FIFTH EDITION

THE WORLD SINCE 1945

A HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

WAYNE C. McWILLIAMS &
HARRY PIOTROWSKI

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In Memoriam

Bill Sladek
1938–1993

friend and colleague

■ Preface to the Fifth Edition

The events since the late 1980s not only brought the Cold War to a close, but continued to transform the world. The age of post–World War II superpower rivalry had ended. With it came the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its military alliance in Eastern Europe, along with agreements to drastically reduce the nuclear arsenals of the United States and the successor states to the Soviet Union.

There were other significant developments. For more than forty years, international competition had been largely military and ideological in character; in the 1990s, it became primarily economic in nature, and once again blocs began to solidify. In East Asia there was economic boom and bust; China experienced phenomenal economic growth, while a host of other Asian nations experienced severe depressions. Economic globalization continued at an ever swifter pace in the 1990s, but its negative impact on many Third World nations and on the environment became an international issue. The 1990s saw attempts to resolve lingering problems, such as civil strife in Central America, contention between North and South Korea, and the quest for nonracial democracy in South Africa. Efforts again were made to establish the foundations of representative governments in parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Africa continued to limp along on the treacherous road to economic progress, plagued with civil wars and political strife in places such as the People's Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe.

With the end of the Cold War, the main focus in nuclear weapons discussions emphasis shifted from disarmament of the superpowers to nuclear nonproliferation. In all these endeavors, the United Nations sought to play the role for which it was initially created. All the while, however, civil strife, brought about by a reassertion of ethnic differences, emerged with a force not seen since the days before World War II.

Wayne C. McWilliams
Harry Piotrowski

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Introduction

A survey of current world conditions and a reading of the recent past reveal that the world is neither a fair nor a friendly place. Insurrections and wars abound, and more than half the world's inhabitants live in misery and hunger while others live in comfort and luxury. In this age of modern science and technology, of space exploration and heart transplants, how does one account for the absence of peace and the prevalence of poverty in a world of plenty? What are the roots of the perilous condition of human affairs? Today's students, young and old, must ask and seek to answer these questions. This book, a history of the world since 1945, was undertaken in order to assist them in that endeavor.

Tribal hostility and war between nations have been common throughout history, but in modern times, and especially in the twentieth century with the development of modern military technology, war has become increasingly deadly. World War II brought death and destruction on an unprecedented scale, and it ended with the use of a powerful new weapon of mass destruction, the atomic bomb. From the ruins of that war came a cry, expressed even by military leaders, that there must never be another such war. Yet, even as the ashes of World War II were still smoldering, friction developed among its victors, and they—the United States and Britain on one side and the Soviet Union on the other—became locked in a new power struggle that threatened the very peace they had sacrificed so much to attain. The postwar friction between them rapidly hardened into a political Cold War that soon turned into a military confrontation between East and West marked by mutual mistrust, suspicion, and hostility. After World War II the Cold War continued for more than forty-five years as the major determinant of international affairs. The two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, aggressively sought to establish and maintain blocs of allies, thus dividing the world into two hostile camps. And since each claimed to be the champion of a superior system, one capitalist and the other Communist, the world became the arena of an enduring ideological conflict.

Meanwhile both superpowers began rearming, and a relentless arms race was soon under way. Each claimed that security—both national and global—lay in military strength, but that the other's armaments threatened world peace. Thus they justified the building of massive arsenals containing thousands of nuclear weapons far more powerful than the ones used against Japan in 1945. Their arsenals have long since been large enough to destroy each other many times over and possibly extinguish human life on this planet, and yet year after year they continued piling up more weapons, spending at a rate of millions of dollars per day. The military standoff between the nuclear powers brought about a precarious peace between them, but the world has not been free of war. On the contrary, there have been more than one hundred wars since World War II, and many of these lesser wars, though contained geographically and limited to conventional weapons, carried the potential of igniting a larger conflagration. Indeed, the combatants were all too often clients of the major powers and were armed by them.

