

# From Frozen to Thawing

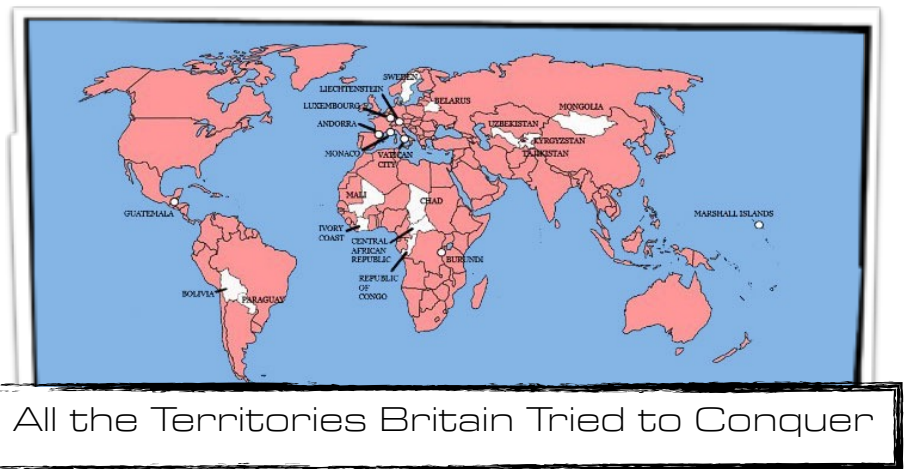
## Introduction

The events of the Cold War are numerous and complicated. The 1950s through the 1990s saw an explosion of technologies that allowed people to improve their space-time compression: being able to move further, faster. Where Julius Caesar and Napoleon could travel 15 miles on a good day, President Kennedy could fly on a plane traveling 500 miles in one hour. Ghengis Khan could get a message across Asia in weeks, Winston Churchill delivered his speeches across Europe and America in seconds. As a result of improved technologies, move events took place faster, and in more places.

This readings focus is thematic: understand the themes of the Cold War and how the events shaped global affairs. The events will not be perfectly chronological, but instead presented in how they moved the world to the brink of human extermination and finally back to establish a “new normal.”

## Finding a New Balance of Power

Decolonization. The imperial reign of Europe came to a close. Since 1492, the Europeans used a combination of guns, germs and industrialization to explore and/or colonize over 90% of the world. However, in the 1950s the era of empires came to a close. Broke from fighting two world wars in 40 years, the Europeans granted liberty to (most) of the lands it controlled.



All the Territories Britain Tried to Conquer

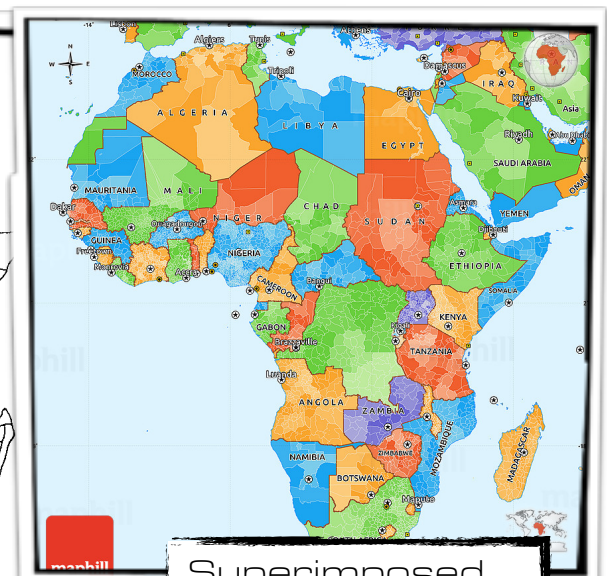
The Europeans gave one lasting gift to its colonial territories: super-imposed boundaries. While holding on to the racist views that the people of Asia and Africa could not properly rule themselves, the Europeans set up Western-Styled countries across Africa and Asia. The Europeans drew new boundary lines, formed new democratic governments, and gave the states their new names.

