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| **World Wars** |

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| “A War to End All Wars” (1914-1918)The **First World War** is historically important for its causes and effects more so than specific events surrounding actual battles.  This page will deal with the long-range and more immediate causes of World War I, the technological advances created during the war, some aspects of WWI battles, and the far-reaching effects of the conflict on Europe and the rest of the world. Text Box: Western Front  http://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/ww1map.gifEurope as a Powder-KegThe **fundamental causes** of the World War I, or the Great War as it was known at the time, were Imperialism, Militarism, Alliance System, and Nationalism.

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| **Causes of World War IM.A.I.N.** |
| **Militarism**  | Imperialism and nationalism led to increased production of goods and economic stability in these countries, which resulted in an arms race.  The aggressive attitude of this policy drove them into producing more weaponry, such as strong navies and armored vehicles.   |
| **Alliance System** | The **alliances** of Europe were formed for protection against each other.  However, the **Triple Entente** and the **Triple Alliance** very quickly took aggressive postures towards one another.  This is due in large part to the lack of any global organization designed to promote peace among the nations of the world.   |
| **Imperialism** | European countries divided up Africa and Asia to strengthen the political and economic power of the mother country.  This resulted in competition among European countries. |
| **Nationalism** | Nationalism was both a uniting force and a divisive one.  It resulted in Germany and Italy uniting into strong nations, and also caused the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary.  |

At the turn of the century, war was imminent.  As nationalism weakened the **Ottoman Empire**, the **Slavic** peoples of the **Balkan** region struggled to free themselves from Ottoman control.  **Serbia** declared independence in 1878, allying themselves to Russia.  Serbia then wanted to unite with **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, which were controlled by Austria-Hungary.  Serbia could count on Russia's support, and Austria-Hungary could count on Germany's.  Because of the high tensions in this area, the Balkans became known as the "**Powder Keg of Europe**."   All that was needed to ignite the world into war was a spark.The SparkIn 1914, Austrian **Archduke Franz Ferdinand**and his wife were visiting **Sarajevo**, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina.  **Gavrilo Princip**, of the Serbian nationalist group called the**Black Hand**, assassinated the Archduke and his wife.  Austria-Hungary made threats to Serbia, whom they blamed for the assassination.  Russia supported Serbia, and readied their military for war.  Germany declared war on Russia, and on France, Russia's ally. Germany then invaded Belgium as a prelude to invading France.  This resulted in Great Britain declaring war on Germany, which was the start of World War I.Aspects of World War IMost of World War I was a stalemate.  Entrenched positions on both sides were only able to move a few miles in a battle that lasted the better part of a year.  The conditions of **trench warfare** were brutal; trench-foot, disease, lice, and inadequate supplies made fighting difficult.  Advances in **technology** also played a major role.  The machine gun, the tank, the airplane, the submarine, and the use of poison gas drastically changed the face of modern war, and resulted in large numbers of casualties.The Aftermath and its Impact on Subsequent EventsOverwhelming odds and weariness forced an end to the fighting with the defeat of the Central Powers.  The peace conference that followed was headed by the  "Big Four,"  **David Lloyd George** of Britain, **Georges Clemenceau** of France, **Vittorio Orlando** of Italy, and **Woodrowhttp://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/The_Big_Four.jpg Wilson** of the United States.  Together, they drafted the **Treaty of Versailles****,** signed in 1919, which officially ended the war.  Wilson tried to institute his **14 Points** but was largely rejected.  However, the **League of Nations** was created as a result and attempted to act as the peacekeeper of Europe.  Unfortunately, it was weak and ineffectual due to the absence of the United States.  The treaty, however, was more about revenge, than it was about forging a lasting peace.  Germany was forced to accept total responsibility for the start of the war.  They also were forced to pay huge reparations, and give over vast amounts of territory.  The start of **World War II** is a direct result of the harsh treatment of Germany after World War I.  