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THE END OF EMPIRE AND THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

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DECOLONIZATION

The end of the Second World War completed the transformation of the imperial systems. Although nationalist political leaders, among them Charles de Gaulle and Winston Churchill, aspired to keep control of their country's empires, this was to be a vain dream, and the efforts to renew or prolong colonial domination proved costly and often bitterly divisive at home. In Africa, the French did crush one major uprising with great bloodshed in the Aurès Mountains, and they reclaimed authority in North Africa and South-East Asia. But the colonial peoples, who had seen the Japanese overrun European possessions in South-East Asia, understood that their rulers were not invincible.

In post-war struggles those who remained loyal to the colonial powers felt abandoned to the local revolutionary forces when their former rulers finally yielded independence. 'Betrayal' of those who had remained loyal to their rulers remained a poignant theme that Westerners defending their role in Asia and Africa would evoke from 1941 until the American helicopters left Saigon in 1975. The Japanese had themselves posed as liberators of the territories they occupied from colonial rule and had found collaborators in the Philippines, Burma, and within the Indian National Army. But instances of cruelty and heavy-handed rule soon provoked resistance movements. National movements, however, such as the Vietminh, who emerged to fight the Japanese, were hardly willing to acquiesce to colonial rule once again. Moreover, the United States stood in theory behind the decolonization movements, or at least did so while Franklin D. Roosevelt was alive before the development of the Cold War.[1]

Although Prime Minister Churchill was an inveterate believer in Britain's imperial role, the permanent officials in London and the new Labour Party government (elected in July 1945) believed that Britain should seek to exercise its post-war role through indirect means. The country was financially depleted by the war as many of its remaining post-war assets had to be liquidated to pay for the struggle. It had granted its colonies in the Middle East and India extensive credits in London (the so-called sterling balances, which in theory remained as liabilities that might be withdrawn) as it drew on their resources to fight the Pacific War. Lend Lease shipments ceased with the end of the war, and a $3.75 billion line of credit for the post-war era from the United States was negotiated conditional upon London's promise to make sterling freely convertible and to dismantle the protectionist agreements negotiated between the wars with other members of the British Commonwealth. Britain had to exercise influence rather than power, and the structure of colonial rule was thus to be transformed into a more associative arrangement.[2]

Britain, however, ruled many areas of mixed ethnicity and religion that threatened to descend into intercommunal violence when granted autonomy. Rioting and mob violence in the 1930s had already provided a foretaste of possible future events. The Arab uprisings of 1936 had led London to try to limit Jewish migration at a period in which Jews were being harassed in Europe. In India, the leader of the Muslims in the Congress, Ali Jinnah, insisted on a separate state for Muslims, and although Gandhi resisted, Nehru accepted the bitter medicine. With a self-imposed deadline of 1 January 1947, a frontier was hastily drawn – but in fact members of each community lived on both sides of the line, and the days of independence brought mob mayhem and killing as Hindus and Muslims tried to flee to their respective countries.[3]

The British, caught in the intractable conflict between Zionist aspirations and Arab interests handed the future of the mandate in Palestine back to the United Nations, which after President Truman finally resolved to support the scheme, voted for a partition into two states in the fall of 1947. The Jewish communal authorities accepted the plan. Arabs and Palestinians were determined to resist, and war between Palestinians and Jews on the territory of the mandate began and climaxed with the initial victory of the Jewish armies over the Palestinians between March and May 1948. When in mid-May the British mandate over Palestine formally ended and the Israelis declared the independence of the Jewish State of Israel, the neighbouring Arab states invaded the new country. After coming close to military catastrophe, Israel successfully defended the territory, and following truces in late spring and summer,

expanded the originally envisaged frontiers by the 1949 armistices. The successive phases of the war proved humiliating and catastrophic for the half or more of the 1.4 million Palestinian inhabitants of the territory, who fled their homes under instructions from Arab propagandists or were expelled by Israeli forces – the reasons are contested – during the course of the fighting.[4]

At the same, Britain relinquished its formal residual hold on Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan even while military and financial advisers helped maintain a shadow influence. London was not yet ready to quit Malaya, where it faced a dogged communist independence movement during the so-called Emergency. For another fifteen years, it would not have the resolution to divest itself of the middle African countries where white 'settler' minorities still counted on Britain to prolong their control (Kenya, Nigeria, Rhodesia). And finally, it would have to prepare to leave the countries of West Africa, the Gold Coast and Nigeria, where it also left a legacy of hostile ethnic groups – the Hausa North and the Yoruba and Ibo South – confined within borders that the dominant groups wanted to preserve.