As one could image, this created many problems. The boundary lines by people who knew very little about the continent and its peoples. Some countries united ethnic groups that had been mortal enemies - being told they now had to work together.

Other ethnic groups got divided between two different countries. The Tutsi tribe got divided between the country of Burundi and Rwanda. Some countries were given an economically crippling situation of being landlocked. For example, the country of Chad does not have immediate access to a sea port, keeping them from being able to access global trade.

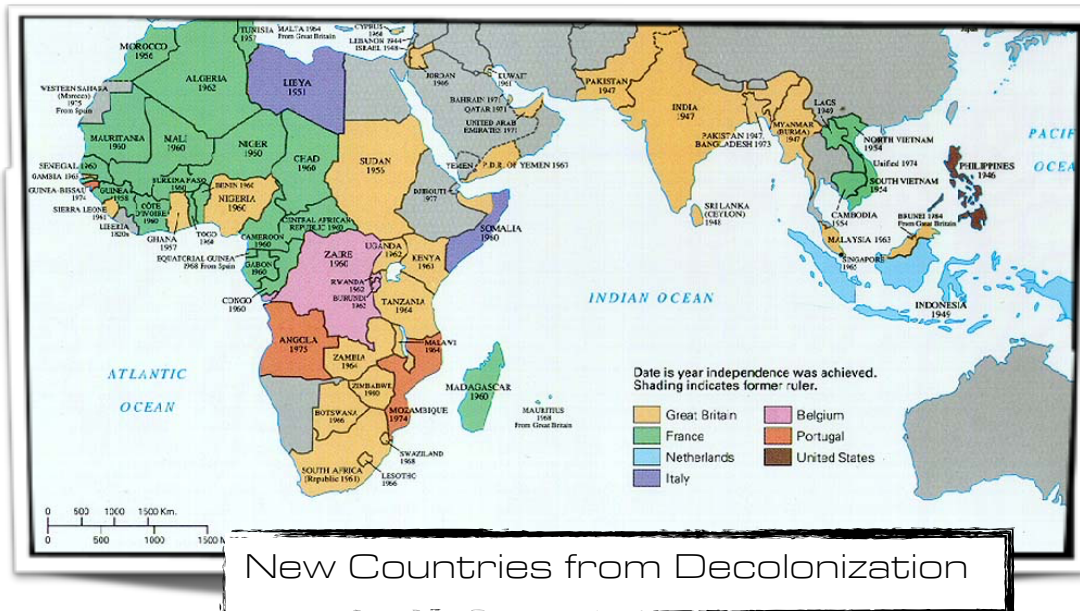


Africa Ethnic Map



Superimposed Boundaries

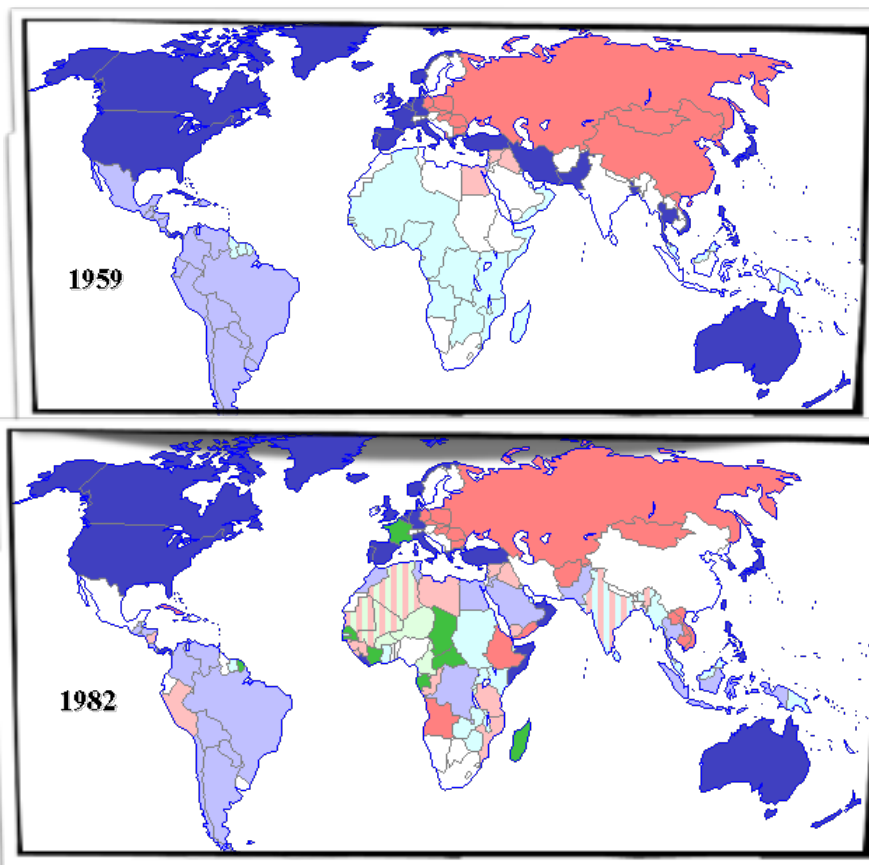
To further complicate the matter, the Europeans made interesting choices with land that had religious significance. The land around Jerusalem was taken from the Muslim Palestinians who had been living there for the past 800 years and gave it to the Jewish people to create a new state of Israel (also giving Israel guns to defend themselves). In India, the British divided the subcontinent into Muslim regions (Pakistan, Bangladesh) and Hindu regions. Muslim Pakistan was given the Indus River Valley, the birth place of the Hindu faith.



**Conflicts on the Edges.** What the Europeans intended for creating peace and stability quickly turned into varying degrees of chaos. Civil Wars broke out all over Africa, as ethnic groups fought for control in their government. This led to the rise of brutal military dictator who used force to keep power. In the country of South Africa, the white leadership had a policy called Apartheid, that legally segregated and discriminated against people of color. African rebel leaders like Nelson Mandela were arrested and imprisoned for decades.

In Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America conflict raged between the Communist and Capitalists. In Hungary, the people rebelled against Communist rule. The USSR sent in tanks and soldiers to brutally squash the rebels. In Cambodia, the Communist group called the Khmer Rouge took power and mass killed 2 million Cambodians. In China, Mao's "Cultural Revolution" and "Great Leap Forward" witnessed the deaths of over 30 million people. In Iran, the leader who was friendly to the USA was overthrown for a strong religious leader. Over 60,000 people died in the fighting. Genocides and the use of government force was very strong in Guatemala, Argentina, Venezuela, Columbia, and Chile. Hundreds of thousands were murdered or imprisoned. Overall, this was an era where former colonies soaked themselves in blood as they attempted to create a balance of power in their country and in their region.