World War II (1939-1945)The rise of the **fascist****Adolf Hitler** and the formation of German **totalitarianism** is http://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/Hitler-Mussolini-in-car.jpgdirectly related to the Versailles Treaty.  Hitler blamed the treaty for Germany's economic trouble and made a call for German patriotism.  The **Nazi Party** quickly came to power in the early 1930's and used terror to achieve its goal of a strong German nation.  The most obvious example of this is **anti-Semitism**, the blaming of the Jewish people for many German problems.  **Benito Mussolini**, the fascist leader of Italy, had a similar rise and utilized the same policies.  Without the negative influence of the Versailles Treaty, Germans and Italians may not have supported the oppressive regimes of Hitler and Mussolini.  Causes of World War IIWorld War II was fought for many of the same reasons http://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/stuka.jpgas the First World War.  The **Axis Powers, Germany, Italy, and Japan**, were hungry for territory and resources.  Institutions like the League of  Nations, and peace treaties such as the **Kellogg-Briand Pact**, were weak and ineffectual.  The immediate cause of WWII was the policy of **appeasement** adopted by the **Allied Powers** of Europe, and eventually the United States.  Germany, as it had previous to WWI, was using **nationalism** and **militarism** to imperialize surrounding areas.  Austria and portions of Czechoslovakia were taken by Germany in direct violation of the dictations of the Versailles Treaty.  Likewise, Italy had taken Ethiopia, and Japan had imperialized much of China.  Under the leadership of **Neville Chamberlain**, British Prime Minister, a conference was called in **Munich** in 1938.  Appeasement became the official policy when Hitler was allowed to keep what was already taken if he promised to stop taking territory from that point forward.  The futile hopes of appeasement were quickly dashed when Hitler annexed the remainder of Czechoslovakia.  The worst fears were realized when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939 using the **blitzkrieg** tactic.  Blitzkrieg, or Lightening Warfare  used all available military resources to attack the target simultaneously.  The invasion of Poland marks the beginning of World War II.http://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/axis%201942.jpgAspects of World War IIWWII is divided into two areas, **the European Theater** and the **Pacific Theater**. In Europe, Germany had quickly taken over large amounts of territory.  France fell after French and British troops were pushed off of the European mainland at **Dunkirk**.  Then, Germany failed to win the **Battle of Britain**http://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/D-Day.jpg in the skies over England.  Italian and German troops gained control of the Mediterranean and the North coast of Africa.  Germany also attacked the **Soviet Union**, despite the secret agreement between Hitler and **Josef Stalin**, which stated neither would attack the other.  This proved Germany's undoing as it had in World War I, as a two-front war is nearly impossible to win.  The **Battle of Stalingrad** was the turning point of the war in Europe.  After this Soviet victory, Allied troops retook Africa and then move on to take the Italian peninsula.  Mussolini's Italy was considered the weak point of Europe.  After the daring D-Day invasion of Normandy, and Germany's last-ditch effort in the **Battle of the Bulge**, it was only a matter of time before Berlin fell.  Hitler committed suicide as Soviet troops took the city in the spring of 1945.  The surviving Nazis that were captured were held accountable for their war crimes in the **Nuremburg Trials**.  The atrocities of the **Holocaust** would come to light, resulting in the execution of Nazi Party officials and ending the darkest segment of human history.   |

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| **Cold War** |

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| Why the Cold War was “cold?”The **Cold War** was a conflict between the **capitalist** and **communist**nations of the world that lasted from the end of **World War II** into the 1990's.  Problems created by the Cold War still exist today, although many of the combatant countries do not.  Capitalist nations are sometimes referred to as the First World, communist nations are called the Second World, and the developing nations of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia are often referred to the Third World.  This terminology, however, is becoming outdated because the titles reflect the Cold War conflict, which is now over.  The Cold War is rather ironic because the main instigators in the conflict, the United States and the **Soviet Union**, the **superpowers**, never actually engaged in open warfare with one another, hence the usage of the term “Cold War.”  This is not to say, however, that many lost their lives over what boiled down to economic and political ideology.  