

THE POSTWAR WORLD 1945-PRESENT

During the Second World War the western democracies became uneasy allies with Hitler's former ally, the Soviet Union. While the two sides, aligned by their allegiance to the two superpower, the United States and Soviet Union, were able to put aside their differences during their goal of defeating the Nazis, after the war tensions again increased, which dominated the postwar world.

THE COLD WAR

A Divided Germany. The problem of what to do with Germany led to the first major confrontation. It had been agreed at Potsdam, the last major conference of the Allied Powers of WWII, that the four zones of occupation would be treated as a "single economic unit." Soviet Premier, Joseph Stalin ultimately refused to go along with this, which meant that the Soviet zone soon became separate entirely from the economically integrated zones of Britain, France and the United States. The long-range result was the permanent division of Germany into East and West German states, as well as the division of Berlin between East and West. This situation, a powerfully visible symbol of the Cold War, would last for nearly half a century.

The Marshall Plan. In June 1947 a new plan was announced by American Secretary of State George C. Marshall. Realizing that all European countries were devastated by war and were in need of economic aid, Marshall offered it to them, with no strings attached except that they use the money to recover economically and politically. Marshall and President Harry Truman believed, however, that the money used to fight poverty in Europe was also a way to fight communism; their assessment generally proved to be correct. Under the Marshall Plan huge amounts of food and other provisions were poured into the countries of western Europe, helping them forestall the spread of communism and establish firm democratic governments. The eastern European countries, however, were forbidden by the Soviets from taking any aid at all – presumably because Stalin feared that it would take these countries out from Soviet hegemony and draw them toward capitalism and democracy.

NATO. The quest for security in the postwar world also sparked a new round of regional defensive alliances. The first such alliance was the Rio Pact, signed in September 1947. It committed the nations of the Western Hemisphere to come to each other's aid in case one was attacked. In 1948 the Treaty of Brussels brought together five European nations: Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The need for collective security against a possible Soviet threat seemed to require a broader coalition. In 1949, therefore, these countries along with four other European nations (Denmark, Norway, Portugal, and Iceland) joined with the United States and Canada in for the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), patterned after the Rio Pact. Greece, Turkey and West Germany later joined. In 1950 an integrated defense force was created.

Soviet Response: The Warsaw Pact. The Soviet Union countered with its own collective defense system. In 1955 eight nations (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union) signed a mutual defense treaty known as the Warsaw Pact. The pact became as much an instrument for political domination by the Soviets as it was an alliance against NATO.

By 1955 the Cold War had resulted in the formation of two hostile blocks, each armed to counter any attack and fearful the other would find reasons to attack first, possibly with atomic weapons. The most destructive two wars in the history of the world was over, but the people of the world seemed not much more comfortable in their security than they had been twenty years earlier.

The United Nations. After the Second World War, the major powers drew up a charter to create the United Nations. Similar to the Concert of Europe and the League of Nations, the United Nations was designed to help maintain peace throughout the world. However, it had little power to enforce its resolutions beyond the willingness of member nations to follow them.

Many Cold War battles were fought within this organization. They often ended in stalemate, since either of the superpowers could simply veto any resolution. Only when the US and Soviet Union agreed was anything really accomplished. One notable example was the creation of the independent nation of Israel in 1948 (see later).

Japan and China. The Soviets won out politically in eastern Europe, but the United States was in a better position to score a major Cold War victory, and make at least one new ally, in East Asia. Under the

careful tutelage of General Douglas MacArthur, Japan became not just a democracy but a strong economic partner (see later). In 1951, it again became independent, and it immediately became a powerful ally of the United States. Mainland China, however, was taken over by communist rebels (who by 1960 became a rival of the Soviet Union also), leaving only the tiny island of Taiwan with a government friendly to the West.

Korea. The Cold War also turned hot in Korea, when an ideological civil war evolved into a struggle between the superpowers in 1950. The United States and the Soviet Union avoided any direct military confrontation, but international forces, acting under a United Nations mandate, kept the Soviet-supported Communist forces from overrunning South Korea. The war was actually a military victory for either side, though the West believed it had achieved a moral victory by keeping South Korea from being overrun. The two Koreas remained split to this day.

Hungary. Things became warm again in 1956 in Hungary, where a popular uprising ousted the Soviet-supported government as well as Soviet troops. The Hungarian “freedom fighters” were shattered when aid they thought had been promised by the United States simply did not materialize. The United States had made implied promises as part of the propaganda war, but when it came to a showdown, the United States was afraid that military action would result in a major war with the Soviet Union, which now had possession of the powerful atomic bombs of the age. The Soviets invaded and smashed the revolution.