**Choosing Sides.** As the world saw an explosion in the number of people and the number of countries on the planet, they were forced into a bilateral choice: capitalism or communism. The USA and USSR took on the policy, "If you are not with me, you are against me." Any person or society that did not take a solemn oath of allegiance was viewed suspiciously and treated as an enemy.



The USA & USSR used their military and economic power to secure the loyalty of nearby countries. In Eastern Europe, "elections" were held and the only candidates to win were Communists who were loyal to the USSR. In 1946, Winston Churchill famously said:

*"From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an **iron curtain** has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states... all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow."*

Similarly, in the Americas, the Latin American countries of Central and South America were expected to stand in support of the USA. These areas had been considered as the USA's sphere of influence since President Teddy Roosevelt's address to France in the late 1890s.



In Asia, Middle East and Africa, the USA and USSR rushed to provide large amounts of money, technology and weapons to persuade the swarm of new countries to join their team. In Asia in particular, industrial technology was given from the USA to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines to rapidly speed up their development and keep the areas capitalist. The USA needed friendly countries with industrial machines if a war was to break out in Asia. They also put a missile defense system in Turkey and Italy, to help protect against USSR's attempts at invasion. Meanwhile, the USSR tried to sway Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya to Communism - all areas that were rich in oil. The USSR also began to reach out to countries in the Americas like Cuba, Nicaragua and Peru to create a network of friends and allies in the Americas. The USSR attempted to put a missile defense system into Cuba, to protect against American invasion.

