress, Challenges and Future Directions* (Cambridge, 2015).
 - 22 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), p. 182.

Nationalism, political conflict and war in Europe

Democracy and nationalism – Conflict and massacre in Yugoslavia – The EU and its travails – Expansion of NATO – The revival of Russia – Russia and Ukraine.

The end of the Cold War seemed to offer Europe an unprecedented opportunity for peaceful development. The Soviet peril had been removed by the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; the unification of East and West Germany had given impetus to the process of European integration. The United States retained its military influence in the continent via NATO, and the new democracies of Eastern Europe were anxious to join both the European Union (EU), which was instituted in February 1992, and NATO itself. The break-up of the Soviet Union had led to the creation of a buffer region of newly independent states, of which Ukraine was the biggest. Russian leaders were anyway open to the West: the then president Boris Yeltsin was a convinced supporter of constructing better relations both with Europe and with the United States.

Things have changed. Russia, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, now menaces Europe's eastern flank and is waging clandestine war on Ukraine. Russia's domestic politics has become steadily more authoritarian. Dealing with Russia is Europe's new 'Eastern Question', but leadership of the calibre of Bismarck and Disraeli seems in short supply.

The EU was supposed to provide this leadership. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, many analysts believed that the EU might develop into a major

international actor. Its failure to pacify Yugoslavia called its credentials into doubt. Its subsequent constitutional and economic travails have confirmed sceptics in their views. The EU's centrepiece project, the Euro, has become the common currency of nineteen European countries, but it has also brutally exposed the weaknesses of its member states, especially the Mediterranean ones. In general, notions – common in the late 1990s – that the EU would soon evolve into a federal union of Europe on the model, say, of Canada, now look overblown.

The paradox is, however, that the EU does retain a powerful allure for the countries of the former Soviet empire. Whatever else it may be, it is perceived to be a cosmopolitan antidote to the virus of nationalism, a provider of markets and investment and a democratic safe haven in a turbulent world. What the international history of Europe since the end of the Cold War has illustrated beyond argument, however, is that nationalism is stirring once again in Europe. It will be interesting to see whether Europe's leaders can cope with this jarring and unanticipated fact.

Democracy and nationalism

The collapse of the Soviet bloc between 1989 and 1991 was the culmination of what the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington dubbed the 'Third Wave' of democratization.¹ It cannot be too strongly underlined that a *majority* of the states that currently constitute the continent of Europe were undemocratic, or outright totalitarian (Albania, Romania), as recently as the early 1970s. Greece, Portugal and Spain overturned their respective clerical-military dictatorships only in the mid-1970s; Turkey emerged as a stable democracy only from the late 1980s onwards; the huge swathe of territory from the Ukraine–Russia border to the Danube had no historical tradition of democracy at all, with the short-lived exceptions of the Baltic states, during their brief period of independence between the two wars, and Czechoslovakia between 1919 and the Nazi invasion in March 1939.

The experience of democracy since 1991 has been mixed. In a number of countries, democracy has indeed taken root. Poland, the Baltic states, Slovenia and the Czech Republic are all multiparty polities where democratic norms have been consolidated into political life – albeit sometimes with difficulty. The nations of Central Europe all experimented with different approaches to organizing their democracy, turning the region into something of a laboratory for

democratic theory.

Poland, for instance, adopted a semi-presidential constitution (i.e. one in which the elected president and the premier share executive power), but its electoral system recalls that of Germany, because its parliament, the Sejm, is elected by proportional representation but with a 5 per cent threshold to ensure – at any rate in theory – that the legislature is not swamped by contentious minor parties and single issue movements. The first post-communist elections in 1991 were characterized by an almost comical level of political fragmentation (111 parties presented candidates and many minor parties, most notoriously the Beer Lovers' Party, obtained parliamentary representation). Gradually, however, the political system has stabilized. In the last two parliamentary elections – in 2007 and 2011 – the two principal parties, the centrist Civic Platform Party and the right-wing populist Law and Justice Party, combined have taken over 70 per cent of the vote. The same has occurred in the last two presidential elections, in 2010 and 2015. By way of comparison, the two largest political parties of France, Great Britain, Italy and Spain no longer command 70 per cent of their respective electorates: their electoral systems are more fragmented. Poland, despite producing a large number of political mavericks since the fall of communism, has also benefited from the leadership of a number of responsible leaders who enjoy a Europe-wide reputation. Donald Tusk, prime minister of Poland from 2007 to 2014, and the leader of Civic Platform, became president of the European Council, the EU's strategic decision-making body, in December 2014. Poland's post-Cold War economic performance has eclipsed that of almost all Europe's more long-standing democracies. Its voice has begun to count in international affairs. Yet despite these successes, a brusque swerve towards right-wing nationalism was recorded in October 2015 general elections, in which Law and Justice won an absolute majority of seats in the Sejm.

The shift towards an intolerant form of nationalist populism has been even more marked in nearby Hungary. Hungary has a unicameral parliamentary system of government whose dominant figure is the prime minister, not the president, whose role is largely ceremonial. Like Poland, Hungary has joined the EU and NATO. Again like Poland, its first democratic elections were contested by a jostling throng of political parties, but the political system has since stabilized – albeit by less than Poland's. Hungary's voters today face a choice between a right-wing party, Fidesz, which overwhelmingly won the 2010 and 2014 general elections, and the centre-left Unity coalition, whose constituent parts are mostly united by their opposition to the alleged authoritarianism of the

charismatic prime minister, Viktor Orbán, who has emerged since 2010 as one of the most controversial post-Cold War European leaders. Orbán faced a pan-European wave of criticism in July 2014 when he publicly argued that national affirmation requires the concentration of power in the hands of the ruling party and a strong leader; he faced even more when he began fencing out refugees fleeing from civil war in the Middle East. When one adds the fact that the third-largest party in Hungary, Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary), is regarded by many as a neo-Nazi movement, one understands why the rest of Europe is watching Hungary with growing concern.

Nationalism has been the curse of post-Cold War Eastern and Central Europe more generally. Nationalism caused Czechoslovakia to split in two in 1992: for all his personal prestige, President Václav Havel could do nothing to stop Czech and Slovak politicians playing the card of nationalist sentiment. In the Baltic states, the question of language and citizenship rights for native Russian speakers arouses strong passions: on the one hand, the Russians living in the country are mostly the beneficiaries or descendants of Joseph Stalin's ruthless post-war attempt to 'Russify' the country; on the other, the comprehensible wariness of the Baltic peoples towards their neighbour has spilled over, especially in Latvia, into distinctly illiberal policies towards the resident Russian community. A large percentage of the Russians living in both Latvia and Estonia were excluded from citizenship after 1991. The whole of the post-Cold War history of Russia itself has been characterized by a growing authoritarian nationalism (see later), which seems likely to write a new chapter in the international history of our times.

Nationalism, of course, is not a phenomenon limited to Central and Eastern Europe. The Scots, Basques, Catalonians, Flemish and northern Italians all have political movements that wish to separate from the nation state to which they presently belong. Some of these movements have enjoyed significant electoral success. As in Eastern Europe, the pursuit of nationhood often degenerates into ethnic tensions and racism: it is a mistake to divide Europe's nationalists into 'good' West Europeans, who use democratic methods to advance their cause, and anti-democratic East Europeans obsessed with ethnicity. France's Front National (FN), which since the end of the Cold War has become the country's second-largest party, is the epitome of a right-wing nationalist movement that combines a 'France first' policy in economic affairs, and within the EU, with a potent anti-immigration message. Taken in the round, nationalism is on the increase across Europe: a fact that is likely to have major future implications for

international relations.

The break-up of Yugoslavia

The rise of nationalism in Europe has occurred despite the fact that, in the 1990s, Yugoslavia provided a bloody lesson of what the human consequences of unbridled nationalism can be. At the risk of imposing too much order on what was a very messy affair, Yugoslavia's tragedy was articulated in three main acts. In act one, in 1990–1, Croatia and Slovenia detached themselves from Yugoslavia, a move that provoked a bloody civil war between the Croatian government and the country's Serbian minority, which had long memories of its terrible oppression at the hands of the collaborationist regime in power in Zagreb during the Second World War. Act two was the Bosnian civil war, which lasted from 1992 to 1995 and horrified international public opinion. Only American intervention halted the conflict, but by then the mere word 'Bosnia' had become a metaphor for the human capacity for hatred towards the 'other'. In acts one and two, the sinister phrase 'ethnic cleansing' (the systematic terrorizing and massacre of other ethnic groups to establish an ethnically 'pure' territory) became part of the vocabulary of international relations. Act three took place in 1998–9 in Kosovo, the southernmost province of Serbia, whose inhabitants were (and are) mostly ethnic Albanians. Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević, who was universally depicted as the chief villain of the Yugoslav tragedy, sought in 1998–9 to drive the Kosovars out of their homes and to re-establish Serb dominance. He was stopped by NATO, which waged a war of intervention, justified on humanitarian grounds, against Serbia itself.

Yugoslavia began to fall apart upon the death of Tito in 1980. Bereft of its charismatic leader, national impulses began to stir; the Communist Party, which was organized along federal lines, did little to stop them. Indeed, in Serbia, where Milošević emerged as the Balkan republic's strongman, and in Croatia, where a former army general, Franjo Tuđman, revived memories of the wartime Croatian fascist state, party officials deliberately whipped up nationalist sentiment. In June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia. Serbia did little to obstruct Slovenia's exit, but it aided and abetted Croatia's substantial Serb minority, which took up arms to preserve the autonomy of the so-called Krajina Republic. Serbs soon controlled one-third of Croatia's territory, and committed atrocities against Croats living under their sway, notably in the town of Vukovar. Croat forces responded in kind.

For reasons which remain opaque, the Europeans (and the Americans) thought this quagmire offered an opportunity for the European Community (EC), which was then negotiating its transformation into the EU, to prove its prowess as an actor on the world stage. 'This is the hour of Europe,' proclaimed Jacques Poos, the foreign minister of Luxembourg. Brussels spent the autumn of 1991 trying to bring order to the chaos. Its chosen mediator, British diplomat Peter Carrington, strove manfully to keep Yugoslavia together in a loose confederation that guaranteed the cultural and political rights of minorities. He got nowhere. Serbian leader Milošević would not sign a deal that did not contain border changes. Contemporaneously former US secretary of state Cyrus Vance worked to broker a ceasefire that would disarm the Serb militias, get the Yugoslav Army out of Croatia, and create United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) in the areas controlled by the Serbs. Vance negotiated an agreement along these lines and on 12 February 1992 the UN voted to deploy 12,000 blue helmets to act as peacekeepers.

Carrington and Vance's efforts to make peace were however scuppered by Germany, which in January 1992 unilaterally recognized Slovenia and Croatia as independent republics – a fait accompli that the EU as a whole accepted. Compounding its mistake, the EU added that it would also accept Bosnian independence if there was a referendum vote in favour. The Bosnian government, headed by Alija Izetbegović, hastened to organize one, though it knew full well that the consequences would likely be tragic. The fact was that Muslim and Croat Bosnians feared minority status within a greater Serbia (which is what Yugoslavia, without Slovenia and Croatia, was destined to be), and hence wanted independence, but Bosnia's Serbs feared for their future in an independent Bosnian state. Bosnia's Serbs boycotted the referendum, which concluded on 1 March 1992, with a 99 per cent plurality in favour of independence. Izetbegović proclaimed Bosnia to be a sovereign state and civil war broke out.

There is no space here to recount the Bosnian civil war in detail. The worst atrocities in Europe since 1945 were recorded. Bosnian Serbs besieged Sarajevo and in July 1995, at the town of Srebrenica, committed genocide – a word that one should always use with caution, but which in this case has been recognized as appropriate by international tribunals. Serbian militia troops commanded by Ratko Mladić – a man subsequently condemned for war crimes – captured the town, which was supposed to be a UN-protected 'safe haven', rounded up 8,000 Bosniak men and boys and murdered them all. They were buried in mass graves.

The women, old people and small children of the town were expelled from their homes at gunpoint. Many women were raped. This Nazi-like atrocity took place under the eyes of UN peacekeepers – Dutch soldiers – who had no orders to intervene and in fact did nothing.²

The citizens of Srebrenica were victims of the international community's reluctance to intervene in the conflict. Again and again in the previous three years, ceasefires had been brokered, safe havens established, UN blue helmets deployed in large numbers (but with inadequate rules of engagement), no-fly zones decreed and economic sanctions imposed upon Yugoslavia (which was by now a rump federation of Serbia and Montenegro). But the war had continued inexorably. By the summer of 1995, almost 150,000 people had been killed in Bosnia, tens of thousands of women had been raped, and perhaps 2 million people had become refugees.

The American government had threatened to wage air war against the Serbs as early as the summer of 1993, following the failure of the so-called Vance–Owen peace plan in the spring and early summer of 1993.³ The Europeans resisted any escalation in the use of force and the Clinton administration did not push them. Srebrenica changed the game. On 30 August 1995, following further Serb attacks on 'safe havens', NATO launched operation 'Deliberate Force'. It was the first time since 1949 that NATO had gone to war. More than 3,500 sorties were launched (two-thirds of them by American jets), and over 1,000 bombs (mostly precision-guided) were dropped. Contemporaneously, Bosnian troops launched a ground attack and forced the Serbs to retreat.

Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia were forced to the negotiating table at Dayton, Ohio, where the three states, under intense pressure from diplomat Richard Holbrooke, signed an agreement on 21 November 1995. The Dayton accords created an autonomous 'Serb Republic' within the boundaries of Bosnia, which remained, however, a nominally sovereign state with its borders intact. An implementation force (IFOR) of 80,000 troops, including a contingent from Russia, was to prevent the communities from renewing the conflict (this duty was taken over in 2004 by the EU). One of Europe's most futile ever wars – and there have been many – had finally ended.

NATO's dealings with Milošević were not yet over. The Dayton accords had specifically not included Kosovo, whose large Albanian majority population was chafing at despotic Serbian rule (for Serbs, Kosovo is their ancestral home and the fact that it now has an Albanian majority population is incidental). In 1990, Milošević had revoked the 1974 Yugoslav constitution, which gave Kosovo

considerable autonomy, and began a programme of ‘Serbification’ in which Albanians were removed from their jobs and replaced by ethnic Serbs. Kosovar Albanians, and the large Albanian diaspora, initially put their trust in Ibrahim Rugova, an intellectual who advocated non-violent resistance to the central government. Rugova created a parallel government within Kosovo, but despite his moderation, Belgrade’s rule became increasingly repressive.

Resentful Kosovars increasingly turned to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which was carrying on armed resistance in the mountains. In March 1998, following a massacre by Serb forces of a KLA leader and his entire clan, the fighting flared up uncontrollably. By September 1998, UN Security Council resolution 1199 was warning of an ‘impending humanitarian catastrophe’ unless international action was taken. It was impossible to get UN authorization for intervention, however, because Russia was adamantly opposed. In the autumn of 1998, 300,000 Kosovars fled to neighbouring Albania and Macedonia. Under the pretext of fighting KLA terrorism, Milošević was in fact practising de facto ethnic cleansing. Perhaps 10,000 Kosovar civilians died during the Serbs’ offensive.

The West, mindful of what had happened in Bosnia, was not prepared to let ethnic cleansing continue. NATO threatened to use air strikes in October 1998, forcing a brief lull in the conflict. In February 1999, all-party talks began at Chateau Rambouillet in France. At Rambouillet, NATO intransigently demanded that Kosovo be granted autonomy and that a substantial force of peacekeepers be deployed in the province. Serbia, in effect, was being required to allow foreign soldiers to police its sovereign territory. Supported by Russia, Belgrade refused, as NATO leaders had known it would. NATO, convinced that a show of force would quickly bring Belgrade to its senses, launched a major bombing campaign on 24 March 1999. For the first time in its history, NATO took ‘sustained military action against a sovereign state’.⁴

The bombing campaign in fact lasted seventy-seven days. Some 38,000 missions were flown. It was not restricted to blasting Yugoslav troops in Kosovo, who, in any case, proved adept at hiding their tanks and vehicles from NATO bombs. Belgrade itself was attacked and hundreds of civilians were killed. The Chinese embassy in Belgrade was accidentally destroyed by an air raid. Led by British prime minister Tony Blair, who was the most hawkish of all NATO’s leaders, willing even to put 50,000 British ‘boots on the ground’ if necessary, NATO’s relentless air campaign eventually prevailed.⁵ Milošević capitulated and in June 1999 agreed to allow UN peacekeepers (KFOR),

including a Russian contingent, into Kosovo, and withdrew the Yugoslav army. Blair, who had been deeply moved by the suffering he had witnessed during a visit to Kosovar refugee camp in Macedonia, argued passionately that the intervention had been a just war. Others, looking at the scale of the bombing in Yugoslavia, and the use of cluster bombs by NATO jets, tended to recall that a war, to be just, must have a just cause – but also be fought justly. Kosovo remained a UN mandate – an old-fashioned word, but in this case the right one – until February 2008, when it declared independence. Many countries, including several NATO members and Russia, have not yet recognized its sovereign status.

An ever-more contentious union

The treaty constituting the EU was signed in February 1992 at the end of two lengthy intergovernmental conferences (one on political union; the other on economic and monetary union) between the then twelve member states of the EC. The treaty envisaged the creation of a single currency by 1999 at the latest for willing member states (Great Britain and Denmark were not) that could show that their fiscal position was sound, that their inflation was low and that their national debt was manageable. A European Central Bank (ECB) would be established to issue and police the new currency zone: its statute clarified that its primary task would be to keep inflation low without political interference.

The treaty did much else. It strengthened the powers of the elected European Parliament, established the right of EU citizenship (though not the opportunity to vote in one's country of residence), established a framework for a common foreign and defence policy, extended the EU's writ to social policy (though the United Kingdom opted out) and greatly increased the degree of cooperation between the member states in judicial and home affairs. It was a 'quantum leap' in the degree of integration established between the new organization's member states.⁶

It cannot be overemphasized that the EC, despite the rhetoric that has always garlanded the 'European project', had been concerned overwhelmingly with trade and agriculture issues. Removing non-tariff barriers to internal trade by the end of 1992 had been the purpose of the 1986 Single European Act. The European Commission, in the meantime, was acting on behalf of the EC's member states in the so-called Uruguay Round of international trade talks that led, in 1995, to the creation of the WTO. Agriculture accounted for the lion's

share of the EC's budget until, in the 1990s, the amount spent on regional development was expanded.

The EU at once began to attract would-be members. Cold War neutrals such as Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden applied to join in 1992 and 1993. These states, with their high standards of living and for the most part enviable democracies, were admitted to membership in 1995 without serious mishap (though the people of Norway voted against membership). The former communist states, as well as Turkey, Cyprus and Malta, were more problematic. In June 1993, a summit of EU leaders in Copenhagen made it clear that candidate states had to become functioning market economies, guarantee political and human rights and improve their capacity to absorb and implement thousands of pages of extant EU legislation. Enlargement, moreover, was not to come at the expense of 'deepening'. That is to say, by putting a brake on the speed with which the existing twelve member states were pushing forward with integration.

The EU's member states were very conscious, moreover, that large-scale enlargement was impossible unless the EU reformed the way in which it made decisions. The leitmotif of EU decision-making process had always been the search for consensus between the member states. With the looming possibility of twenty or more member states, how was broad consensus on complex budgetary, trade or foreign policy questions to be found? For many European federalists, not to mention French diplomats, the risk of greater enlargement was that the new EU would evolve into a glorified, somewhat litigious free trade area ensconced in a wider American security sphere. Great Britain – no fan of European federalism – enthusiastically backed rapid enlargement precisely for this reason.

The years 1993 to 1999 were therefore spent on 'deepening' the EU. The process was far from easy. A prolonged major crisis on the financial markets in the summers of 1992 and 1993, caused by international investors buying German government debt, which was being issued in massive quantities to pay for German unification, wrecked the first and most fundamental criterion for monetary union: stable exchange rates between the EU's member states – a point that is often glossed over in histories of European integration. The EU nevertheless proceeded undaunted and in 1995 gave the would-be currency a name: the Euro.

The truth was that the member states, especially Germany, had invested too much political capital in building the single currency to turn back. Politics, not

economics, was driving the process. In 1998, the European Commission judged that all the member states except Greece and Sweden were fit to join the Euro. Italy and Belgium, both of which had national debts in excess of 120 per cent of GDP, double the amount strictly permitted by the EU Treaty, were the main beneficiaries of this decision, which was reached only after some hard negotiating behind the scenes. Great Britain and Denmark opted out, and on 1 January 1999, eleven countries fixed their exchange rates against one another. Banknotes were introduced in 2002, by which time, in another highly political decision, Greece had been admitted, too. It was a decision that reflected a degree of hubris about the EU's ability to impose tight fiscal policies on its member states.

The EU also sought systematically to increase the powers of the European Parliament, to deepen cooperation in justice and home affairs and to promote action to solve global warming. These were all concerns that permeated the treaties of Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2000), which also produced some important amendments to the EU Treaty. The member states, however, merely tinkered with the crucial institutional questions by inventing ever-more convoluted voting mechanisms in the Council of Ministers and hatching elaborate plans for increasing the size of both the Commission and the Parliament. The treaty changes introduced at Nice were bargained over with particular vigour and were deeply unpopular in some member states. Ireland rejected the Nice Treaty in a referendum in June 2001, holding up its ratification for the EU as a whole, and was eventually compelled to hold a second, successful, referendum in October 2002. The Irish vote, in hindsight, was a signal that so-called Euroscepticism was spreading from the known troublemakers – Great Britain and Denmark – to nations that had profited from EU membership.

In May 2000, in a Berlin speech, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer of Germany advocated movement in the direction of a federal state for Europe. In December 2001, the Laeken (Belgium) European Council meeting established a 'Convention', to be chaired by a distinguished former president of France, Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, and tasked with formulating proposals that would shape the EU's institutional future. The Convention's delegates were entirely drawn from the then member states' national governments, and from the European and national parliaments. The applicant countries – by December 2001, the EU was at an advanced stage in membership talks with the Czech Republic, the three Baltic nations, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia

and Slovakia – were permitted to send observers, but they were specifically debarred from preventing ‘any consensus that may emerge among the member states’.

The Convention inaugurated its work in March 2002. Giscard – no shrinking violet – announced that its job would be to draft a ‘constitution’ for the new Europe that had emerged after the Cold War. To general acclaim from *bien-pensants* across Europe, the Convention in July 2003 duly delivered a document that established a ‘Union of States’, a confederation with substantial and clearly delineated responsibilities, a bill of rights, a de facto cabinet (the European Council), a voting system in the Council of Ministers that facilitated the passage of legislation and a parliament that would become a ‘co-legislator’ in all areas of policy. The Convention’s proposals were duly watered down by the member states – including the candidate members – in a tortuous intergovernmental negotiation that lasted until July 2004, but enough innovations remained for the more modestly named ‘constitutional treaty’ to be regarded as a major step towards European federalism. To many, it promised – to quote the union’s new motto – ‘Unity in Diversity’.