Equally dangerous to the safety and well-being of humanity was the growing gulf between the world's rich and poor, between the industrially advanced nations of the North and the underdeveloped nations of the South. In the South, often referred to as the Third World, one finds the world's lowest standards of living, lowest economic growth rates, lowest levels of education, lowest rates of life expectancy, and the highest population growth rates and infant mortality rates. Thus, millions of the inhabitants of the Third World are dreadfully impoverished, malnourished, disease-ridden, and unable to live productively and in dignity. Governments of Third World nations have struggled, usually ineptly, to lift their countries from such impoverishment, and while some have made marginal progress, many others are merely marking time or slipping even further behind. Many of these countries have contracted enormous foreign debts, which they are unable to pay, and their indebtedness threatens the financial stability of the wealthier nations of the North. Economic failure made the Third World more volatile politically and more vulnerable to intervention and militarization by the superpowers. Nearly every war fought since World War II has been fought in Third World countries, and they all have been fought with weapons supplied by industrialized nations.

This is the world into which the youth of today were born. Their chances of resolving the immense problems they have inherited, of reducing the nuclear threat and of alleviating the misery of the majority of mankind, thus making this world a safer and more civilized place, depend to a great extent on what they know of the causes of these problems. The clear-eyed vision needed to come to terms with these difficult problems and to progress toward a resolution of them must be based on an understanding of the past. To remain ignorant of that past is to compound the chances of either perpetuating the current problems or committing grievous and possibly irretrievable errors.

It was for the purpose of combating such ignorance and supplanting it with a knowledge of world affairs that we undertook the writing of this text. Our aim is to provide our readers with an evenhanded, yet critical explanation of the political history of this troubled world and to expose them to more than one viewpoint. We seek to advance our readers' knowledge of the recent past and to develop a better understanding of the difficult issues and dangerous conditions in the world today. Above all, we hope to instill an appreciation of the need for greater objectivity and for careful, critical thinking about political issues. It is, therefore, our hope that this text will serve as a primer for responsible global citizenship.

It should be emphasized that we are primarily dealing with political history in this text, except in certain chapters where economic themes are particularly relevant. We do not address social or cultural dimensions of recent world history, as interesting or important as they may be. We also wish to point out that a text with a scope as broad as the world cannot help but be selective. Obviously, not every political development around the globe is discussed within these pages. We have attempted to provide a balanced coverage of global history, rather than a Western world or U.S.-centered approach. Thus, a substantial portion of the text is devoted to Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The study of the recent past is no substitute for studying the longer haul of human history. Obviously, World War II had antecedents, the knowledge of which deepens our understanding of that momentous event, its consequences, and the course of events in the postwar period. Nonetheless, because World War II represents a historic watershed, one of the landmarks in history, it is not inappropriate that it be taken as a starting point for the study of recent world history. And because the postwar period is distinctly a new era with many new features—the advent of nuclear warfare, the development of high-speed aviation, the emergence of two superpowers, and the end of European colonialism, to name just a few—it makes sense to treat it as a distinct historical period. (To be sure, for certain topics treated in this text, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict or the revolution in China, it will be necessary to trace historical roots further back in time, but our focus remains on the postwar period.)

■ SEVEN MAJOR CONSEQUENCES OF WORLD WAR II

The enormous consequences of World War II gave shape to the postwar world, and they are treated as major themes in this text. We have identified the following as the most important of those consequences:

1. *The end of the European age.* Europe ceased to be the center of international power. At war's end, Europe was in shambles; its nations

were prostrate, its cities in ruins, its people exhausted, and its economies shattered. The total defeat and destruction of Germany created a power vacuum in central Europe, and since nature and politics both abhor a vacuum, the victors inevitably filled it.