#### Frozen: Rising Tensions

Foreign Policies in the Major Powers. The next generation of American and Soviet Leaders drastically altered the nature tone and aggressiveness of the Cold War. FDR and Truman had taken the policy of Containment: working to contain Communism to keep it from spreading. Entering into the 1950s, President Eisenhower (the general who led the D-Day invasion and war in Europe), had a policy of Brinksmanship: being aggressive with military force up until the point that it would cause a nuclear war. The USA and Great Britain increased the use of their spy networks (CIA and MI-5) to gain every advantage they could over the USSR. After President Eisenhower came a new generation of American leadership: John F Kennedy (JFK). JFK marked the first leader to be born after WWII. JFK took even more aggressive steps towards fighting communism, believing that Communism should both be contained AND reversed. He stated "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

Meanwhile, in the USSR they experienced changes in their leadership and foreign policy. The world breathed a collective sigh of relief with the death of Stalin; hoping the next USSR leader would not be bent on starting WW3. The next leader was Nikita Khrushchev started a promising policy of de-STALINization: attempting to undue to the damage and tensions Stalin had caused. Khrushchev proposed "Peaceful coexistence" between the USA and USSR - that both ideologies could learn to live together on the world in harmony. However, it was soon seen within the USSR that Khrushchev was being too soft on the USA.

Khrushchev was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, who took a more firm stance. The Brezhnev Doctrine stated that any attempt to spread capitalism into a communist country would be met with military force.



Eisenhower



JFK



Khrushchev



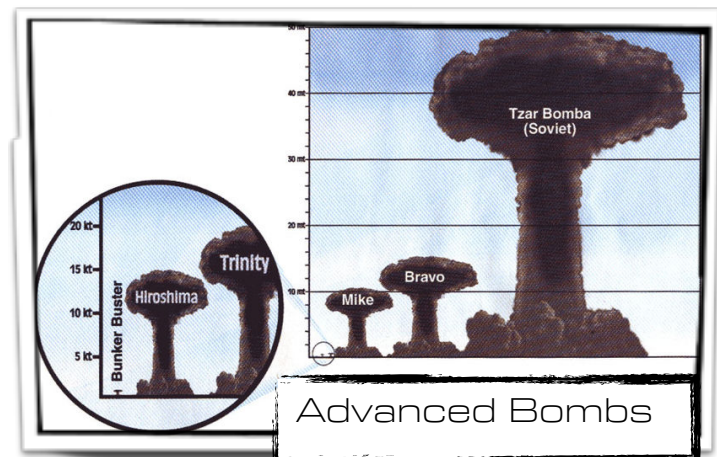
Brezhnev

Constant Competition. The competition between capitalism and communism spread into all areas of life:

- The USA and USSR competed in sports - most iconically at the olympic games. The olympic games were seen as a show case of which society could produce the genetically superior athletes. Every race, every match, every game was a sign of cultural victory, every loss was taken as a sign of falling behind the enemy.
- The USA and USSR competed in espionage (spying). The USSR had the elaborately trained KGB, considered one of the greatest spy networks in the history of the world. The USA and Great Britain's spy networks competed with the KGB over information gathering. Who could steal the most secrets and critical information? Who could plant a spy inside the other's government or military? Who could pay insiders for top-secret knowledge? This bred a large amount of distrust in the USA and USSR - anyone could be a spy, anyone could be a traitor...
- The USA and USSR competed in education. In the 1960s, it was believed the USA's public school education was behind the USSR's. The USA put a renewed emphasis on math and science (to create more engineers) and on physical education (gym classes). The president's award was given to young people for achieving certain speeds while racing, or hitting a pre-set number of pushups/sit-ups. The idea was to make the nation's youth ready for war in case of a draft.
- The USA and USSR competed in who could create the most advanced technologies. Each side created bigger and more deadly atomic weapons. The USSR created the most deadly bomb, the Tsar Bomba: 3,000 times stronger than the bomb that struck Hiroshima (created a fireball 5 miles wide, 6 miles tall). Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) were created that could launch nuclear weapons around the world within 30 minutes, without the need of an airplane. Soon, the USA and USSR had enough nuclear weapons and missiles to create Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). There were enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world seven times.