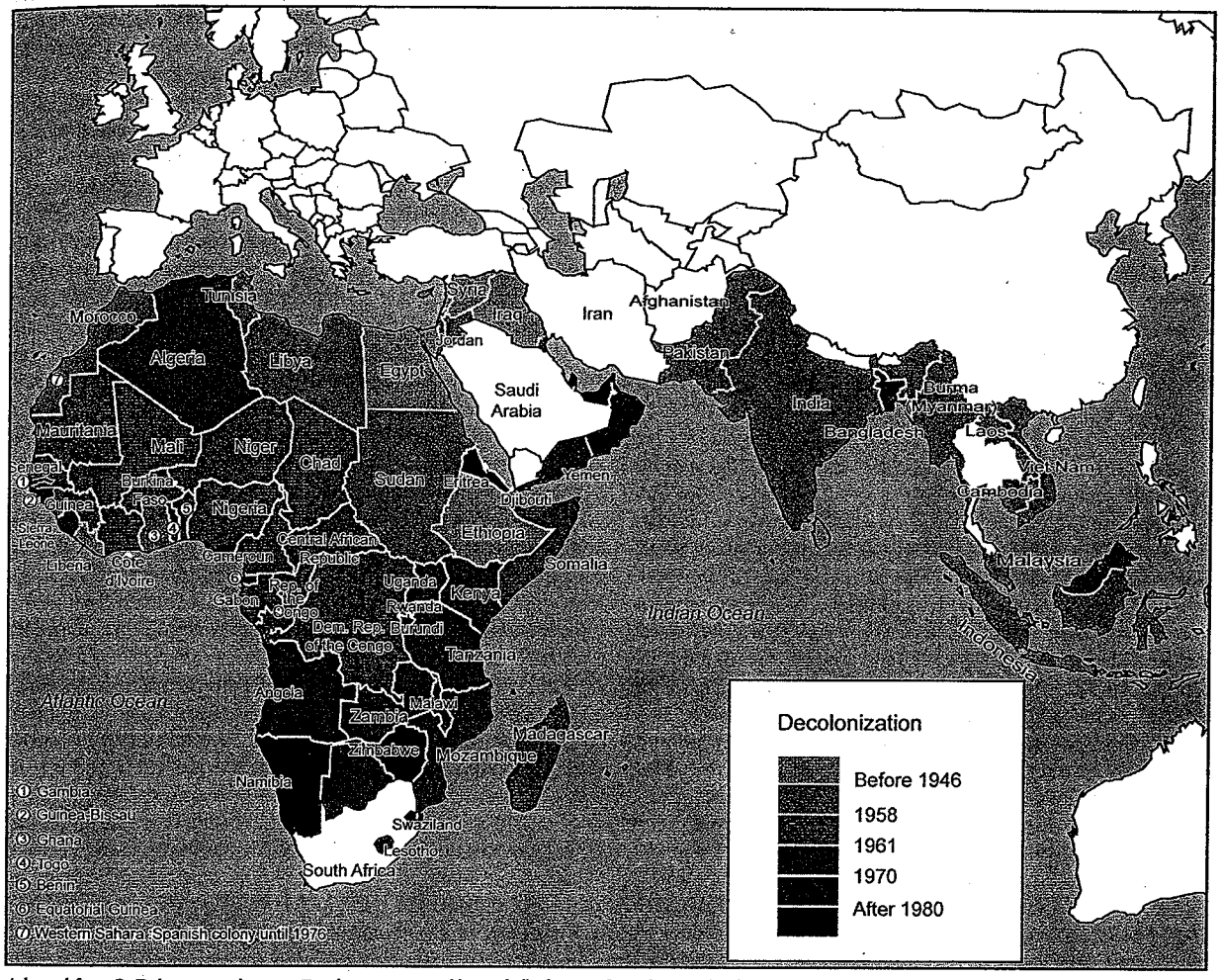
For all the vexation of imperial divestiture, the British withdrawal still seemed easy compared to the French situation.[5] Between the wars, the French Right had envisioned the 'valorization' of the empire as a way to retain a threatened great-power status, and the Vichy regime of 1940 carried on this aspiration. On the other side, Charles de Gaulle, as leader of the Free French challengers and, by 1944–45, provisional president of the new Fourth Republic, also wanted to preserve as great an overseas French role as possible. Meeting in Brazzaville in late January 1944, he and pro-Free French officials envisaged the formation of the French Union, which the reformers planned would federate the colonies and embark on their industrial development, while the traditionalist administrators insisted it would assimilate their populations without independence and preserve the political and cultural primacy of the metropole. Félix Eboué, a socialist of West Indian origin and governor of Guadeloupe, and Henri Laurentie, who advanced a sophisticated scheme for a federal assembly in which all members of the French Union were to be represented, were the major advocates of the new ideas, which collided with the conviction of most administrators and military that France's 'civilizing mission' and goal of 'assimilation' meant firm control. Shifting politics in Paris and the resistance of military officials and some colonial administrators precluded application of the more liberal interpretations, although it is unlikely that in the long run these would have satisfied nationalists. The transition in the states of French West Africa remained perhaps the happiest exception due in part to the stature and intellect of African leaders who could merge ideals of 'negritude' with the universalist aspirations that the French republican tradition offered. But the long-term evolution of all the African states would face grave difficulties, and the responsibility of the colonial state for economic setbacks and authoritarian outcomes in the decades after independence will be long debated.[6]

In the states of Indochina, the Japanese ended the formerly residual French administration in March 1945, after the Vichy regime had collapsed at home, and encouraged supposedly independent regimes. Gaullist forces resolved to reassert sovereignty, envisaged again a French Union that would cede 'appropriate' (*propre*) internal autonomy but maintain control of external relations in the hands of Paris and its Governor General. Roosevelt did not support this goal, but he disappeared from the scene a month later. In August and September as Japanese authority collapsed, the Vietminh took control in the North during 1945, but France reoccupied the area around Saigon. French-Vietminh negotiations began in 1946. Ho Chi Minh was willing to readmit French troops in order to oust Chinese forces that might otherwise never leave. While a Vietminh delegation went to Paris to negotiate, fierce clashes, provoked certainly in part by the local French military forces, broke out in Haiphong in November and Hanoi in December. The ensuing struggle lasted eight years.[7]

The situation in Indochina introduced the French, and later the Americans who took over the struggle, to a new type of warfare that military theorists on both sides analysed as revolutionary or guerrilla war, in which the enemy were absorbed into the local population in the presence of French soldiers, but returned to reassert control of the population when the foreigners departed.[8] Such a war – as in Greece or Yugoslavia during the German occupation – was a struggle to control the local population. In Indochina, and later in Algeria, the French officers believed that the majority of the local population did not support the liberation movement, but had to be protected. The Vietminh, later the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) in the south, were supposedly extremist, their analysis went, and famous for their ruthless violence. Instead the French proposed to set up a government under Bao Dai that would opt for union with France, but they vastly overestimated the legitimacy it might possess. Increasingly the French Right suggested that all these movements were part of a communist conspiracy to undermine the West. Indeed Ho Chi Minh was a Marxist as well as a nationalist, and committed to a communist victory. The arrival of the Chinese communists at the Viet Nam border in 1949 reinforced this sense of a life and death struggle against international communism. However, the trouble was that in fact the countermeasures taken drove more and more of the youth into the camp of the nationalist forces. The French in fact lost finally in a major conventional siege and battle in north-east Viet Nam when their troops were besieged at Dien Bien Phu. A new premier, Pierre Mendès-France, promised peace in forty days or vowed to send in a mass of conscripts and not just smaller forces of professional soldiers, and a deal struck at Geneva in 1954 divided the country at the 17th parallel. But already both sides were preparing for the next stage. The peace provided for elections in the South; Northern Vietnamese communists were seeking to infiltrate and control the elections, and the Americans supported postponement. The scale of the fighting increased in the South until the Americans had committed half a million troops. Only in 1973 would a peace agreement be negotiated.[9]

Paris had long since extricated itself from Indochina and its other colonies. Mendès-France had acceded to Tunisian self-government and the transfer of power to the long-standing nationalist movement, the Neo Destour of Habib Bourguiba. Demands for Algerian independence were another matter, however. Neither Premier Guy Mollet, a socialist, nor other centrist forces, who held power after the next parliamentary elections, were prepared to capitulate in Algeria, which the French defined as an integral part of the French Republic and included a million French settlers, who had made the cities of the coast their home. But even as

