

# A New World Order

*by Sophia*



## WHAT'S COVERED

In November 1989, just 1 month after President Ronald Reagan left office, the world watched as a series of protests brought about the end of the Eastern Bloc. Two years later, the Soviet Union collapsed, ending the Cold War. To President George H. W. Bush, these events marked the beginning of a “new world order”—one that would be different from the Cold War that had divided the world between freedom and communism since the end of World War II. President Bush and his successor, Bill Clinton, sought a new foreign policy approach that would advance American interests without requiring U.S. intervention in every international crisis.

This tutorial examines how the United States navigated the “new world order” during the 1990s in three parts:

## 1. The End of the Cold War

In November 1989, observers around the world—including foreign policy experts and the U.S. and Soviet intelligence agencies—watched as peaceful protesters in East Germany marched through checkpoints at the Berlin Wall. Within hours, people from East and West Berlin overwhelmed the checkpoints and began to tear down the wall.



Demonstrators gather at the Berlin Wall, near the Brandenburg Gate, in November 1989. Two years earlier, President Reagan gave a speech at this location, stating, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

These demonstrations were part of a larger movement that was sweeping across the **Eastern Bloc**.

#### TERM TO KNOW

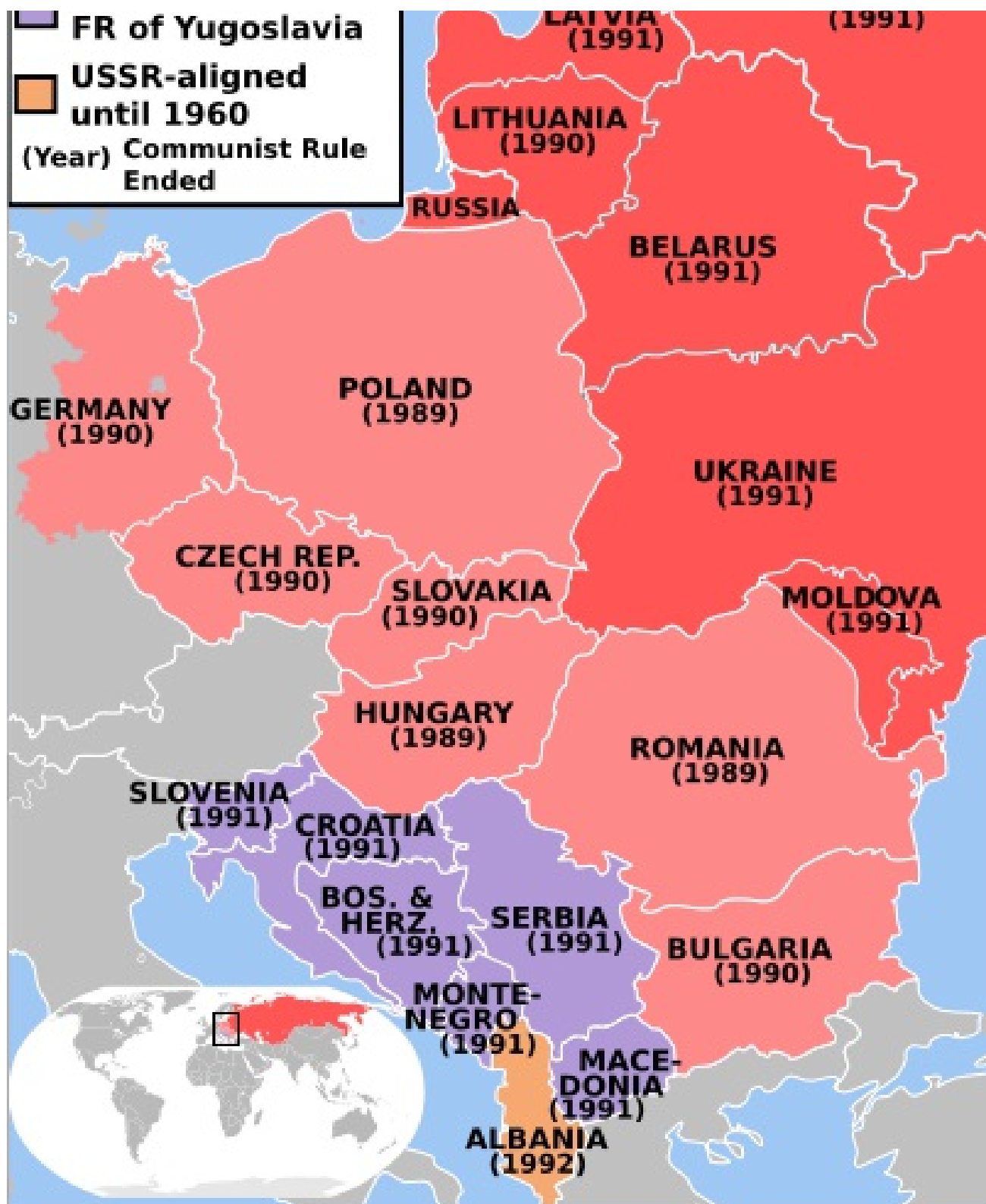
##### Eastern Bloc

A collection of Eastern European nations that featured communist governments and were allied to the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

In addition to the popular uprising in East Germany, demonstrations in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania led to the overthrow or collapse of their communist governments.

➞ **EXAMPLE** In 1990, East and West Germany were reunified as one nation.





A map illustrating the breakup of the Eastern Bloc, 1989–1991.

The U.S.S.R. did not attempt to suppress the demonstrations in 1989, indicating that it was no longer able to prevent what was happening. Despite the reforms implemented by General Secretary (of the Communist Party) **Mikhail Gorbachev**, the Soviet economy was unable to meet the needs of its people—or to keep pace in an arms race with the United States. In August 1991, hard-liners in the party attempted to remove Gorbachev from power. As crowds filled the streets of Moscow in a demonstration of support for Gorbachev, the coup ended in failure. Moscow descended into chaos, and independence movements throughout the

country gained momentum. By December 1991, the U.S.S.R. no longer existed. One month later (in January 1992), 12 former Soviet republics, including Russia, formed a Commonwealth of Independent States to coordinate trade and security policies.