Berlin and the Wall. In two other instances, however, the United States did not back down. In 1958, concerned over the flow of people out of East Berlin into prosperous West Berlin, the Soviet government demanded the Western powers evacuate Berlin. The Western powers refused, and after John Kennedy became president of the United States in 1961, he made it clear that he was willing to go to war rather than accede to such demands. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev backed down but at the same time approved construction of a stone wall separating East and West Berlin. For the next three decades the wall was a visible symbol of the tension between the superpowers.

Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1962 Khrushchev sent nuclear missiles to Cuba, where a revolution under Fidel Castro had established a communist regime in 1959. Kennedy had already been embarrassed by the failure of the ill-planned Bay of Pigs invasion, intended to overthrow Castro. He was not going to stand, however, for a nuclear threat to be aimed at the United States from ninety miles away. He ordered a naval blockade and threatened whatever action was necessary, including nuclear war, if the missiles were not removed. Khrushchev backed down again, but the tension mounted.

Vietnam and China. A ongoing conflict in Vietnam set the stage for the next crisis of the Cold War. After successfully leading a rebellion against French rule in 1954, communist leaders in North Vietnam pressed for unification. After South Vietnam refused to accept communist rule, America first sent “advisors” to help. Gradually, however, the aid escalated to military involvement and 500,000 men. American President Richard Nixon began a gradual withdrawal of American troops in 1969. In 1972, just before the next election, he also achieved the most impressive foreign policy coup of any recent American president: a reconciliation with China that paved the way for the restoration of full diplomatic relations. This was possible partly because of the increasing distance between China and the Soviet Union. Bringing communist China closer to the US was thus an ironic diplomatic victory in the Cold War. Nixon’s next act was to reach an agreement with North Vietnam and withdraw all American troops. The United States “won one (China) and lost one (Vietnam)” in the seemingly never-ending ideological struggle with the Soviets.

Détente. Far from being just a slap in the face at the Soviet Union, however, the accord with China was symbol of a new and hopeful phase of the Cold War – détente, or the effort to gradually relax tensions. Another was the completion of the long-sought Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties (SALT) of 1972 and 1974, slowing the arms race. In 1975 the United States, Canada and nearly every nation of Europe signed the Helsinki Accords, agreeing to the maintenance of existing European boundaries (recognizing, in effect, Soviet areas of control).

Failure of Détente. By the end of the decade, however, détente had faded. The United States was so disgusted with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 that it boycotted the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow and placed an embargo on American grain shipments to the USSR. In addition, the American Senate refused to ratify the SALT II agreement of 1979, fearing that the Soviets might take advantage of American arms reduction and develop a first-strike potential. New round of disarmament talks failed in the early 1980s, and the United States began to deploy more missiles in Europe.

The Cold War and Space. Even space became a factor in the Cold War, as the “space race” seemed to parallel the arms race. In the fall of 1957 the USSR launched *Sputnik I*, the first man-made satellite to orbit the earth. People worldwide stood in awe as they watched it move slowly across the sky,

the sun's reflection making it visible to the naked eye. But Americans wondered what this meant so far as rocket power was concerned, and why their country was not ahead in the development of engines that could not only put satellites but also deliver missiles. The next year America launched its own satellite, and in 1960 the Soviet Union put the first man in space. In 1961 President Kennedy challenged American engineers to put a man on the moon before the end of the decade. That goal was achieved in 1969. America was finally seen as being ahead in a race that was presumably peaceful but that everyone knew had serious military overtones.

By the time American and Soviet negotiators renewed their discussions on nuclear arms limitations in 1985, a new factor had entered the mix. The United States was attempting to develop its Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as "star wars," a laser weapon system controlled from surveillance satellites that could knock out nuclear missiles as they were launched. The Soviets saw this a violation of existing treaties as well as a possible threat of new kinds of offensive space weapons. They initially refused to negotiate until "stars wars" was dropped, and America refused to drop it.

The arms race was taking such a crippling bite from the economies of both the Soviet Union and the United States that both countries were anxious for an accord. New Soviet Premier, Mikhail Gorbachev and American President Ronald Reagan reached an agreement to reduce the nuclear arsenals of the two powers.