Map 3 **The process of decolonization**



Adapted from B. Delaveau, et al., 1989, *Décolonisation et problèmes de l'Afrique indépendante*, Edicef, Paris.

the end of the war was being celebrated on 8 May 1945, in Europe and Algeria, nationalist demonstrations provoked a massive repression by the French military in Sétif and the Constantine region, which left between 15,000 and 40,000 Muslim casualties and hampered any future gradualist settlement. By the early 1950s the Resident General was determined to meet uprisings with forceful counter-measures including the destruction of villages harbouring rebels. As in Indochina, the French were convinced that the National Liberation Front (FLN, a term that would be used in Algeria and then by the insurgents in South Viet Nam after 1954) was unrepresentative of the native population they considered loyal. The FLN began to strike with bombs at European gathering places in the city of Algiers, and civilians became the true hostages of the struggle. The French applied counter-terrorist doctrines, destroying the rebel cells in Algiers, regaining apparent control of the Kasbah by using torture to interrogate captured FLN soldiers. They won 'the battle of Algiers' by 1957, but could not win 'the battle of the frontiers'. Supported by the Egyptian government of Gamal Abdel Nasser and lodged across the border in Tunisian 'sanctuaries' the FLN could be pursued only by indiscriminate air strikes, such as the bombing of the hospital at Sakiet Sidi Yousef in February 1958, which threatened in turn to trigger a UN debate, where the Americans might have felt compelled to join in a condemnation of Paris policies.[10]

Without American support, the colonial powers just could not persevere in resisting anti-colonial uprisings. When Washington believed that nationalist forces were communist agents of Moscow, they usually lent assistance but not at the cost of a possible direct military confrontation with Russia or China. As late as 1954, President Eisenhower and his chief of staff contemplated using a nuclear weapon to help the French avert defeat in Indochina. Although he accepted the Central Intelligence Agency's plans to help overthrow the communist strongman of Guatemala, Eisenhower had the good sense to decide against Paris's desperate request.

Moreover, by 1955, the emerging ex-colonial nations, sponsored by a China now seeking to distance itself from Moscow, and likewise by India and Indonesia, and including oil-rich Arab lands, gathered at Bandung to coordinate their policies as a cohesive bloc of 'non-aligned' powers. Washington did not appreciate their neutralist stance, but the State Department did not wish to seem aligned with a

retrograde policy of defending colonial positions. In the autumn of 1956, Guy Mollet, who was angered at Egyptian assistance to the FLN, and Prime Minister Anthony Eden, who was determined to reverse Nasser's recent nationalization of the Suez Canal, colluded with Israeli leaders to plan an invasion of the Sinai Peninsula, supposedly rescue the Canal from Egyptian mismanagement, and overthrow the ambitious Egyptian leader. But the American Government decided that this policy could not be allowed to stand. It disavowed its NATO allies, and at the very moment the Soviets threatened to use missiles if necessary against Britain and France, Washington decisively applied pressure, including a threat to the British pound sterling, and compelled London and Paris to back down. The Suez reversal completely undercut Eden's domestic position and caused a deep moral crisis in London, where defenders of residual British power felt humiliated and betrayed by their major ally. It also suggested to Paris that if America turned hostile, they could not prolong their struggle in Algeria even if they seemed to be winning.[11]

These difficulties caused the uneasy coalition governments in Paris to fall apart. The conservatives and Catholics would not accept yielding control of Algeria to the FLN while increasing numbers of the centre left and the socialists were unwilling to escalate the pursuit of the rebels. In an effort to retain a majority, the government sought to offer partial reforms and autonomy, which proved too grave a concession for the right wing and insufficient to satisfy the rebels. Settlers and generals, who feared Paris would capitulate in May 1958, seized power in Algiers, formed a committee of public safety, dropped paratroopers on Corsica, threatened to land in Paris and prompted even socialist deputies to accept the return to power of General de Gaulle, who had retired from public service twelve years earlier (Plate 32).

De Gaulle won massive support for a new constitution that sharply curtailed the power of the legislature to overthrow cabinets and endowed the president of the Fifth Republic with far greater authority over international affairs and legislative initiatives. As new president, however, de Gaulle quickly came to realize that France could not win the Algerian war. From the settlers' adulation, he incurred their wrath, had to face down a new attempted *coup d'état* in 1961, and subsequent assassination attempts by irreconcilable conspirators, and finally, by 1962, signed the Evian Accords that allowed the FLN to govern Algeria.

The Dutch, who had hoped to recover 'the Indies' and overthrow the Republic of Indonesia that nationalist leaders A. Sukarno and M. Hatta had declared upon the surrender of the Japanese, abandoned their ambitions slowly. At first, they relied on the British and Anglo-Indian forces in the theatre, and then re-established themselves on the eastern islands. An armistice painfully ratified by March 1947 envisaged a United States of Indonesia under the Netherlands crown, which would federate the nationalists' republic based on Java and Sumatra with an East Indonesian State to remain controlled by the Dutch. The armistice, which faced opposition in both camps, unravelled a few months later as the Dutch decided they should exploit their 100,000 soldiers stationed so far from home and embarked on a police action that reconquered much of Java. A further agreement signed in January 1948 on the USS *Renville* also failed to hold. Events moved toward a chaotic climax as Islamic and communist challenges to the Sukarno-Hatta leadership emerged within the republic, while Dutch forces sought to organize a federal state throughout the archipelago. Sukarno gained American support by suppressing the communists. When the Dutch embarked on a second police action at the end of 1948, occupied the republic's capital and arrested the Sukarno government, the Americans lost patience and threatened to suspend Marshall Plan aid. It was easier to put pressure on Amsterdam than on Paris, and Sukarno's nationalist movement – in contrast to the Vietminh – had proved itself staunchly anti-communist at a time when the Cold War was becoming disturbing. Unable to prevail outside the major cities in any case, the embittered Dutch ceded control of all but West New Guinea, which was yielded as West Irian only in 1962.[12]