#### PEOPLE TO KNOW

##### Mikhail Gorbachev

Leader of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, who implemented a series of reforms within the Soviet Union known as *perestroika* (political openness) and *glasnost* (economic restructuring).



A map showing the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The former Soviet republics are numbered as follows: (1) Armenia, (2) Azerbaijan, (3) Belarus, (4) Estonia, (5) Georgia, (6) Kazakhstan, (7) Kyrgyzstan, (8) Latvia, (9) Lithuania, (10) Moldova, (11) Russia, (12) Tajikistan, (13) Turkmenistan, (14) Ukraine, and (15) Uzbekistan.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War, and, with it, a distinct period in the history of American foreign policy also came to an end. For over four decades, a **containment** policy had guided U.S. conduct abroad.



#### TERM TO KNOW

##### Containment

The U.S. strategy that sought to limit the expansion of communism abroad during the Cold War. U.S. presidents from Harry S. Truman to Ronald Reagan, and their advisors, had interpreted nearly every coup, revolution, and civil war that occurred anywhere in the world as part of a larger struggle between democracy and communism. With the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., American foreign policy was no longer constrained by this paradigm. The United States could assess each international development according to its own merits

and address it accordingly.

Whether any actions by the United States directly contributed to the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and the collapse of the Soviet Union remains the subject of debate. However, some U.S. observers have interpreted the end of the U.S.S.R. as a validation of American foreign policy principles. It remained to be seen whether the United States would use the opportunity presented by the collapse of the Soviet Union (and the end of the Cold War) to pursue—independently, if necessary—its interests throughout the world.

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## 2. Operation Desert Storm

As the Soviet Union collapsed, the United States increasingly focused on conflicts in the Middle East. The region quickly replaced the Cold War as America's foreign policy priority.

In 1990, Saddam Hussein of Iraq was of primary concern to the United States. He assumed power in 1979 and, 1 year later, began a war with neighboring Iran that would last 8 years.



### DID YOU KNOW

Hussein used chemical weapons on several occasions during the Iraq–Iran War, including against people in Iraq. In 1988, he authorized a chemical weapons attack against the Kurds (an ethnic group in northern and western Iraq) that killed 5,000 people in 1 day.