2. *The rise of the United States to superpower status.* Having played a decisive role in the global war and emerging from it militarily and economically supreme among the nations of the world, the United States shed for good its earlier isolationism and assumed a leadership role in the international arena.
3. *The expansion of the Soviet Union and its rise to superpower status.* Despite its severe war damage and its dire economic condition, the Soviet Union was determined to extend its power, especially in Eastern Europe, and play a major role in world affairs.
4. *The emergence of the Cold War.* Contention, mistrust, and hostility between the two emerging superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, developed quickly and produced an ongoing, global, bipolar power struggle.
5. *The beginning of the nuclear age.* The use of the atomic bomb by the United States and the world's failure to achieve international control of atomic energy resulted inevitably in the ever-growing nuclear arms race.
6. *The rise of nationalism and independence movements in Asia and Africa.* Although the roots of nationalism may be traced back to prewar times, it was not until the postwar period that nationalist movements became strong enough to challenge the colonial order in Asia and Africa. The struggle for independence was stimulated by the defeat of Japan and the weakening of the European colonial powers, and, in a remarkably short span of time, many Asian and African states won their independence.
7. *A renewed effort to secure lasting peace through international organization.* The United Nations was created in the hope that it might help preserve the global peace and security that the old League of Nations had failed to maintain.

Most of these interrelated themes are discussed in Part 1, "The Origins of the Cold War." In it we examine the global state of affairs at the end of World War II, and analyze the origins of the Cold War and its development in both Europe and Asia. In Part 2, "Nationalism and the End of Colonialism," the sixth theme is taken up. In this part, we also trace the development of Arab and Israeli nationalism and the course of the Middle East conflict. Part 3, "The Shifting Sands of Global Power," focuses mainly on the 1960s. In it we examine the changing configuration of the Cold War, the strains within the Eastern and Western blocs, the Sino-Soviet split, and the resulting emergence of multipolarity, which replaced the bipolar confrontation of the

earlier Cold War period. This section also includes coverage of the Vietnam War and its consequences. Part 4, "The Third World," takes us back to Asia and Africa to trace their postindependence progress—or lack thereof—and to Latin America as well to examine its similar problems.

In addition to investigating the political and economic patterns on the three Third World continents, we also devote sections to such topics as the problem of the Third World debt, the issue of apartheid in South Africa, the economic progress of certain Asian nations, and the revolution in the Philippines. Part 5, "The End of the Postwar Era," treats the major global developments and issues in the 1980s and 1990s. We have selected for special attention the rise of militant Islam, especially as manifested in the Iranian revolution, the rise of Japan and the European Community as new economic superpowers, and such late Cold War issues as the rise of Solidarity in Poland, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the nuclear arms race, potentially the most dangerous challenge to modern man. Finally, in Part 5, we analyze the momentous changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since the end of the 1980s, changes that signal the end of the postwar era.

We urge our readers to join with us in a quest for a fuller, more objective understanding of the world of turmoil in which we live. And we would remind them that history, especially recent political history, is not merely the compilation of dead facts; it is alive with controversy and conflicting ideas. We challenge our readers to confront these controversies, to weigh the conflicting ideas and viewpoints, and to formulate their own opinions.

PART 1

THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

In light of the enormous impact of the Cold War on human life since World War II—the immeasurable human energies it has exhausted, the gargantuan amounts of wealth it consumed, the shifting of national priorities it demanded, the attention it diverted from other global concerns, the civil liberties it has impinged on and the intellectual freedom it strained, the anguish and fears it caused so many people, and the threat it posed to the earth's inhabitants—it becomes necessary to inquire into its origins and to question whether it was avoidable.

By its very nature, the Cold War was for many years so divisive a subject that it was all but impossible to study it with detachment and objectivity. So strong were the feelings and so total the commitment of each side to its cause, and so contemptuous and mistrusting was each of the other side, that each had its own self-serving version of the history of the Cold War and of each and every confrontation between East and West.

The United States and the Soviet Union each perpetuated a series of Cold War myths that sustained them over the years. On the one hand, the people of the United States generally felt and still may feel (1) that the Soviet Union broke its postwar promises regarding Eastern Europe and was therefore responsible for starting the Cold War; (2) that its aggressive action in Eastern Europe was a manifestation of the determination of the Soviet Union to capture the entire world for Communism; (3) that so-called international Communism was a monolithic (that is, singular) movement centered in and controlled by the Soviet Union; (4) that Communism was enslavement, and was never accepted by any people without coercion; and (5) that the great victory of the United States in World War II, as well as its immense prosperity and strength, attested to the superiority of its values and its system—that, in short, the United States represented humanity's best hope.