With the early 1960s, one might end the history of the overseas colonial empires. The Indians annexed the small Portuguese enclave of Goa in 1961. The Belgians precipitously abandoned the Congo Republic in the face of nationalist resistance in 1960, although not without attempting (with CIA aid) to support a secessionist movement in the province of Katanga with its important copper mines still controlled by the Union Minière. Britain had granted the Gold Coast independence as Ghana in 1957, and Nigeria followed in 1960. London's plans to federate the departing colonies, whether in the federated states of Malaysia, the West Indies, the Central Africa Federation or Southern Arabia, lasted only a few years: each dissolved into national states upon or shortly after gaining independence. Nigeria, a federated unit since 1914, underwent a long and cruel civil war, but remained a conglomerate nation. Only a few Portuguese redoubts remained in Africa, and the Portuguese army, tired of the fruitless battles in Angola and Mozambique, revolted in 1974, to end the authoritarian regime at home and terminate a senseless war.[13]

For the former colonial powers, the end of empire brought often immense political recrimination at home, although only in France and in Portugal did the conflicts bring down a regime. Nationalist Europeans felt their sense of national mission and historical status diminished. Soldiers who had tried to win the hearts and minds of loyal collaborators felt they were being forced into betraying them. Liberal colonialists were grieved that their lofty projects for economic development and political education were now to be interrupted. In the context of the Cold War, many feared the advance of communism. Yet, the conditions were hardly catastrophic for the metropolitan societies. The money invested in colonial enterprises did better in fact than domestic investments. Advocates of decolonization understood that their own 'civil war' – that is, the Second World War – bore a major responsibility, and that control over such distant peoples could not be perpetuated. In fact, they often learned to keep influence by indirect means; agreements with the new Algerian Government allowed Sahara oil to be exploited by France; the Union Minière kept its properties in the Congo. The British continued to train the armies of the Middle East; the promising students of West Africa came to Paris, while those from South Asia went to London and Oxford. Families seeking work gravitated from the former colonies to the cities whose language they had learned and adopted, eventually, in effect, to transplant their communities, cuisines, and cultures of the so-called 'Third World' into the cities of the former colonial powers. Europe was

prospering, more consistently than in any other period of its history, and in that post-war economic growth and the ideological exertions of the Cold War, and in the new ideas of integration – through the Marshall Plan, the Coal and Steel Community, the European Community – a new sense of Europe was born. But only reluctantly and slowly would its citizens recognize that they had to integrate as their neighbours those who had once been their subjects.

As for the former colonies, they gained the independence which almost every citizen believed was the prerequisite for their society's advancement. Westerners told them that it profited not to gain national independence if their new native rulers suppressed human rights that were better guaranteed under the colonial powers. Even Washington statesmen argued that the rule of the Communist Party over the citizens of Russia was far more oppressive than governance by colonial officials. For the indigenous peoples of the Maghreb or Central Africa or Asia, such a calculation was usually beside the point. Wisely or not, intellectuals and simple tribesmen alike believed that collective self-determination was the foundation for all other rights. They moved from being subjects to citizens. The measures for local representation, which Paris or London schemes had offered from the Government of India Act in 1935 to the Algerian Loi-Cadre Deferre of 1956, always resisted that basic grant of national self-determination. On the other hand, the indigenous governments that took over after independence often succumbed to bitter internal rivalry, military dictatorship, and ethnic strife. The institution the colonial powers had trained most effectively was the military, whose leaders often emerged with the sense that they alone might speak for the national interests of their new country, or that they alone would be free from corruption and clientelism. The era of colonial rule had left arbitrary national borders that did not coincide with tribal lines, but leaders resisted any changes lest all frontiers be thrown into contention. Nigeria's vast expanse, for example, included at least three different basic cultural areas and rivalry enough to provoke a tragic civil war. Even where partition accompanied independence, as in South Asia, inter-communal violence remained high. High expectations of economic development were often frustrated as governments sought to institute prestigious building projects, implant industries that lacked a market infrastructure, and control food prices to still urban protest. The models of state socialism attracted many intellectuals in Africa and India throughout the 1960s, even as they resisted adaptation to the world market. Foreign companies still controlled mineral wealth or petroleum resources. *L'Afrique noire est mal partie* (Black Africa in Trouble) was the title of one apt study of the 1960s.[14] Politics disappointed many intellectuals. Arab leaders yearned for unity but generally could not institute pluralist governments at home. Vast and voluble India divided into cross-cutting communities of faith, class, and region, preserved government by discussion but remained ransom to vast reservoirs of poverty and village under-development. The British had re-infused its many jurisdictions with the notion that a common state could provide the possibility for letting its fragmented people preserve political identity.

Historians and political leaders debated the so-called legacy of colonialism. Was it an unmitigated evil like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* on a huge scale, in which arbitrary power necessarily blighted any initiative taken? Were those who led struggles for liberation all revolutionary heroes, as students in Paris or Berlin claimed in their 'tiers-mondisme' of the 1960s and 1970s, even if they then surrendered to self-aggrandisement, grandiose and impoverishing developmental schemes, and arbitrary power? Colonial rule had withheld decisive political responsibility: it had not allowed local assemblies to educate a new parliamentary class; it allowed the native best and the brightest to study philosophy in the metropole, but not to practice politics. It trained officers, intellectuals, and civil servants at best, but not party leaders. Defenders of the system had always argued that some day the colonial world would be ready for self-government, but that day was always in the future – and then one day, it was at hand. The rise and fall of overseas colonialism were one of the most important, if not the most essential, developments of world history in the century from approximately 1870 to 1970, and it is hardly an unblemished story.

The Cold War and a divided world

Decolonization played out against the growing polarization and tension of the Cold War. The United States and Britain on the one side, the Soviet Union on the other shared the objective of defeating the Axis, but had different visions for the future, even if both sides invoked the term democracy. Critical divisions began to emerge already before the end of the Second World War. The Russians grew suspicious at the West's waiting so long to open a Second Front in north-west Europe. Americans and British grew fearful that Moscow wished primarily to impose one-party rule on the areas of Europe its armies swept into.

Still, the months of impending and accomplished victory in 1945 brought hope for a new post-war order that culminated in the founding conference of the new United Nations organization at San Francisco from April through June 1945. Arduous allied negotiations had produced a plan for a General Assembly that was to include all fifty participating countries and a Security Council to address urgent questions of war and peace and would comprise five permanent members, the USA and USSR, France, Britain, and China, each with a veto right, plus a rotating representation of other states without vetoes. Collective security was a major strand of Franklin Roosevelt's hopes for the post-war world; the emerging UN was, in effect, his monument, and the spirit it incorporated marked the work of its major agencies (including UNESCO) and the ongoing discussions that led to the Declaration of Human Rights by 1947. For all the disappointments and divisions that would follow, the idea of an international civil society based on political and social rights remained a normative summons to global hopes for peace and freedom.