The End of the Cold War. All this was accompanied by spectacular ideological and political revolutions all across eastern Europe. In 1990 the hated Berlin Wall tumbled. In 1991 the two Germanies were reunited. That same year, the old Soviet Union ceased to exist – broken up into its several independent states. The largest and most powerful was Russia. Ideological conflicts with the West virtually disappeared, as Russia and other republics attempted to move toward democracy and a form of capitalism. In June 1992, Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian republic, visited the United States. Among other things, he signed a historic agreement by which each nation committed itself to far-reaching cuts in its nuclear arsenal. Actually, both were engaged in dismantling and removing some of their most threatening weapons, and the process would continue. The Cold War was over.

European Unification. By 1992 twelve European nations had formed the European Economic Community. France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Greece, Spain and Portugal had entered into an economic alliance. The countries looked to eliminate all remaining economic barriers of any sort. At the same time, other European nations looked to join. Austria, Finland and Sweden joined in 1995 as the European Community changed its name to the European Union.

In light of the historic nationalism that had so often set the countries of Europe against each other before WWII, the extent to which they created a unified Europe was remarkable. They established common policies with respect to most economic activities, including transportation, foreign trade, and fiscal and monetary affairs. The EU instituted a common currency for member nations on January 1, 2002, with only Great Britain not joining the common currency. Non-member European nations are examining whether or not to join and/or watching the European Union's policies.

The European Union became the largest and most powerful trading power, accounting in 1995 for 20 percent of the world's trade. It also participated, as a community, in promoting economic development in underdeveloped countries. After the unification of Germany, for example, it immediately invested in the development of what was once East Germany. It also developed free trade agreements with numerous countries in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Mediterranean. In addition, new realities of world trade and world politics made the United States and the European Union interdependent, and the two entities developed an important cooperative relationship that has helped keep the Western nations very powerful throughout the rest of the world.

THE POSTWAR WORLD OUTSIDE THE COLD WAR

JAPAN

World War II was devastating for Japan. Many of its cities were destroyed. The last months of the war were a nightmare for Japanese citizens, as American incendiary and conventional bombs laid waste to city after city. In one fire-bombing raid alone, in March 1945, over 100,000 people were killed in Tokyo. And the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki not only flattened those two cities, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives, but also left deep emotional scars that still affect Japan.

American Occupation. The war was followed by an occupation that was technically under the jurisdiction of the Allies, but was in fact carried out largely by the Americans, with General Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers.

Demilitarization. According to documents outlining postsurrender American policy in Japan, the goal of the occupation was to “insure that Japan will not again become a menace to the peace and security of the world.” This required, first of all, the demilitarization of Japan. In addition, a new constitutional government based on the principles of democracy was installed under the guidance of the Americans.

The End of the Occupation. Japan responded very well to US-imposed reforms, and the two recent enemies began to develop a friendly relationship. Though the American forces entered Japan as conquerors determined to reorganize the Japanese state and society, rapid changes in the postwar world also brought about changes in the way Japan was treated. The wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union rapidly fell apart after the end of World War II. The strain in the relationship was showing even before the war came to a close; although the Soviet Union finally entered the war before Japan’s surrender, the United States effectively prevented active participation in the occupation. But the United States could not prevent Soviet involvement in the postwar administration of nearby Korea – the scene of the Cold War’s first hot flash. With US-Japan relations turning friendly and US-Soviet relations moving in the opposite direction – especially after the outbreak of war in Korea in 1950 – American authorities were especially concerned that Japan become a strong American ally, linked to a world political order and economy dominated by the United States. The symbol of the new US-Japan relationship was the signing of a peace treaty in San Francisco in September 1951; the occupation officially ended in April 1952. In a separate treaty, however, the United States agreed to continue to provide military protection to Japan, in exchange for which Japan granted the US access to bases and other facilities in Japan.

CHINA

Mao Tse-tung, who had brought China through the communist revolution and attempted to mold the huge nation along the lines of his revolutionary vision, died in 1976. His more radical supporters, including his widow, were arrested not long after Mao’s death, bringing to the party and the nation a new, more moderate leadership, initially under Hua Kuo-feng but eventually under Teng Hsiao-p’ing. Teng had been purged during the Maoist era, but re returned to power in 1981 and led China through a period of modernization and restructuring.