By the time the war with Iran ended in 1988, Iraq had accumulated significant foreign debt. At the same time, other Middle Eastern nations, especially neighboring Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, increased oil production to meet growing demands from the United States and Western Europe.



### DID YOU KNOW

During the early 1990s, Saudi Arabia was the leading oil producer in the world, accounting for over 25% of the world's supply. Iraq was also one of the world's leading oil exporters at this time.

Increased production forced oil prices downward, further damaging Iraq's debt-ridden economy. Hussein approached Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for economic assistance. After talks with both countries broke down, he launched an invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Iraqi forces won a quick victory, and Hussein claimed Kuwait for Iraq.

Saddam Hussein's conquest of Kuwait was the first significant international test for President **George H. W. Bush**, who had been vice president during both of **Ronald Reagan**'s terms before being elected president in 1988. President Bush and his foreign policy team, which included General Colin Powell of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, forged an international coalition to respond to the Iraqi invasion. It included 34 countries, many of them members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt also joined the coalition. The United States secured a United Nations (UN) resolution that authorized the use of force against Iraq if it did not withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991.



### PEOPLE TO KNOW

#### George H. W. Bush

Vice president under Ronald Reagan and Republican president from 1989 to 1993, who navigated the collapse of the Soviet Union and the “new world order” that followed the end of the Cold War, including Operation Desert Storm, which turned back Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.

#### Ronald Reagan

Conservative Republican president from 1981 to 1989, whose support of tax cuts, deregulation, reduced spending on social programs, hard-line anti-communism, and conservative social policies earned him the loyalty of the “New Right.”

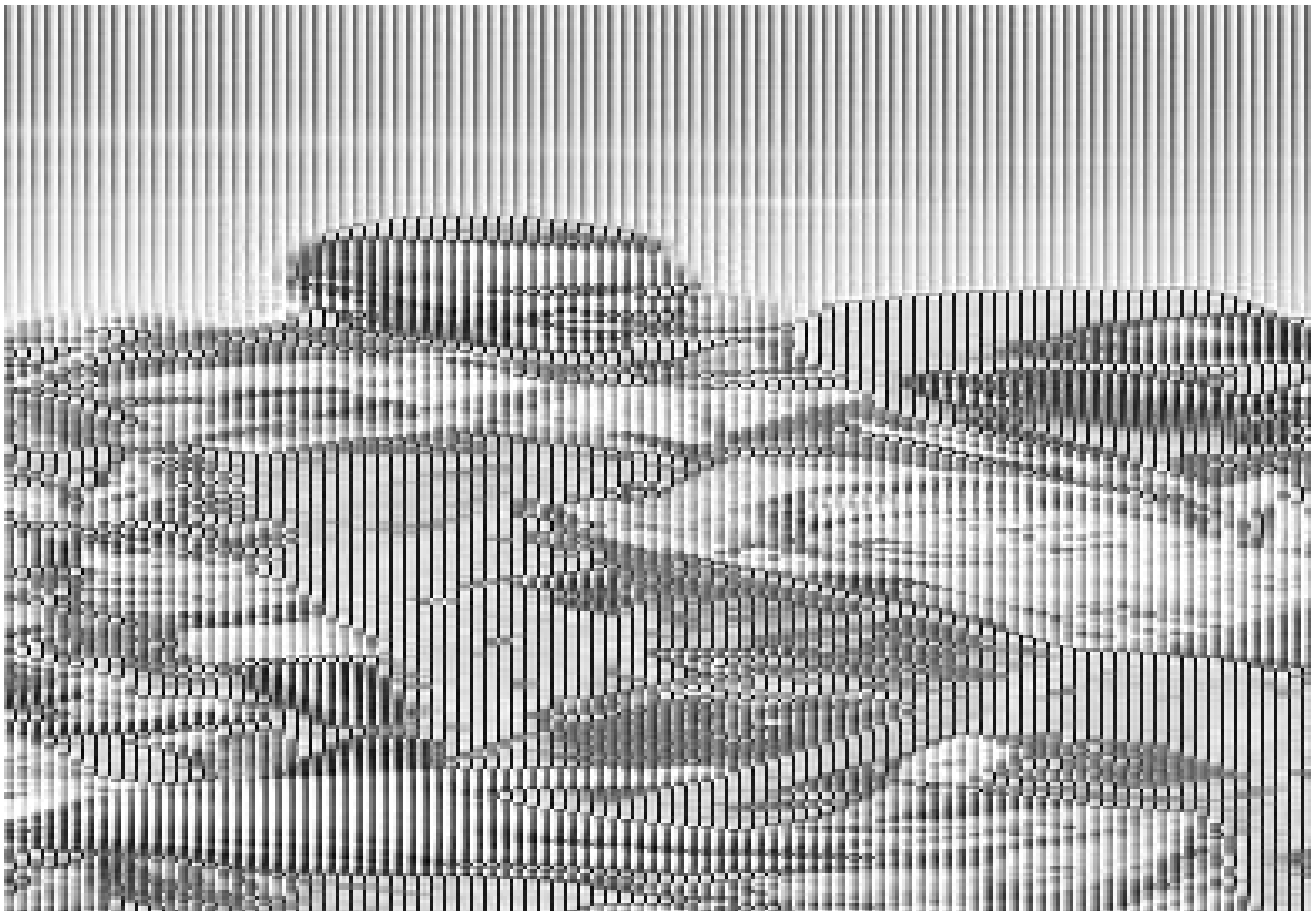
In the meantime, Bush deployed American troops and aircraft to Saudi Arabia during the fall and winter of 1990 to protect it from possible Iraqi aggression. This deployment was named Operation Desert Shield. On January 14, 1991, Bush received a resolution from Congress that authorized the use of military force against Iraq. When the January 15th deadline passed without an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, the United States began a massive air assault, which was followed by **Operation Desert Storm**.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Operation Desert Storm