But difficult post-war issues had already emerged. Faced with potential discord after military victory, Roosevelt attempted to secure the basis for post-war cooperation at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 (Plate 33); the Russians won strategic concessions in the north-eastern provinces of China (Manchuria) bordering the Soviet Union as a price for promising their entry into the Pacific War three months after the end of the European war, a commitment they met to the day (which turned out to be two days following the destruction of Hiroshima). A compromise was patched together to overcome the rival

governments that both sides had sponsored in liberated Poland. The reinstated Warsaw government would be based mostly on the Russian-sponsored Polish committee of national liberation, although one quarter of its members would be drawn from the Polish government in exile that had so antagonized Stalin by refusing to accept his frontier demands and accusing the Soviets of executing thousands of Polish officers in the Katyn forest, a charge that was indignantly denied but turned out to be accurate. The new government in Poland, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, was to be subject to free elections. Eastern Europeans would later complain that Yalta amounted to a condominium in which Washington abandoned the liberty of their region to Moscow in return for a free hand in the West. In fact, Roosevelt and Churchill felt that they could wrest no more satisfactory a settlement given the presence of Russian soldiers up to the Elbe River.

Washington and London grew alarmed when throughout 1945 and 1946 communist elements resorted to intimidation and violence against the pro-Westerners in Romania and Poland. The agreement reached at the Potsdam Conference of July 1945, which provided for occupying Germany as a united country and drawing reparations from its industrial plan, also broke down such that inter-allied cooperation became virtually inexistent. The British and Americans feared Russian subversion of any new all-German institutions; they were frightened by the evident conformity the Russians were imposing over their own zone through a new Socialist Unity party. The Russians and Anglo-Americans also quarrelled over Iran – both sides were scheduled to leave that country, which they had jointly occupied during the war – but the Russians were supporting communist secessionists in Azerbaijan province and withdrew only after Truman threatened a major crisis. The Russians also distrusted American control of the atomic weapon. The American offer for internationalization of nuclear production (the Acheson-Lilienthal Plan) proposed US atomic disarmament but only at the end of a long process in which other countries placed their production facilities under international control. As presented to the UN by American negotiator Bernard Baruch, the plan further demanded that the Security Council veto be set aside in enforcement issues. Soviet nuclear research was well enough underway not to have to accept what Moscow considered an asymmetric US proposal. And, on the other hand, it was probably utopian to expect that American authorities would surrender what they considered the ultimate resource of their nation's post-war power.[15]

Tension grew also in East Asia. The occupation of Japan did not give rise to the same conflict between the former coalition partners since Washington had rejected the last-minute Soviet request for a zone of post-war administration. Japan's future as a non-military, but crucial, American security partner with a unique fusion of liberal parliamentary and bureaucratic politics emerged out of General MacArthur's proconsular role in helping to shape post-war institutions. After a resurgence of left-wing and labour protest in 1947, MacArthur reined in economic restructuring. Organized labour would negotiate extensive employee security provisions, but only at the firm, not the national level. A Marxist intellectual culture would remain strong, and student protests against the close ties with Washington would shake the political scene in 1960, but this opposition in effect remained only perpetual opposition.[16]

The future of China was troubling, but neither Moscow nor Washington could shape the outcome of that massive struggle. The conflict between nationalists and communists, barely adjourned to meet the Japanese threat, was bound to resume. As the Japanese moved toward surrender, Stalin signed a treaty with Chiang's government in return for strategic and railroad concessions in Manchuria and a Chinese guarantee that Mongolia could subsist as an independent state. A strong state run by Mao Zedong (whose peasant-oriented revolutionary mission had already clashed with the disastrous Soviet wager on collaboration with Chiang in the mid 1920s) was not likely to grant the same concessions, and the Soviet leader placed first priority on establishing a clear-cut sphere of territorial security. Moscow would consistently urge restraint on Mao even as the Civil War resumed and the Communists enlarged their areas of control. Meanwhile, the United States, which had unsuccessfully urged a mediated solution in the Marshall mission of 1946, watched as Chiang's control of China disintegrated under his miscalculated efforts to seize immediate military control in Manchuria and the North, endemic corruption, and advancing hyperinflation with its destruction of a money economy. By 1948, the Communist forces moved to open battles and won a striking series of military successes in central and then southern China.

As the Nationalists fled to Taiwan, and Mao announced the establishment of the People's Republic on 1 October 1949 in Beijing's Tienanmen Square, the Truman administration seemed initially inclined to accept history's verdict and to leave 'Formosa' to its own defence. But the commitment of the Republican Right to 'free China', the intensity of Cold War politics, and the intervention of the PRC in the Korean War precluded a simple policy of disinterest. Instead the 'loss of China' became a domestic issue, and the 'old China hands' in the State Department were scapegoated by Senator Joseph McCarthy and other Republicans, even as General MacArthur called for enlarging the Korean War to China itself, using atomic weapons, if appropriate.

As for the new Chinese regime, isolation and the devastation of the country he inherited led Mao to solicit a thirty-year treaty of friendship and aid with Moscow in February 1950 even at the cost of renouncing claims to Mongolia. The Chinese secured an aid package and the help of Soviet technical advisers. The treaty could hardly be the last word, however. If a smaller Yugoslavia (albeit aided by the United States) could defy the Soviets, a huge China could not be a predictable ally. But for the next years with the Cold War at its height and an open war in Korea from June 1950 until July 1953, the latent tensions between Moscow and Beijing remained subordinate to a sense of ideological common cause.[17]

If Washington moved hesitantly toward an anticommunist stance in East Asia, it had already become deeply committed to the policy of 'containment' in Europe. While Stalin and his advisers found the Truman administration less committed to conciliation and cooperation than Roosevelt seemed to have been, the British and Americans perceived a Soviet threat to impose unchecked Communist Party control in what Moscow described as the peoples' democracies of Eastern Europe and to drive pro-Western leaders from any influence in that

region. The behaviour of each side confirmed the other's fears. At his famous speech on receiving an honorary degree at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946, Churchill declared that an 'iron curtain' was descending over Europe. It became the West's metaphor for the next four decades.