China’s new outlook was reflected in its rapprochement with the West. Teng and other Chinese leaders traveled to Western nations, looking for friendly relations and advanced industrial technology. The new leadership also began a process of dismantling Mao’s image, influence and policies. This was a difficult matter, as Mao was not only responsible for some excesses of the past but was also the founder of the People’s Republic and the leader of the Revolution. But over the course of several years, China’s leadership steadily reversed many of Mao’s policies.

China’s new approach was most obvious in the economy. The post-Mao leadership gradually moved away from strict central planning to the incorporation of some elements of a market economy. Collectivization was reversed, with individual households responsible for agricultural production. Similarly, managers of local industrial enterprises were given more decision-making responsibility. The result was an increase in production, especially in agriculture. However, the state government has not been as willing to open up and allow for more participation. This policy was most exemplified in the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident. In fact, recently there have been reports of dissidents being purged from China.

MIDDLE EAST

Independence. The Middle East generally supported the Allied effort during World War II. An uprising among Arab peoples in the Middle East could have seriously hampered British war efforts, and possibly have given Hitler the Suez Canal. The Arabs thus felt that they had helped save Britain from the Germans; the British should now reward them with independence. Indeed, Britain and France were so financially and militarily exhausted by the war that they lacked the resolution and the resources to attempt to maintain their control over the Middle East in the face of serious opposition from the Arabs. Thus, within a few years of the end of WWII, all of the Arab states became independent from European control. For the most part independence was achieved without military conflict.

The Arab nations had an unrealistic view of the results of their independence from Britain and France. Many felt that somehow all their problems would now be resolved. Instead, the departure of the Europeans simply allowed a number of suppressed social and political tensions to come to the surface, creating a new set of problems. Furthermore, although the western Europeans had ceased direct rule, indirect control by outsiders was to continue in a number of forms. Many Arab nations were still dependent on Western technological and military advisors.

The Cold War. The Cold War had a significant impact on the Middle East. For the superpowers, three basic issues were involved: the spread of communism in the Middle East, control over strategic waterways (Bosporus, Suez and Red Sea, Persian Gulf), and control of access to the region's oil resources. The struggle manifested itself in a number of ways. Turkey became a staunch ally of the West, thereby limiting Soviet land and sea access to the Middle East. Iran, after an unsuccessful flirtation with communism in the 1956 revolution, also became a strong military ally of the United States until Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979.

End of the Cold War. As Soviet power declined in the 1980s, the Soviet Union abandoned its patronage of Middle Eastern states. Radical Middle Eastern state – Syria, Iraq, Libya and Iran – were all increasingly isolated and left without major military patrons and suppliers. The moderate Arab states have increasingly moved toward accommodation with the United States and Israel, as witnessed by the 1991 Arab-US alliance against Iraq and the ongoing Arab-Israeli peace talks.

NATIONALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

ARAB NATIONALISM.

Arab nationalism was divided into two conflicting forms. The first, pan-Arabism, was represented by an attempt to unite all Arab-speaking peoples into a single state. Pan-Arabism was manifested during the Arab Revolt of WWI, with its goal of uniting Arabia, Syria, Palestine and Iraq into a single Arab state. The British and French, however, preferred to keep the Arabs divided into small countries as part of a “divide and conquer” strategy.

Theoretical movement toward the creation of a single Arab state began in 1945 with the creation of the Arab League. Practically, however, the Arabs themselves faced a major problem in attempting to create a single, united Arab state. Although most could agree that such a state was desirable, there was no agreement as to who should be the leader, nor on the principles on which the state would be founded. The most successful advocate of pan-Arabism was Nasser of Egypt, whose charismatic personality and bold rhetoric temporarily created a loose confederation of Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Libya in the late 1950s and early 1960s. His efforts were doomed to failure, both because of internal tensions between Arab states and because of opposition from the superpowers.

The second form of Arab nationalism centered around the smaller states formed by the Europeans following WWI. Here, Iraqis, Syrians, Palestinians, and Egyptians, although all ethnically Arabs, began to see themselves as separate peoples. However, recent events on the part of fundamentalists have pushed the ideas of a single united Arab state forward.

JEWISH NATIONALISM

Although the Zionist movement stemmed from intellectual, social and political developments in Europe, it has been played out in the Middle East, becoming one of the most complex and intractable issues of the region. In the late nineteenth century European Jews, affected by ideas of nationalism and worried by rising European anti-Semitism, increasingly looked for an opportunity to create an independent Jewish state. Although several alternatives were suggested, attention focused on creating a Jewish state in the Ottoman province of Palestine, which had been the Jewish kingdom of Judea under the Roman Empire some 2,000 years earlier. For many decades only a trickle of Jews immigrated to their potential new homeland.