The U.S. name of the campaign by coalition forces waged against Iraq from January to April 1991.



George H. W. Bush greets U.S. troops stationed in Saudi Arabia on Thanksgiving Day in 1990. The first troops were deployed to Saudi Arabia in August 1990 as part of Operation Desert Shield.

Many Americans monitored Desert Shield’s progress by watching network news stations, including Cable News Network (CNN), which reported on the bombing of Baghdad and other Iraqi cities. The air raids were an impressive display of technological superiority, as U.S. forces launched cruise missiles from aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf in addition to conventional bombing. The air attack was followed by a ground invasion as over 500,000 U.S. soldiers, along with 200,000 from 27 other countries, drove Iraqi forces from Kuwait within 100 hours.





Oil well fires burned throughout Kuwait following Operation Desert Storm. Iraqi forces set the wells on fire as they retreated.

Despite the success of Operation Desert Storm, Bush's advisors disagreed on whether to remove Saddam Hussein from power. General Powell argued that it would be “un-American” to continue to fight a defeated army. President Bush believed that the goal of Desert Storm was to liberate Kuwait, not to depose Saddam Hussein. As a result, U.S. troops began to withdraw from the region in March 1991.

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### 3. “A New World Order”

When President Bush announced the launch of Operation Desert Storm to the American people on January 16, 1991, he indicated his hope that the conflict in the Middle East would lead to a “**new world order**” in which the nations of the world worked together to deter war and aggression.



#### TERM TO KNOW

##### **New World Order**

Phrase coined by George H. W. Bush to describe his vision of American peacekeeping and international relations after the end of the Cold War.

##### **President George H. W. Bush, Operation Desert Storm, 1991**

“This is an historic moment,” Bush said.

“We have in this past year made great progress in ending the long era of conflict and cold war. We have before us the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a new world order—a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations. When we are successful—and we will be—we have a real chance at this new world order, an order in which a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfill the promise and vision of the U.N.’s founders.”



#### THINK ABOUT IT

1. How do you think President Bush defined “the rule of law” and “the conduct of nations”?
2. What did President Bush mean when he referred to a “credible” UN?



#### BRAINSTORM

Recall what you have learned about President Wilson’s idealistic vision for the world following the First World War. To what extent is Bush’s “new world order” a revival of Wilson’s vision?

Both President Bush and his successor, **Bill Clinton** (who defeated Bush in the 1992 presidential election), envisioned the “new world order” as one in which the United States would use its military superiority and influence to preserve peace and advance its interests throughout the world. As a result of their vision, the United States became increasingly involved in the Middle East and other regions. The “new world order” guided U.S. foreign policy throughout the 1990s, with varying degrees of success.