Earlier, on 1 May 2004, the EU had admitted the ten Mediterranean and Central European states mentioned earlier. The union now consisted of 25 member states, with 450 million citizens. The enlarged EU’s GDP was slightly larger than the United States’. As Wim Kok, a former premier of the Netherlands, wrote in 2003: ‘Enlargement of the European Union ... is the fulfilment of a vision ... the reunification of Europe’s peoples in a constitutional framework that encourages them to work together in peace and stability.’⁷ The entrance of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, and Croatia in 2013, brought this vision closer still to completion. Even more than the Euro, enlargement represented an achievement that was of potentially historical significance, for until 2004, Europe’s peoples had never actually been unified. Europe had existed in the minds of writers and political thinkers, and in certain moments had existed as an economic unit (one thinks of J. M. Keynes’s brilliant description of the economic unity of Edwardian Europe in the *Economic Consequences of the Peace*), but it had never before been a coherent political whole.

Taken together, the act of enlargement and the signature of the constitutional treaty led to a major surge in the EU’s self-confidence. It was not aberrant to talk of a mood of ‘EU-phoria’.⁸ The confident mood was restricted to Europe’s élites, however. Think-tank gurus and overexcited academics might gush that ‘Europe has become a giant freewheeling experimental laboratory for rethinking

the human condition and reconfiguring human institutions in the global area', or hypothesize that the EU was becoming a 'normative power' able to spread its virtuous practices through power of example, but such notions obtained little purchase among ordinary citizens, most of whom remained ignorant about what the EU did, why it was doing it, and certainly why it should do more.⁹

This disjuncture between leaders and led soon became an important fact in European politics. Hostility to the constitutional treaty was so intense in Great Britain that Prime Minister Tony Blair felt obliged to call a national referendum on the question. President Chirac of France followed suit, as did the governments of the Netherlands and Spain, which voted by a 77 per cent plurality in favour. The French were less enthusiastic than their Iberian neighbours. After a campaign dominated by a lurid debate over the prospects of migrants from Poland and elsewhere stealing French jobs, the French electorate voted by 55–45 per cent in May 2005 to reject the constitutional treaty. The death knell, however, was delivered by the Dutch. In the Netherlands, the electoral campaign was less populist in tone than in France. Nonetheless, on 1 June 2005, the Dutch voted against by a staggering 62–38 per cent margin. The peoples of two of the original six member states had popped the EU-phoria bubble. Tony Blair was spared from even having to hold a referendum of his own.

The EU has arguably never recovered from the rejection of the constitutional treaty. There has been a perceptible loss of momentum in its activities. Most of the treaty's institutional changes, shorn of a good deal of federalist rhetoric, were incorporated in the Treaty of Lisbon (December 2007). That treaty too, however, was only ratified after much heart-searching. Except for Ireland, ratification was everywhere through national parliaments: the treaty would unquestionably have been struck down in many countries had peoples been allowed to vote.

The Lisbon Treaty became operational on 1 December 2009, just in time for the world financial crisis, which brutally exposed the weaknesses and disequilibria of the European economy, and which put the Euro at serious risk of collapse. EU member states lurched into the red in 2009, when the collective budget deficit of the EU's member states reached €802 billion. In 2010, borrowing was even higher. In the same year, Ireland had to borrow a sum equal to 32 per cent of its GDP in order to bail out its reckless banks. As deficits surged, financial markets woke up to the fact that Euro membership was no guarantee against national bankruptcy. As Irish banks crashed, Spanish property prices slumped, Greek politicians admitted that national borrowing had been

deliberately understated, and Italy wallowed in an endless political crisis caused by the judicial troubles of its controversial premier, Silvio Berlusconi, the markets began to fear defaults. Yields on the bonds of the so-called PIGS (Portugal–Ireland–Greece–Spain) soared, as did those of Italy.

In the United States, or other federal states, such problems can be solved by transfers from the central budget to states in economic difficulty, or else by action by the central bank to stimulate economic activity. In the Eurozone, the ECB, wedded as it was to German values of sound money, was reluctant to cut interest rates as fast as the Federal Reserve in Washington DC. German public opinion – and north European opinion in general – was also hostile to transferring resources to the Greeks and other poorly governed southern European nations. A sour residue of nationalistic contempt for lesser breeds with budget deficits disfigured the German press. At the same time, the EU's leaders were afraid that these countries would be driven to abandon the Euro if their budgetary positions became hopeless. The European Council therefore created a rescue fund that allowed the countries in difficulty to receive soft loans in exchange for taking drastic measures to improve their efficiency and to reduce public spending.

EU-imposed austerity has led to massive unemployment and growing social unrest across the Mediterranean, especially in Greece. New political parties such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and the Five Stars Movement in Italy have captured the votes of Europe's *indignados*. Throughout Europe, populist movements such as the French Front National, the Danish People's Party, the True Finns, northern Italy's Lega Nord and the United Kingdom Independence Party, all openly blamed the EU for their nations' troubles. In Britain, indeed, hostility to the EU became so strong that Prime Minister David Cameron, a Conservative, was compelled in 2016 to negotiate a series of special derogations for Britain from EU rules and put them to a national referendum – on the understanding that rejection of the terms he had negotiated would mean beginning the complex procedure to leave the EU. The British shocked the world (and horrified its EU partners) by voting 52–48 per cent for so-called Brexit on 23 June 2016.

Cyprus, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and, above all, Greece have all nevertheless taken EU money since 2010. By 2015, Greece had received €240 billion – €170 billion of which is from EU partners – that it was not able to repay. In the summer of 2015, Greece's left-wing government was compelled to close its banks to prevent capital outflows: citizens were allowed to withdraw a mere €60

a day for essential purposes. The Syriza-led Greek government was forced to bow to demands from Brussels for even more austerity or face bankruptcy and a return to the drachma, Greece's former currency. Some German politicians did not hide that this was their preferred outcome. But grovelling unsurprisingly did not come easy to a proud people like the Greeks. The bail-out's harshness stimulated considerable nationalist feeling across the political spectrum.

The EU's failure to deal with the migration crisis (see [Chapter 24](#)) has also stimulated nationalist instincts. The EU found itself utterly unprepared for the wave of migration that occurred in 2014 and 2015. First, the task of preventing people trafficking was left in the hands of the nation states. Italy launched Operation *Mare Nostrum* in October 2013. The Italian coastguard and navy – despite much ignorant criticism – saved a great many lives the following year; the tiny island of Lampedusa, geographically the closest part of Europe to Libya, has alone hosted rather more desperate people than most of the rest of Europe. Italy, supported by Greece and Spain, nevertheless argued that the costs for a European problem of these dimensions could not fall upon the Italian taxpayer alone.

From November 2014 the result of this pressure was an increased role for Frontex, the EU's border agency, and the involvement of support ships and assets from other member states. The sheer numbers of people in arrival swamped the Mediterranean states, however. Under the so-called Dublin Regulation, the EU state that is point of entry for a migrant must decide whether she or he is seeking to enter Europe in order to obtain asylum from war or political persecution (such people must by international law be admitted), or is an economic migrant subject to immigration law. Countries in northern Europe suspect that the Mediterranean states, who are well aware that most migrants want to move north, have been handing out asylum status too easily. The initial tolerance towards migrants shown by Germany and a handful of other countries has frayed as public opinion realized that would-be seekers of asylum, or simply a better life, number in the millions. Germany apart, few European countries – especially in Eastern Europe – have shown any signs of being willing to accept asylum seekers in meaningful numbers. Walls and border checks are returning to Europe; so are right-wing politicians of an ugly kind. The EU's inability to invent a policy for North Africa, or to coordinate a convincing defence of its borders, has rekindled distrust between its member states and angered a large section of its peoples, who think their rulers are out of touch with public opinion on this question.

By 2016, indeed, the EU's hard-won halo of cosmopolitan progressivism was looking distinctly tarnished. It has not lived up to the hopes invested in it at the turn of the millennium. It remains true, however, that the EU is a symbol of prosperity for many countries beyond its borders, and its claims of being an oasis from the ruthless realpolitik of global politics are certainly not false. The EU won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 for a reason.

NATO rises

The EU has sought with diligence since the end of the Cold War to expand its activities in foreign and defence policy. Ever since Maastricht, the EU has tried – often with success, but sometimes with embarrassing failure – to speak with a single voice in world affairs. The EU's 'High Representative' for foreign policy is second only to the president of the Commission in the Brussels hierarchy and has become an important figure in international negotiations. The Lisbon Treaty, while ensuring that member states retained their sovereign right to act independently in international affairs, underlined that foreign policy was an area where the EU shared responsibilities with the member states.

The EU's security, however, is principally provided by a Cold War legacy organization: NATO. This is another way of saying that Europe remains tied to the United States for its defensive needs. One might have expected NATO to be dismantled once its enemy – the Soviet Union – imploded in 1991. In fact, it expanded its membership and scope. There were three main reasons for this. First, the Americans were determined to retain their strategic position in Europe and not be replaced by some pan-European security organization; second, the comforting US military guarantee enabled West European states to cash in on the peace dividend and reduce spending on their armed forces; third, and most important, the new democracies of Eastern Europe clamoured to become part of the American-led organization in the same way as they pressed to join the EU.

The East Europeans' enthusiasm for NATO membership is easy to explain. They had scarce faith that Russia would remain a benign presence on their borders. The only country, however, that might plausibly commit itself to defend the borders of Poland, the Baltic states or Romania against attack is the United States. NATO's military actions against Serbia in 1995 and 1999 only confirmed this perception. Without US military might, the EU countries would unquestionably have backed off from a conflict with Belgrade.

NATO enlargement – which was launched in 1994 under the aegis of its

‘Partnership for Peace’ programme – took place in two large strides. The first former communist countries to join, in March 1999, were Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. France and Germany pressed for the early entry of Romania and Slovenia, but these countries had to wait until April 2004, when they joined along with Bulgaria, the three Baltic nations and Slovakia. In 2009, NATO reached its present complement of members (twenty-eight), when Albania and Croatia joined the organization.

Russia accepted the absorption of the Central European countries into the American-led alliance with a degree of caution, but with broad acquiescence. The enlargements were in any case accompanied by prolonged diplomatic overtures to Moscow. In June 1996, NATO foreign ministers emphasized that the alliance’s primary task was enforcing peace within Europe, not containment of Russia; NATO also excluded siting nuclear weapons on the territory of its would-be new members. On 27 May 1997, Russian president Boris Yeltsin participated at a bridge-building summit in Paris to sign an important treaty setting out a framework for ‘mutual relations, cooperation and security’ between Russia and the alliance. The treaty’s main achievement was the creation of a NATO–Russia permanent joint council to facilitate diplomatic contacts and debate on security questions. Russia also became a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), a broad forum for discussion and mutual cooperation on security issues that has since evolved to include practically every country from Central Asia to the Atlantic.

Russia and the United States also engaged in complicated diplomacy over nuclear issues. The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty of July 1991 (START 1), which put strict limits on the number of nuclear warheads the two Cold War superpowers could possess, and which established that the other post-Soviet republics possessing nuclear weapons – Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine – should disarm, remained in force until 2009. It was supplemented by the so-called Moscow Treaty (24 May 2002), which committed the superpowers to reducing the number of strategic warheads in their arsenals to between 1,700 and 2,200. The Moscow Treaty was substituted by the ‘New START’ treaty signed in 2010. All these treaties were accompanied by the usual doubts over verification and the occasional accusation that one party or the other was cheating, but they did at least testify to the ability of the world’s two leading nuclear powers to cooperate over weapons of mass destruction.

Outright Russian membership of NATO was mooted at the start of the new millennium. In 2002, Russia was inserted into NATO’s policymaking process,

though without the right to vote. Some public intellectuals even envisaged – as a serious possibility – the creation of a huge peace bloc stretching from the Atlantic to Vladivostok.¹⁰ Others talked excitedly of ‘Global NATO’, whereby the organization would throw itself open to non-European democracies and become a de facto global policeman.¹¹

In retrospect, however, the enlargement of NATO and of the EU, especially the former, represented a major geopolitical risk. Russia watches political developments in Central Europe with understandable caution: the region is seen as essential for its national security. From Moscow’s perspective, expansion of NATO and the EU looked like a new version of the so-called *cordon sanitaire* established by France after 1919 with Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania, to keep Bolshevism out of Europe. As the United States established a friendly regime in Baghdad, and poured forces into Afghanistan, Russia fretted that it was being encircled.

Bear-baiting?

In hindsight, the West’s extension of influence was uncontested by Moscow only because post-Soviet Russia was weak. Its economy was sick, its ethics were sicker and its politics was sickest of all. When the Soviet Union expired, Russia’s economy experienced a collapse of Great Depression proportions. The social consequences were terrible. Alcoholism rates – never exactly low – surged and life expectancy plummeted. President Boris Yeltsin, whose exploits with the vodka bottle were legendary, was not untypical of his compatriots as a whole. When the economy began to recover, a wealthy class of ‘oligarchs’, political insiders turned businessmen whose lifestyles were often more akin to Al Capone than Warren Buffet, were the primary beneficiaries. Post-communist Russia was the epitome of crony capitalism and of capitalist excess. It was chaotic, breathtakingly corrupt and living miles beyond its means. In the summer of 1998, after slumping world commodity prices created a balance of payments crisis, even an emergency loan from the IMF could not prevent Russia from going bankrupt. The Kremlin defaulted on its debts and the rouble – Russia’s currency – was devalued. Inflation soared, harming, as inflation always does, the poorest sectors of the population the most.

Contemporaneously, Russia was also dealing with the political and national legacies of the implosion of the Soviet Union. Russian domestic politics in the 1990s was in shambles. The Communist Party remained the largest party, albeit

of a very fragmented party system, in both the 1995 and 1999 parliamentary elections. Right-wing opinion – which in Russia is very right-wing, indeed – was represented by the Liberal-Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, which took 23 per cent of the vote in the 1993 parliamentary elections and remained a serious force throughout the 1990s. Zhirinovsky, far from being a liberal, was a populist of extreme nationalist views. Nobody could openly trust him with power. President Yeltsin therefore relied on an unruly coalition government of centrists and conservatives anchored upon the Nash Dom – Rosiya (Our Home – Russia) party of Viktor Chernomyrdin, who was prime minister from 1992 to 1998. This government took full advantage of all the opportunities political power offers to secure self-enrichment.

Last but not least, Russia was embroiled in a bloody civil war in Chechnya, a mostly Sunni Muslim region in the Caucasus that borders on the Republic of Georgia. Chechnya had been the victim of Stalinist terror after the Second World War, when hundreds of thousands of its citizens were deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan.¹² Even after Stalin's death, large-scale Russification of Chechnya in the 1960s and 1970s only compounded the Chechens' sense of grievance. When the Soviet Union fell apart, the Chechens rejected continued Russian rule. Under the leadership of Dzhokhar Dudayev, Chechnya declared independence. Its capital city, Groznyy, swiftly became a lawless entrepôt for arms dealers, drugs traffickers and smugglers of all kinds.

In December 1994, Russian troops invaded Chechnya. A brutal twenty-month war followed, in which 100,000 people lost their lives. Groznyy was reduced to ruins. Even after Russia had killed Dudayev, Chechnya remained a hostile terrain for Russian troops. Chechen forces commanded by Aslan Maskhadov drove the Russians from Groznyy in 1996, compelling Yeltsin to negotiate a ceasefire. In 1999, after repeated terrorist attacks by Chechen militants, and an invasion of neighbouring Dagestan by Chechen jihadists, Moscow renewed the war. Groznyy was captured; a pro-Moscow puppet was appointed president, and Russian forces pacified the territory ruthlessly. Thousands of human rights abuses were committed by Russian troops. The West's condemnations were muted by comparison with the obloquy heaped upon Serbia during the parallel Kosovo conflict, or in the earlier Bosnian civil war. Russia discovered that it could count upon a degree of myopia so long as it cooperated with NATO.

The Chechens, not to be outdone, hit back with some of the worst terrorist outrages of the new millennium – obviously, no small claim. In 2002, Chechen suicide bombers seized a Moscow theatre and held 700 people hostage; the

terrorists and over 100 hostages were killed when the Russian Army used nerve gas to immobilize them. In September 2004, in an even more gruesome incident, Chechen terrorists seized a thousand hostages, including nearly 800 children, at a school in Beslan in the Caucasus; 385 hostages died when Russian troops stormed the building.

The point is that in the first decade after the end of the Soviet Union, Russia's leaders were obliged to deal with internal problems. But this unhistorical passivity towards the outside world was never going to last. Sooner or later, a Russian leader intent on asserting his country's traditional geopolitical interests was bound to take the stage. Russia, for all its travails, remained a great power with a seat on the UN Security Council, a large arsenal of nuclear weapons, vast oil and gold reserves, large and technologically advanced security services and the political will to use military force on a large scale, even when doing so meant losing thousands of lives. Nobody ever made the mistake of suggesting that Russia, like the EU, was 'from Venus', to use the neoconservative theorist Robert Kagan's celebrated formulation. Russia's rulers were (and are) emphatically from Mars.¹³



PHOTO 10 *Russian president Vladimir Putin (Getty Images. Credit: Sasha Mordovets).*

The leader who emerged was Vladimir Putin, a former senior KGB officer who enjoyed Boris Yeltsin's patronage. Putin became premier in August 1999. He was one of the founders of the Unity Party, which took 23 per cent of the poll in the December 1999 elections. In the same month, he took over as acting president when an ailing Yeltsin resigned. He proceeded to win the May 2000 presidential elections, and subsequently formed United Russia, a catch-all party that has dominated the party system ever since. Its official ideology is known as 'Russian conservatism', which means a popular mix of nationalism, anti-pluralism and much old-fashioned bigotry. Putin won consecutive terms as president and governed until 2008, when he stepped down and became premier. Dimitri Medvedev, Putin's former campaign manager and deputy prime minister, took over the top job until 2012, when Putin returned to power.

In domestic politics, Putin – and the Russian state he directs – has grown increasingly authoritarian. Homosexual rights campaigners, inquisitive

journalists and political opponents have been murdered with distressing frequency.¹⁴ The state-run media pumps out propaganda of Soviet-era mendacity to the masses. Oligarchs, while still often above the *law*, have learnt – or have been taught – that their private fiefs can flourish only if they heed the bidding of the *state*.

In international politics, Putin has been less willing than Yeltsin to acquiesce in the hegemony of the United States. In particular, Putin was discontented with Western support for Georgia, which had rebelled against the government of Mikhail Gorbachev's former right-hand man, Eduard Shevardnadze, in November 2003 (the so-called Rose Revolution). The relationship between Georgia and Russia had been fraught since 1991, with Russia accusing the Tbilisi government of harbouring Chechen terrorists on its territory, and Georgia accusing Russia of aiding rebels in two breakaway provinces, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In May 2005, President George W. Bush visited Tbilisi, welcomed the recent revolution and called Georgia a 'beacon of liberty' for the region.

The last straw for the Kremlin seemingly was a NATO summit held in the Romanian capital of Bucharest in April 2008. This meeting took several decisions that rankled in Moscow. Georgia and Ukraine, which were pressing to join the alliance, and which had contributed contingents of troops to the occupation forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, were not admitted to the organization, but the final communiqué stressed that the summit had agreed that membership was only a matter of time: 'We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO.' The summit also extended *de facto* recognition to Kosovo, which the Russians continued to regard as a province of Serbia even after its declaration of independence, by stating that KFOR would remain in Kosovo until the UN Security Council decided otherwise, and would cooperate with the UN, the EU and other international actors to 'support the development of a stable, democratic, multi-ethnic and peaceful Kosovo'. NATO also agreed that it would begin deployment of anti-missile systems in Central Europe. NATO insisted – and continues to insist – that these systems were directed at future missile threats from Iran, or other mysterious rogue powers; in reality, Russia's suspicion that the systems were being deployed to counteract its supremacy in short- and intermediate-range missiles is surely not groundless. Last but not least, the summit publicly rebuked Russia for having suspended (in December 2007) its commitments under the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, which provided for verifiable limits on the size of conventional forces.

Russian rearmament has since rendered this treaty a dead letter. Since 2008, Russia has begun modernizing its forces – ground, air and naval – on a major scale: in 2014, its spending on defence reached \$70 billion per year, approximately 3.5 per cent of GDP. This is dwarfed by the United States’ vast budget (\$581 billion), but it is larger than the budget of any other NATO member state (most of which spend between 1 and 1.5 per cent of GDP on defence). Certainly, Russia spends far more on military hardware than does any other state in Europe. Quite apart from its nuclear forces, Russia possesses a 770,000-soldier army, as many battle tanks (2,800) as the United States, the second-largest attack submarine force in the world after the United States and over 1,000 fighter-bombers. In the hands of a leader who does not shirk from using military might to get his way, Russia’s arsenal is a threatening one.¹⁵

Following the Bucharest gathering, Putin showed he was just such a leader. Straight after the summit, Moscow announced that it would strengthen ties with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, two breakaway Georgian provinces. In August 2008, after months of tension, the leader of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili, handed the Kremlin a golden opportunity by ordering Georgian troops to deploy in South Ossetia. Putin, shrugging off international appeals for restraint, rallied to the Ossetians’ side with an imposing show of force. The ensuing war was brief. In five days, Russian troops drove the Georgians out of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and penetrated deep into Georgian territory. Nearly 1,000 people were slain: relatively few by the murderous standards of post-Cold War Caucasus, but nevertheless far more than needed to die. The Russian leader was sending a message to Washington that he still commanded in his own backyard.

After the Georgian conflict, the West should have realized that a red line had been drawn. In the immediate aftermath of the war, however, European leaders rushed to repair relations with Russia, which possessed the strategic advantage of being Europe’s main supplier of natural gas. The newly elected US president Barack Obama too, announced that there would be a ‘reset’ in Washington’s relations with Moscow: ‘New START’ was the most conspicuous outcome of this willingness for dialogue with the Kremlin. The view that Russia was a member of the international community – albeit a prickly one – whom the West could do business with, remained broadly prevalent.

Crimean war

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, which caused shock and outrage in

Brussels, Berlin and Washington DC, has, in retrospect, an air of inevitability about it. Ukraine had long been the target of both NATO's and the EU's overtures, who thought they could strengthen Kiev's democracy. Russia, by contrast, was not prepared to let Ukraine be lured away without a fight, or without obtaining partition of the Ukraine and the absorption of the districts contiguous with the Russian border.

The West's perception of Ukraine as a place where democracy needed help to set down roots was an accurate one. In its first decade of independence, Ukraine 'acquired an international reputation as a seamy state led by a criminal elite ruling over a passive populace'.¹⁶ Power was in the hands of President Leonid Kuchma, a Soviet-era holdover, and a class of oligarchs who bankrolled politicians. In 2000, as a gesture to reform, Kuchma appointed Victor Yushchenko, the president of the central bank, as premier. Yushchenko, aided by an oligarch turned politician, Yulia Tymoshenko, raised tax revenues, combatted corruption and redistributed wealth. In May 2001, Kuchma forced Yushchenko out and replaced him with Viktor Yanukovich, a man supported by the Russian-speaking minority and by business interests.

In November 2004, Yushchenko contested Yanukovich for the presidency. It was a dirty campaign. Yushchenko was poisoned: the state-run media blithely attributed his illness, which left him disfigured, to a dish of contaminated sushi. On election day, Yushchenko lost, despite a big lead in the exit polls. Impassioned crowds wearing orange (Yushchenko's campaign colour) took to the streets of Kiev. It swiftly became obvious that there had been rampant ballot fraud in the Russian-speaking areas. Yushchenko declared himself president and urged the military to stand by him. For a few days, Ukraine had three presidents: the outgoing Kuchma, Yanukovich and Yushchenko. On 27 November 2004, the election was annulled by the parliament. A second poll, monitored by 12,000 international observers, gave Yushchenko victory by 52 to 44 per cent on 26 December. The international media celebrated the 'Orange Revolution'.