Immigration. Following WWI, the British established an ambiguous policy that both encouraged Jewish immigration to Palestine, while at the same time limiting such immigration. Ultimately, the rise of violent anti-Semitism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s convinced many Jews that their only hope for safety was in the creation of an independent Jewish state. The horrors of the Holocaust confirmed this idea for hundreds of thousands who poured into Palestine during and after WWII.

The State of Israel. Social tensions between the new Jewish immigrants and the local Palestinians steadily mounted throughout the early twentieth century. These tensions culminated in riots

and unrest in the 1930s, which led to the British to decide to abandon their mandate in Palestine and turn the problem over to the newly formed United Nations. The UN decided that partition of Palestine was the only workable solution; neither side accepted it, and war broke out in 1948 when the state of Israel was officially born.

In the half-century since its creation, Israel has been at the heart of a bloody conflict manifesting itself on many levels: full-scale wars, guerrilla actions, terrorism, riots, oppression, torture and innumerable violation of human rights. Many Arab states came to the military aid of the Palestinians in the 1967 and 1973 wars but were unable to defeat Israel. Israel's possession of the a large nuclear arsenal (from the United States), however, made it unlikely the Arabs would achieve their goals through military means. Pragmatists on both sides, though not necessarily in the majority, began to realize that the Arabs and Israelis needed to create some mechanism by which they could live together. Through the decades, both sides in the conflict had reasonable claims and grievances, and both sides were guilty of horrendous atrocities. Serious peace negotiations were conducted throughout the 1990s. However, the September 11, 2001 attacks against the United States and the Americans subsequent "War on Terror" only served to reenergize both the Israelis and Palestinians to rid themselves of the other.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Oil. The fundamental economic factor in the Middle East in the twentieth century was the discovery and exploitation of oil resources. Exploitation of oil resources of the Middle East began at the turn of the century as oil became increasingly important, first for modernization of naval engines, then for land transportation, mobile weapons, and aircraft. Initially Western oil companies were giving special concessions in Middle Eastern countries in return for giving the government a percentage of the revenues. The importance of oil in global economies and military systems expanded exponentially in the early twentieth century, leading to the creation in 1928 of a cartel of Middle Eastern oil production by seven Western oil companies, known as the Seven Sisters. The real oil boom occurred after WWII, when the percentage of world oil production from the Middle East steadily increased, and when Middle Eastern countries began to nationalize the previously Western-owned oil companies. In 1973 a massive oil embargo showed the world the economic and political power of the Middle Eastern states which controlled the oil. Today, nearly two-thirds of the oil used by the Western allies comes from the Middle East. This dependence on Middle Eastern oil is frequently used as a powerful lever to influence Western foreign policy. Indeed, the Gulf War of 1991 was fought fundamentally to ensure unhindered Western access to Middle Eastern oil.

Problems with Oil Wealth. First, oil is unevenly distributed throughout the Middle East. This effectively means that the countries with the largest populations and greatest need for economic benefits from oil have the smallest oil resources. Arabia, with a relatively small indigenous population, has perhaps a quarter of the world's oil resources. Egypt, with nearly 60 million people living in the narrow Nile valley, has little oil. This uneven distribution of oil had led to numerous disputes and occasional wars. Iraq invaded Iran (1980) and Kuwait (1990) in order to conquer oil fields in those countries.

Even within countries possessing abundant oil reserves, however, the benefits from oil have been unevenly distributed. Furthermore, the unstable political situation in the Middle East, both internally and externally, has created a desire for massive militarization. Thus much of the oil wealth of the Middle East has been spent buying arms from the West. The ruling elite tend to enrich themselves from oil revenues; indeed, many ruling families in the Middle East treat the oil resources of their countries as if they were the private wealth of the individual ruling family.

The uneven distribution of oil wealth among Middle Eastern countries, combined with the concentration of wealth in the hands of a limited few, has created a vast economic imbalance in the Middle East. Kuwait, for example, has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, while Egypt has one of the lowest. The majority of people in many Middle Eastern countries live lives of marginal or extreme poverty. The huge gap between rich and poor people and countries in the Middle East remains a serious social and political problems. However, efforts to improve this situation have been hindered by anti-Western Islamic fundamentalists who blame the West for the problems in the Middle East.