#### PEOPLE TO KNOW

##### William J. Clinton

Democratic president from 1993 to 2001 who, as a “New Democrat,” advocated a compassionate conservatism that combined socially liberal policies with fiscal conservatism.

One notable success was a temporary period of relative peace in the Middle East. In September 1993, **Yitzhak Rabin**, prime minister of Israel, and **Yasser Arafat**, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), signed the **Oslo Accords**.



#### PEOPLE TO KNOW

##### Yitzhak Rabin

Prime minister of Israel who, with Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), signed the Oslo Accords to advance peace in the region.

##### Yasser Arafat

Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) who, along with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel, signed the Oslo Accords to advance peace in the region.



#### TERM TO KNOW

##### Oslo Accords

A set of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.





Yitzhak Rabin (left) and Yasser Arafat (right), shown with President Bill Clinton, signed the Oslo Accords at the White House on September 13, 1993.

The accords marked the first time that Israel recognized the PLO's legitimacy. They granted some self-rule to Palestinians living in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank (of the Jordan River).

However, sustained peace in the region remained elusive. Just 2 years after the Oslo Accords were signed, Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli who opposed the treaty. Israel also continued to build Jewish settlements on land claimed by Palestinians in the West Bank.

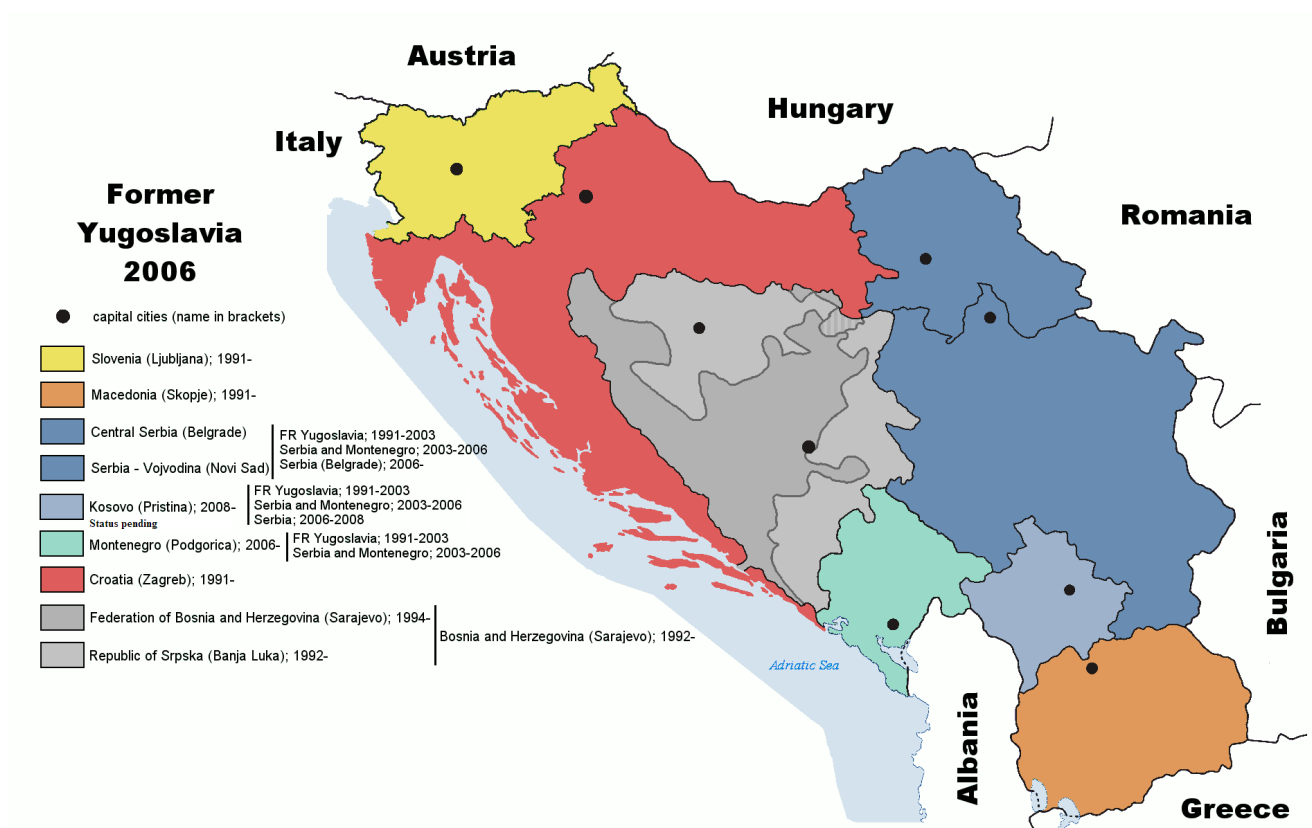
In the aftermath of the Cold War, violence erupted in Southeastern Europe (in formerly communist Yugoslavia) and persisted throughout the 1990s.



