

Cold War and Decolonization

AP World History ■ Unit 8

AP World History



What we will cover

- 1 Setting the Stage for the Cold War
- 2 The Cold War
- 3 Effects of the Cold War
- 4 Spread of Communism After 1900
- 5 Decolonization After 1900
- 6 Newly Independent States



Setting the Stage for the Cold War

Unit 8 covers the period after 1945, and two processes run through it at once: a **global ideological rivalry** and the **end of empire**. Most of the unit's questions turn on how those two interacted.

In the years following World War II, **increasing anti-imperialist sentiment** built momentum in colonised regions, and this time it produced independence rather than promises.



The Cold War

The shifted balance **rapidly evolved into the Cold War** – a rivalry between the democracies led by the United States and the communist states led by the Soviet Union, conducted as an **ideological struggle** rather than direct war between the two principals.

Leaving the non-aligned states out of an answer describes a two-sided world that did not exist.



Effects of the Cold War

The rivalry produced concrete institutions and conflicts:

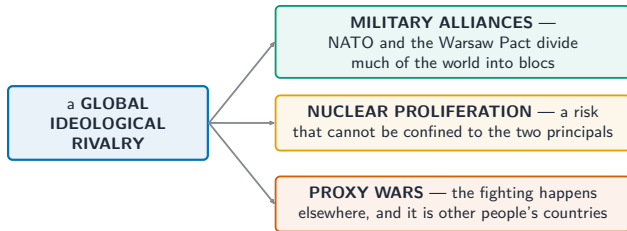
- **New military alliances** – **NATO** and the **Warsaw Pact** .
- **Nuclear proliferation** – the spread of nuclear weapons to more states.
- **Proxy wars** between and within states, in which the two blocs supported opposing sides in conflicts elsewhere rather than fighting each other directly.

Effects of the Cold War, continued

The comparison this topic sets up is *how* each superpower maintained influence over other states – through alliances, aid, military support, and intervention.

Both used all four, which is why the comparison question is answerable in both directions.

One rivalry, three things built



The shifted balance **rapidly evolved into the Cold War** - a rivalry between the democracies led by the United States and the communist states led by the Soviet Union, conducted as an ideological...

The CED insists that this was not a world of only two options.

What the war left behind, and how communism spread

the technological and economic gains

made during World War II carried straight into the postwar rivalry – radar, jet engines, computing, nuclear physics

the consequence

the Cold War was fought partly as a **competition in capability**, not only in territory

first, revolution

communist parties took power through war and upheaval rather than election

second, state control of the economy

as in the Soviet Five Year Plans, the Chinese **Great Leap Forward** restructured production by state direction

third, land redistribution

movements to redistribute land and resources developed in many places, communist and not

nationalist leaders and parties

in Asia and Africa sought **varying degrees of autonomy** – not all of them independence, and not all at once

Land redistribution appears on both sides of the Cold War divide. That it is not exclusively communist is the point a comparison question is usually testing.



Spread of Communism After 1900

Two examinable threads run here. First, **China**: as a result of **internal tension** and **Japanese aggression**, Chinese communists seized power, and the CED notes this eventually contributed to communist revolutions elsewhere.

The CED presents these as a matched pair, which is exactly how a comparison question will ask for them.

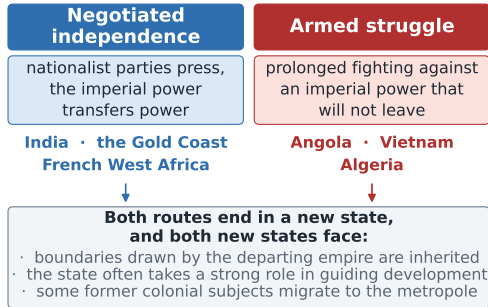


How a colony reached independence shaped what it inherited

After World War II, **some colonies negotiated their independence** while **others achieved it through armed struggle** .

India and the Gold Coast are the standard negotiated cases; Angola, Vietnam, and Algeria the standard armed ones.

How a colony reached independence shaped what it, in detail



The difference that earns marks: what the new state inherits - a working administration, or a war-damaged one.

After World War II some colonies **negotiated** their independence – India, the Gold Coast – while others won it by **armed struggle**: Angola, Vietnam, Algeria.

Decolonization After 1900

After World War II, **some colonies negotiated their independence** while **others achieved it through armed struggle**. India and the Gold Coast are the standard negotiated cases; Angola, Vietnam, and Algeria the standard armed ones.

Those boundaries are the reason so many post-independence conflicts were about borders rather than about the departing power.