On the other hand, the Soviets seem to have felt (1) that the United States and the Western allies purposely let the Soviet Union bleed in World War II, and furthermore lacked gratitude for the role that it played in the

defeat of Hitler, as well as for the losses it suffered in that cause; (2) that the United States was committed to the annihilation of Communism in general and to the overthrow of the Communist government of the Soviet Union in particular; (3) that the laws of history were on its side, meaning that capitalism was in decline and Communism was the wave of the future; (4) that the U.S. political system was not really democratic but was completely controlled by Wall Street, or at any rate by a small clique of leading corporate interests; and (5) that capitalist nations were necessarily imperialistic and thus responsible for the colonization of the Third World, and that the leading capitalist nation, the United States, was the most imperialistic of them all.[1]

As unquestioned assumptions these myths became a mental straitjacket. They provided only a narrow channel for foreign policy initiatives by either country. When notions such as these were imbedded in the thinking of the two adversaries, it was almost impossible for the two countries to break out of the Cold War and equally impossible to analyze objectively the history of the conflict.

The myths came into play throughout the Cold War, and especially in its earliest phase even before the defeat of Nazi Germany—when the Allied leaders met at Yalta in February 1945. For this reason, in the opening chapter of this book, we examine the wartime relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, and their respective strengths at the end of the war. We also analyze the U.S. decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan and the impact it had on U.S.-Soviet relations. In Chapter 2, we turn to the Yalta Conference and examine its bearing on the beginning of the Cold War. We then trace the hardening of Cold War positions over critical issues in Europe in the four years following the end of World War II. By 1947, when the U.S. policy of "containment" of Communism was in place, the Cold War myths were firmly entrenched on both sides.

The Cold War quickly became global, and in fact it was in Asia that it became most inflamed in the first decade after the war. In Chapter 3, we pursue the Cold War in Asia by treating the Allied Occupation of defeated Japan, the civil war in China, and the Korean War—all Cold War issues. The Allied Occupation of defeated Japan was thoroughly dominated by the United States over the feeble objections of the Soviets, and eventually the United States succeeded in converting Japan into a major ally in the global Cold War. The Chinese revolution, which brought the Communists to power in 1949, was fought entirely by indigenous forces, but the stakes were great for the two superpowers. The United States responded to the Communist victory in China with still firmer resolve to stem the advance of Communism in Asia. Less than a year later, that resolve was tested in Korea where Cold War tensions grew most intense and finally ignited in the Korean War. The armed conflict between East and West was contained within one Asian country, but it threatened to explode into the dreaded World War III.

After the standoff in Korea, Cold War tensions oscillated during the remainder of the 1950s. During this period, covered in Chapter 4, new leaders—Dwight Eisenhower in the United States and Nikita Khrushchev in the Soviet Union—exhibited a new flexibility, which made possible some reduction in tensions and the solution of a few of the issues that divided the two nations. But the Cold War mentality, the embrace of the Cold War myths, remained undiminished during this period as manifested by sporadic crises and the substantial growth in the nuclear arsenals of both countries. The two superpowers came to the brink of nuclear war in the early 1960s over the deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. The Cuban missile crisis was the most dangerous of the many confrontations between East and West.

■ NOTE

1. These myths are an adaptation of a similar set of Cold War myths presented in Ralph B. Levering, *The Cold War, 1945–1972* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1982), pp. 8–9.

As early as March 1964, William Fulbright, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, speaking before a nearly empty Senate chamber, challenged some of these and other Cold War myths. He questioned whether Communist China's "implacable hostility" to the West was "permanent," whether Fidel Castro posed "a grave danger to the United States," and whether there was something "morally sacred" about the U.S. possession of the Panama Canal, which it had seized in 1903, *New York Times*, March 29, 1964, p. E1.