The ambiguous political agendas of 1945–46 – when in France and Italy in the West, and Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia in Eastern Europe, communist and non-communist power sharing still seemed possible – ended by mid-1947. Communists and their affiliated trade unions were either rebuffed or decided on a resolute opposition in the West. In Central and Eastern Europe, members of agrarian and popular parties were tried, imprisoned, sometimes executed, and the significant socialist parties painfully split over the issue of collaboration in so-called peoples' fronts that their communist allies would dominate.

In Greece, outright civil war began, provoked in part by a dubious 1946 plebiscite confirming the monarchy, then encouraged, not really by Stalin, but the Yugoslav communist leader Josep Brodz Tito, whose resistance to Moscow's discipline would make him a hated heretic in Kremlin eyes by 1948 and an ally of opportunity for Washington. When in February 1947, the British told Washington they could no longer subsidize the Government of Greece's struggle against communist guerrillas, the US president enunciated the so-called Truman Doctrine, which provided for assisting countries under attack by armed subversion. However, Germany was the major issue. With lack of unity, uncertainty about reparations, and inability to agree on a monetary reform, the economy continued to languish. After a frustrating Council of Foreign Ministers session in Moscow, the US president announced that Washington was prepared to help any regime fighting armed subversive groups. In June 1947, American Secretary of State Marshall proposed that the United States would provide cooperative European regimes access to what would amount to about $13 billion worth of imports over the next four years. As important as the aid itself (over 2 per cent of American GNP and initially a sizable percentage of what Europeans could devote to reconstruction) was the incentive it provided for further Western European cooperation – and the clear line it ended up drawing against the communist regimes in the East and the communist parties in the West.[18]

With the fall of 1947, and events of 1948, Europe, at least, became effectively divided. The Russians felt that participation in the Marshall Plan required too much control and withdrew from the conference, forcing their East European governments to follow their lead (Plate 34). They summoned Communist Party leaders to Poland in September and instructed them that there would now be a period, no longer of cooperation, but of long conflict with the West. In February 1948, the local communists forced a coup in Prague, but two months later elections in Italy confirmed the defeat of the communists. Europe was moving toward division. The Western Allies finally did carry through a monetary reform in the zones of Germany under their control and summoned a constitutional convention to create a founding document. The emerging West German State was matched by an East German one in 1949.[19]

The temperature of the conflict grew dangerously high. When the Yugoslav communists rejected Russian leadership, the schism provoked a massive reaction as all the countries now engaged in political trials against Titoists. Indeed, under the new ideological reaction, political trials became a depressingly familiar feature in all the Eastern European countries, and non-communists, or by 1950–52 loyal communists targeted as Titoists, were forced into abject confessions, imprisoned, and sometimes executed. The wave of persecutions crested in 1952, as Stalin seemed on the verge of a major persecution of alleged Jewish conspirators, including intellectuals and even his physicians, with only the Soviet leader's death in March 1953 interrupting the ominous preparations. The United States meanwhile was caught up in its own rites of political purification, known as 'McCarthyism', as espionage revelations and the climate of the Cold War allowed the demagogic senator from Wisconsin (and other exploiters of anti-communist reaction) to try to impose a climate of political conformity.[20]

Both sides rushed to arm, and the United States helped to organize the NATO alliance in the West and proposed to its allies to accept German rearmament, finally approved by 1955. The Soviets responded with the Warsaw Pact. Fearing the massive land strength of the Soviets, the Allies responded with nuclear deterrence. When the Russians exploded a nuclear device in 1949, Washington pressed ahead with a crash programme to develop hydrogen weapons.

From 1950 to 1953, military confrontation seemed imminent. Indeed Stalin accepted the proposals of Kim Il Sung to try to reunify Korea by force, as it was believed that the United States would not intervene. But in fact the Americans did enter Korea with the agreement of the United Nations' Security Council and fought a devastating war to an inconclusive armistice in 1953. Underestimating how important China considered the stakes, Washington's policy-makers and generals were shocked when the Chinese entered the war in November 1950, but US-led troops managed to stabilize the front by the next spring.[21]

In such a context, it was hardly surprising that American views of decolonization struggles changed. The United States initially encouraged decolonization, urging the British to leave India, then Palestine, pressing the Dutch to give up their rearguard action to hold Indonesia, and ultimately aligning against the British and French during the Suez conflict. Originally the United States wanted the French out of Indochina, but once communist Chinese troops reached the southern border of China, it seemed more important to prop up the French position against the Vietminh than encourage home rule. Still, when Israel, France, and Britain conspired to re-seize the Suez Canal from Nasser, after he nationalized it forcibly, President Eisenhower ostentatiously worked to compel British withdrawal. American objectives were ambiguous. In theory pro-Third World, the US Government was reluctant to accept the fact that national movements were also effective and very loyal communists.

The emerging Third World powers tried to escape falling under the patronage of the United States or the ideology of the Soviets. Their self-proclaimed non-alignment vexed John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's secretary of state, who tended to see the Cold War as a Manichaean moral confrontation. Still, between 1953 and 1955, there were hopes for a 'thaw' in communist policies after the death of Stalin and the advent of an uneasy 'collective leadership'. The new rulers relaxed the iron grip of the secret police and

executed their colleague, Lavrenti Beria, who controlled this feared agency; they stopped the anti-Semitic purge being prepared, and relaxed the pace of forced industrialization and collectivization in the satellites. By 1956, Khrushchev denounced the crimes and errors of Stalin to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, a speech that helped to undermine ideas of party infallibility throughout communist ranks. The armistice ending the Korean War was concluded in the summer of 1953, the Indochina conflict was apparently resolved a year later; in 1955, the Russians agreed to an Austrian State Treaty that ended the occupation and provided for a neutral but clearly non-communist regime. After a flurry of notes about German reunification (probably the result of rival policies within the Kremlin), each side fully accredited its respective German ally and stabilized its respective military alliance.

Was there a chance at détente? Eisenhower met Khrushchev and Bulganin, and journalists celebrated 'the spirit of Geneva'. The Soviet leader, who finally consolidated his supremacy by 1956, gave renewed signs of flexibility, but he was not independent enough or at least not inclined to dismantle the Soviet grip on the states already in the Soviet orbit. When in October 1956, reformist Hungarian communists giddily yielded to their citizens' desire to secede from the Warsaw Pact and liberalize the regime, the Soviets invaded to suppress what became a full-scale uprising. The post-Stalin 'thaw' was brought to a halt throughout the socialist world. Instead Khrushchev decided to reinforce the status of Russia's most industrialized but vulnerable protectorate, the East German regime, and opened what became a protracted crisis over the status of East and West Berlin by threatening in 1958 to give the GDR the right to control traffic to Berlin, still officially under four-power control.