Anti-Westernism. For many Middle Easterners, the promises of modernization, prosperity, democracy and civil rights have never been realized. Instead they find an increasing technological dependence on the West, a huge gap between rich and poor, fake democracy hiding the realities of dictatorship, and the suppression of individual freedom and rights in the name of security. Many Middle Easterners feel that, for them at least, the results of modernization are not an unequivocal good. Many in

the Middle East see the West as being solely concerned for their oil. For all their talk of human rights and democracy, Western powers are seen as being hypocritical in their willingness to deal with any tyrant who will sell them oil.

Islamic Fundamentalism. Another important issue facing the Middle East is the question of secularization. For thousands of years the fabric of Middle Eastern society has been bound together by religious laws and values. For the West, the separation of church and state has been a mechanism to limit the religious civil strife that plagued Europe during the century of the Reformation and the subsequent wars of religion. Many Muslims, however, believe that Islam cannot be fully lived without the institution of traditional Islamic law, the shari'a; governments must be Islamic, not secular. Those Muslims who seek to establish the shari'a as the official law are often known as Islamic fundamentalists. Their basic goal is that all Middle Eastern societies should be firmly grounded on Islamic ideas and practices, rather than secularized Western concepts and laws. (There is a similar important Jewish fundamentalist movement in Israel, which sees the Jewish Talmud as the basis for a just society in Israel.)

Islamic fundamentalism has been an important part of Middle Eastern society since the coming of Islam. It has witnessed a remarkable rebirth in recent decades, especially since the formation of Israel in Palestine and the successful Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. All Middle Eastern states have strong Islamic fundamentalist movements today, although not all are as radical as the Iranian fundamentalists. Indeed, most are willing to see their programs instituted by legal means. Islam will continue to play an important role in Middle Eastern society. Even the most blatantly secularized despots, such as Saddam Hussein in Iraq, have increasingly been forced to adopt the trappings of religious terminology and practices in an attempt to legitimize their regimes.

Muslim fundamentalists have a natural antipathy to the West, whose ideologies are seen as non-Muslim at best, and often completely secular and anti-Muslim. One of the major challenges facing Western policymakers will be dealing effectively with Islamic states. US military presence in Saudi Arabia, the home of the two holiest places to the Islamic religion, and Western support of Israel have been leading causes to the strife between the West and the Middle East.

Events against the West by Islamic Fundamentalists (Al-Qaeda)

1993

Killing of U.S. soldiers in Somalia. 18 US soldiers killed.

1993

Bombing of [World Trade Center](#); 6 killed.

1994

Investigation of the WTC bombing reveals that it was only a small part of a massive attack plan that included hijacking a plane and crashing it into CIA headquarters.

1995–1996

Bombing of U.S. barracks in Saudi Arabia; 22 soldiers killed.

1997

Declaration of Jihad against Israel and the Crusaders (Western Christians)

August 1998

Bombing of [U.S. embassies](#) in East Africa; 224 killed; including 12 Americans.

Dec. 1999

[Jordanian](#) police arrested members of a cell planning attacks against Western tourists.

Dec. 14, 1999

[Plot to bomb millennium celebrations](#) in Seattle foiled when customs agents arrest an Algerian smuggling explosives into the U.S. Other Algerians subsequently arrested were "Afghan alumni." A total of 59 were arrested.

Oct. 12, 2000.

Bombing of the USS *Cole* in port in [Yemen](#), 17 U.S. sailors killed.

Sept. 11, 2001

[Destruction of WTC, attack on Pentagon.](#) Plane that hit the Pentagon was originally en route to the White House. A fourth plane, crashed in Pennsylvania, was en route to Congress.

April 11, 2002

Explosion at ancient synagogue in Tunisia left 17 dead, including 11 German tourists.

In response to the September 11, 2001 attacks the United States attacked the Taliban government of Afghanistan beginning on October 7, 2001. By March the Al-Qaeda organization, which had been supported by the Taliban, and the Taliban government had been destroyed. Many high-level leaders of the terrorist organization were arrested. In an effort to avoid further terrorist attacks, the United States began to target Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. At first the US and Great Britain went to the United Nations for an endorsement to begin removing the Iraqi leader for his possession of weapons of mass destruction. However, the French, Germans and Russians blocked any effort to use military action to disarm Iraq.

On March 19, 2003, the United States and Britain, without UN approval, began its military campaign to remove the Iraqi leader. Future of the UN and Iraq to be continued.