Since neither side could get an advantage on earth, the competition moved into outer space. The USSR won the race into space. First, the USSR sent Sputnik - the first satellite into orbit. The USSR let the USA know the exact time of its launch and its orbit path. The USSR timed Sputnik's launch so it would pass over New York and Washington DC just after sunset - so the Americans could see the satellite in orbit above their heads... and were helpless to do anything about it. The USSR also put the first man into space. The USA soon caught up, as they put the first man onto the moon.



Race to the Moon



Sputnik



ICBM



USA & USSR: Not so far away....

*Brink of Humanity's Destruction.* The Cold War reached the height of greatest tension in the 1960s. Four events marked critical points that almost caused global nuclear war:

- **Vietnam War Begins.** In 1955, the communist North Vietnam (with the support of China and the USSR) attacked capitalist South Vietnam. In the name of Containment and preventing the Domino Theory, the USA sent “peace keeping troops” on a “policing action.”
- **Rise of the Berlin Wall.** Tensions rose to a fever point in Berlin in the 1960s. Citizens of East Berlin (Communist side) were fleeing in large numbers to West Berlin (Capitalist side). One night, the Communist government assembled a wall to keep the East Berliners in East Berlin. Anyone who got within 100 feet of the wall were shot. Families and friends were instantly divided, as the wall would last for close to 30 years, as a visible sign of the Cold War.
- **U2 Spy Plane.** While at a conference about the future of Germany, the USSR shot down an American U2 spy plane that had been flying over Russia. The conference ended immediately, and drastically increased the tension and mistrust between the two superpowers.
- **The Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis.** By the 1970s, the USA had put a missile launching system in Turkey and Italy, to be able to quickly strike the USSR - defending the area from future attacks. In response, the USSR reached out to the Communist leader of Cuba - Fidel Castro - about putting nuclear missiles on Cuba to be able to launch to the USA. Since Cuba is 90 miles away from the USA, this was considered a major threat. The USA tried to overthrow Castro in the Bay of Pigs, but failed. After two “almost nuclear launches,” JFK and Khrushchev came to an agreement to back-down. The USA removed its missiles from Turkey and the USSR removed its missiles from Cuba.



Vietnam War



Berlin Wall



Cuban Missile Crisis



## Social Unrest

*The Red Scare.* With the fear of war, MAD, and spies, Americans became suspicious of each other. This was the first “war” where the enemy did not wear a different colored uniform. Instead, it was a war of ideas. Ideas cannot be seen, they cannot be shot. Senator McCarthy started a movement to remove all communists from America. It did not matter where a person was born or their profession. If there was doubts that someone was not “American Enough” in their thoughts and actions, they were labeled a communist and put on trial. Neighbor turned against neighbor, co-worker against co-worker. It was believed that “communist were everywhere...”

*The Loss of Trust.* After WWII, the government had used fear of communism to promote the idea that the US Government was noble and trustworthy. All Americans were to obey the US government because they were the “good guys” who would do “what is right.” By 1975, that trust was gone. President JFK was assassinated AND his assassin was assassinated... All the files related to JFK were locked away, and still have not been released. Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated while leading the civil rights movement against oppression. President Nixon was found to have spied on his opponent to manipulate the election and was forced out of office... By the end of the 1970s, all trust in the government was gone. Suspicion, anger, and rejection took the place of love and loyalty. The American people would never fully trust their government again.