The new threat over Berlin reflected what we can now see was a period of confused departures in the history of the Cold War and indeed of world politics – initiatives that were contradictory, might have led to détente, but were still too easily reversed. For the first time since the Second World War, the United States had to face a potential adverse balance of payments situation from the end of the 1950s, which it attributed to the cost of maintaining its troops abroad. Eisenhower's effort to advance personal diplomacy at a new summit conference in 1960 was marred by the Soviet Union's capture and display of a U-2 pilot who was shot down on a covert intelligence-gathering mission high over Russian air space. The American president had to finish his term in 1961 with no real agreements but a vague warning against the role of 'the military-industrial complex' in American politics. His successor, John F. Kennedy, seemed young and innovative but fully committed to continuing an even more effective Cold War struggle, which would soon lead to his supporting the disastrous invasion of American-based Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba.

On his side, Khrushchev was preoccupied about Mao's ill-conceived 'Great Leap Forward', forced collectivization (and the massive famine that accompanied it), and he recalled Soviet advisors in 1960. The ensuing polemics and rift between the two great Communist powers became a long-term feature of the socialist world. Mao's unleashing of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966, which convulsed China for a decade and seemed to aim at destroying all political and remaining social and cultural hierarchies, was a frightening spectacle, not only in the West but in the European communist world.

Khrushchev's direction of Soviet and world communist politics was hardly consistent, however (which his colleagues would recognize when they peacefully removed him from power in late 1964). He under-estimated the learning capacity of President Kennedy when they met at Vienna in spring 1961 (Plate 35), although he correctly gambled that NATO would accept the new status quo when he allowed the East Germans, who faced a growing desertion of productive citizens to the West across the still-open inner-Berlin frontier, to erect the Berlin Wall. And after the American debacle at the Bay of Pigs, Khrushchev was emboldened to change the overall strategic balance and place missiles in Cuba, a wager on a windfall gain that led the world to the brink of nuclear confrontation in the fall of 1962.

Both sides were given pause by the brush with catastrophe, and by mid-decade it seemed finally that détente might resume. Foreign policy in the German Federal Republic was moving from the grip of Adenauer's Christian Democratic Union to the now reformist Social Democrats, who under Willy Brandt were preparing the concepts of Ostpolitik or negotiated coexistence with the East German regime. Throughout the Soviet bloc, ideas of mild economic decentralization and market-oriented reforms were gaining favour. Social theorists suggested that both sides might 'converge' toward mixed economies and welfare states. Nonetheless, the growing momentum for reform proved too risky for the cautious Soviet bureaucracy. When, in spring 1968, Czechoslovak party reformers sought democratic reforms and, buoyed by public enthusiasm, ultimately hinted at independence from the Warsaw Pact, Khrushchev's successor, Leonid Brezhnev, decided the movement must be quashed lest it begin spreading (Plate 36). The 'Brezhnev Doctrine' justified Warsaw Pact intervention if socialism was endangered by counter-revolution. As had happened with the suppression of the Hungarian revolt twelve years earlier, the Warsaw Pact intervention and the removal of the Prague reformers disillusioned many communists who had set their hopes on the spreading momentum of liberalization. While in 1956 defections largely involved Western communists, after 1968, the intellectuals and party members throughout Eastern Europe began losing their faith.

The end of an era

From the late 1960s to the late 1980s, the premises of world politics were transformed in a way that historians have only begun to analyse. At the level of international politics, the changes were logical enough and might well have been predicted. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and President Nixon spectacularly reversed America's long boycott of China and established relations in 1971. Although the new rapprochement had little immediate effect on Hanoi's policy, the United States extricated itself from Viet Nam, abandoning the South to takeover by the communist North in 1975. Mao himself called a pause to the Cultural Revolution and his successors, above all Deng Xiaoping, moved cautiously but decisively toward economic policies that combined planning and market incentives. Foreign investment and Chinese entrepreneurship unleashed a

process of growth that has transformed the country in the succeeding decades. Party control was challenged by the great manifestations at Tiananmen Square in July 1989, but successfully repressed, and the party managed to keep a growing sphere of political debate and fundamental economic upheaval under its own continuous tutelage.

Britain's return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty was an emblematic step in this remarkable ascent. But it also symbolized how profoundly the relationship between former world masters and subjects had been changed as the twentieth century closed. Formal colonialism ended with the Portuguese military's renunciation of the country's remaining possessions in the mid-1970s. The remaining specimen of the older variant of land-based empire ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union from 1989 to 1991. The communist system had prolonged the possibilities for empire beyond 1917, but for reasons discussed below, could not do so after the 1980s. What critics called neo-colonialism – the domination of Third World economies by the West – did not disappear, but the balance of economic power between the industrialized West and the other world regions changed fundamentally.

'Third World' critics and theorists from Latin America had elaborated a so-called dependency theory (see Chapter 1), which argued that the prosperity of the industrial countries resulted from prolonging the relative backwardness of the non-industrialized countries in order to benefit from cheap labour and under-priced commodities. Such an analysis informed the appeals for redistribution of resources and wealth proposed by the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Opponents of such a prescription criticized instead the developing world's misconceived vast development projects, squandered resources, disincentives for agricultural production, and corruption and repression. It would be an indication of the changed terms of debate that a leading theorist of dependency theory in the 1960s would introduce successful market-oriented reforms as President of Brazil in the 1990s.