Causes of the Cold Warhttp://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/american-flag.gifhttp://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/Soviet.gifAn event that took less than one second to unfold shaped the remainder of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st.  The destruction of two Japanese cities, **Hiroshima** and **Nagasaki**, with the use of atomic bombs, ended WWII.  The unveiling of this super-weapon caused the Allied nations of the world to realign themselves in an effort to either gain access http://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/rul07858.gifto **atomic technology** or to secure it and keep it from others.  This arms race for atomic and then nuclear weaponry is considered a long-term cause of the Cold War.  There were a number of immediate causes at the end of WWII that were also responsible.  **Josef Stalin** refused to allow free elections in the Soviet-controlled territories and imposed communism instead, creating satellite states.  The United States, Great Britain, andhttp://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/26347.jpg France rejected the practices of Stalin.  Stalin was considered to be as untrustworthy, sinister, and evil as **Hitler** had been.  British Prime Minister **Winston Churchill** described the spread of communism and the control of Stalin by saying, *"A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victories. . . . From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an* ***iron curtain*** *has descended across the continent."* Europe was divided into eastern and western blocs.  President Truman settled on a policy of **containment** which is called the **Truman Doctrine**.  Containment was the idea that the spread of communism and Soviet control must be stopped, or contained.  Stalin viewed this as a threat, which created a conflict that would last nearly half a century.  http://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/berlin.airlift.jpgIn the aftermath of WWII, Europe was in a state of ruin, with people living in constant hunger and abject poverty.  The United States sought to relieve some of this suffering through economic aid called the **Marshall Plan**.  This aid packagesoviet missile included the rebuilding of Germany, which Stalin saw as a threat.  Therefore, Germany was divided into an eastern and western half.  The city of Berlin itself was also divided.  The western half of Germany and Berlin was rebuilt by the Marshall Plan, while the Soviet-controlled eastern portion was ignored. Stalin tried to keep Western aid out of Berlin, but failed when Allied planes flew around the clock missions for one year, supplying West Berlin.  The **Berlin Airlift** is considered the first victory for the west in the Cold War.  The Soviets went so far as to construct a wall in the center of the city in the 1960's.  The **Berlin Wall**'s stated purpose was to keep capitalism out, but was in reality a wall to keep people from escaping the brutal life under Soviet rule.  The policies of both sides created greater tension between thehttp://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/prop3.jpg superpowers and by the 1950's military alliances had been formed with each side expecting the other to attack.  The United States, Canada, and most of the free nations of Western Europe formed **NATO**, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.  Conversely, the Soviet Union created the **Warsaw Pact**, an alliance between the USSR and its satellite nations.  The satellite nations were more of a buffer zone used to protect from invasion than a true alliance system.  The military alliances also engaged in an escalating arms race in which each side tried to outpace the other in nuclear arms production and strength.  In fact, both sides had enough to destroy the planet ten times over in what Churchill called a "balance of terror."  Fortunately, neither side was willing to take the final step to actually firing upon the enemy in anger.  Major Events of the Cold War Throughout the Worldkhrushchev.jpg (3078 bytes)The Soviet Union had problems maintaining control over its satellite states.  Life was virtually unbearable despite the promises of communism, and any group willing to fight the Soviets had the support of the United States.  In 1956, shortly after taking power with the death of Stalin, **Nikita Khrushchev****,** ordered Soviet troops into **Hungary** to put down a rebellion.  Hungarian freedom fighters had believed the West would help.  It did not, which allowed the Soviet government uncontested control in eastern Europe.  In 1968, the Soviets invaded **Czechoslovakia** under the leadership of **Leonid Brezhnev****,** who claimed that the Soviet Union had the right to involve itself in the affairs of any communist country. This is known as the **Brezhnev Doctrine**.The world teetered on the brink of destruction during the **Cuban**Fidel Castro **Missile Crisis** of 1961.  **Fidel Castro** had allied himself with the Soviet Union for economic support and protection from the United States.  