## Thawing: End to the Cold War

*America's Failure.* After 20 years of war, the USA could not stop the North Vietnamese Army. The US Army used the most advanced weapons in the world, but found it impossible to tell what ideas a person truly believed just by looking at them. Also, Vietnam was the first war to be video taped and shown "live" to audiences using television. America got to witness the horrors of war from their living room. Added to the outrage and mistrust, America lost its appetite for war. America pulled out of Vietnam, the communist won.

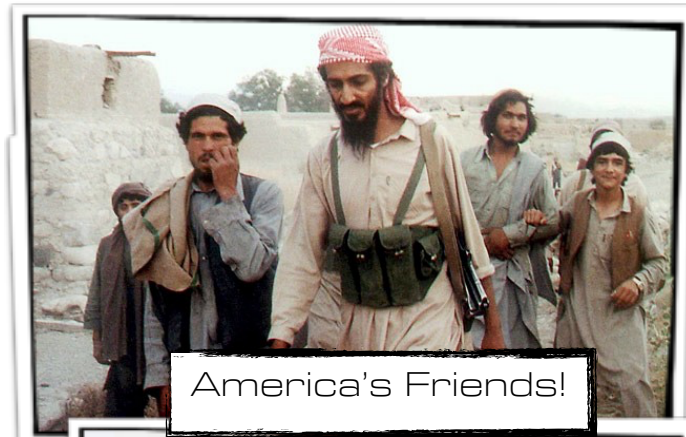
*Messing with the Middle East.* While the USA did not have the support to send troops to fight wars, it did not stop them from getting "involved" in other countries. Israel fought three wars against its Muslim neighbors, using weapons bought from America. Iran and Iraq fought a long, bloody war over oil rights to the region. The USA provided money and military supplies to the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, in an attempt to curb Iran's influence in the region.

*The USSR's Failure.* The USSR tried to invade Afghanistan to spread communism into the Middle East. Much like Vietnam, the USSR was faced with a fighting force that looked just like everyone else, making it impossible to know who "believed" your ideas compared to who was your enemy. Muslim men from around the Middle East came to join the Mujahideen - The Holy Warriors of Islam. The Mujahideen was led by Osama Bin Laden. Bin Laden was trained by the CIA and given weapons by the US Military. Just like Vietnam for the USA, USSR had to leave Afghanistan, a superpower having lost to "the little guy."

*Glasnost & Perestroika.* While the USSR looked tough on the outside, they were bankrupt on the inside. Communism could not keep up economically with capitalism, causing the USSR to struggle at home. The people did not have enough bread to eat. The businesses were in shambles. Mikhail Gorbachev put two policies into place: Glasnost and Perestroika. This turned control of the economy over from the government to the businesses - giving greater openness and the ability to restructure society. The hope was to reignite the economy of the struggling USSR.

*And They All Fall Down...* After Glasnost and Perestroika, the USSR began to fall apart. Unable to fund their military, countries in Eastern Europe began to rebel against their communist leaders. In Berlin, US President Ronald Reagan famously stood at the Berlin Wall - telling the USSR and the World, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." Soon, the Berlin Wall was brought down, and Berliners were reunited for the first time in 30 years. Finally in 1992, a broke and broken USSR - allowing businesses to have control over the economy, as well as free and fair elections. The USSR "dissolved" (decolonized) into new countries. With lightning speed, the Iron Curtain fell to pieces and the Cold War was over.

The USA as the sole super power in the world.



## QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain two impacts of European's superimposing boundaries on their colonies.
- 2) What caused so many people to die during the 1950s-1970s?
- 3) Why did the USA invest so much money into S. Korea and Taiwan, but so little into S. America?
- 4) How did American Foreign policy towards Communism change between Truman and JFK?
- 5) Identify two events that you feel were the most important causes of bringing the world close to WW3?
- 6) Why did Americans lose trust in their government?
- 7) Identify the three events you feel were the most important "turning points" in bringing an End to the Cold War? Explain.
- 8) Why did America become friends with Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein?