

Cold War and Decolonization

AP World History: Modern

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.

Hopes for greater self-government were **largely unfulfilled after World War I**. In the years following World War II, **increasing anti-imperialist sentiment** 反帝情绪 built momentum in colonised regions, and this time it produced independence rather than promises.

At the same time, the **technological and economic gains** 技术与经济收益 made during World War II by the victorious nations **shifted the global balance of power**. This is the historical context the CED asks for: the war did not just destroy, it redistributed capability.

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** 意识形态斗争 rather than direct war between the two principals.

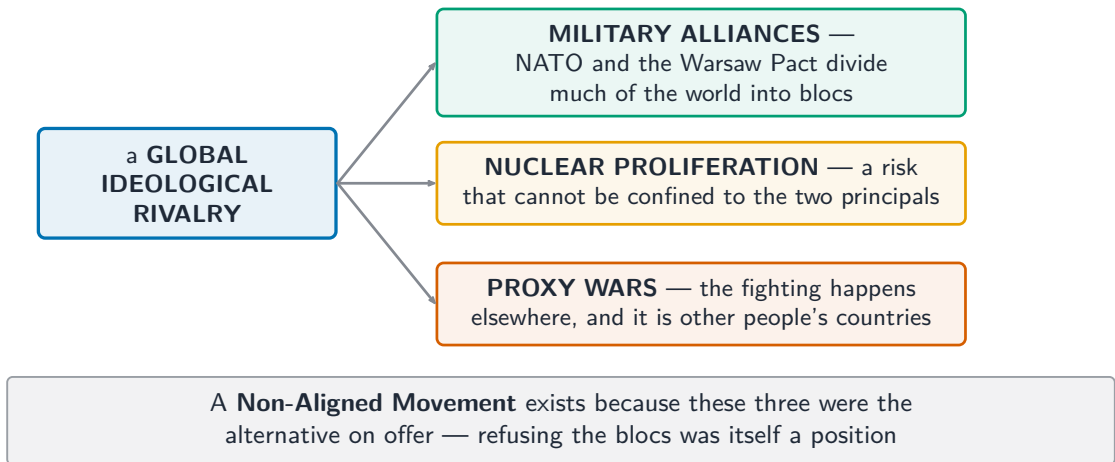
The CED insists that this was not a world of only two options. Groups and individuals - including the **Non-Aligned Movement** 不结盟运动 - **opposed and promoted alternatives** to the existing economic, political, and social order. Leaving the non-aligned states out of an answer describes a two-sided world that did not exist.

Effects of the Cold War

The rivalry produced concrete institutions and conflicts:

- **New military alliances** 军事同盟 - **NATO** 北约 and the **Warsaw Pact** 华沙条约组织.
- **Nuclear proliferation** 核扩散 - the spread of nuclear weapons to more states.
- **Proxy wars** 代理人战争 between and within states, in which the two blocs supported opposing sides in conflicts elsewhere rather than fighting each other directly.

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.



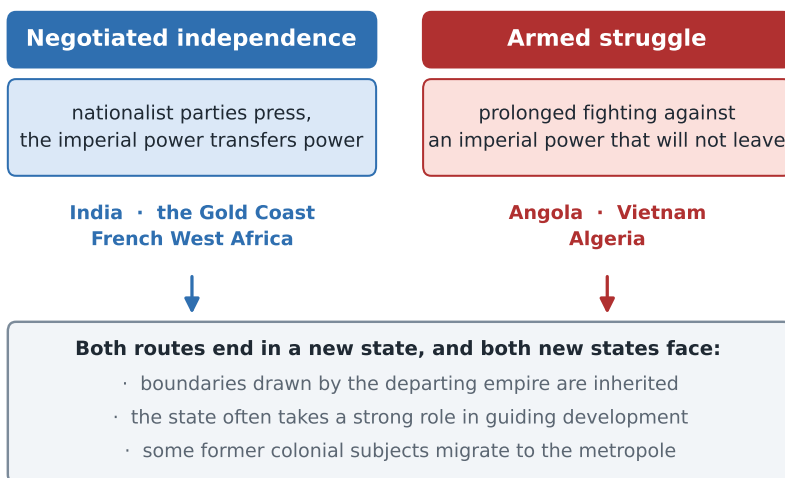
Spread of Communism After 1900

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

Second, **state control of the economy**. As in the Soviet Five Year Plans of Unit 7, the Chinese government controlled the national economy through the **Great Leap Forward** 大跃进, implementing repressive policies with significant **costs to the population**. The CED presents these as a matched pair, which is exactly how a comparison question will ask for them.

Beyond these, **movements to redistribute land and resources** developed within states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, some advocating communism or socialism and some not. That distinction matters: land reform is not the same claim as revolution, and the CED separates them.

Decolonization After 1900



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

Both routes end in a new state - but they do not end in the same new state

Nationalist leaders and parties 民族主义领袖与政党 in Asia and Africa sought varying degrees of autonomy within, or independence from, imperial rule. The examinable set of examples includes the Indian National Congress, Ho Chi Minh in French Indochina, Kwame Nkrumah in the Gold Coast, and Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt.

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.

A third strand is easily missed: **regional, religious, and ethnic movements** challenged both colonial rule and the **inherited imperial boundaries** 沿袭的帝国边界 those empires left behind. Those boundaries are the reason so many post-independence conflicts were about borders rather than about the departing power.

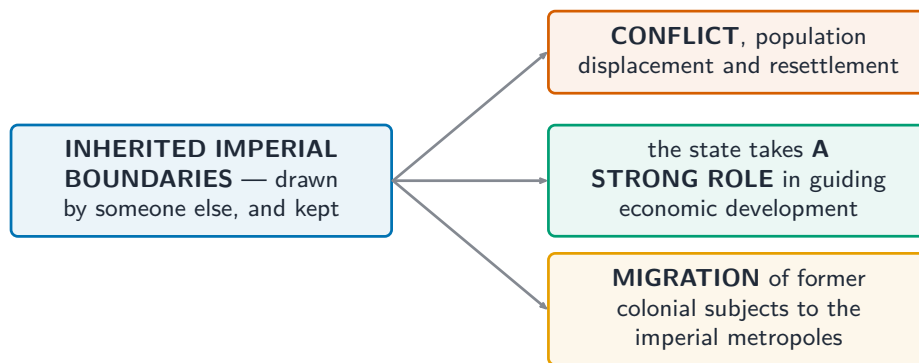
Newly Independent States

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.

There was also a reverse flow of people: the **migration of former colonial subjects to imperial metropolises** - usually to major cities - which maintained cultural and

economic ties between the former colony and the former colonial power long after independence.



Independence is where the problem **starts**. The boundary, the development strategy and the migration are all consequences of the same inheritance

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** 甘地, **Martin Luther King Jr.** 马丁·路德·金, and **Nelson Mandela** 曼德拉 - **promoted non-violence** 非暴力 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.

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.

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** 公众不满, and **economic problems** 经济困难 within the Soviet system.

Notice that three of the four are internal to the Soviet Union. 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 real AP exam question). AP World short-answer questions here ask, for example, to “*Explain one difference between the processes of decolonisation in two different regions after 1945.*” A full-mark answer names both cases and the difference between them: “*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.*” Notice what earns the mark: the difference is stated in terms that apply to **both** cases, and each side carries its own evidence.

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.