The country had divided, however, along ethnic-linguistic lines. Yushchenko took all the seventeen western and central provinces of the country; Yanukovich had solid majorities in the East and in the Crimea. Part of the country looked west, to eventual EU membership, and to NATO. Others, whether from ethnic loyalty or calculations of sheer prudence, concluded that Ukraine simply could not opt for Europe ahead of Russia. Ukraine needed Russian gas to keep itself warm. It could not afford to antagonize its powerful neighbour.

After the 'Orange Revolution', the EU gave democracy building in the Ukraine

a high priority. But it did not clarify when and how Kiev could apply for membership of the EU. Lacking an incentive for lasting reform, Ukraine relapsed into old ways. Yushchenko and Tymoshenko were less effective rulers in their second spell in office. The country was arguably the most corrupt in Europe, ranking alongside some of Africa and Latin America's murkiest regimes in international assessments.¹⁷

In 2010, Yanukovich narrowly beat Tymoshenko for the presidency in an election that was much cleaner than in 2005. Instead of unifying the country, however, Yanukovich persecuted the opposition (Tymoshenko was imprisoned in 2011 on trumped-up charges) and cosied up to Russia. But millions of Ukrainian citizens did not want their country to imitate Putin's authoritarian regime. They looked westwards to Poland, and to its democratic stabilization and growing prosperity after its 2004 entry into the EU, as the right model for Ukraine to follow. Ukraine, with its fertile plains, Black Sea coastline, skilled workforce and medium-to-large population was in all respects a match for Poland, if only it could be properly governed.

It was for this reason that a decision in November 2013 by President Yanukovich to refuse an offer from the EU of an accession agreement – a treaty giving Ukraine access to the EU market in exchange for economic and political reforms – became such an explosive issue. Public opinion in Kiev regarded the EU's opening as an 'existential choice between a corrupt and authoritarian post-Soviet system of governance and a European one'.¹⁸ Vladimir Putin certainly saw the issue in those terms: Moscow offered a generous package of incentives to persuade Yanukovich to turn his back on the EU's blandishments.

Pro-EU demonstrators, including many who were the Ukrainian equivalents of Jobbik supporters, occupied Kiev's central Maidan Square in December. On 18 February 2014, Yanukovich deployed riot police in an attempt to clear the square. Serious street fighting broke out, with dozens of people being killed and hundreds wounded. Ukraine's second revolution in a decade was tinged scarlet, not orange. Having lost control of the capital, Yanukovich fled, taking refuge in Russia, whose state-controlled media were already depicting events in Kiev as a fascist coup d'état. A provisional government took power and presidential elections were called for in May 2014. In those elections, Petro Poroshenko, a candidate independent from the ruling parties, thrashed Tymoshenko, whose image as *la passionaria* of the Ukraine people had by now somewhat faded. Poroshenko won with 55 per cent of the votes. He signed an accession agreement with the EU on 27 June 2014.

The May 2014 elections were not held throughout Ukraine, however. They were not held in the Crimean Peninsula, which was infiltrated by Russian special forces in the days after Yanukovich's flight, and was subsequently annexed by Russia on 18 March 2014. The elections were held only partially in the Donbass region of Ukraine, whose largest cities are Donetsk and Luhansk. Pro-Russian militia, abetted by undercover Russian troops and generous supplies from across the border, rose in rebellion against Kiev in the spring of 2014 and began a bitter civil war. Rebels using a Russian-provided anti-aircraft missile accidentally shot down a Malaysian airliner in July 2014, killing three hundred innocent travellers. At the end of 2015 the UN reported that over 9,000 soldiers and civilians had died in this latest nationalist conflict in post-Cold War Europe.

Russian support of the Donbass rebels, and its blatantly illegal action in Crimea, turned Ukraine's domestic chaos into one of the most portentous conflicts of the post-Cold War period. Both the EU and NATO member states have imposed sanctions on Moscow, although the West's principal leaders, President Barack Obama and Chancellor Angela Merkel, ruled out military assistance to Ukraine. Russia, which was to have hosted the G8 in June 2014, has been suspended from the organization. The now-G7 convened in Brussels, instead. The West has imposed travel bans and asset freezes on numerous individuals and entities known to be close to Putin. Russian banks have been denied access to Western capital markets, and all technology transfers to Russia with military implications have been banned. Russia responded by excluding the import of many EU foodstuffs, a move that has cost many EU economies dear.

Attenuation or extension of the sanctions will depend on whether Russia is willing to accept the underlying premise of the Minsk accords, so-called because they were signed in the capital of Belarus in September 2014 (and renewed in February 2015, following their initial failure). The premise is that Russia, now that it has grabbed Crimea, must settle for a Ukraine that retains its borders intact, albeit while conferring substantial autonomy to its Russian-speaking majority areas. Western nations, with the United States to the fore, have underlined that even tougher sanctions will be imposed upon Russia if Moscow does not keep its word, and have hinted that NATO's front-line forces in Poland and the Baltic states might be reinforced.

Lurking behind the West's stance, indeed, is a preoccupation with the position of the three Baltic nations – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, these countries, especially Latvia, have significant Russian minorities with grievances. All three are now members of NATO and

are hence guaranteed military assistance under Article 5 of the NATO treaty. An attack on any of these nations would in theory be an attack on all twenty-eight NATO member states. But what would happen if Putin tested the West's will by repeating in, say, Latvia his tactics in the Crimea? Would the United States, and Latvia's West European allies, risk outright war with Russia for the sake of infiltrators crossing the frontier?

The crisis in Ukraine, in short, has underlined several general themes of post-Cold War Europe. The power of nationalism is immense and enthusiasts of European integration were too quick to believe that it had been superseded; the EU offers an enticing alternative to a Hobbesian Europe, but it is far too civilized – and dysfunctional – to be a great power; NATO, far from being a global policeman, is an organization whose efficacy depends upon the fluctuating will of the White House to use force in pursuit of diplomacy; Russia, which dwells in the dog-eat-dog world of realpolitik, has reasserted its place at the heart of Europe's foreign policy concerns. The question 'what is to be done with Russia?' will be one that will exercise the minds of Europe's best strategic thinkers in the coming decade.

Notes

- 1 For the 'Third Wave', see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, 1993); Samuel P. Huntington, 'Democracy's Third Wave', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 12–34.
- 2 See <http://www.srebrenica.org.uk/>. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, established under UN auspices in 1993, has since tried (and in many cases condemned) dozens of war criminals, including Slobodan Milošević, since 2000. Ratko Mladic's sentence is expected in November 2017. See <http://www.icty.org/en/action/cases/4>
- 3 For the Vance–Owen plan, see Lauren Silber and Allan Little, 'The Last-Chance Café', in *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London, 1996), chapter 21.
- 4 Javier Solana, 'NATO's Success in Kosovo', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 6, November/December 1999, p. 117.
- 5 Andrew Rawnsley, 'On a Wing and a Prayer', in *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour* (London, 2001), chapter 14 and *passim*.
- 6 Frédéric Bozo, 'Mitterrand's France, the End of the Cold War, and German Unification: A Reappraisal', *Cold War History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2007, p. 467.
- 7 Wim Kok, *Enlarging the European Union* (Florence, 2003), p. 2.
- 8 For 'EU-phoria', see Mark Gilbert, *European Integration: A Concise History* (Lanham, MD, 2011), chapter 9 and *passim*.
- 9 Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the*

American Dream (New York, 2004), p. 83.

- 10 Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World* (London, 2004), p. 220.
- 11 Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, 'Global NATO', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 5, September/October 2008, pp. 105–13.
- 12 For the Stalinist oppression of Chechnya, see Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred* (Cambridge, MA, 2002).
- 13 See Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York, 2004).
- 14 The most famous case of a murdered journalist is that of Anna Politkovskaya, who was killed on 7 October 2006. But dozens of journalists have died in mysterious circumstances, especially since 2000. Boris Nemtsov, a former deputy premier under Boris Yeltsin and a leading opponent of the war in Ukraine, was shot dead near the Kremlin in Moscow in February 2015.
- 15 For Russia's military strength, see The International Institute for Security Studies, *The Military Balance 2015* (London, 2015), pp. 24–5.
- 16 Adam Karatnycky, 'Ukraine's Orange Revolution', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2, March/April 2005, p. 42.
- 17 Transparency International, 'Corruption Perceptions Index 2014: Results'; available at: <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results>.
- 18 'Europe's New Battlefield', *The Economist*, 22 February 2014, p. 17.

The wounded hegemon

9/11 – War on Terrorism – Operation Enduring Freedom – Invasion of Iraq – Drone strikes and ‘targeted killings’ – Arab–Israeli conflict – Relations with Iran – ISIS – Pivot to Asia.

When the Cold War ended, the United States was left as the sole remaining superpower. Its victory was not only military: it was widely agreed that the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, and the subsequent break-up of the Soviet Union, represented a historic victory for the American model of society and for its values. An analyst of political trends, Francis Fukuyama, won worldwide recognition for arguing that the outcome of the Cold War signified the ‘end of history’. Fukuyama naturally did not mean that wars and political crises would cease, and that the whole world would henceforth live in placid prosperity. Events would continue to occur. But he did think that the defeat of communism had illustrated that liberal capitalism was the likely culmination of humankind’s search for a just political order.¹

Some, especially in France and Latin America, regarded Fukuyama’s analysis as a sign of American hubris. In China, despite Deng Xiaoping’s opening to private enterprise, diehard Maoists still rejected the capitalist road. In the Middle East, radical Muslims – most notably a sect known as al-Qaeda (‘the base’) – interpreted the ascendancy of the United States quite literally as the victory of Satan. Yet in the early 1990s, few imagined that a handful of zealots could ever amount to more than a nuisance for the new *hyperpuissance*, to use a French word coined to characterize the United States’ new status. Nor did anybody imagine that the United States’ economic dominance could possibly be challenged, within a generation, by a country that had been ravaged for a century

by famine, war and the most extreme forms of communism.

The end of the Cold War was the United States' 'unipolar moment', to quote Charles Krauthammer, an influential columnist of 'neoconservative' stamp. The United States bestrode the world like Gulliver, without obvious rivals. Its armies were better equipped; its economy was a powerful engine for growth; cutting-edge computer technologies such as the desktop computer (yes, really) were a commonplace in the United States but still novelties in the rest of the world; its population was increasing, while the populations of other rich world countries such as Germany, Italy and Japan were stagnant or even in decline.

Perhaps above all, the 'soft power' of the United States was unmatched. Joseph Nye, the Harvard University theorist who invented this term, argued that the prowess of a nation could not be measured merely by its muscles (i.e. its military forces and GDP), as international relations experts were too prone to do. Nations also attracted or repelled peoples by virtue of their ways of life, popular culture and the beliefs they lived by.²

In this respect, America was supreme. Aside from the blemish of race relations – no small defect – the appeal of the American way of life was all but ubiquitous. The force was with Hollywood films. What European or Asian arthouse movie could match the pizzazz of *Jurassic Park* or *Terminator*? American music, be it rap, country, jazz or West Coast soft rock, was the soundtrack for hundreds of millions of lives. Brilliant young scholars and inventors, especially engineers and scientists, wanted to study at universities in the United States, and their families emigrated from all over the world to enable them to pursue their dream.

Remarkably, people even wanted to eat like Americans. The rapid spread of McDonald's outlets after the end of the Cold War is a genuinely significant fact for understanding the international relations of the post-Cold War world. In 1985, the corporation operated 9,000 restaurants worldwide. This number had more than tripled by 2001. The billions of people across the globe tucking into biggie fries and salty fat-saturated patties of meat in a tasteless bun were, in a meaningful sense, buying an inexpensive symbol of the American dream.³

Being American, in short, was cool. But for the government of the United States, it was also a position of great responsibility. President George H. W. Bush was succeeded in the presidency in 1993 by Bill Clinton, the first president to be born after the end of the Second World War. The Clinton administration coined a phrase – the 'indispensable nation' – that has resonated ever since. The three American presidents of the post-Cold War era, in different ways, have all

loosely based their foreign policies on this concept. Presidents Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama have taken for granted that the United States should project its power across the globe; maintain a contemporaneous military presence in Europe, East Asia and the Persian Gulf; and act as the guarantor of its key allies' security. In the absence of the deployment of American power, they have reasoned, regional crises would flare inevitably, and the world would be a more dangerous place. The task of grand strategy was to ensure that the first century of the new millennium would become the second 'American century'. The world would be safe for democracy only if the United States maintained its ubiquitous role.⁴

The costs of this core principle of American strategy have been considerable. Its prerequisite was heavy spending on the military. Although the Clinton administration was criticized by Republicans for its insufficient investment on defence (and it did, indeed, allow real defence spending to decline by a third in the 1990s, compared to Cold War highs), it 'was during the Clinton years, not the Bush years, that the United States started spending more money on defence than virtually all other nations combined'.⁵ Even at its lowest point, in 2000, the United States was spending more than one-third of the world's total military outlay. During George W. Bush's presidency (2001–9), defence spending spiked as fast as under Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. It nevertheless peaked at \$771 billion in 2011, during the presidency of a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Barack Obama.⁶ Yet a quarter of a century after the end of the Cold War, the world is not a safer place. It is a more dangerous one. The failings of American strategy deserve some of the blame for this state of affairs.

The shock of 9/11

The strikes against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, on 11 September 2001, when nineteen hijackers affiliated to al-Qaeda employed four commercial airliners as weapons to murder 3,000 people, marked a watershed in contemporary international relations. For the first time since December 1941, the territory of the United States had come under direct attack. The terrorists, moreover, had struck at the heart of American power: the financial district of New York, and the Pentagon. The likely third target was either the Capitol building, or the White House, but this part of the plan failed, as a result of the heroism of the passengers on United Airlines Flight 93 who fought to retake

control of the jet from the hijackers. The plane crashed in southern Pennsylvania before it could reach its target. On 12 September, shocked NATO member states solemnly evoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. One of them had been attacked, and an attack on one was an attack on them all.

On 9/11, the United States abruptly realized that being indispensable was not the same as being invulnerable. Most people in the world admired the American way of life, but some people detested it, and were willing to destroy themselves – and thousands of innocents – in order to broadcast their hatred. While public opinion throughout the world felt profound empathy for the plight of the passengers on the downed jets, or for the office workers in the Twin Towers (a prominent French newspaper, *Le Monde*, usually no friend of the United States, solemnly proclaimed, ‘We are all Americans’), the ‘Arab street’ responded, at least in some cases, with outright jubilation. As far as many Arabs were concerned, the United States deserved no particular sympathy. It was merely getting a taste of the destruction its own wars, and the actions of Israel, had visited upon the Arab people.

The 9/11 plane bombings were not the first time that al-Qaeda had attacked the United States. In August 1998, the terrorist organization had bombed US embassies in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Nairobi (Kenya), killing 200 people and wounding more than 5,000 others. In October 2000, the USS *Cole*, a navy frigate, was nearly sunk by al-Qaeda bombers as it refuelled in Aden harbour. Seventeen American sailors were killed. Nevertheless, ‘top officials did not consider terrorism or radical Islam a high priority’.⁷ The Bush administration, and the Clinton administration before it, had got their priorities wrong.

Al-Qaeda was a terrorist network born during the struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Its charismatic leader, like fifteen of the suicide bombers on 9/11, was a Saudi, Osama bin Laden. In September 2001, many of al-Qaeda’s leaders, bin Laden included, were under the protection of the Taliban, an ultra-devout Sunni Muslim sect that had seized power in war-devastated Afghanistan in 1996 and had imposed sharia (religious law) on the country. On 20 September 2001, President Bush told Congress that the Taliban ‘must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate.’ The so-called global war on terror had begun. When the Taliban refused to surrender bin Laden, the United States, with the help, behind the scenes, of Iran overthrew the Afghan regime in a campaign that has been described as a ‘flawed masterpiece’.⁸ Crack American troops, allied with the ‘Northern Alliance’ (internal opponents of the Taliban), penetrated Afghanistan and pinpointed

Taliban forces. Thousands of air strikes with precision-guided bombs proceeded to pummel the Taliban forces. In November, Pushtun tribes in the south of the country joined the US-led coalition. By December three-quarters of Afghanistan was under American control. The hunt for al-Qaeda's leaders, especially bin Laden, was on, but they eluded capture.



PHOTO 11 Notorious terrorist Osama bin Laden addresses a news conference in Afghanistan in 1998 (Getty Images).

Regime change required nation building. In 2001, Afghanistan was the most war-devastated country in the world. Its economy, the growing of opium poppies aside, was in tatters. Well-armed warlords commanded swathes of the territory. Intervention in Afghanistan required recreating a functioning nation state. In December 2001, an international conference in Bonn (Germany) created the so-called Afghan Interim Authority. In June 2002, a large meeting of tribal elders elected Hamid Karzai, who had led Pushtun fighters into combat at the side of US forces, to be the head of the Authority. In October 2004, Karzai was elected

president of the newly constituted Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; elections to the new nation's legislature were held the following year. Despite this seemingly orderly political process, however, Afghanistan did not fully establish itself a sovereign state. Karzai's government did not have 'ownership' of its own country (though that did not prevent it from being strikingly corrupt).

Between 2001 and 2014, when 'Operation Enduring Freedom', as the Americans dubbed their intervention, was wound down, Afghanistan was essentially a mandate: that is to say, a territory under de facto international supervision. A 2002 conference in Tokyo, in addition to pledging \$5 billion in aid to Kabul, gave various Western countries the task of 'coordinating' efforts in key policy areas: thus, the United States was responsible for training the army, the Germans for creating a police force, the British for eliminating the heroin trade and so on. From August 2003, NATO provided the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that was tasked with training the Afghan army and with the job of disrupting, dismantling and defeating al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was NATO's first significant deployment 'out of area' and hence represented another major step, after the actions in Bosnia and Kosovo, in the organization's growth as a global security actor. UNAMA, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, contributed expertise and resources to build up the Afghan government's efforts in education, welfare and other domestic policies.

Important results were unquestionably achieved. Girls went back to school. Women did not have to stay indoors, but could walk in the streets without being shrouded from head to foot. Life expectancy leapt. The capital, Kabul, became a relatively secure city. Outside Kabul, however, chaos reigned. An insurgency, routinely ascribed to al-Qaeda, but in fact led by indigenous warlords enjoying the protection of neighbouring Pakistan, became an increasing threat. The Taliban was never truly stamped out as a military force. Its leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, also used remote, lawless districts in Pakistan as a base for guerrilla operations. Pro-government warlords, notably Hamid Karzai's half-brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, the head of the provincial council of Kandahar, or Atta Mohammed Noor, the ethnic Tajik governor of Balkh, on the border with Tajikistan, ran parts of the country as independent fiefdoms.

In December 2009, President Obama committed 30,000 new troops to the conflict, taking the total number of American forces in Afghanistan to 97,000. This 'surge' enabled the ISAF to achieve a greater degree of control over the territory and allowed the Kabul government to extend its sway. In 2010, a

NATO summit in Lisbon, Portugal, agreed that the bulk of ISAF troops would be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, with only a residue of technical experts and advisers remaining. The United States began drawing down its military presence in 2011, and in 2013 negotiated a bilateral security agreement, which prevented the United States from conducting independent anti-terrorist operations on Afghan soil, but which also gave troops remaining in Afghanistan extraterritorial rights. By June 2015, fewer than 10,000 NATO soldiers remained.

The US Army lost 2,355 lives during Operation Enduring Freedom. More than 20,000 troops were wounded. Total ISAF dead was approximately 3,500. British forces lost over 450 lives, easily the second-largest national toll of casualties. The financial cost of the mission to Afghanistan was also immense. The United States alone spent \$686 billion in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014.⁹

Unknown tens of thousands of Afghan insurgents died. Osama bin Laden, the original target, was killed by US Navy Seals on 2 May 2011, but – significantly – when his executioners arrived, he was living quietly in a well-appointed house in Abbottabad, Pakistan, not in a cave in Afghanistan. His location was certainly known to the Pakistani secret services, who are a law to themselves, and who may have been keeping him under house arrest. The overwhelming majority of the NATO servicemen and women who died in Afghanistan gave their lives essentially to preserve post-Taliban Afghanistan from its internal enemies, not to defeat al-Qaeda. The test of whether that sacrifice was justified will be Afghanistan's ability to become a functioning Islamic democracy.

In April 2014, Afghans went to the polls to replace Karzai. The elections, which were won on the second ballot by Ashraf Ghani, a former finance minister, were a murky affair, though the people of Afghanistan voted in impressive numbers. The second-placed candidate, Abdullah Abdullah, a former foreign minister, who won the first round of voting that eliminated minor candidates, cried fraud. A stand-off between Ghani and Abdullah lasted until September 2014, when, under intense American pressure, the two men announced a power-sharing deal. It was an inauspicious start for Afghanistan's new democracy.

Ghani's government has struggled to maintain control of the territory. The Taliban now control more of the country, about 30 per cent, than at any time since 2001. In October 2015, following representations from the Afghan president, President Obama announced that American soldiers will stay until 2017. Absent American forces, it is likely that Ghani's government will be

unable to retain control. In general, Afghanistan, like Bosnia, has proved a chastening lesson in the limits of the West's ability to rebuild a nation.

Iraq

The same lesson was contemporaneously learnt in Iraq. Indeed, in Iraq, the United States can fairly be accused of smashing the Iraqi state, and then of failing dismally to construct a plausible alternative. Convinced that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and his regime were agents of terrorist destabilization throughout the Middle East, and persuaded that Iraq possessed stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), President George W. Bush, backed loyally by British prime minister Tony Blair, invaded Iraq in March 2003. The invasion and botched rebuilding of Iraq is, in hindsight, the dominating issue of the whole post-Cold War period. It led to a keenly disputed, but enormous, number of civilian deaths and inflicted deep injury on the world's perception of the United States' moral purpose and fundamental strategic competence.

Neoconservative intellectuals – the men that writer James Mann has dubbed the 'Vulcans' – had long argued that the United States should have 'finished the job' during the 1991 Gulf War by imposing regime change in Baghdad.¹⁰ They were critical of the 'containment' strategy adopted by the George H. W. Bush administration, and the despised Clinton administration, to the regime of Saddam Hussein, whom they routinely likened to Hitler. They had developed links with the main Iraqi opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), whose leader, Ahmed Chalabi, persuaded them that the Iraqi people were ripe for a democratic revolution that would bring increased stability to the Middle East.

When George Bush won the presidential elections in November 2000, defeating Al Gore in a closely contested poll, the neoconservative worldview took power.¹¹ Vice President Dick Cheney and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld shared many aspects of the neoconservative view on Iraq. Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, was one of the most prominent thinkers associated with the neoconservative movement. Other members of the president's staff, notably Secretary of State Colin Powell, a former chief of general staff, were more cautious about overturning the consensus, however. In the year following 9/11, their views prevailed, not least because Afghanistan was the central preoccupation of the Bush administration.



PHOTO 12 *British prime minister Tony Blair and US president George W. Bush talk outside the Oval Office at the White House (Getty Images. Credit: Jim Watson).*

In 2002, President Bush came to the conclusion that he had sufficient grounds to wage war on the Iraqi dictator, for two main reasons. First, throughout the 1990s, Saddam Hussein had systematically avoided complying with the terms of UN Security Council resolution 687 (1991), which – among much else – called upon Iraq to destroy, remove or render harmless, under international supervision, all chemical and biological weapons and all missiles with a range of over 150 kilometres, and which explicitly prohibited Iraq from making such weapons in the future. As a result, Iraq was already subject to a severe sanctions regime that had led to great hardship for its people. If it could be shown that the Baghdad

regime was now manufacturing WMD, the international community would possess a clear *casus belli*.

Second, Bush – and here the influence of neoconservative ideology was vital – came to believe that in the post-9/11 world, it was the moral duty of the United States to wage war against nations that sponsored terrorism, or that represented an existential threat to liberty. The clearest expression of his thinking (and that of important actors close to him, such as his chief adviser on national security, Condoleezza Rice) appeared in September 2002, in the US National Security Strategy. This fascinating document sustained that the United States was ‘fighting a war against terrorists with global reach’. A small number of ‘rogue states’, of which Iraq was the paradigmatic example, were determined to acquire WMDs and use them to achieve aggressive goals. In January 2002, Bush had already denounced Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an ‘axis of evil’ in his State of the Union address. Such regimes, Bush affirmed, ‘reject basic human values and hate the United States and everything for which it stands’. The president drew the conclusion that the United States ‘must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use WMDs against the United States and our allies and friends’. If necessary, the president added, the United States would ‘act pre-emptively’ to ‘forestall’ ‘hostile acts’ by such states.¹² Preventive war, Bush believed, was a legitimate policy choice in the circumstances faced by the United States after 9/11.

Bush’s Manichean perception of the world was, a mere year after 9/11, an understandable one. Its immediate effect was to put the regime of Saddam Hussein directly in the firing line. From 12 September 2002, when Bush spoke to the UN General Assembly, the United States mounted a diplomatic offensive to persuade the Security Council that Iraq was in breach of its WMD commitments. On 8 November 2002, the Security Council adopted resolution 1441, which acknowledged that Iraq was in ‘material breach’ of resolution 687 (1991); gave Iraq a ‘final opportunity’ to comply by providing full details of its WMD programmes within thirty days; and demanded full freedom of investigation for inspection teams. Resolution 1441 emphasized that Iraq would face ‘serious consequences’ if it did not yield, though it did not explicitly authorize the use of military force, either.

What followed was an unedifying chapter in international diplomacy. From 27 November 2002 to March 2003, Saddam’s regime did permit teams from the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to conduct

approximately 550 surprise inspections at 350 sites in Iraq. The inspectors found no WMDs and were broadly positive about Iraqi cooperation. The inspections were accompanied by US military build-up in the Persian Gulf and a drum beat of martial rhetoric. President Bush threatened on 14 January 2003 that he was ‘sick and tired’ of Iraq’s deceptions, and in his State of the Union speech on 28 January 2003, warned that ‘with nuclear arms or a full arsenal of chemical and biological weapons ... Saddam Hussein could resume his ambitions of conquest in the Middle East and create deadly havoc in the region’.

So he could. If only he had had any. The principal deception being carried out by February 2003 was by the British and American governments, which knowingly ‘sexed up’ intelligence reports to make them seem like hard evidence of WMD possession. ‘Intelligence professionals were put under pressure to ... present the Iraqi threat in as lurid terms as possible.’¹³ In both London and Washington, top officials manipulated the media to give the impression that Saddam was a clear and present danger able to strike the West at any moment. Colin Powell, the US secretary of state, addressed the Security Council on 5 February 2003, and presented a dossier of evidence that allegedly proved that Iraq was ‘failing to disarm’. Most of the evidence Powell adduced would subsequently turn out to be false or exaggerated.

Showing that Saddam was cheating was necessary, because the concept of preventive war would not find an appreciative audience at the UN, while the British government was reluctant to go to war without a second resolution confirming that Iraq could be the object of military sanctions. On 24 February 2003, Britain, the United States and Spain presented a second resolution to the Security Council stating that Iraq had failed to take the final opportunity offered by the November resolution and authorizing the use of force. French president Jacques Chirac and Vladimir Putin announced that they would veto it. On 17 March 2003, after three weeks of frenetic diplomacy, the resolution was withdrawn. The United States was not deterred by international disapproval. Saddam Hussein was warned by President Bush that he had forty-eight hours to get out of Dodge – or, in this case, Baghdad. The invasion began when the ultimatum expired. Its legality, in international law, was dubious.

The military side of the ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’ was not a ‘cakewalk’, as some had predicted.¹⁴ Resistance from militia groups loyal to the Iraqi dictator was stiffer than expected. British troops set up base in the Shia Muslim town of Basra, Iraq’s second city. American troops drove straight to Baghdad. The capital fell on 9 April 2003; Tikrit, the dictator’s home town in northern Iraq,

was captured four days later. The war had been thankfully short, although allied losses were not negligible: 139 American and 33 British troops lost their lives. Iraqi losses were much higher: 15,000–20,000 Iraqi soldiers and civilians certainly died, and damage to infrastructure was considerable. Jubilant Iraqi citizens nevertheless pulled down a giant statue of Saddam in Baghdad's Forhos Square, to the delight of the world's media. President Bush was able to declare victory in front of a banner proclaiming 'Mission Accomplished' on a US aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf on 1 May 2003.

The mission was, in fact, only just starting. The United States and Britain, which were recognized by the UN as 'occupying forces' under international law and whose forces were supplemented in 2003–4 by troops and officials from numerous other UN member states, had to maintain order in a territory the size of France, restart its economy, rebuild its infrastructure, win the hearts and minds of its citizens, provide basic services such as healthcare, clean water and electricity, purge the worst members of Saddam's entourage from the state, find people who spoke English who were willing to collaborate with the occupation forces, find the missing WMD, quell resistance from pro-Saddam rebels, disarm tens of thousands of former soldiers and militia members, construct a provisional government and find Saddam himself, since the dictator was in hiding.

Incredibly, few in key positions in Washington had realized that such tasks were an inevitable concomitant of military victory, and contingency planning for reconstruction was almost non-existent. Looting quickly broke out in Baghdad, and government buildings, including the principal ministries, were burnt down. Iraq's administrative memory, not to mention tens of thousands of precious Assyrian artefacts from the national museum, vanished in the process. US troops stood by, uncertain of whether they had a policing role, untrained to fulfil one and lacking sufficient numbers to act.

The role of reconstruction was initially entrusted to a retired general called Jay Garner. His amateurish operation was replaced on 12 May 2003 by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), headed by Paul Bremer, a 'tough diplomat with a background in counter-terrorism'.¹⁵ Bremer, under orders from Washington, banned all members of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party from public service and disbanded the Iraqi Army. These rash choices turned tens of thousands of men, many of them armed, into potential recruits for an insurgency. US forces were soon under constant harassment from guerrilla fighters, while the CPA was holed up in Baghdad's 'Green Zone', a protected area cut off from the reality of Iraq's problems. Washington was doomed to pay a high price for its neglect of

post-war planning.

There is no space for a detailed account of the turbulent years that followed. Building a functioning democracy in Iraq, the predictable stated aim of US policy, was an arduous task. In Iraq, democracy was certain to lead to a narrow majority for parties representing Shiite Muslims. This, because of Iraq's history, was bound to be a destabilizing step. Iraq, ever since the British placed an Arabian prince, Faisal ibn Huseyn, on the throne after the First World War, has always been governed by its Sunni minority. After the occupation, the pot of Sunni resentment was stirred by al-Qaeda, whose 'Emir' in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian, was as fanatical in his hatred of the Shia (devout Sunni Muslims regard the Shia as apostates because of their denial that Abu Bakr, the father of the prophet's wife Aisha, was the rightful spiritual and political heir to Mohammed) as he was of the American 'crusaders'.

Throughout 2004, Sunni terrorists targeted Shiite areas and holy sites with suicide bombers, killing hundreds. US efforts at counterterrorism were heavy-handed. In April 2004, they provoked global revulsion when photographs of tortures inflicted by American soldiers were released. The Abu Ghraib images (Abu Ghraib had been one of Saddam's worst prisons and was being utilized by the US Army) were a propaganda gift to al-Qaeda. For millions, the war on terror became indelibly associated with the photograph of a soldier holding a terrified Iraqi prisoner on a leash, like a dog. Zarqawi responded by slitting the throat of an American hostage, Nicholas Berg, as revenge. In this climate of pornographic violence, the capture of Saddam Hussein – yesterday's man – faded into the background. The fact that WMDs had not been found did not. In Great Britain, in particular, the debate over whether (or perhaps how much) Tony Blair's government had lied in the run-up to the war led to a judicial inquiry that might easily have brought down the government.¹⁶

The Sunni campaign of violence against the Shia, however, sparked off a conflict in the Shiite community between supporters of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who favoured working with the Americans, and a turbulent Shiite priest, Moqtada al-Sadr, whose 'Mahdi Army' raised a revolt in Baghdad and the town of Najaf in the summer of 2004. Hundreds died in the fighting. The Shiite revolt was sandwiched between two revolts in Fallujah, a city of 300,000 inhabitants west of Baghdad, which was a hot spot of al-Qaeda activity. Thousands died before Fallujah was finally subdued in November 2004. Civilians paid a heavy price. Cluster bombs and uranium ammunition were employed by US troops and the city was, as a result, subjected to severe environmental contamination. Rates

of leukaemia and other cancers surged in Fallujah in the years following the fighting.¹⁷

In January 2005, national elections were held. Sunni parties boycotted the poll, thus facilitating the victory of the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). The Kurds placed second. The election was the first of three in 2005. On 15 October 2005, despite the strong opposition of two Sunni provinces, Iraqis accepted a constitution that re-established the nation as a federal state, with a large autonomous Kurdish region in the north-east. In December 2005, fresh, more representative national elections were held, with Sunni parties this time participating. The UIA won again. The elections ignited the worst communal violence yet. In February 2006, al-Qaeda attacked the golden mosque of Samarra, a holy city for the Shia. This outrage led to Shiite militia attacks, often backed by the American-trained Iraqi Army, on Sunni areas in Baghdad and to the emergence of Nuri al-Maliki as premier. Maliki would govern Iraq – with a strong bias towards his Shiite constituency – until 2014.

The year 2006 had its successes, from the American viewpoint. Saddam was hanged, after a farcical trial, for crimes against humanity. Zarqawi was killed in a missile strike. But the victims of communal violence kept rising, as did the number of deaths among the occupying forces. In October 2006, the British medical journal *Lancet* published a study that concluded that as of June 2006 approximately 650,000 more people had died in Iraq since the invasion than would have been likely had pre-war mortality rates continued, and that most of the excess deaths were the outcome of violence. The *Lancet* study was condemned as a wild exaggeration, and, indeed, the 650,000 figure was no more than the study's best estimate: all its authors were methodologically entitled to say was that there was a 95 per cent probability that the figure lay between 390,000 and 940,000. A flood of other surveys disputed both figures. The *Lancet* controversy did illustrate, however, that the official casualty figures – which were projecting deaths by violence in the low tens of thousands – were in all likelihood hopelessly wrong.¹⁸

By the end of 2006, in short, the US involvement in Iraq had turned into a conflict akin to the colonial and civil war fought by France in Algeria in the 1950s, another conflict for which estimates of total casualties vary immensely. Prime Minister Blair and President Bush continued to assert that 'regime change' had been the right thing to do, even if WMD had not been found, but their rhetoric rang increasingly hollow as the human costs of the occupation mounted. It seems likely that both men's reputations will be permanently

tarnished by the tragedy that enveloped Iraq after the invasion.

On 4 January 2007, President Bush raised troop numbers by 24,000 and a new commander, General David Petraeus, an expert in counter-insurgency warfare, took over command of coalition forces in Iraq. By the middle of 2008, communal violence had receded and the monthly civilian death toll was in sharp decline. In part, this was due to the ‘surge’ putting more boots on the ground; in part, it was due to awareness in the Sunni community that they would lose a civil war; in part, it was due to the growing steadiness under fire of the Iraqi Army. More moderate Sunni began to cooperate with the al-Maliki government and with the occupying forces against al-Qaeda and other extremist groups.

This relative softening of the conflict paved the way for President Barack Obama, who had campaigned on a pledge to take American troops out of Iraq within sixteen months of taking office, to begin drawing down the occupation forces in 2009. By August 2010, except for a residual force of 55,000 advisers and support staff, all troops had been withdrawn from Iraq. The US presence in Iraq came to an end in December 2011. In all, the conflict cost the United States over \$800 billion and the lives of more than 4,500 soldiers. More than 30,000 soldiers had been wounded, many of them maimed for life.

As in the case of Afghanistan, the only way that this prodigious expenditure of blood and treasure could possibly be justified, above all when one took into account the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi lives lost or ruined by bombardment, communal strife and suicide bombings, was by Iraq’s development into a peaceful, democratic and prosperous nation – something far superior to Saddam’s semi-totalitarian regime. On the eve of US withdrawal, Obama promised that the United States would ‘help Iraqis strengthen institutions that are just, representative and accountable’ and would ‘build new ties of trade and of commerce, culture and education’, to ‘unleash the potential of the Iraqi people’ and allow the United States to ‘partner with an Iraq that contributes to regional security and peace’.¹⁹ His rhetoric proved to be empty. Within three years of the US withdrawal, Iraq risked falling into the hands of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS, or ISIL), a sect that makes al-Qaeda seem moderate.

Drone strikes

President Obama brought the US military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq to an end. This does not mean that he has failed to prosecute the war against terrorism in his own way. Since January 2009, when Obama took office, the

United States has greatly expanded its campaign of ‘targeted killings’ of suspected terrorists by drones or cruise missiles. That is to say, the government of the United States has asserted an extraterritorial right to monitor the communications of citizens of foreign lands and to follow their movements by satellite. When it has acquired sufficient intelligence by these means to identify given individuals as terrorists, it passes a death sentence, without due process or even consultation with the authorities of the countries in which the victims live, and executes it by remote control from CIA bases inside the United States. Often, of course, the men blown to bits by Hellfire missiles launched from Reaper drones are politically motivated terrorists who live by a ‘kill or be killed’ ethic. They have no grounds for complaint if justice falls on them out of the sky. The problem is that civilians who dwell near such men too often become ‘collateral damage’, to use the US military’s preferred euphemism for mangled corpses.

The strategy of waging war through drones is, in effect, a refinement of the doctrine of preventive war advocated in the 2002 National Security Strategy. Its underlying premise is strictly utilitarian: it is for the greater good of the United States (and perhaps humanity collectively) that potential or actual terrorists are ‘taken out’ pre-emptively before they can strike against the United States or friendly governments. There are other benefits: if the terrorists can be eliminated by remote control, the United States is spared from intervening, as it did in Afghanistan, to liberate territories that have been turned into safe havens for terrorists. Last, but not least, drones, as relatively small, precision-guided weapons, enable their users to ensure that civilian casualties are minimized, although in war they can never be eliminated entirely. Drone attacks can be aborted, for instance, if the target suddenly walks through a school playground, in a way that other forms of military action cannot. Drones can also ‘loiter’ above a target until he is alone, or surrounded only by his associates.

As Daniel Byman has written:

The drones have done their job remarkably well: by killing key leaders and denying terrorists sanctuaries in Pakistan, Yemen, and, to a lesser degree, Somalia, drones have devastated al-Qaeda and associated anti-American militant groups. And they have done so at little financial cost, at no risk to U.S. forces, and with fewer civilian casualties than many alternative methods would have cost.²⁰

The majority of drone strikes have taken place in the remote mountains of

Pakistan – North Waziristan is a particular target – although, as Byman suggests, drones have also been used in other troubled parts of the world, too. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates that there have been 424 strikes since 2004 in Pakistan, 373 of which have taken place on President Obama’s watch, with the peak year being 2010. It estimates that 100–200 strikes may have taken place in Yemen.²¹ Casualties in these attacks certainly run into the thousands; how many of these are innocent bystanders is difficult to ascertain. What is certain is that the Obama administration’s claims that no non-combatants have been killed are falsehoods. Hundreds of women and children have reportedly died – unsurprisingly, since many strikes have been against houses where suspected terrorists lived with their families.

Drone strikes clearly infringe the sovereignty of the states that are targeted. In the case of Pakistan, the picture has been muddied by the fact that different parts of the government have responded in different ways to the strikes. The Foreign Ministry has conducted a campaign against drone warfare: in December 2013, at Pakistan’s instigation, the General Assembly of UN voted unanimously to request any member state making use of drones for anti-terrorism purposes to respect international human rights law by avoiding the targeting of civilians and showing due proportionality in the use of force. Other branches of the Pakistani government, however, have encouraged the attacks as a way of eliminating individuals and groups who present a menace to the Pakistani state (so-called goodwill strikes).

Drone strikes have also added to the international perception that the United States is a warrior state. The colossal technological superiority possessed by the United States is symbolized by the drone campaign. Yet acting like a Zeus who strikes down his enemies with remotely guided bolts of lightning is a form of behaviour that comes with high political costs attached. An overweening preponderance of power rarely wins over hearts and minds. The use – or abuse – of drone strikes, a policy with which President Obama is now indelibly associated, has harmed Obama’s own reputation as a peacemaker and reduced the reserves of soft power upon which the United States can draw.

Land for war

The United States’ international reputation has also been damaged by its close connection to Israel, whose standing in the world has plummeted since the end of the Cold War. Once seen across the globe as the only democracy in the

Middle East, as an underdog nation that respected human rights and was building a vibrant society in the face of unremitting aggression from its neighbours, Israel has acquired controversial status in international affairs. In global opinion polls, Israel ranks with Russia, North Korea and Pakistan as the nation whose influence on world affairs is regarded as most negative.²² In the developing world, Israel is depicted as a racist state: in 2001, the UN's World Conference against Racism, meeting in Durban, South Africa, officially declared Zionism to be a racist ideology, a move that led Israel and the United States to abandon the conference. A campaign for a boycott of Israeli products, disinvestment and sanctions, modelled on the campaign against apartheid in the 1970s, is attracting an increasing number of adherents – yet another example of how international relations is an increasingly 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' affair.

Some of this anti-Israel sentiment is unquestionably tinged with anti-Semitism. The number of attacks in Europe on Jewish cemeteries, cultural institutions and businesses has grown sharply in recent years, for example. There are plenty of people in Europe, let alone the Middle East, who hate Israel because it is Jewish. It remains true, however, that most of the upsurge in anti-Israel feeling can be attributed to the failure since the end of the Cold War to 'move forward to a peace that would guarantee Israel's security and Palestinian rights'.²³ If such a peace were reached, much anti-Israel feeling would all but evaporate, at any rate in Europe.

Rightly or wrongly, Israel has received most of the blame for the failure of such a peace to emerge. It has also been blamed for the disproportionate force with which it has quelled terrorist attacks emanating from Palestinian territory, and for its refusal to acquiesce in a two-state solution in which an independent Palestine receives the land occupied and settled by Israel since the 1967 Arab–Israeli War. The United States – Israel's principal ally – has been tarred by association with its perceived intransigence. Its involvement in the prolonged diplomatic attempt to bring peace to the Middle East since 1991 is in fact an object lesson in the limits of its power. Both the representatives of the Palestinians, and the leaders of Israel, have said 'no' to presidents of the world's sole superpower with, if not equanimity, then with the certainty that the United States would keep coming back to the table.

The question of Palestine returned to the top of the international agenda with the end of the Cold War and the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime in the 1991 Gulf War. The diminishing of the Soviet Union meant that its allies in the

region, notably Syria, had lost their superpower protector. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and its leader Yasser Arafat, had lost credibility with key Arab states by supporting Saddam Hussein during the Gulf conflict. Jordan's King Hussein, a pro-Western ruler whose nation hosted large numbers of displaced Palestinians, was anxious for a deal. Israel had defused Saddam's attempts to turn the Gulf War into a broader Arab–Israeli conflict by not retaliating against Iraq's missile bombardment of its territory. Its stoicism had impressed everybody. As President George H. W. Bush pointed out in an address to the Congress on 6 March 1991, 'In the conflict just concluded, Israel and many of the Arab states have found themselves confronting the same aggressor.'²⁴ The United States had demonstrated both its diplomatic skill and military clout: in 1991, nobody could doubt that it was the sole regional superpower. The moment, in short, seemed right for diplomatic initiatives to bring peace to the region.

The human dimension of the Palestine issue was also pressing. For the previous three years, evening television bulletins had been dominated by images of the intifada (street uprising) in the territories occupied by Israel since the 1967 war. The picture of Israel that was being portrayed to the world was of brave Arab youths with catapults fighting Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers. The George H. W. Bush administration thought it was in Israel's own interests to pacify the so-called occupied territories, which were the crux of any peace deal. In his March 1991 speech to the Congress, Bush was forthright: 'The time has come to put an end to the Arab–Israeli conflict.'

Israel was wary. The Israeli premier in 1991, Yitzhak Shamir, detested Arafat, whom he regarded as an unrepentant terrorist. Shamir understood the terrorist mindset well. He himself had been a member of the Lehi, a militant Jewish group that had in September 1948 assassinated Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN's envoy to the new state of Israel. Shamir nevertheless attended a conference held in Madrid on 30 October 1991, under the joint chairmanship of President Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev, which formally relaunched the peace process in the Middle East. What Shamir would not do was cut back building Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. Israel's population was being boosted by hundreds of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union and it needed land. Shamir's stance on this issue led to a major spat with the Bush administration in the spring of 1992. Bush refused to give aid to Israel while settlement building continued. Shamir tried to get Congress to override the president, using the formidable pro-Israeli lobby in Washington to put pressure on Capitol Hill. He

failed, and relations between Tel Aviv and Washington were briefly severely damaged.

So long as Shamir was in power, there was no hope for peace. In June 1992, the Israeli people, recognizing this fact, elected Yitzhak Rabin's Labour Party. Although Rabin was handicapped, thanks to Israel's ultra-proportional voting system, by a wafer-thin majority in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, his government nevertheless prepared to negotiate with the PLO. In December 1992, Israel and the PLO began discreet talks in the Norwegian capital of Oslo. The accords that issued from these negotiations were adopted by new President Bill Clinton at a ceremony at the White House on 13 September 1993, at which Rabin and Arafat, with visible lack of enthusiasm, symbolically shook hands.

The deal they were celebrating traded 'land for peace'. The PLO acknowledged that Israel had a right to exist and promised not to work for its destruction – anathema to the radical wing of the PLO itself, and certainly to Islamist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, whose influence was growing among the alienated youth of Gaza and the West Bank. In return, Israel promised to withdraw from the occupied territories and to allow an independent Palestinian Authority (PA) to exercise governmental, though not sovereign, control over the areas thus relinquished. The PA was established on 4 May 1994, and Arafat returned from Tunis to lead it. Israel also recognized the PLO as the political representative of the Palestinian people and made peace with Jordan in October 1994.

The Oslo accords represented a courageous step towards dialogue by both sides. But they could only work if Palestinian terror attacks on Israel ceased, and if Israel stopped building settlements on the occupied territories. Neither happened. More than three hundred Israeli civilians were killed in terrorist attacks between 1993 and 1996; these attacks were mostly carried out by Hamas or Islamic Jihad, but Arafat was blamed. On the other hand, Israeli settlers were prepared to use violence to retain their land. On 4 November, Yigal Amir, a member of the settler community, assassinated Rabin, whom he regarded as a traitor, in Tel Aviv. The loss of Rabin, who was a man of great decency and vision, would prove to be a catastrophe.

Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres, fought a bloody conflict with the Shia Muslim organization Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and was hit by a wave of Hamas-sponsored suicide bombings inside Israel. In the summer of 1996, Israel rejected Labour and re-elected Likud, the party of Shamir and Menachem Begin. A new leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, took the stage. A fluent English speaker,

Netanyahu was politically close to the neoconservatives in Washington. They were arguing, as part of their broader critique of Bill Clinton's foreign policy, that the entire Oslo process had done nothing but weaken a key American ally. It was a view Netanyahu shared.

It was to Clinton's credit that he did not give up on the Oslo process. His own position after re-election in November 1996 was weakened by the sex scandals that nearly led to his impeachment, and he was naturally engaged with many other weighty matters of domestic and foreign policy. Nevertheless, Clinton kept the Oslo process alive in October 1998, when the US government brokered the so-called Wye River memorandum, which facilitated a transfer of land settled by the Israelis to the PA. In January 2000, Clinton hosted talks between Syria and Israel to get an agreement on Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. In July 2000, after Netanyahu's government collapsed, Clinton strove to end his presidency in style by calling Arafat and the new premier of Israel, Ehud Barak, to Camp David, the country retreat of US presidents in the Maryland hills. Clinton poured all his considerable intelligence, charm and negotiating skill into getting the two sides to make a historic agreement.

He failed. At Camp David, Barak made a bold offer to the Palestinian leader. In effect, he promised Israeli withdrawal from over 90 per cent of the occupied territories (and, at Clinton's behest, subsequently offered more). He further acknowledged that the PA would control most of East Jerusalem. Arafat rejected the deal, though Clinton told him, with great passion, that it was the best deal he was ever likely to get, because Barak's proposals did not provide for the free return to Palestine of the Palestinian diaspora (Barak was open to limited return), and because the PA would not be given sovereignty over Haram al Sharif (the Temple Mount), the place in Jerusalem whence Mohammed is said to have ascended to heaven. Haram al Sharif is the third most holy site, after only Mecca and Medina, for devout Muslims. It is also the site of the remains of the second temple, a place of absolute reverence for all Jews. It was an impossible demand to make, as Arafat must have known. Arafat presumably believed that Barak was making an offer that he could not deliver – for, after all, Israeli public opinion had balked at giving away much less since 1993. He may have hoped to win kudos with the Palestinian street by taking such a negative stance. In any event, his caution (or opportunism) killed the Oslo process.

Arafat's intransigence was matched within Israel by General Ariel Sharon, the controversial new leader of Likud, who was detested by the Palestinians for his role in the 1982 Sabra and Chatila massacre (see [Chapter 16](#)). In September

2000, Sharon made an inflammatory visit to the holy sites in Jerusalem and proclaimed that they would forever remain Jewish. The result was the outbreak of a second intifada, which Sharon, who became premier in March 2001, tried to stamp out with heavy-handed repression. Over the next four years, thousands of Palestinians were killed and wounded in the daily street fighting. Terrorist movements such as Hamas were also decimated by the Israelis' systematic targeting of their leaders for assassination. Arab terrorism inside Israel took over 450 lives in 2002 and hundreds more in 2003 and 2004, but declined thereafter as explosives experts and skilled organizers were picked off by Israeli counterterrorism operations.

Politically, the PA's scope for action was eliminated. Israel reoccupied most of the territories already ceded to the PA. Arafat hunkered down in his presidential compound; he governed, in effect, only his immediate surroundings. In mid-2002, Israel began work on a controversial security barrier that protected pre-1967 Israel (with incursions into the occupied territories) from attack from the West Bank and East Jerusalem. By 2006, over 200 miles of wall had been constructed to a chorus of international condemnation.

The United States sided with Israel during the second intifada. Israel was an ally, and it was resisting terrorism. Nevertheless, on 24 June 2002, George W. Bush strongly espoused a 'two-state' solution, that is he recognized that the people of Palestine had the right to govern a sovereign state of their own, so long as they recognized Israel's right to exist. Bush hedged his speech with qualifications, however: the most important was his insistence that the Palestinians should disown Arafat, who was 'compromised by terror'. The core of Bush's speech was that only when Palestine was a peaceful state, with democratically elected leaders, could it reasonably pretend that Israel should make permanent concessions of land. In 2003, a 'Quartet' composed of the United States, the EU, Russia and the UN set out a 'road map' whereby the violence could be stopped and a 'two-state' solution reached. The road map never made the top of the presidential 'to do' list, much to the frustration of British prime minister Tony Blair, who saw it as a quid pro quo for British support over Iraq.

Such well-meaning international initiatives would have got nowhere on their own. In 2004, however, Ariel Sharon, an unlikely peacenik, warned his country that the two-state solution had to be faced. Sharon, explicitly backed by President Bush, proposed rapid Israeli disengagement from the Gaza strip and most of the West Bank. A further boost was given to hopes for peace by the

death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004. He was replaced, after a free election, by Mahmoud Abbas, a former chairman of the PLO, who now advocated non-violent means of securing Palestinian rights. Violence in the occupied territories declined in 2005. Israeli troops expelled recalcitrant Jewish settlers from the Gaza and parts of the West Bank in September 2005. In the same month, Sharon told the General Assembly of the UN that the Palestinians 'are entitled to freedom, and to a national, sovereign existence in a state of their own'. In November 2005, acting with military decisiveness, Sharon split the Likud Party, whose hardliners, headed by Netanyahu, were aghast at the policy of disengagement, in order to accelerate the search for a deal with Mahmoud Abbas. Sharon formed a new party called Kadima (Forward) and allied with Labour. The necessary conditions for the two-state solution espoused by President Bush seemed tantalizingly close.

Two events in January 2006 prevented peace from breaking out. First, on 4 January 2006, Sharon suffered a stroke that left him in a coma. He was replaced by Ehud Olmert, a less charismatic figure. The Kadima–Labour alliance won elections in March 2006, but only by a slim margin that left Olmert no room to manoeuvre. The second event was a result of American bungling. Condoleezza Rice, the newly appointed secretary of state in the second Bush administration, pushed a dubious Abbas to hold legislative elections in the territory administered by the PA. Rice considered that 'freedom and democracy are the only ideas powerful enough to overcome hatred, and division, and violence'.²⁵ Such euphonious platitudes sound well enough at Washington seminars, but they are an erroneous basis for policy in the Middle East.

The elections were held on 25 January 2006. They were duly won by Hamas, which obtained an absolute majority in the 132-seat assembly. Only the Bush administration was surprised. Israel, the United States and the EU immediately underlined that Hamas would have to renounce violence and abide by the PA's recognition of Israel's right to exist, but the elections injected a dose of uncertainty into a situation that already had far too many 'unknown unknowns'. After tense negotiations, a Hamas-led coalition government that included Fatah (the name of the PLO's political wing) was formed on 27 March 2006. Within weeks, however, Hamas and Fatah were at each other's throats, Hamas was firing rockets into Israel, and Israeli jets were bombing the office of Ismael Haniya, the Hamas-backed premier of the PA.

It was at this delicate moment that war broke out in the Lebanon. Ehud Barak had withdrawn Israeli troops from southern Lebanon in 2000, but the country

remained a cauldron likely to boil over. The north was partially occupied by Syrian troops, with Hezbollah, a Shiite Muslim terrorist group backed by Iran and allied to Syria, exercising substantial control of the country's south. In February 2005, the so-called Cedar Revolution took place after Syria murdered the country's long-standing Sunni premier Rafiq al-Hariri, who was pushing energetically, with the support of France and the United States, for the withdrawal of Syrian troops. The ensuing revolt of Lebanese citizens made Syria's position untenable and Bashar al-Assad, the heir of his dictator father Hafez, was compelled to move Syria's troops from the country. George Bush exulted: it seemed to him that a powerful blow had been struck at the 'axis of evil'.

It seemed so to Hezbollah, too, which decided to retaliate by striking at Israel. On 12 July 2006, Hezbollah launched rocket attacks on Israel and sought to kidnap Israeli soldiers for ransom purposes. It was an act of blatant terrorism. Israel threw the international sympathy that it had gained away by the ferocity of its response. Southern Lebanon was pounded by Israeli airstrikes and subsequently by a ground invasion. Hezbollah responded by firing Katyusha rockets at towns in northern Israel and by waging a successful defensive war against the hitherto invincible IDF. In August, France and the United States persuaded Israel to agree to a ceasefire. Well over 1,000 Lebanese civilians had already died by then, while much of the Lebanese economy was in ruins. Hezbollah's rockets – while they caused much disruption – had taken fewer than fifty Israeli lives. International peacekeepers were deployed on the ground between the two sides by the UN.

The Lebanese war testified to two important points. First, Israel's growing problems with international public opinion derived from its failure to use its military might judiciously: in the summer of 2006, Israel had just cause for war, but it did not fight the war with due proportion. As in the Gaza strip and the West Bank, Israel gave an impression of blithe disregard for civilian casualties (although Hezbollah's tactic of using civilians as a shield was also to blame). Second, the United States, a global power of over 300 million citizens with interests everywhere, had once again been compelled to expend considerable diplomatic resources to smoothing down a Middle East conflict exacerbated, though not initiated, by Israel's actions. In 2007, at Annapolis, Maryland, the United States made yet another ultimately futile effort to bring Israel and the PA together.

Since 2007, in fact, the crisis between Israel and the Palestinians has been in a

state of stall. Israel has continued to build the wall, with its encroachments into the occupied territories, and is practising a policy of de facto annexation, especially around East Jerusalem. The number of settlers within the barrier was almost 300,000 by 2014, with another 80,000 living beyond the barrier in fortress communities that cause disruption for their Palestinian neighbours. The government of Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been premier since February 2009, has included the settlers' party, Jewish Home, in his majority. Its leader, Naftali Bennett, regards the West Bank lands – Hebron, Bethlehem, Jericho and, above all, Jerusalem – as Jewish by biblical right. The Palestinians remain divided among themselves. Fatah is still willing to work with Israel; Hamas is not. Hamas has grabbed control of the Gaza strip, which Israel blockades, and has twice (in December 2008 and July 2014) provoked war with Israel by firing rockets across the border in an attempt to kill Israeli civilians.

Israel's reaction in both cases followed the pattern set in the Lebanon war. It deployed a sledgehammer to crush a nut. In December 2008, more than 1,300 Gazans died in the fighting (Israeli casualties numbered 13), and Israel was accused of using white phosphorus bombs against civilians: a war crime. In July 2014, the intensity of the bombardment was even greater. Over 2,200 Gazans, including hundreds of women and children, were killed as the IDF smashed Hamas's network of tunnels, which it uses to escape the blockade, and its stocks of weaponry. Over 10,000 Palestinians were wounded. Seven Israeli citizens were killed by Hamas's rockets. Israel's assault was condemned all over the world, although not by the government of the United States, which broadly backed Israel's use of preponderant force. Protests, some of which led to anti-Semitic violence, erupted in Europe.

The plight of the Gazans, who are crammed into a small, devastated strip of territory and are constrained to live on international handouts, has probably done more to further the Palestinian cause than anything its inept and violent leadership has done since the end of the Cold War. In November 2012, the General Assembly of the UN voted to upgrade Palestine's status from 'non-state observer' to 'non-member state' (a category that also includes the Vatican). In effect, the possibility of accelerated Palestinian statehood was being recognized. The United States was one of the few states to vote against; many of its closest allies abstained or even voted in favour. Since then, the Obama administration, which took office in 2009 full of confidence about brokering a peace agreement has found itself endlessly preaching peace, democracy and the necessity of compromise to parties that are not prepared to budge an inch. John Kerry, who

replaced Hillary Clinton as secretary of state in 2013, has been just the latest in a long line of senior US diplomats to spend an inordinate amount of valuable time hunting that mythical creature, the 'Middle East breakthrough'. It may be, however, that a younger generation of Palestinians will find its own way of breaking the stalemate. Many young secular Arabs, who know their grandfathers failed to defeat Israel by war and terrorism, and that their fathers failed to reverse Israel's territorial gains, bringing destruction and abject poverty on to the Palestinian people, now wish to be treated as full citizens within a binational single state.²⁶

Iran

Israel has also been a protagonist in US policy towards Iran, whose nuclear aspirations have posed a major strategic problem for both the Bush and Obama administrations. Israel possesses nuclear weapons, though it does not admit the fact publicly. When Iran's plans became known, Israel repeatedly threatened to bomb the sites where Iran's nuclear potential was being developed. The prospect of Israeli strikes on Iran was so catastrophic that international diplomacy has done everything possible to rein in Iran's ambitions.

Pre-revolutionary Iran signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 and thereby committed itself to renouncing nuclear arms, though not necessarily to the production of nuclear energy. In the 1980s, the Iran-Iraq War, and Israel's nuclear capability, gave the country's clerical leadership an incentive to build a nuclear bomb of its own. The country, like North Korea, bought the technical expertise of Abdul Qadeer Khan, the 'father' of Pakistan's military nuclear programme. By 1996, it was clear to all that Iran was carrying out military research. President Bill Clinton announced sanctions on all companies, domestic and foreign, that cooperated with the Iranian programme. It would be the first of many such announcements.

Clinton's sanctions did not deter Iran from executing its programme. In December 2002, on the eve of the US invasion of Iraq, it was revealed that Iran possessed a secret nuclear plant at Natanz, south-east of Tehran, and a further plant producing heavy water, which is necessary for the construction of a bomb. Tehran's growing capacity to flout the NPT would have caused diplomatic ructions in any case, but on 3 August 2005, when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the mayor of Tehran, was elected president of Iran, the question of Iran's nuclear ambitions became a major international issue. Ahmadinejad was a Holocaust-

denier – he proceeded to organize a conference on the topic – who had allegedly argued that Israel should be ‘wiped off the map’. Under his leadership, Iran resumed and intensified production of enriched uranium at Natanz (it had been suspended in 2004). The United States fended off Israeli requests for air strikes to sabotage Iran’s nuclear plants before they could begin producing weapons grade material. Cyber warfare was used instead. In 2008, the CIA introduced a computer ‘worm’ into the computer systems at Natanz to disrupt its production. Mysterious attacks on Iranian scientists subsequently eliminated some of the Iranian atomic programme’s top brains.

At the heart of the dispute was the question of national sovereignty. Israel – which has never signed the NPT – has nuclear weapons. So do Pakistan and India. Iran might not have wanted to be the odd one out, although Tehran has consistently maintained throughout the crisis that it regarded nuclear weapons as un-Islamic and hence off limits. It merely wanted – as was its right under the NPT – to carry out research on nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. From November 2011 onwards, when the IAEA unambiguously stated that Iran was producing materials that would enable it to construct a bomb, the question became one of just how much pain Tehran was prepared to take in order to make its point. When, in 2012, a group of powers (the so-called P5+1 group of the United States, Russia, China, France and Great Britain, plus non-nuclear Germany) demanded that Iran should cease producing weapons grade uranium, Iran insisted stubbornly on its sovereign ‘right to enrich’. In July–August 2012, the EU and the United States accordingly embargoed Iranian oil, which cost Tehran billions of dollars in revenues and provoked a crisis in the *rial*, which halved in value. Imports became more expensive and the cost of living for ordinary citizens soared. Further sanctions on banks or other intermediaries that facilitated financial transactions with Iran followed.

Israel, meanwhile, played bad cop. On 27 September 2012, Benjamin Netanyahu, with the help of a large cartoon-like picture of a bomb, argued before the General Assembly of the UN that Iran might make a rapid and secret leap towards producing weapons. The implication was clear: Israel would not allow this last step, which it considered an existential threat, to be taken. By the spring of 2013, Israel was seemingly poised to carry out a lone strike. The United States temporarily headed off the danger with a new wave of crippling sanctions against front companies that were helping Iran evade sanctions.

A change of leadership in Tehran was decisive in breaking the deadlock. On 15 June 2013, Iranians elected a new president, Hassan Rouhani, a skilled diplomat

and known moderate, in the place of Ahmadinejad. President Obama wrote immediately to Rouhani offering to ease sanctions. Rouhani responded positively. Speaking before the UN on 24 September 2013, he made a thoughtful plea for the West to cease demonizing the threat countries such as his own supposedly posed to world peace. Iran's nuclear programme, Rouhani promised, 'must pursue exclusively peaceful purposes'. Nuclear weapons had 'no place' in Iran's security strategy, and it was 'imperative' for Iran to dispel all 'reasonable' concerns about it. His quid pro quo was equally clearly stated: 'acceptance of and respect for the implementation of the right to enrichment inside Iran'. In short: so long as Iran could continue to develop its nuclear industry for peaceful purposes, 'time-bound and result-oriented talks' could take place.²⁷

In October 2013, negotiations began in Geneva, with the foreign policy chief of the EU, Catherine Ashton, heading the P5+1 team. It was the start of an at times contentious negotiating process, steered behind the scenes by the Obama administration, which culminated in July 2015 with an accord that ended Iran's isolation from the West. There is no need to go into the (extremely technical) details of the accord, but its central achievement was simple enough. Iran would scale down its nuclear programme, allow verification that its nuclear research was not being used for military purposes and would use only the Natanz site for enrichment purposes. The United States – for so long the Great Satan in Shia Muslim eyes – had reached a deal with the country that since 1979 has been the incarnation of Islamic militancy, and which Washington continues to regard as a state sponsor of terrorism.

It had done so, moreover, in the face of passionate opposition from Israel and Arab allies such as Saudi Arabia. Benjamin Netanyahu mobilized American conservatives in a bid to stop the deal. In March 2015, he was even invited to Washington by the Republican leadership of Congress to make his case against any loosening of the pressure on Iran. Netanyahu's move was indicative of the influence that Israel wields in domestic American politics. What other world leader would have been invited to Washington explicitly to attack the foreign policy of a sitting president? Yet Netanyahu's visit was also a sign of Israel's shrinking influence with President Obama and, perhaps, the wider Washington foreign policy establishment. It is not fanciful to interpret the Iran nuclear deal as a strong hint that top US policymakers are growing tired of placing Israel at the heart of their strategy for the Middle East.

The pivot

Whether it is true or not that Israel's position is waning, nobody who studies American foreign policy at all can fail to be struck by the extent to which the Middle East has dominated Washington's attention since the end of the Cold War. This chapter, which has not even dealt with relations with Saudi Arabia or Turkey (Egypt is discussed in [Chapter 27](#)), exemplifies the extent to which post-Cold War American diplomacy has been preoccupied by that convulsed region of the world. Yet, if one looks back to [Chapter 24](#), there is something anachronistic about this. The 'global future' will increasingly be decided in Asia. Its demographic preponderance and economic strength guarantee it. In particular, Washington has to decide whether it will treat China as a 'strategic partner' (which is what the Clinton administration called it), a 'strategic competitor' (the Bush administration's preferred term) or perhaps as an enemy to be contained (or confronted).²⁸

The Obama administration soon grasped this shift in the centre of gravity of global politics. Probably the largest achievement of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was the notion that US foreign policy needed to 'pivot' from its preoccupation with the Middle East and Europe, and engage more with the Pacific community of nations.²⁹ Asia was too important to be left to its own devices. As Clinton expressed the idea in October 2010:

The United States is uniquely positioned to play a leading role in the Asia Pacific – because of our history, our capabilities, and our credibility. People look to us, as they have for decades. The most common thing that Asian leaders have said to me in my travels over this last 20 months is thank you, we're so glad that you're playing an active role in Asia again. Because they look to us to help create the conditions for broad, sustained economic growth ... to ensure security by effectively deploying our own military, and to defend human rights and dignity by supporting strong democratic institutions.³⁰

On Mrs Clinton's watch, the United States gained membership of the annual East Asia summit, a gathering of the region's leaders, and signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia, which was an important act of diplomatic recognition for ASEAN. The United States now maintains an ambassador to ASEAN in Jakarta (Indonesia). A free trade agreement was signed in 2012 with South Korea, and this was only a prelude to a concerted push for greater trade liberalization in the Pacific region. The so-called Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which was signed by twelve Pacific nations in

February 2016, if ratified will create a free trade bloc between the United States and other key regional economies, but not China, the biggest trading power of them all. The United States, along with Japan and Canada, has also boycotted the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), launched in Beijing in October 2014. Many of Washington's European allies, by contrast, have subscribed capital. The preference of the United States for existing (American-influenced) institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank is very clear.

Addressing the Australian parliament in November 2011, President Obama underlined the military implications of the pivot:

So here is what this region must know. As we end today's wars, I have directed my national security team to make our presence and mission in the Asia Pacific a top priority. As a result, reductions in U.S. defence spending will not – I repeat, will not – come at the expense of the Asia Pacific. ... We will preserve our unique ability to project power and deter threats to peace. ... Let there be no doubt: In the Asia Pacific in the 21st century, the United States of America is all in.³¹

Why should anybody ever have doubted the US commitment? The US military was still entrenched on the Japanese island of Okinawa and a series of other bases across the West Pacific; American troops (and tactical nuclear weapons) were keeping North Korea from waging war on its more successful southern brother. The Seventh Fleet still patrolled the waters of the region; the security guarantee to Taiwan and to historic allies like Japan and Australia remained intact. In 2012, the United States announced that it would be committing 60 per cent of its naval resources to the Asia-Pacific region by 2020.

The reason why Washington's commitment was in doubt is that the United States was, as the title of this chapter affirms, a 'wounded hegemon'. The United States had taken a major hit to its prestige by its bungled handling of the Iraq war. Only ideologically blinkered pundits regarded its withdrawal as evidence of strategic strength. Elsewhere, analysts understandably wondered whether the United States would have the stomach for any further conflict in the coming decades. President Obama, highly intelligent, rational and the opposite of a warrior, had had no choice but to cut US losses, but by so doing had given the impression that the United States was losing its grip. In the jungle of international politics, it is a dangerous impression to give.

There are two looming challenges in East Asia, where American resolve may

be put to a test: the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea. The regime in North Korea has been a persistent cause of trouble for its neighbours, and for the United States, since the end of the Cold War. The last truly totalitarian communist regime still standing – the Economist Intelligence Unit ranks it the least democratic country in the world – North Korea is a ticking atomic bomb that nobody knows how to defuse.³² The crisis in the South China Sea, by contrast, is one of old-fashioned power politics. China, now a major economic force, is exerting its hegemony over its immediate neighbours against their will and against the will of the United States.

North Korea and the United States went to the brink of war in June 1994 when the then dictator, Kim Il Sung, threatened to withdraw from the NPT. The risk was that Kim would then be free to transform fuel from North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear plant into plutonium for bombs. This posed a threat to South Korea, but there was also the prospect that the regime would try to prop up its failing economy by selling plutonium to other unsavoury regimes around the world. The American military drew plans to take out Yongbyon. The danger of making a pre-emptive attack on North Korea was that the regime's 1.7-million-strong army might launch a retaliatory invasion of South Korea, sparking a conflict that might draw in China. North Korean negotiators warned their American counterparts that they would even regard international sanctions as an act of war and as an opportunity to destroy Seoul in 'a sea of flames'.³³

The impasse was broken by former President Jimmy Carter, who with President Clinton's acquiescence, carried out a personal mission to the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang. Carter persuaded Kim to halt his nuclear programme pending negotiations with the United States. These negotiations resulted in an October 1994 'Agreed Framework' by which North Korea affirmed it would 'freeze and eventually dismantle' its experimental 5MW 'graphite moderated' reactors under the supervision of the IAEA and replace them with two smaller light water reactors (LWR). The United States also undertook to supply the regime with 500,000 tons of fuel oil per year and gave a solemn undertaking not to make a nuclear strike on North Korea. The deal was denounced as appeasement by Clinton's many critics in the United States. It was widely – and correctly – believed that North Korea would not keep its word. On the other hand, the alternative was very likely a war that the United States could have won only by using extreme measures and that was certain to lead to huge civilian casualties in South Korea.