The U.S. had been involved in the **Bay of Pigs** invasion, which had failed.  Khrushchev then began building Soviet missile installations in Cuba.  Upon discovery, the United States confronted the Soviet Union and demanded the missiles be removed.  For nearly two weeks, nuclear war was imminent.  Eventually, diplomacy succeeded and war was averted. The **Korean War** was the first instance of open warfare which pitted communism against capitalism.  The U.S. believed in the **domino theory****,** which stated that nations sharing borders with communist countries were top right:  Gregorio A. Limjoco II, Jr. during the Korean War.  Taken in Korea.in imminent danger of falling under the sway of that country.  North Korea had become a communist state with the backing of **Mao Zedong's** China.  South Korea had chosen democracy in the wake of WWII.  In 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea by crossing the **38th Parallel**, the latitude line which divided the Korean peninsula.  The invasion forced the **United Nations** into involvement with UN forces being comprised largely of American troops.  American involvement brought **China** into the war which raged back and forth across the 38th Parallel for three years of brutal fighting, often in sub-zero conditions.  In 1953, an **armistice**, or end to conflict, was signed which re-established the 38th parallel as the border between North and South Korea.  Therefore, three years of war resulted in absolutely nothing. The **Vietnam Conflict**was similar to the Korean War.  Communist Northern Vietnam had invaded democratic Southern Vietnam in the early 1960's.  Northern forces, the **Viet Cong**, were under the leadership of **Ho Chi Minh** and were receiving aid from the Soviet Union and China.  As guerrilla tactics were proving effective against American forces, the U.S. escalated the conflict by sending in more troops.  This **escalation,** and the subsequent invasions of Cambodia and Laos, turned the American public against its government.  Finally, under the leadership of Richard Nixon, American troops left Vietnam, ending the war in the early 1970's. The Cold War experienced an easing of tension in the 1970's called **détente**.  However, this relative peace was shattered with the Soviet **invasion of Afghanistan** in 1979.  The USSR was forcibly exerting its power in a effort to establish Afghanistan as a communist state.  For ten years, a poorly trained and equipped Soviet army was repeatedly beaten by Afghan guerrilla forces being supplied by the United States.  The Soviet economy was completely disrupted and the Soviet public demanded an end to the war.  Many comparisons can be made with this conflict and the one between the United States and Vietnam. The Collapse of CommunismMichail GorbachevCracks began to appear in the iron curtain by the mid-1980's.  Movements in many of the satellite nations were calling for change. Most notably was the role played by **Lech Walesa** of Poland and his **Solidarity** movement.   Under the leadership of **Mikhail Gorbachev**, the Soviet Union did make some attempts at reform and an easing of communist hard-line policies.  **Perestroika** was a complete overhaul in the structure of the Soviet government and economy.  Another reform policy, called **Glasnost**, was the creation of an open atmosphere in national and global affairs.  Despite the efforts at change, the Soviet Union had already weakened to the point where it was not able to recover.  A major sign of this was its loss of control of East Germany.  In 1989, the **Berlin Wall** was literally torn apart by the citizens of both East and West Berlin.  The fall of the wall and the reunification of Germany was one of the most dramatic episodes in 20th century history.  By the end of the 1980's, Gorbachev was blamed for the decline of the Soviet Union.  In an attempt to regain power, he began reversing some of his reforms, and attempted to return to hard-line communism.  His biggest critic, **Boris Yeltsin**, called on the nationalistic pride of Russians and demanded Gorbachev's http://www.regentsprep.org/regents/global/themes/conflict/images/Breaking-down-Berlin-Wall-1989.jpgresignation.  Following Yeltsin's lead, many of the satellite states called for independence.  Gorbachev was close to giving in, which terrified conservative communists still in the government.  These hard-liners attempted a military **coup d'état** in 1991, but failed after a total lack of support on the part of the military and the public.  Yeltsin saw this as his opportunity and denounced the leaders of the coup in what is known as the **Russian Revolution of 1991**. Yeltsin went on to declare Russia an independent state.  The authority of the Soviet Union was discarded, and communism came to an abrupt end in Eastern Europe.  Yeltsin was elected president of the newly formed **Commonwealth of Independent States****,** which included Russia and many of the former republics of the Soviet Union. |