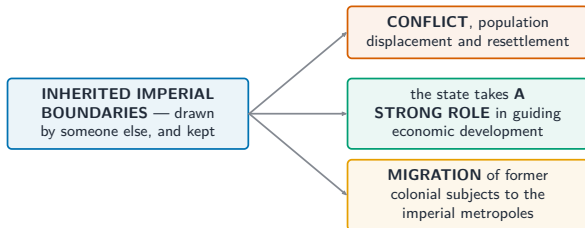


Newly Independent States

The **redrawing of political boundaries** after colonial withdrawal led to the creation of new states, and in some cases to **conflict, population displacement, and resettlement**. The partition of British India is the standard case of all three at once.

Economically, governments in newly independent states **often took a strong role in guiding economic life to promote development** – a continuity with the interwar pattern of Unit 7, arrived at from a completely different direction.

What a new state inherited



- Groups and individuals **challenged the wars** of the century, and some - **Mohandas Gandhi** , **Martin Luther King Jr.** . . .
- **Militaries and militarised states** often responded to the proliferation of conflicts in ways that **further intensified** them.
- Some movements **used violence against civilians** in an effort to achieve political aims.



Global Resistance to Established Power Structures

Although conflict dominated much of the twentieth century, many individuals and groups – **including states** – opposed that trend. The CED names three distinct patterns, and they should not be blurred:

- Groups and individuals **challenged the wars** of the century, and some – **Mohandas Gandhi** , **Martin Luther King Jr.** , and **Nelson Mandela** – **promoted non-violence** as a method of change.
- **Militaries and militarised states** often responded to the proliferation of conflicts in ways that **further intensified** them.
- Some movements **used violence against civilians** in an effort to achieve political aims.

Global Resistance to Established Power Structures, continued

Both the third and second points are examinable content, not asides.

A question on "reactions to existing power structures" expects the full range, not only the non-violent one.

The century contains both at once

MOVEMENTS THAT PROMOTED NON-VIOLENCE

Mohandas Gandhi
Martin Luther King Jr.
Nelson Mandela

STATES THAT INTENSIFIED FORCE

militaries and militarised states
violence used against civilians
challenges met with more force

Both are responses to **established power**. The century contains both at once, which is why “the world became freer” is only half of it



End of the Cold War

The CED gives a compound cause here too: advances in **United States military and technological development**, the Soviet Union's **costly and ultimately failed invasion of Afghanistan**, **public discontent**, and **economic problems** within the Soviet system.

An answer that explains the end of the Cold War purely as external pressure has missed the CED's own weighting.



Causation in the Age of the Cold War

The unit's reasoning task is to explain the **extent** to which the effects of the Cold War were **similar in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres**. "Extent" is a comparison word: it asks for similarity *and* difference, with a judgement about which dominates.

Worked example – a difference stated in shared terms

“Explain one difference between the processes of decolonisation in two different regions after 1945.”

- **Full marks:** *“In the Gold Coast, independence was achieved largely through negotiation, as nationalist parties won elections and Britain transferred power without a war. In Algeria, independence came through a prolonged armed struggle against France, which left the new state with a military-led government and a devastated economy.”*
- The difference is stated in terms that apply to **both** cases.

Negotiation against armed struggle is one axis, and each case is placed on it. Two unrelated facts are not a difference.

Exam tips

- The Cold War was **not two-sided**. The **Non-Aligned Movement** is examinable content, and including it lifts an answer immediately.
- Give the effects as the CED does: **alliances, nuclear proliferation, proxy wars**. Three named effects beat one described at length.
- **Negotiated versus armed** independence is the highest-value comparison in the unit, because it explains what the new state inherited.
- **Inherited imperial boundaries** explain post-independence conflict better than any other single factor. Use the phrase.
- For resistance, give all three CED patterns – **non-violence, militarised response, and violence against civilians**.
- The end of the Cold War was **mostly internal** to the Soviet system. Weight the causes that way and say why.



Unit 8 – key takeaways

1

Cold War

not two-sided: name the Non-Aligned Movement

2

Effects

alliances, nuclear proliferation, proxy wars

3

Independence

negotiated vs armed – what the new state inherited

4

Borders

inherited imperial boundaries explain later conflict

Check yourself

- 1 Why mention the Non-Aligned Movement?
- 2 Name the three CED Cold War effects.
- 3 What comparison explains inherited state form?
- 4 What phrase explains post-independence conflict?

Answers: the Cold War was not two-sided ▪ alliances, nukes, proxies ▪ negotiated vs armed
▪ inherited imperial boundaries