Kim Il Sung died at the end of 1994. He was replaced by his son, Kim Jong-Il,

who continued the semi-divine cult of personality practised by his father. There was no change in the regime's form of government. Nor did the younger Kim respect the Agreed Framework. In 2002, the Bush administration cut off oil shipments and suspended work on the LWRs when it became clear that North Korea was conducting secret research to enrich uranium to weapons grade. Pyongyang responded by withdrawing from the NPT in January 2003. 'Six Party' talks between Washington, South Korea, Russia, Japan, China and North Korea began with a view to getting North Korea to abandon its nuclear programme in exchange for increased aid. Pyongyang proved very adept at stringing these negotiations along before suddenly raising the stakes. It tested a nuclear device in October 2006 and also demonstrated surprising prowess in missile technology. The Bush administration, like the Clinton administration before it, responded with great caution to these provocations, which were much more threatening than the parallel actions of Iran.

The Obama administration has also followed a policy of 'strategic patience' with North Korea, despite North Korea's conducting a wave of new nuclear tests and missile experiments shortly after Obama's inauguration in January 2009. In practice, this has meant trying to influence Pyongyang via China – which has kept the North Korean regime afloat financially – and South Korea, which has tried to create trade and development links with its northern neighbour. But it also meant carrying out bilateral negotiations. The Leap Day Agreement, so-called because it was signed on 29 February 2012, briefly seemed like a breakthrough. North Korea declared yet another moratorium on testing bombs and rockets, agreed to allow the IAEA to inspect its nuclear facilities and received in return 240,000 tons of grain to feed its starving population.

The illusion of breakthrough endured only a few months. In December 2012, North Korea, now under the leadership of the latest member of the Kim dynasty, Kim Jong-un, a corpulent youth of dubious mental stability, launched a three-stage intercontinental rocket in defiance of no fewer than three UN resolutions prohibiting it from developing ballistic missile technology. In March 2013 North Korea declared that its nuclear weapons were 'not a bargaining chip' and would not be relinquished even for 'billions of dollars'. The regime's propaganda boasted that North Korea would soon be able to rain destruction onto the cities of Japan and the United States. This was an exaggeration – there is still no sign that North Korea knows how to miniaturize a nuclear device so that it can be used as a warhead – but given the unreliable character of the regime, and the regime's willingness to pour resources into its missile programme, it was one

that had to be taken seriously. The United States issued a range of sanctions against the regime and its most prominent members. Short of war, it could do little else. The same held true in January 2016 when North Korea claimed to have tested a thermonuclear device. Western experts threw doubt on its boasts, but it is also true that the same experts have consistently underestimated North Korea's determination and technical prowess.

During the 2013 crisis, the *Economist* contended that the world was playing 'Korean roulette'.³⁴ This blunt assessment is surely right. North Korea is bound to collapse sooner or later. Kim Jong-un has opened Pyongyang to a form of crony capitalism, but for the most part the country is living in primitive backwardness. The Soviet Union was unjustly described as 'Upper Volta with rockets' at the height of the Cold War. In the case of North Korea, the comparison holds. It is a garrison state, hypnotized by the cult of personality, with a hidden gulag of slave labour camps, a huge, well-drilled army and a rural population that is at permanent risk of famine. It is a commonplace to compare the Korean Peninsula with Germany in the late 1980s. Actually, the situation is much worse. The East German regime would never have launched an aggressive war on West Germany. North Korea, if its internal plight becomes desperate, might easily attack South Korea. There are few certainties in international relations, but the prediction that the Korean Peninsula will become one of the critical crises of the next decade is one of them.

So is the prediction that the United States and China will find peaceful coexistence increasingly difficult. As China's economic prowess grew in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it naturally became an object of strategic analysis. How much firepower would the dragon desire to possess? Chinese scholars and politicians hastened to underline that Beijing would be less of a dragon than a panda – a cuddly vegetarian beast that nobody need fear. As Zheng Bijian wrote in an influential 2005 article in *Foreign Affairs*, China intended a 'peaceful rise to great-power status' by the middle of the twenty-first century.

Zheng argued that China would orient its policy around three 'transcendences' in order to achieve this long-term goal. The first of these required China to transcend 'the old model of industrialization and advance a new one'. Instead of the old model, based on 'rivalry for resources in bloody wars and by high investment, high consumption of energy, and high pollution', China was aiming to 'forge a new path' based on 'technology, economic efficiency, low consumption of natural resources relative to its population, low environmental pollution, and the optimal allocation of human resources'.³⁵ We saw in [Chapter](#)

24 to what extent China has thus far transcended traditional development models. The third ‘transcendence’ Zheng identified was that of superseding ‘outdated modes of social control’ in order to ‘construct a harmonious socialist society’. China, Zheng insisted, was ‘strengthening its democratic institutions and the rule of law and trying to build a stable society based upon a spiritual civilization’.³⁶

The second ‘transcendence’, however, was the one that would guide China’s foreign policy. Zheng unambiguously averred that China would not follow the pattern pursued by Germany before the First World War, or Japan before the Second World War, of vying for hegemony. Rather, ‘China will transcend ideological differences to strive for peace, development, and co-operation with all the countries of the world’.³⁷

A less optimistic scenario has been sketched by the international relations theorist, John Mearsheimer, who said that his argument, ‘in a nutshell’, was that

if China continues to grow economically, it will attempt to dominate Asia the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. The United States, however, will go to enormous lengths to prevent China from achieving regional hegemony. Most of Beijing’s neighbours, including India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Russia, and Vietnam, will join with the United States to contain Chinese power. The result will be an intense security competition with considerable potential for war. In short, China’s rise is unlikely to be tranquil.³⁸

So far Mearsheimer is winning the debate. China has expanded its military capacity substantially. Its 2014 defence budget of \$130 billion is second only to that of the United States, and it is more than double that of its nearest regional rival, Japan. Its well-equipped army of 2.33 million men is the largest in the world. It possesses only one aircraft carrier, but boasts a potent fleet of attack submarines and surface ships that regularly engage in provocative displays of strength: ‘It has become commonplace for Chinese naval flotillas to sail through Japanese-held seas and cruise along Japan’s east coast.’³⁹ China can scramble almost 2,000 fighter planes if foreign aircraft penetrate its controversially large ‘Air Defence Identification Zone’, and it has a notable helicopter force.⁴⁰ Chinese DF-21 missiles and DH-10 cruise missiles are capable of hitting targets in Japan and, in a war, could be used to knock out naval bases crucial for Japan’s American ally. Japan’s 2013 National Security Strategy expressed its alarm at China’s ability to disrupt the East Asian ‘US-led status quo’.⁴¹

China and Japan ‘normalized’ relations in 1972, but the horrors of the Japanese invasion and occupation of China during 1937–45, for which Japan has never made a convincing show of repentance, throw a shadow over the two countries’ relations. The Japanese appear to be in denial about their country’s Nazi-like past, while the Chinese leadership is not above stirring the Chinese masses’ anti-Japanese sentiment for political ends. In 2005, for instance, riots broke out across China in protest of the adoption of a history book in Japanese schools that downplayed the scale of wartime atrocities in China. The Chinese authorities protected Japanese consulates, but otherwise seemed content to play the nationalist card. Further protests broke out in September 2012, after the Japanese Diet (parliament) declared the Senkaku, a group of islets between Okinawa and Taiwan, to be Japanese. The Chinese, who call them the Diaoyu islands, have asserted their competing claim. The odds that an accident involving military assets from the two rivals will take place cannot be discounted. If it does, the United States may be drawn in to a conflict.

A similar dispute is taking place between China and its southern neighbours, Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia, over the Spratly Islands, a set of coral reefs geographically closest to the Philippines, but for which Vietnam has the best historical claim. China has asserted its sovereignty over the islands in a manner that has brooked no compromise. Having already physically seized the nearby Paracel islands from Vietnam in 1974, in 2012 it grabbed the Scarborough reefs, which are literally only a few miles from the Philippines’ shore, asserting, in effect, that its territorial waters were the whole of the South China Sea. In May 2014, it underlined the point by deploying an oil rig inside Vietnam’s 200-nautical-mile Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ). In April 2015, it began constructing a substantial naval base, together with an airstrip, in the Spratlys. It is as if Italy were to claim the whole of the Adriatic Sea as its territorial waters. Five trillion dollars of trade passes through the South China Sea every year. It is the main shipping route for oil tankers and freighters coming from Europe to Japan and Taiwan. If China pursues this policy further, its neighbours run the risk of becoming its dependents. The United States, concerned about freedom of navigation, may test China’s resolve by sailing warships in the proximity of the new naval base.

The crisis underlines, however, that American politicians are not being merely vainglorious when they call the United States the ‘indispensable nation’. If the United States were to follow an isolationist policy of withdrawing from the Far East, the risk of war between Japan and China, and Vietnam and China, would

greatly increase. So would the risk of a Chinese-led East Asian co-prosperity sphere – to resurrect a phrase. China may become East Asia’s regional hegemon anyway, but in the absence of the United States, its hegemony would be certain. Will the United States, weary of war and drained of funds, be willing to finance a long-term naval commitment to protect a faraway cluster of rocks of which its people know nothing?

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Democracy and human rights

Democratic recession – Arab Spring – Oppression in Asia – Genocide in Rwanda – Humanitarian intervention – R2P – ISIS – Broader global governance.

Since the end of the Cold War, the number of states with good records for democracy and human rights has increased significantly. Many of the former communist states now enjoy competitive free elections, a lively and critical media, freedom of association, rule of law, minority rights and the other key attributes of a liberal-democratic society. In South America and Africa, fewer countries are governed by military despots, or by the strongmen who wreaked such damage on fragile postcolonial societies. On balance, more people are living in free societies than ever before.

Nevertheless, the ‘Third Wave’ of democratization identified by the political theorist Samuel P. Huntington, which began its surge in 1974 with the ‘revolution of the carnations’ in Portugal and the overthrow of the Greek colonels in the same year has seemingly reached its high point and is perhaps beginning to ebb.¹ Several democratic theorists have characterized the period 2008–15 as a ‘democratic recession’ because the number of democracies has ceased to grow, and the strength of democratic institutions and values has weakened even in free societies.² The number of autocracies in the world has increased, and sheer social breakdown has led to some countries relapsing into a state of anarchy. The editor of Freedom House’s 2015 report on the state of democracy in the world emphasized: ‘Acceptance of democracy as the world’s dominant form of government – and of an international system based upon democratic ideals – is under greater threat than at any time in the last 25 years.’

In 2016, the same writer complained of ‘global freedom under pressure’.³

One of the great questions facing statesmen in 2016 is whether it is right for outside powers to intervene inside the borders of sovereign nation states in order to stop bloodshed and in order to promote democracy and human rights. The so-called international community has a mixed record on this score. In Rwanda, in 1994, the world stood by while a genocide took place. In Bosnia and Kosovo, NATO acted. In 2011, Britain and France, with the logistical help of the United States, backed rebels fighting against Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi to overthrow his regime. Since 2012, the Syrian civil war has led to the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, and the displacement of millions of people, but no humanitarian intervention has yet been taken by outside powers to end the sufferings of the civilians caught up in the fighting. The reluctance of Western nations to get involved in other people’s fights is understandable. It is a legacy of the experience in Iraq, which represented a hard lesson for those who thought that democracy could bloom in any soil.

Liberal democracy, it seems, is not a hardy perennial. It is rather a plant that needs the right environment, careful tending and a strong dose of luck if it is to grow. Perhaps most of all, it needs good gardeners – political leaders – who are committed to its success and willing to ensure that democracy amounts to more than the tyranny of the majority. For good or ill, leaders matter, as Vladimir Putin has demonstrated in Russia, Slobodan Milošević showed in Serbia and Hassan Rouhani is arguably illustrating today in Iran. And that is why free, unrigged elections are so important. They are the only non-violent way so far discovered of kicking rascals out before they do irreparable damage.

Mapping democracy

The most widely accepted index of democratic institutions and values is that of Freedom House, which has been compiling an annual audit of democracy in the world since the 1970s. Freedom House ranks countries as free, partly free or unfree by giving them two grades from 1 (absolutely free) to 7 (repressive) according to their record on political liberties and civil rights. Twenty-five separate indicators are evaluated. A free society is one that scores at least 2 on one count and 3 on the other.

Such standards are clearly indicative of so-called Western values. North Korea’s elites believe as strongly as any American or Dane that they live in the finest society in the world and will send any of their fellow citizens who disagree

to a re-education camp to reflect on their doubts. More seriously, nations such as Singapore believe that liberal freedoms, while not undesirable per se, can, if unchecked by authority, bring disorder, immorality and chaos and make a society less productive. Liberty breeds licence, in short. This was the fundamental criticism that the founder of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, made of the United States, which in other respects he admired: 'The expansion of the right of the individual to behave or misbehave as he pleases has come at the expense of an orderly society.'⁴ Lee Kuan Yew sustained that a nation's collective welfare came before the individual political and civil rights of its citizens in the scale of human values. The economic success of Singapore – now one of the most prosperous places in the world – is before everybody's eyes. Yet Singapore scores only 4/4 on Freedom House's index and is only 'partly free'. China's leaders, while in theory espousing Deng Xiaoping's variant on communism, believe something similar: they consider that it is the party's duty to make China a great power both economically and politically. This collective good takes precedence over individual rights and political pluralism; and China's own 2016 Freedom House ranking (political rights, 7; civil liberties, 6) suggest that they take their principles seriously.

Unless one is an exponent of collectivist ethics, however, the growth of democratic institutions and values is normally regarded as a good thing. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a significant increase in the number of countries that are classified as free or partly free. In 2016, eighty-six countries (44 per cent) were classified as free, fifty-nine (30 per cent) as partly so and fifty (26 per cent) as unfree. Nearly 3 billion people live in free societies, as opposed to 2.6 billion, half of them Chinese, who lived under unfree regimes. It is instructive to compare these figures to 1984, before the Cold War ended. Then, just 32 per cent of the states in the world were free, 35 per cent partly free and one-third were undemocratic. Already by 1994, however, the number of unfree regimes had been reduced to 28 per cent, and since then there has been little change except at the margin.

The general picture holds enormous regional and cultural differences. In general, the freest societies are those of the 'Anglosphere' – Great Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand – and Western Europe. All of these states score 1 for both political and civil rights. Nevertheless, Latin America scores better than ever before. Still-Marxist Cuba apart, no Latin American state is classified as outright unfree, although Venezuela scores 5 for both political and civil rights. Countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru

and Brazil are all now consolidated democracies. Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, Paraguay and Colombia are at least partly free. By contrast, there are only five fully free countries in the whole of Asia – India, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia and Taiwan, although the Philippines is making a spirited attempt to join the club. Africa's success stories include South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Cape Verde, Lesotho and Ghana.

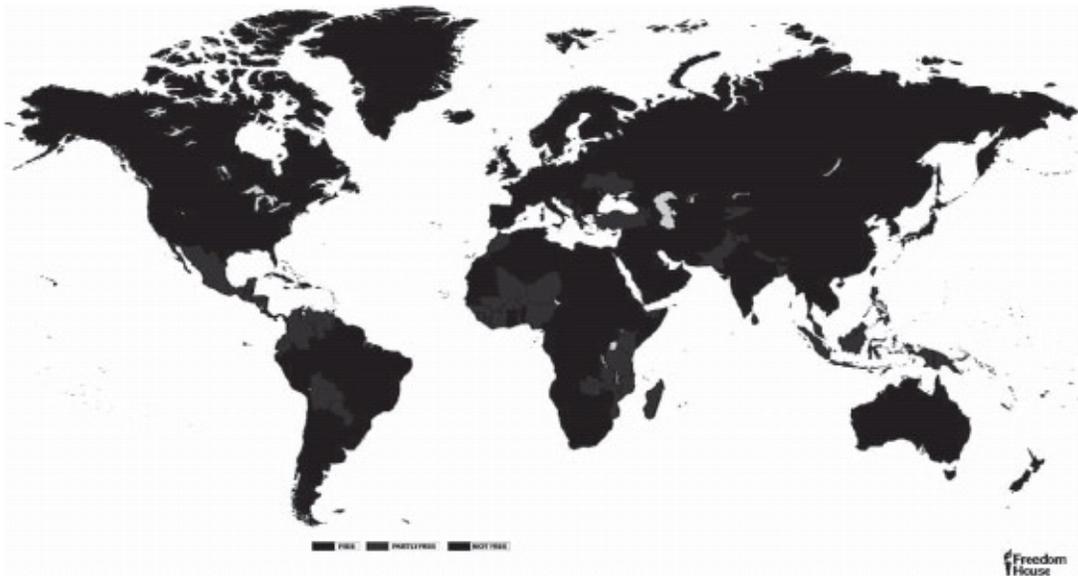
The worst societies are repressive communist regimes (China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam), repressive former communist regimes (Russia, Belarus), Central Asian states such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, failed states (Chad, Syria, Somalia, Equatorial Africa, Central African Republic, Sudan, Libya), military dictatorships (Myanmar) or Middle East theocracies such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. In the entire vast swathe of territory from Algeria to Pakistan, only Israel and Tunisia are classified as free societies.

Bitter spring

The significance of the so-called Arab Spring is evident from the above. The wave of popular uprisings that shook the regimes of North Africa and the Middle East in 2011 was a sign that the most politically oppressed peoples on earth wanted democratic rights. Democracy was once again working its magic – or so many pundits reasoned. The outcome of the Arab Spring, however, has been civil war, anarchy and a return to military dictatorship. Tunisia, where the Arab Spring began, alone boasts a free society, albeit one that is under attack from all sides.

Speaking in Cairo in 2009, President Obama, after diplomatically discussing the importance of Islam for American society, and after explaining that the United States would not repeat the errors of Iraq, dropped a heavy hint to his audience of senior Egyptian politicians that they needed to change their ways:

I ... have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. Those are not just American ideas, they are human rights, and that is why we will support them everywhere ... governments that protect these rights are ultimately more stable, successful and secure.⁵



MAP 13 *Freedom in the world 2015. Courtesy Freedom House.*

Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak, the absolute ruler of his country since 1982, would have done well to heed these words. Within two years, the Egyptian people had driven him from power. Mubarak’s fall was the high point of an exhilarating surge in Arab public opinion that briefly seemed to be transforming the entire Arab world.

The Arab Spring began in Tunisia. On 17 December 2010, a street vendor, Mohammed Bouazizi, immolated himself in protest against policemen that had confiscated his cart – and his livelihood. Like many other young Tunisians, Bouazizi had found himself unemployed and without means thanks to the actions of an uncaring state. He died of his burns. The country erupted against the misrule of the country’s dictator of more than two decades, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, whose immediate family had appropriated much of the nation’s wealth, and whose threatening face disfigured public buildings across the land. On 14 January 2011, Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia. A confused transition ensued, but Tunisia was distinguished from the first by the willingness of its social, religious and political forces to cooperate in a committee for national renewal: the so-called Superior Instance for the Achievement of the Goals of the Revolution, for Political Reform and Democratic Transition. Elections held on 23 October 2011 were won by al-Nahda, a confessional Muslim party that had been banned by Ben Ali.

The flash fire spread to Egypt, where educated youth led the huge pro-democracy demonstrations that began in Cairo’s Tahrir Square at the end of January 2011. The protests were characterized by ‘the demonstrators’ incredible

discipline'.⁶ Clashes between pro-Mubarak supporters and regime critics spread across the country, but the weight of public opinion quickly rallied behind the protesters. On 11 February, the ageing Mubarak, one of the few leaders in the Arab world willing to cooperate with Israel, stepped down after he lost the confidence of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which was intent both on maintaining stability and on preserving its own considerable privileges within the Egyptian state. In August, Mubarak and his son, Gamal, were charged in a televised trial with corruption and with ordering the massacre of protesters at Tahrir Square. Television, notably the Qatar-based Arabic satellite news channel Al-Jazeera, played a considerable role in spreading the contagion of revolt across the Arab world, as did social media. The anger of Egyptian youth had in fact been sparked by the death of a pro-democracy blogger, Khaled Said, in police custody in June 2010.

Yemen, where mass protests began on 3 February, was next: its leader, President Saleh, was injured by a car bomb in June 2011 and, like Ben Ali, took refuge in Saudi Arabia. Saleh subsequently resigned, though he returned to Yemen and continued to exercise considerable political power. On 14 February, protests broke out in Bahrain, a monarchy whose population is mostly Shia, but whose ruling family is Sunni. The origins of the uprising in Bahrain were to be found, in fact, in the constitutional marginalization of the Shia community, which was excluded from all leading positions in society. The uprising was quashed in mid-March by Bahrain's own security forces and by Saudi troops called in by Bahrain's King Hamad. Saudi Arabia feared contagion from the Bahrain revolt among its own Shia citizens, not to mention Iranian penetration, and the crackdown was accordingly given remarkable latitude by the West, which had no desire to see the House of Saud drawn into the turmoil.

The West was less reticent in the case of Libya. On 15 February 2011, rebellion broke out in Benghazi and Tobruk against Muammar Gaddafi, whose permanent revolution had impoverished the country and left the state entirely in the hands of his own kin and clan. A savage civil war began in which the rebels, aided by UN-authorized air strikes and military assistance from NATO, gradually overcame Gaddafi's private bodyguard of trained mercenaries. Tens of thousands of Libyans died in the fighting. The capital, Tripoli, fell to the rebels in August 2011. Gaddafi, who went into hiding, was butchered by a mob in October 2011. The case of Libya was less an attempt at democratization than a social and institutional dissolution. Unlike its western neighbour, Tunisia, Libya needed to be reconstituted as a functioning state. The seriousness of Libya's

post-Gaddafi predicament was not, however, fully appreciated by the West in the autumn of 2011.

In Syria, the regime of Bashar al-Assad used ruthless violence in an attempt to crush an uprising that began in the southern town of Deraa in March 2011. The regime's crackdown cost more than 5,000 lives by the end of 2011. It was merely a foretaste of the catastrophe to come. The rebellions across the Arab world were motivated by different things and varied sharply from one another. Ultimately, however, they had in common the fact of being a 'call for dignity and a reaction to being humiliated by arbitrary, unaccountable and increasingly predatory regimes'.⁷ Syria was to prove that it was the most predatory regime of them all.

The Arab Spring was followed by a bleak winter, which killed any hope that the green shoots of democracy might grow into a sturdy plant. In many ways, the failure was greatest in Cairo. Egypt is the intellectual centre of the Arab world. If democracy had worked there, its example might have been imitated elsewhere. The Egyptians soon discovered, however, that 'authoritarian politics ... is a poor school for democracy'.⁸ The Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist party with long roots in Egyptian history, won parliamentary elections in January 2012. Its candidate, Mohammed Morsi, thanks to his strong showing in rural areas, beat all rivals in the presidential elections of June 2012. Sophisticated middle-class voters in Cairo and Alessandria deeply distrusted Morsi, who admittedly governed in a way that confirmed their worst suspicions. Voting on a new constitution was boycotted by Morsi's opponents in December 2012, and the spring of 2013 was characterized by a mounting climate of confrontation between the Morsi government and the many secularist Egyptians who feared that Morsi intended to imitate Iran.

On 30 June 2013, huge crowds challenged the government's legitimacy in the streets of Cairo. They were backed up by the army, which deposed Morsi and arrested the top echelons of the Muslim Brotherhood on 4 July. Hundreds were killed in the subsequent crackdown against Morsi's supporters, and the Egyptian courts have since handed out numerous death sentences to members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including Morsi himself. The young general who led the coup, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, became a hero for many Egyptians: 'Sisi mania' broke out among Cairo's elites. Sisi, who trained at the US Army War College, was acceptable to Washington, too. He became president of Egypt in June 2014, after winning the presidential election with 96 per cent of the poll. The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, or the battered remains of it,

boycotted the election. Overall, the events of 2012 and 2013 have ‘left behind an Egypt in which the very idea of democracy has lost much of its meaning and all of its lustre’.⁹ In effect, Egypt has spent the years since the Arab Spring in a wayward transition from rule by an ageing, infirm strongman to a youthful, dynamic one. Finding a new boss is not, however, a long-term solution for the social, economic and cultural problems that beset it.

Egypt at least did not collapse into anarchy. Libya did. Post-Gaddafi Libya possessed certain advantages – notably its large revenues from hydrocarbons – but greater disadvantages. At war’s end it was occupied by literally dozens of armed ‘brigades’ representing various tribal, regional and religious affiliations. There was no strong central authority, the populace was heavily armed and there was great resentment among the people for all those who served the Gaddafi regime. The cultural and ethnic rivalry between Benghazi and Tripoli was notable, and al-Qaeda exercised its malignant influence over some of the local militias. Despite a relatively successful election in July 2012 that elected a Constituent Assembly, the political process failed to get the country’s political factions to coalesce in a process of national renewal. The result was that Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood gradually exerted greater influence and imposed sharia law. From mid-2013 onwards, Libya experienced persistent fighting between rival militias, and in the summer of 2014, after farcical elections in which only 18 per cent of the population voted, the country fell apart, with power being mostly exercised by fundamentalist militias, including Islamic State (ISIS). The main effect of the Arab Spring in Libya, in short, was the creation of a Somalia-like failed state on the shores of the Mediterranean. On 17 December 2015 a ‘Government of National Accord’ was formed with the support of the UN and the West. The new government has been assisted by US airstrikes as it has fought to extend its authority over the territory. The effect of the Arab Spring in Libya has been to reproduce a Somalia-like failed state on the shores of the Mediterranean.

In hindsight, NATO should probably have committed itself to putting boots on the ground as part of its humanitarian intervention in the 2011 conflict. Libya was left to fend for itself, which is not what happened in Europe after the Second World War. There were good reasons for this decision. The intervention had already caused much bad blood within the alliance. Germany, especially, had even abstained in the United Nations (UN) Security Council vote authorizing military support for the anti-Gaddafi forces. UN Resolution 1973, which authorized intervention, specifically ruled out occupation forces being stationed

in Libya. Tripoli's politicians were foolishly confident that they could manage to run the country on their own. The dire experience of Iraq, of course, threw a baleful shadow over any notion of committing Western ground forces. Nevertheless, it was probably the right thing to do. As Chivvis and Martini have written, an effective UN or NATO security force at any rate 'would have saved Libya's nascent democratic institutions from constant humiliation and interference from the street'.¹⁰ Certainly, from the Europeans' point of view, it would have at least meant that Libya would not have become a safe haven for people traffickers. The thriving trade in desperate migrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa to Italy departed from Libya's unguarded shores.

Yemen and, above all, Syria have also become failed states since 2012 (Syria is discussed in greater detail later). So has Iraq. Other Arab countries, notably Algeria, never had a democratic springtime at all, but remained trapped in oppressive isolation. Morocco and Jordan, like the Gulf principalities, are monarchies with a façade of popular consultation. Saudi Arabia is a regime whose oppression of women is almost total (women are not even allowed to drive cars) and whose criminal code can inflict a punishment of ten years' imprisonment and one thousand lashes on a blogger, Raif Badawi, for the Orwellian offence of 'insulting Islam through electronic channels'.¹¹

Even Turkey, which is an important cultural and political influence throughout the Islamic world, has shown a weakening commitment to democracy in recent years. Under Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the leader of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP), the Turkish state has persecuted critical journalists, purged the army leadership and ridden roughshod over civil society, especially in Turkey's Kurdish provinces. Erdogan has made clear his preference for an executive presidency with sweeping powers. Yet the ameliorative power of democracy has also been on show in Turkey. In 2013, large protests in Istanbul against the government's plans to build over a much-loved park showed that the electorate's critical spirit was alive and well. Turkey's 2016 Freedom House ranking was 3 for political rights and 4 for civil rights, with a downward arrow indicating that the country's trend was negative. Its 2017 ranking will likely be lower still. The Erdogan regime has detained thousands in the aftermath of a failed military coup in July 2016 and seems intent on transforming Turkey into an authoritarian state on the model of Russia.

Tunisia has seemingly learnt Turkey's lesson. The country adopted a democratic constitution in 2014. On 26 October 2014, elections were held in which al-Nahda was defeated by Nidaa Tounes ('Call for Tunisia'), a secularist

party. The elections were free and fair, and all political parties accepted the results. Nidaa Tounes and al-Nahda cooperated together to form a government in the spring of 2015, after it proved impossible to assemble a coalition without the moderate Islamist formation. Earlier, in November 2014, Nidaa Tounes' candidate Beji Caid Essebsi, a veteran of the Ben Ali era, had won the presidential election. Tunisia is the only country in the Arab world whose political system has become more democratic since 2011. This fact makes it a beacon of hope, but also a target for terrorism.

Burma and China

North Korea aside, the two worst cases of human rights repression in Asia are Burma and China. Burma has been a military dictatorship since 1962, when General Ne Win led a coup d'état. Ne Win's Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) introduced a military brand of socialism. The country isolated itself from the world, following, like North Korea, a policy of autarky, and the results were predictable: impoverishment and social unrest. In July 1988, Ne Win stepped down. The following month, the '8888' uprising, so-called because it began on 8 August 1988, rocked the nation. Hundreds of thousands of protesters, with Buddhist monks to the fore, demanded democracy. On 26 August 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of General Aung San, the founder of the post-war Burmese republic, entered politics. Speaking to a giant crowd in the capital of Yangon (Rangoon), she appealed for non-violent, democratic change. Aung would become one of the most emblematic figures of the post-Cold War world, but in the short term her appeals fell on deaf ears. Protests against the regime became more violent, and the regime itself became more determined to stamp them out. On 18 September 1988, General Saw Maung established the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Mass repression followed. Troops fired on the crowds, and opposition leaders were hunted down. Perhaps 10,000 Burmese died or went missing by the end of 1988.

In May 1990, the international outcry against the oppression in Myanmar, as the country renamed itself in 1989, was so intense that the regime yielded and allowed democratic elections. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) swept the poll, winning nearly 400 of the 447 seats in the Burmese parliament. The SLORC refused to accept the electoral results. Aung was held under house arrest and hundreds of her party's militants were jailed. Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, though she was

not allowed to leave the country to claim it. The Burmese military, however, proved able to tough the situation out. The regime, now headed by General Than Shwe, was unwilling to concede any move towards democracy that did not give the military a special constitutional role, though it did rename itself the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997.

In 2007, the Burmese regime's disastrous and inequitable economic policies provoked the 'Saffron Revolution', so-called because it was led by the country's large community of Buddhist monks, who wear saffron-coloured robes. Once again, huge crowds of ordinary citizens marched through the streets of Yangon and Mandalay. Aung San Suu Kyi gave the protesters her blessing through the locked iron gates of her house. A few brief months of liberty aside, she had been imprisoned in her home since 1991, and in 1999 had been forbidden to see her husband, Michael Aris, a British academic, before he died of cancer. Despite Aung's blessing, the Saffron Revolution followed in the footsteps of the 8888 uprising: the police bloodily suppressed the democratic movement. In 2008, the regime imposed a constitution that reserved 25 per cent of parliamentary seats for nominees of the military and freed the military from future civilian control. Citizens who had served jail terms were banned from serving in politics – a measure that effectively decapitated the NLD.

On 7 November 2010, national elections were held. They were universally condemned as unfree and unfair. Manipulation of ballot papers took place, government workers were intimidated into voting for the Union, Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), the regime's political vehicle, and international observers were excluded. The NLD boycotted the poll after it was told that it could participate only if it expelled Aung San Suu Kyi. The result of the election was therefore predictable: the USDP won an overwhelming majority, with the National Democratic Force (NDF), an offshoot of the NLD, emerging as the principal opposition force. General Thein Sein, a former adjutant of Than Shwe, became president.

In the aftermath of the elections, a degree of political relaxation has taken place. Aung San Suu Kyi was released in 2012 and collected her Nobel Prize. Foreign investment, especially American, has poured into the country; President Obama visited in 2012, with Thein Sein paying a reciprocal 2013 visit to Washington DC. The normalization of relations with the Burmese regime, however, should not disguise the regime's shortcomings. Political prisoners are still in jail, the Burmese state continues to spend vast sums on the military while neglecting basic education and health care and Myanmar's minorities are often

brutally persecuted. The case of the Rohingya, a Bengali Muslim minority from the north-west of Burma that the regime does not regard as truly Burmese, has aroused particular international indignation. The Rohingya are subject to the systematic violation of their civil rights and have fled by the hundred thousand into neighbouring Bangladesh and Thailand.

Myanmar's 2016 Freedom House ranking was 6/5. The real test of its recent cautious liberalization has taken place since 8 November 2015, when the NLD won a landslide victory in general elections. Although Aung San Suu Kyi is barred from the presidency, she has indicated that she will rule by proxy. Specifically, she will be in charge of foreign affairs, the president's office, education and energy policy; her right-hand man, Htin Kyaw, was also sworn in as president on 30 March 2016. The Burmese military has nevertheless appointed its own nominees for three key ministries – defence, home affairs and border affairs. Myanmar's generals claim to prefer a 'disciplined democracy'; what they will do if the nation's nascent democracy becomes ill-disciplined is an open question.

China's equivalent of Aung San Suu Kyi is Liu Xiaobo, a prominent writer and scholar who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2010. Liu took an active role in the pro-democracy protests that ended in massacre in May 1989 in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. He was jailed for three years in the crackdown that followed the massacre, but continued to work for human rights after his release. In 2008, he was one of the drafters of Charter 08, an important statement by critics of the Chinese regime that was modelled on Charter 77, a document published by Czech 'dissidents' at the height of the Cold War. Liu was charged with 'inciting subversion of state power' on 23 December 2009, sentenced after a three-hour trial to eleven years' imprisonment and after a perfunctory appeals process was sent to prison. The odds of his overturning the prosecutors' case were zero: China, overall, has a 0.07 per cent rate of acquittals at trial.

What were the ideas that sent Liu to prison (and led to the persecution of Charter 08's hundreds of other signatories)? Like the drafters of Charter 77, Liu and his fellow activists were concerned to highlight the hypocrisy of their government's position on human rights. Charter 08 was issued on the sixtieth anniversary of the Declaration of Universal Human Rights (to which China is a signatory), and the tenth anniversary of China's adherence to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (China has not yet ratified its adherence). It asked, bluntly:

Where is China headed in the twenty-first century? Will it continue with

‘modernization’ under authoritarian rule, or will it embrace universal human values, join the mainstream of civilized nations, and build a democratic system?¹²

Charter 08 was clear that it wanted the second option to prevail. Under the communist regime, the document explained, the ‘Chinese people have paid a gargantuan price. Tens of millions have lost their lives, and several generations have seen their freedom, their happiness, and their human dignity cruelly trampled.’ Even today, after the worst of the Maoist dictatorship has passed, China still has ‘many laws, but no rule of law’. It has, in its place, corrupt ruling elites that abuse their powers with impunity. Liu and his co-signatories proposed that China should shift to a democratic, constitutional democracy with guaranteed human and civil rights. ‘The democratization of China can be put off no longer,’ the document averred.

As Liu’s fate illustrated, China has a long way to go before this objective can be reached. Modernization under authoritarian rule is clearly the path that China has embarked on. Indeed, the leader of China since March 2013, Xi Jinping, is significantly more authoritarian than his predecessors, Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin, although more determined to eliminate corrupt party cadres who abuse their official position.¹³ Leaving aside the absence of basic political rights in China, however, three other crucial areas of dictatorial rule should be underlined in the Chinese case. These are: abuse of the death penalty, treatment of religious and ethnic minorities and failure to respect its commitment to implement democracy in Hong Kong.

China executes several times more people than all the other nations on the planet put together. The Dui Hua foundation, the established authority on this subject, estimates that 2,400 people were subjected to capital punishment in China in 2013, the last year for which reasonably accurate figures are available. This statistic was much *lower* than in the recent past. Since 2002, indeed, the foundation estimates that approximately 78,000 people have been judicially killed in Chinese jails – 6,500 per year.¹⁴ This enormous number is, moreover, almost certainly an underestimate since acts of capital punishment are a state secret in China and in many cases are carried out without publicity. Other nations, of course, have capital punishment. Iran, Saudi Arabia and the state of Texas are known for their eagerness to inflict the ultimate penalty. The Chinese system, however, is arbitrary in the extreme. Condemned prisoners, even in capital cases, are often subjected to rapid trials where due process is not

respected. The appeals procedure is inadequate (and, indeed, the fall-off in the number of executions has been linked to an improvement in the system of judicial review).

China's policy towards religious and ethnic minorities is universally condemned. The paradigmatic case, of course, is Tibet. China occupied Tibet in 1950, but never respected its pledges to maintain Tibetan autonomy: the Chinese presence in Tibet, in fact, represents one of the few remaining cases of old-fashioned imperialism in the world today. The Dalai Lama, the spiritual head of the Tibetans, had to flee to India in 1959. Between 1966 and 1976 Tibetan culture was ravaged during the Cultural Revolution. Hundreds of monasteries and other cultural sites were vandalized or outright destroyed. Sinification has also changed the population balance: the Tibetans are now a minority in their own land; a land, moreover, which is suffering severe environmental degradation. All political authority is in the hands of the Communist Party, which is entirely dominated by non-Tibetans.

Tibet – a culture for which the practice of Buddhism was an essential part of its national identity and daily life – now has only limited religious freedom. Tibetans lack basic civil rights and are the objects of overt racism by the majority Chinese population.¹⁵ Lacking any other way of resisting the Chinese occupation of their territory, dozens of desperate Tibetans have immolated themselves since China suppressed an attempted uprising in the territory in 2008. Freedom House's ranking for Chinese-occupied Tibet is 7 for political liberties and 7 for respect of human rights. The denial by the Chinese government of Tibet's civilizational rights is unquestionably one of the most egregious cases of human rights abuse in the world today – as it has been since 1959.

The Falun Gong cult is another religion that has been subjected to arbitrary political persecution. A mix of various Asian religions, including Buddhism and Taoism, Falun Gong is a spiritual practice that claims to purify both the spirit and the body of those who pursue its Yoga-like exercises. The cult claims tens of millions of adepts in China. Since 1999, the cult has been the subject of continual persecution in China, with tens of thousands of its adherents being arrested and sentenced to imprisonment in labour camps. Worst of all, it has been plausibly alleged that thousands of imprisoned Falun Gong cultists have been murdered for the purpose of 'organ harvesting' by their jailers.¹⁶

Less bloodily, but equally seriously from the point of view of its international image, China has shown every sign of wanting to renege on its 1997 agreement with the United Kingdom to grant Hong Kong democratic autonomy in 2017.

When British colonial rule came to an end in 1997, it was agreed that Hong Kong would be governed according to the principle of ‘one country, two systems’. What this meant was that China took over responsibility for the external defence of the city-state, but Hong Kong, uniquely for China, was allowed to maintain the liberal freedoms of speech and of property that was the legacy of British colonial rule. Government was to be by a kind of guided democracy. Hong Kong’s chief executive and LegCo, its legislature, were chosen by an electoral college of prominent officials and businessmen – which naturally ensured that only officials willing to work with the Chinese government were selected. Beijing nevertheless promised in 2007 that free elections might be held in 2017. When, in August 2014, the Chinese government clarified that one country took precedence over two systems, and that the next chief executive of Hong Kong would be chosen from a list of approved candidates, spontaneous public protests broke out. The Occupy Central movement, a civil rights organization, brought tens of thousands of protesters into the streets to take part in giant sit-ins against the lack of democracy in Hong Kong. The protesters brought umbrellas along to shelter from the rain, as protection from the use of pepper spray by the police, and the ‘umbrella revolution’ soon became the biggest single popular rejection of Beijing’s rule since Tiananmen Square in 1989. Thankfully, it ended without mass bloodshed: the Chinese authorities are well aware that they cannot use force in Hong Kong with the same nonchalance as on the mainland.

Hong Kong remains, however, emblematic of the problems China faces. China’s leaders seem unready to acquiesce in a more pluralist political system. The example of Mikhail Gorbachev worries them: they know how fast a communist regime can unravel when it begins to make concessions. China is an economic success story, but it is also one of the most repressive regimes in the world. Its prosperity and dynamism tend to blind us to this uncomfortable fact. China’s own leaders are not blind in the least.

Shocking the conscience of mankind

The cases discussed in the previous two sections of this chapter raise important ethical questions for those who live in free societies. How should democrats respond to egregious breaches of human rights and political liberties elsewhere? If they are citizens of a free society, they can of course express their outrage freely. They can, for instance, sign petitions organized by human rights groups

such as Amnesty International, or take part in public protests against delinquent countries around the world. They can diffuse their views by using the social media. Sometimes, this will lead to an issue going ‘viral’ and mobilizing citizens across borders. In plenty of individual cases the degree of moral suasion generated by protesters in free societies is sufficient to get specific cases of torture and unjust imprisonment suspended, reviewed or even annulled. By keeping human rights and political liberties at the forefront of political debate, a culture of political protest can also create a mood favourable to boycotts or sanctions of nations with poor human rights records.

Such protests are nevertheless only a useful palliative. Ultimately, they usually do not stop regimes from behaving badly. China will not withdraw from Tibet, and make reparations for the immense damage its occupation of the country has caused, just because liberals in the Netherlands, Japan and Uruguay sign petitions. Saudi Arabia will continue to behead adulterers no matter what Western human rights activists say.

Delinquent regimes have, moreover, traditionally been broadly protected by the doctrine of sovereignty from external interference in their internal affairs. Nations may impose sanctions – be they economic, or restrictions targeted towards individual leaders and their henchmen – on regimes that infringe on human rights. But historically, they have been authorized to wage war only on states that act as aggressors. To use what philosophers call a ‘domestic analogy’, just as you or I would think it right to immobilize a robber who was physically assaulting his victim in the street, so we would be more cautious about kicking down our neighbour’s door to intervene in a domestic dispute, no matter how loud the sound of smashing crockery became. It is the same for states. They may go to the aid of states attacked by an aggressor, but should think twice, or thrice, about getting involved in somebody else’s internal conflicts, even when outside aid may well obviate a tragedy. During the Cold War, the principle of ‘non-interference’ in nations’ internal affairs was a mantra used by both sides.

Since the end of the Cold War, this convention that one should not be one’s brother’s keeper has given way to a growing conviction that sovereign states lose their immunity from outside interference when actions that ‘shock the conscience of mankind’ occur. When the screams and cries of agony from next door become too loud to hear the television, you should have no moral qualms about getting involved.

The main reason for this change of heart was that on two important occasions in the 1990s, the world’s democracies stood by and did too little, too late while

genocide took place. The Srebrenica massacre during the Bosnian civil war in 1995 was discussed in [Chapter 25](#). This appalling slaughter did prompt NATO states to intervene, but by the time they kicked the door down and pinned down the combatants, the corpse of Bosnia was on the floor livid with bruises. It is still recuperating today.

The other case took place in Africa, in the former Belgian colony of Rwanda, between April and July 1994. The Rwandan genocide was one of the worst atrocities of the twentieth century. Rwanda's population in 1994 was divided between the majority Hutu tribe (about four-fifths of the total), and the smaller Tutsi tribe, which had been favoured during colonial times. Since 1973, when the Hutus, led by Juvénal Habyarimana, seized power, ethnic tensions between the two tribes had been building, stoked by events in neighbouring Burundi, which has a similar ethnic breakdown.

In the case of Rwanda the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) had been fighting a guerrilla war against the Hutu regime since October 1990. Power-sharing accords in August 1993 had led to the deployment of a small force of UN peacekeepers in Kigali, the capital city. This force was getting alarmed by intelligence reports suggesting that Hutu extremists were training militias and plotting to seize power from Habyarimana, but it could not imagine the scale of the bloodlust that was about to engulf the country.

On 6 April 1994, Habyarimana's plane was shot down as it landed at Kigali airport. He was killed, along with the president of Burundi, in the crash. Official government radio, and a Hutu broadcaster, Radio-Télévision Libres des Mille Collines, immediately began inciting Hutus to kill their Tutsi neighbours in revenge for the president's death. Angry mobs spontaneously attacked their Tutsi neighbours in a grievous act of communal violence. Thousands died, but many Tutsi were still able to flee to 'gathering sites' – public buildings such as churches, schools, stadiums and the like, where they could organize themselves in self-defence. At this point, the army stepped in. Soldiers and members of the presidential guard, armed with grenades, rifles and machine guns, fanned out through the country, led assaults on gathering sites and then left the Hutu mobs to mop up the survivors with machetes.

The means used to kill the Tutsi were primitive, but the pace of the killing was startling. By 20 April 1994, which is approximately when the West, already beset by the problems of Bosnia and North Korea, woke up to the fact that something more than an unusually bloody bout of intertribal feuding was occurring, more than 250,000 Tutsi had been killed. It was the 'fastest genocide

rate in recorded history'.¹⁷ The slaughter would go on for nearly three months more, albeit at a reduced speed.

The UN force was located in Kigali, the capital, where armed clashes broke out between the RPF, extremist Hutu militias and the regular army. UN troops, far from being reinforced as the fighting worsened, were actually partly withdrawn to protect their own safety. Belgium, and other European countries, airlifted their nationals out of the combat zone. Kigali was a bloody chaos, but the rest of the country was a charnel house on a scale that few had grasped. Western leaders – notably President Bill Clinton, who subsequently visited Rwanda in 1998 for the most emotionally searing experience of his entire time in office – can be forgiven for not having mobilized forces immediately to stop the slaughter. The sheer scale and intensity of the Hutus' tribal hatred meant that a gigantic massacre was destined to take place before the international community could act to prevent it.

What was less comprehensible was the sloth of the world's great powers, working through the UN, to get well-armed troops into Rwanda with a clear mission statement entitling them to use force to stop the horror. May and June 1994 were wasted in futile dissembling over whether genocide was taking place or not. It was only at the end of June that France was authorized by the UN to conduct a military mission to the country. By that time, almost three-quarters of Rwanda's Tutsi population – some 500,000 people – were dead, along with thousands of unknown Hutu moderates.

A major military intervention in May–June 1994 could have saved as many as 125,000 lives, and even a more modest intervention in the country's south and west, which would not have exposed soldiers engaged in a humanitarian intervention to the same risks might have saved as many as 100,000 lives. A more substantial UN presence throughout the country, as opposed to a skimpily equipped force concentrated in Kigali, might possibly have prevented the genocide from taking place at all. As Kuperman has written, the 'most obvious lesson from Rwanda's tragedy is that intervention is no substitute for prevention'.¹⁸ Peacekeeping forces should be robust and able to do their job, not stand on the sidelines wringing their hands.

This is not least because human rights catastrophes are not self-contained phenomena. In the case of Rwanda, the genocide led to the military victory of the RPF and the installation of a Tutsi-led government. Hundreds of thousands of Hutus, many of whom bore responsibility for the genocide, fled into neighbouring Zaire, and organized resistance against the new regime in Kigali.

Rwanda intervened militarily in Zaire and waged a brutal war against its enemies; its shrewd leader, Paul Kagame, also backed the insurgency of Laurent-Désiré Kabila, an opponent of the corrupt Cold War-legacy Mobutu regime. Kabila's forces took Kinshasa in May 1997. By then, hundreds of thousands of people had been killed or displaced by the fighting – and even worse was to come after Kabila fell out with his erstwhile allies in Rwanda and Uganda. The Democratic Republic of Congo, as Kabila renamed the country, was a battleground for the next ten years.

In his Millennium Report, UN general secretary Kofi Annan of Ghana pondered: 'If humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica, to gross and systematic violation of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?' It was an excellent question. The Canadian government-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) specifically sought to find a clear answer to it. There should be, the ICISS argued, a 'Responsibility to Protect' (2001).

The doctrine of 'R2P' (as it is now abbreviated) is a complicated attempt to define a generally recognized formula to help busy policymakers decide when and why they might carry out military action against brutal regimes. It argued, essentially, that military intervention, even for humanitarian purposes, should be a last resort and that the amount of military force used should always be proportional to the end being sought – it would have been wrong, for instance, to 'solve' the problems in Rwanda by systematic bombing of the cities where the atrocities had been committed. Nevertheless, when cases of violence 'shocked the conscience of mankind', it was just for outside forces, under the aegis of the UN, to employ military force against a perpetrator regime. The crucial question, of course, was what actions are so shocking that they legitimize military intervention? The Commission agreed that intervention for human protection was just in 'two broad sets of circumstances':

- Large-scale loss of life, actual or apprehended, with genocidal intent or not, which is the product either of deliberate state action, or state neglect or inability to act, or a failed state situation.
- Large-scale 'ethnic cleansing', actual or apprehended, whether carried out by killing, forced expulsion, acts of terror or rape.¹⁹

R2P was substantially adopted by the UN at the September 2005 'World Summit'. Member states affirmed that all states had a *moral* responsibility to

protect their populations from ‘genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity’ (not a *legal* obligation, as the R2P document had implied) and acknowledged that whenever states fail to meet that responsibility, the international community is responsible for helping to protect people threatened with such heinous crimes.

There were obvious nits to be picked in the R2P doctrine. What did ‘large scale’ mean? What about the deliberate destruction of cultures, habitats and ways of life? Doesn’t the R2P doctrine imply a dual morality? The nations that will be suborned by outside humanitarian intervention are always going to be small, weak and disproportionately African – China or Russia could carry out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale, but nobody would be so foolish as to intervene militarily against them. Despite the quibbles, the central premise of the Canadian study was fundamentally right. Nations might indeed have good reasons for not carrying out a humanitarian intervention; but henceforth they would have to explain why *non-intervention* was a wiser course of action, and not just hide behind a blanket refusal to infringe the sovereign rights of a fellow state. If one could, one should, was to be the new, underlying principle of protection in world politics.

This shift of emphasis was worthy and perhaps overdue. In practice, however, interventions cannot be carried out if there is no will to do so on the part of the international community; which means, in effect, the major powers and those medium-ranked powers, like Britain, France and India, that possess strong armed forces and know how to use them. Since the 1990s, there have been several cases where R2P conditions have been met, but humanitarian intervention has not invariably followed.

In the case of Darfur, a huge territory in West Sudan, intervention did not take place. Already one of the bloodiest parts of the globe – the civil war between the Sudanese government in Khartoum and rebels seeking self-determination for southern Sudan cost hundreds of thousands of lives between 1983 and January 2005 when a ceasefire was declared – the conflict in Darfur flared into life in 2003 as a result of clashes between nomadic Arab herders and African farmers over scarce water rights. The Africans were also giving clandestine support for separatist movements. The Khartoum government armed so-called Janjaweed militias to rape, pillage and slaughter the African populations, gave them logistical support and carried out air strikes on the militias’ behalf. Like the Hutu mobs in Rwanda, the Janjaweed were low-tech, but brutally effective: at least 100,000 Darfur Africans were killed and nearly 2 million forced to flee their

lands over the next three years. By January 2005, despite a nominal ceasefire in the spring of 2004, Darfur could be described as the ‘worst humanitarian disaster on the planet’.²⁰ The US government, anxious not to repeat the error it had made during the Rwanda crisis, unequivocally described what was happening in Darfur as ‘genocide’ in September 2004.

The crisis in Darfur was a textbook case of the sort of crisis for which the R2P doctrine had been designed; and R2P was indeed invoked in UN resolutions. If the international community had been minded to follow the prescriptions of R2P, its decision would have been straightforward: send a multinational expeditionary force of imposing size to control the territory irrespective of the wishes of the Khartoum government. Instead, the opposite occurred. Sudan was persuaded to allow an inadequate force of peacekeepers from the African Union into Darfur, and though this force gradually expanded to over 7,000 troops, the mission could not maintain order throughout the territory. The US, British and other governments accordingly asked the UN Security Council to support the deployment of a bigger contingent of peacekeepers. Resolution 1706 of August 2006 called for the already existing UN force in southern Sudan to insert over 20,000 peacekeepers into Darfur. The resolution was approved, in the face of abstentions from China, Russia and Qatar, but the Sudanese government dismissed the move as a neocolonialist infringement of its sovereignty. The international community backed off. Remarkably, a government that had been denounced as genocidal was permitted to say that it would administer its territory as it saw fit.

Chinese mediation – China had large and growing business interests in Sudan – enabled a compromise resolution in July 2007 to establish a UN-African Union joint force (UNAMID), but when deployed the new mission was hampered at every turn by a Khartoum government that had no interest in cooperation and which could exert a partial veto over its actions. UNAMID, indeed, is widely regarded as ‘a textbook case of how not to authorize, organize, and deploy peacekeepers’.²¹ Sudan did not get off scot-free. The president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, was indicted for crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and a warrant was issued for his arrest in March 2009. He has since been severely restricted in his movements outside Sudan. On the whole, though, the crimes in Darfur dropped off the rich world’s radar screen after 2008, though this did not mean that they stopped.

The second place where R2P principles were evoked but not applied was Syria and Iraq. The Arab Spring protests in Syria rapidly degenerated into an all-out

civil war on sectarian lines. Syria's Sunni majority organized themselves in a bewildering array of jihadist brigades to struggle against the Alawite minority – Shia Muslims – led by the Assad family. The Assad regime, bolstered by the material support of Russia and Iran, hit back ruthlessly. Chemical weapons were repeatedly used in 2013 in the face of warnings from President Barack Obama that their use might provoke American intervention. The Assad regime also made widespread use of 'barrel bombs' – bulky, primitive high explosive devices that are filled with shrapnel and dropped on residential areas. Entire towns have been smashed into rubble by these weapons. By the spring of 2016, the Syrian Centre for Policy Research estimated that the death toll was over 450,000, with nearly 2 million wounded while perhaps 5 million people had been uprooted by the conflict.²² Hundreds of thousands of people had fled to vast refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. In the summer of 2015 many of the refugees began to migrate in large numbers to the EU, via Greece and through the Balkans. This influx called into question freedom of movement within the EU, one of the organization's key principles, since many countries were unwilling to accept more than token numbers of refugees.

The West shrank, however, from intervening directly in the conflict. Russia's support of the Damascus regime (which since September 2015 has involved launching air strikes against the enemies of the Assad regime) meant that a UN Security Council resolution authorizing intervention was impossible. Intervention posed practical problems, too. The first rule of humanitarian intervention must be: 'Will this intervention do more good than harm?' In the case of Syria, there was a strong case for thinking it might unleash a new spiral of violence. The sheer scale of the communal hatred in Syria was also intimidating: nobody felt inclined to put 'boots on the ground' in such a situation. In Great Britain, in August 2013, the House of Commons voted against Prime Minister David Cameron when he contended that airstrikes should be launched against the Assad regime. President Obama, meanwhile, stood firm against demands by neoconservative intellectuals and Republican politicians to launch US attacks on behalf of the rebels.

On the other hand, the anarchy in Syria facilitated the degeneration of neighbouring Iraq into civil war. In 2013, eight thousand civilians were killed as Sunni militants fought against the al-Maliki Shia-led government. Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the principal font of Sunni terrorism, morphed into a millenarian Islamist movement known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS or ISIL), whose black-clad and black-flag-waving jihadists by the middle of 2014

controlled much of the north of the country and was threatening Baghdad. ISIS has subsequently pushed into Syria to fight both the Assad regime and the anti-Assad opposition, which has found itself, as a consequence, caught between a rock and a hard place. ISIS militias have also attacked the autonomous Kurdish region of north-east Iraq (Kurdish self-rule has been one of the few successes of the American occupation in Iraq) and Kurdish enclaves in northern Syria. In June 2014, ISIS's leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, who claims the Prophet as his ancestor, proclaimed a Caliphate. All true Muslims should flock to the Caliphate to fight for ISIS, al-Baghdadi ordered, so it could wage war against all enemies of the one true faith. One day, he prophesized, ISIS would even capture Rome.

The areas that have fallen under control of ISIS have seen a degree of terror that recalls Nazi rule in Eastern Europe – a comparison made by many secular Arab intellectuals. The local Christian minority – the Yazidis – has been slaughtered, forced to convert to Islam or compelled to pay a huge tax to preserve their religious identity. Yazidi women have been subjected to mass rape and have even been sold as slaves. Sharia law has been imposed ruthlessly. ISIS jihadists have carried out mass executions of captured Iraqi soldiers – shooting hundreds at a time and burying them in mass graves – and have gruesomely murdered Western aid workers and journalists. Such murders, when posted on the internet, have excited the admiration of alienated young Arabs from Europe who have flocked to the territory under ISIS control to join the fight for the Caliphate. Others have conducted terrorist operations in the West. A January 2015 attack on the offices of the French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, and a Jewish-owned supermarket in Paris, cost 17 lives; on 13 November 2015, 130 Parisians were killed in attacks on crowded restaurants and a rock concert; March 2016 bombings in Brussels, Belgium, cost over 30 people their lives; in July 2016 a Tunisian-born terrorist used a truck to kill over 80 holiday-makers in Nice, France. So far these have been the worst cases of ISIS-inspired terrorism in Europe, but they are unlikely to be the last. ISIS has also unleashed a wave of iconoclastic fervour against Iraq and Syria's Assyrian past. Monuments and relics of inestimable cultural significance have been razed to the ground.

Perhaps most frightening of all, ISIS has won support across the Arab world. It has infiltrated Libya on a significant scale and will inevitably try to bring its fanatical brand of Islam to the Gulf principalities, to Jordan and to Egypt. Its affiliates have carried out terrorist attacks in Tunisia with a view to bringing down that nation's tentative experience of democracy, and in Turkey, where its terrorist outrages have killed dozens and created a climate of fear. Boko Haram,

an Islamist movement that has carried out a series of atrocities in northern Nigeria, claims inspiration from ISIS. Above all, the terrorist threat posed by ISIS has drawn the United States back into conflict in the Middle East. Since 8 August 2014, when Operation Inherent Resolve was started, thousands of airstrikes have been launched by the United States and its partners (Jordan has played a key role) in support of the Kurds and the government of Iraq. By May 2016, the US Department of Defence estimated that the raids had destroyed over 22,000 targets in ISIS-held territory.²³ President Obama has explicitly stated that the American mission is ‘to degrade and ultimately destroy’ ISIS.

There can be no doubt that R2P principles justify humanitarian intervention in Iraq and Syria. The Kurds, in particular, are literally fighting for their lives: genocide, or something close to it, would follow an ISIS victory in north-east Iraq. The international community clearly has a ‘responsibility to protect’ innocents in the region from the ravages of a totalitarian movement like ISIS. Yet it is a responsibility that seems certain to be evoked in other conflicts in the Arab world and Africa in the coming decade. Whether or not the international community will have the strength of purpose (but also the means) to meet this challenge is one of the key questions of world politics today.

Two cheers for democracy

It will be clear by now that the era since the end of the Cold War has been a period characterized by an abnormal number of state failures and human rights catastrophes. Contrary to the beliefs of some of the more optimistic sages at the end of the Cold War, Western ideas of democracy and human rights are very far from being universally accepted values. Other cultures find them repugnant – or their leaders do, which may not be the same thing. Democracy, if it is to prevail, will only do so by showing that it can solve the problems of divided societies; ones with vast ethnic, religious and social cleavages, and long-standing communal hatreds. It is relatively easy for democracy to succeed in Norway; harder for it to thrive in Nigeria, Libya, Pakistan or Iraq. But if democracy is ever to be more than a mere Western whim, it needs to show that it can cope with the hatred inspired by human difference.

Fortunately, there are success stories that give hope that democracy can overcome this challenge. In particular, three major nations that seem destined to play an increasingly important role on the world stage have all strengthened their democracies since the end of the Cold War. These countries are South Africa,

Brazil and India. Few observers would have bet, back in 1991, that these three nations could have avoided either dictatorship or widespread political unrest. Instead, they have prospered. They are living proof for many nations around the world that economic development can be conjugated with free elections and healthy public debate.

When white rule ended in South Africa, few were optimistic. The huge differences in economic opportunity between whites and blacks, the intense rivalries between tribes, the unreconstructed Marxism of several of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) leaders and, above all, the simmering anger of the African majority at the accumulated humiliation of half a century of apartheid made South Africa a powder keg waiting for a match. The parallel experience of Zimbabwe was not encouraging, either. As we saw in [Chapter 19](#), by the mid-1990s President Robert Mugabe had liquidated the economic dominance of the white elites, redistributed the country's assets to his party cronies, debauched the currency, subverted the rule of law and crushed all opposition, black or white. In the first decade of the new century Mugabe intensified his grip on the country, despite international outcry against the humanitarian consequences of his policies. Zimbabwe, which might have been one of the wealthier nations in the developing world, became an economic basket case and as much of a political pariah as it had been during the days of the white supremacist leader of Rhodesia, Ian Smith.²⁴



PHOTO 13 *State president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela (Getty Images. Credit: Thomas Imo).*

The same thing did not happen in South Africa, whose leader, Nelson Mandela,

while determined to get justice for his country's African majority, realized that he could not overtly favour some tribes over others, and could not treat the strong white minority as an enemy to be crushed. Mandela strove to build an inclusive South Africa, with a new identity as the 'rainbow nation' in which all – black, white or 'coloured' – could feel they had a stake. The role played by 'Mandiba', as Mandela was known, can be (and has been) romanticized, but it should not be underestimated either. Nor should Mandela's less charismatic successor, Thabo Mbeki, be forgotten, despite his neglect of the problem of AIDS, which is a major health crisis in South Africa. Two decades after the first free elections held with universal suffrage, on 27 April 1994, South Africa has a large and growing black middle class; growing political competition for the ANC (the chief opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, long exclusively a party of white liberals, now has a young black leader, Mmusi Maimane); and a degree of racial mixing that would have seemed impossible in the 1980s, when it was widely assumed that a race war was the only possible outcome of white rule. South Africa does have serious problems: the incumbent president Jacob Zuma is not a model of probity; violent crime rates are high; black township dwellers and the rural poor, hitherto excluded from South Africa's miracle, are turning to the Economic Freedom Fighters, a far-left movement that promises Mugabe-like policies of expropriation of private property. South Africa nevertheless remains a beacon of democracy for the rest of Africa. The odds seem reasonable that – given continued good leadership – it will resolve its problems of development through free debate and the constitutional process. South Africa's latest Freedom House score is 2 for political liberties and 2 for civil rights.

A second success story is Brazil. As we have seen, Brazil consolidated its democracy under the leadership of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, whose free market reforms caused the economy to grow and who managed to defeat the plague of inflation. By 2002, Brazil was ready to give the left – the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party) – a chance to govern. Its presidential candidate was a former shoeshine boy from the slums, Luiz Inácio da Silva, known to everybody as 'Lula'. Lula had already been the left's candidate in 1989, 1994 and 1998, but in 2002 he won with 61.3 per cent of the vote on the second ballot.

Lula proved the left could govern. He essentially continued the Cardoso government's economic policies; indeed, he improved upon them, paring down Brazil's foreign debt and becoming a paladin for freer global trade in agriculture. Brazil's credit rating went from 'junk' to investor status between 2002 and 2010. He channelled Brazil's rising wealth into social welfare for Brazil's tens of

millions of slum dwellers, ensuring that all families received at least a minimum access to food, electricity and education. By the end of his second term in 2010, he enjoyed approval ratings of 80 per cent, which made him the most popular politician on the planet. Lula did not, however, deal with many of Brazil's structural problems. He was reluctant to privatize and to introduce structural reforms to the labour market. He did little to change Brazil's dysfunctional political system, which with its plethora of small political parties, potent regional powerbrokers and endemic corruption bears a striking similarity to Italy's.

His successor, Dilma Rousseff, Brazil's first female president, has failed to deal with these problems. Rousseff almost lost the October 2014 presidential election campaign to the candidate of the centre-right Party of Brazilian Social Democracy, Aécio Neves, who campaigned on precisely these issues. In 2016 'Dilma' was hit by corruption scandals involving Petrobras, a state-owned oil company she had chaired, Lula and the leadership of the Workers' Party. In May 2016 she was suspended from the presidency pending a Senate vote on her impeachment. Rousseff proclaimed she had been the victim of a coup d'état by her political enemies. In fact, the opposite was true: she had been removed constitutionally and for good reason. Brazil, a country of 200 million people, with gigantic disparities of income and opportunity, is never going to be an easy country to administer. Yet, like South Africa, it has an excellent Freedom House ranking of 2 for political liberties and 2 for civil rights. Like the United States in 1974, Brazil is proving it can remove a sitting president who is considered to have abused her powers.

India is in many ways the greatest democratic success story of all. With the exception of a brief interlude between June 1975 and March 1977 when then premier Indira Gandhi imposed the so-called Emergency on the nation, India has enjoyed free elections, rule of law and a free press since independence in 1947. Freedom House gives India a 2 for political liberties and a 3 for civil rights. In May 2014, India took an important step towards consolidating its democracy further when the ruling Congress Party was routed at the general elections. Congress, the party that had led the fight for independence from Britain, and which had mostly been led by the descendants of Jawaharlal Nehru, premier of India from 1947 to 1964, took only 44 seats in India's parliament. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party (Indian People's Party: BJP), led by Narendra Modi, won a landslide victory with nearly 300 seats and 31 per cent of the vote. It was the first time since independence that Congress had not been the largest party, although the BJP had led a coalition government between 1998 and 2004.

At the time of the election, there were many fears that the BJP, and Modi in particular, would stir up communal tensions with India's large Muslim community, or adopt an aggressive policy towards Pakistan.

India's relationship with Pakistan, indeed, has some claim to be one of the most critical questions in world politics today. Since the end of the Cold War, both countries have become nuclear powers, possessing nuclear warheads and the means to deliver them. They have not resolved their dispute over Kashmir (see [Chapters 9 and 18](#)) and on two occasions (in 1998–9 and May–June 2002) have come close to war. The 2002 crisis, in particular, was arguably the most dangerous nuclear stand-off since the Cuban missile crisis. India moved 500,000 troops to the Pakistani border after terrorists trained and equipped in Pakistan attacked the Indian parliament in Delhi on 13 December 2001. The crisis was only defused thanks to the diplomatic efforts of the indispensable nation: the United States.

India, Brazil and South Africa cooperated together with Russia and China to form the so-called BRICS. The term was invented by a Goldman Sachs banker, who was simply identifying an emerging bloc in the global economy, but since 2006 the foreign ministers of Brazil, Russia, China and India have been meeting to discuss issues of mutual concern (South Africa joined in 2010). The countries have striven to coordinate their foreign policy on a range of issues, notably including the excessive role of the dollar in the world economy, reform of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and alternatives to it and, in general, the predominant place of the United States and Western Europe in the international system.

The cooperation of the three most impressive democracies of the developing world with the two emblematic autocracies of the twenty-first century arguably reflects their frustration at their inadequate role in global politics. Brazil, Latin America's predominant nation, thinks it should have a seat on the UN Security Council. India, with its nuclear weapons capacity, 1.3 billion people and rapidly growing economy, thinks the same. South Africa's claims for a Security Council seat are less strong, but if Africa is ever to have a permanent representative, its most successful democracy and largest economic power is surely a good candidate (although the claims of Nigeria would be equally strong, if only that potential giant could achieve consolidated democratic rule and greater economic development). The three democracies are also chafing at the hegemony of the United States and Europe in such institutions as the IMF and the World Bank.

The world has changed since the end of the Cold War. Global democracy

demands that some of the emerging nations be given a place at the top table, even if this means reducing the claims of traditional global powers such as Britain or France. Delhi used to be the centre of the British Raj, but it is today the capital city of a nation whose reach and geopolitical significance are already at least as great as Britain's and in coming decades are bound to be more crucial still. Encouraging developing countries to follow the lead of Brazil, India and South Africa will be a key challenge for the diplomacy of the West. If large, complex, populous countries such as Nigeria, Iran, Indonesia, Egypt, Turkey and Pakistan become consolidated democracies, and if they are given a political role that is in keeping with their enhanced importance, the challenges of future global governance will be eased, although hardly eliminated. Since the end of the Cold War, the world has entered into a period of flux. Far from being a stable world dominated by a single superpower, the world today is characterized by the diffusion of power, the presence of numerous trouble spots that are generating conflict and war, and grotesque inequalities of opportunity and physical security. The 'West' needs allies – friends who share its values – if the post-Cold War world is to have any hope of achieving stability and progress towards greater global justice.

Notes

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- 5 Barack Obama, 'Remarks at the University of Cairo', 4 June 2009; available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>.
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- 8 Nathan J. Brown, 'Egypt's Failed Transition', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2013, p. 53.
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- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 117.
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- 21 John Prendergast and David Sullivan, 'Irresolution: The UN Security Council on Darfur', ENOUGH Strategy Paper 33, July 2008, p. 6; available at: <http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/irresolution-un-security-council-darfur>.
- 22 See <http://scpr-syria.org/publications/policy-reports/scpr-alienation-and-violence-report-2014-2/>.
- 23 'Operation Inherent Resolve', US Department of Defense; available at: http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0814_Inherent-Resolve.
- 24 For Smith's views on Mugabe, see his interesting memoir *Bitter Harvest: Zimbabwe and the Aftermath of Its Betrayal* (London, 2008).

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The following is a short selection from the vast literature that is available on the subject of this book. The choice has necessarily been somewhat arbitrary, but most of the works listed in the first section, dealing with world histories and books on international history, include extensive bibliographies that will provide ample supplementary information. The place of publication is London unless otherwise indicated.

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