After almost thirty years of unprecedented real economic growth, Western countries underwent a difficult decade in the 1970s. The four-fold increase in the price of cheap petroleum decided by the oil-producing countries in early 1974 contributed to both inflation and deflationary pressures. Under the pressures of inflation, the long era of post-war capital-labour solidarity, forged after the Second World War to reconstruct the European economy, began to fray under the pressures of simultaneous inflation and unemployment. The United States, which from 1948 until its involvement in the Vietnam War in the late 1960s had effectively underwritten the international economy by means of the Marshall Plan, military assistance, and private investment, faced mounting resistance to the reserve-currency status of the dollar. In August 1971, President Nixon abandoned the long-term American commitment to maintaining a gold parity for the dollar and forced a re-negotiation of exchange rates, and finally renounced any commitment to purchase foreign currencies for dollars in spring 1973.[22]

Although it could not be recognized at the time, in the 1970s the world economic and territorial system was entering a new phase of development that has only accelerated in the quarter century since. Both capitalist and communist economic systems were put under strain; the growth of a whole new technological sector, information technology and the computer, coupled with the movement of traditional heavy industry to East Asia or Latin America, meant the need to remould the labour movement in the West and East. The First World or the industrialized West saw the slow attrition of its classical industrial labour movement. The Second World or the state socialist economies of the former Soviet bloc simply disintegrated, and what was once known as the Third World tended to bifurcate, with one group of economies successfully industrializing and another falling further behind world standards. Massive waves of new migrants streamed from rural areas to the vast cities of hard-pressed developing nations, and from Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, and the Middle East to Europe and North America. International financial organizations controlling capital and production in vastly separated sites across the world provided a new framework for the economy, far less tied to traditional territorial authorities than previously. National powers in Western Europe tended to devolve 'down' to the regions of the nation-state or 'up' to the European Community (later called the European Union), which significantly enhanced its authority under the striking leadership of Jacques Delors during the 1980s. The United States, which had seemed financially over-committed in Viet Nam and Europe during the Nixon and Carter administrations, enjoyed a remarkable surge of economic growth under President Reagan and his successors, in large measure because it took such a commanding lead in the new computer-based service industries as well as the popular products of a world consumer culture. In addition, the great centre of international state socialism, the Soviet Union, in effect dismantled its own institutions and dissolved the last bastion of old-style imperial control.

How did this remarkable and totally unexpected outcome occur? Once reformist economic and political initiatives seemed to spin out of Communist Party control in the late 1960s, the Soviet leader decided that he could at least assert Russian superpower parity on the basis of the country's huge military capacity, including missiles and nuclear strength. He did secure American willingness to negotiate a series of agreements with NATO members – the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties (SALT I and II) and the Helsinki and Madrid accords that emerged from the multilateral Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The Helsinki Accords provided for the recognition of existing borders (thus protecting East Germany), but also committed the Soviets to agree to guarantees of human rights – a pledge often violated, but one that provided a new generation of critical intellectuals in Eastern Europe with a foothold for organization and protest. Even if suppressed, Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and, to a far greater extent, the Solidarity movement of 1980 in Poland revealed the growth of dissent within the Soviet bloc. At the same time, Brezhnev's wager on preserving superpower parity on the basis of military power also faltered. The Soviet Union's army became demoralized and mired down in the effort to control Afghanistan. Despite major protests at home, NATO members resolved to match Moscow's deployment of intermediate range missiles that would have possibly subjected Europe to nuclear blackmail. The percentage of Soviet GNP needed to preserve Russia's arsenal was also far higher than the 4 per cent or so required in the West, and the Soviet civilian economy faced grave difficulties during the 1980s. After some brief efforts to grind greater

productivity out of central planning following Brezhnev's death in 1982, and by his two short-term successors, Mikhail Gorbachov (Plate 37) decided he must loosen the grip of state socialism and introduced policies of *perestroika* ('reconstruction', i.e. decentralization and market reforms) and *glasnost* (political openness or transparency). The reforms, necessary though they were, led to consequences that he could hardly predict, including the final dismantling of the communist bloc as it had been established since the end of the First World War. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, after an abortive coup by foes of reform in 1991, in effect the last of the old land empires had come to an end, and with it, an era of political control that had marked the period from the late nineteenth century.[23]

What forces for international cohesion might now secure world order? For almost a century, from approximately 1870 to the 1960s, the age of imperialism had linked what used to be called the First and Third Worlds. Imperialism and the world economy had confronted tribal structures in western and southern Africa and the Middle East with the centres of finance and industry in Europe and North America. It had prolonged but then destroyed the remaining land-based multinational empires – three of which had disintegrated after the First World War, and the last of which had fallen apart at the end of the 1980s. If indeed there remained new transnational forces that might help the diverse peoples of the world preserve peace and prosperity and a sense of collective dignity, these forces derived less perhaps from their respective political units, than from continuing prosperity and NGOs, who served as trustees for the environment, for human rights, and mitigating disease and hunger.[24] In effect, the NGOs concerned with environment and human rights were the transnational agents that equilibrated the for-profit firms that restlessly drove the international economy forward. Perhaps such political structures as the European Union or NATO would also provide international order.

The United States remained clearly the world's greatest conventional power, but its political agenda was reduced largely to the international enhancement of market democracies, i.e. a type of liberalism that would be favourable to the continued progress of global economic forces. As the twentieth century closed, America was less an empire than a consortium of banks, media giants, a culture industry, innovative computer companies, and enterprising providers of financial services. But it became unclear whether the United States could or would exercise a stabilizing or disruptive role based on its at least temporary military primacy. The devastating assault on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 11 September 2001 was a shock that left American politics hostage to unforeseeable and contradictory feelings of supremacy and vulnerability. Although most of its allies accepted Washington's military intervention in Afghanistan to hunt down the training grounds of the Al Qaeda 'network' that claimed responsibility for the attack, the subsequent American and British invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003 drew dissent from some key NATO allies, France and Germany above all. The continued military involvement in turbulent Iraqi politics also divided Americans at home. The United States might conceivably persevere in an effort to take on a wider imperial role, but it was also possible that its volatile public opinion might back away from such an exercise of power, which was unlikely in any case to prevail in a world in which the desire for order and affluence had to coexist with the claims of militant faith. Was it not possible that by the beginning of the twenty-first century the world community might learn finally to live without empire? This was a revolutionary possibility but also a disorderly one.

NOTES

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4. By the late 1980s, critical Israeli historians abandoned the original Israeli claim that the Palestinians had fled merely under instructions from Arab authorities who wagered on a rapid reconquest. The current debate among historians revolves more around the issue of whether plans for a forced transfer motivated Yishuv (Jewish) authorities from the outset, or expulsions gained momentum village by village during the armed clashes. See E. L. Rogan and A. Schlaim (eds), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, Cambridge, 2001; B. Morris, in his contribution, 'Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948,' documents widespread if 'haphazard thinking about transfer before 1937 and the virtual consensus' thereafter, denies any 'master plan' was applied during the war (pp. 48–49), but also sees more concerted expulsion than when he wrote *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, Cambridge, 1987. For background see also M. J. Cohen, *Retreat from the Mandate: The Making of British Policy, 1936–1945*, New York, 1978, and Cohen, *Palestine to Israel: From Mandate to Independence*, London, 1988; B. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917–1929*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1991.
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