#### DID YOU KNOW

Yugoslavia originally consisted of six provinces: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Each was populated by a number of ethnic groups, some of which had a history of hostile relations with their neighbors.

The collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe led to the breakup of Yugoslavia into several independent republics. In 1991, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia declared their independence. In 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina did the same. Only Serbia and Montenegro remained united—as the Serbian-dominated Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.



A map of the former Yugoslavia in 2006.

Almost immediately, ethnic and religious tensions between Bosnia and Herzegovina escalated into war. Bosnian Serbs did not want to live in an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina that was predominantly Muslim. With support from Serbs in the neighboring Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnian Serbs declared their autonomy and attacked Bosnian Muslims and Croats. The violence came to be described as “**ethnic cleansing**.”



## TERM TO KNOW

### Ethnic Cleansing

The forced expulsion or mass killing of a particular ethnic or religious group from a certain area. Ethnic cleansing took several brutal forms, including the systematic rape of Muslim women by Serbian military and paramilitary forces.

Ethnic cleansing in Southeastern Europe gave the member nations of NATO, including the United States, a new mission in the aftermath of the Cold War. Originally created to protect member nations against Soviet aggression, NATO’s actions in Southeastern Europe indicated a focus on protecting human rights.

NATO intervened in Yugoslavia to end the violence in 1995, when President Clinton agreed to U.S. participation in air strikes against Bosnian Serbs. In 1998, violence re-erupted when Yugoslavia, under President **Slobodan Milošević**, authorized soldiers and Serb civilians to attack Albanian Muslims in the province of Kosovo.



## PEOPLE TO KNOW

### Slobodan Milošević

President of Yugoslavia who authorized troops and local Serbs to attack Albanian Muslims in the

province of Kosovo in 1998, requiring American intervention.



#### DID YOU KNOW

By the summer of 1999, over 800,000 Albanians had been displaced, and almost 10,000 had been killed. To end the bloodshed, the United States and other NATO member states waged an air campaign against Yugoslavia until it withdrew its troops from Kosovo in June 1999.

Despite the atrocities that occurred in Southeastern Europe during the 1990s, it was not clear that the international community would mobilize to protect human rights. Additionally, U.S. efforts to address human rights crises, or to provide humanitarian aid, sometimes revealed the limits of American power and influence.

➔ **EXAMPLE** In December 1992, U.S. soldiers were dispatched to Somalia to ensure the safe distribution of UN relief supplies. When it learned in 1993 that a warlord was stealing supplies and endangering aid workers, the Clinton administration sent soldiers to the Somali capital, Mogadishu, to capture him. The helicopter transporting them was shot down, and U.S. special forces had to fight their way through the streets to rescue the survivors. Nineteen of them died during the operation. The United States eventually withdrew from Somalia, leaving the country to struggle with anarchy, violence, and poverty on its own.



A U.S. helicopter flies over Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, on a patrol mission in December 1992.



#### SUMMARY

The collapse of the Soviet Union and communist governments in Eastern Europe was one of the most momentous series of events in world history. The United States appeared to have won the Cold War.

Free of the need to continue its containment policy, the United States shifted its attention to the escalating tension in the Middle East. During Operation Desert Storm, an international coalition assembled by President Bush drove Iraqi occupying forces from Kuwait. The success of Operation Desert Storm led many to hope that the United States could establish “a new world order.” The implementation of this vision produced notable successes and violent failures and revealed that America’s power to influence international affairs was limited.

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## REFERENCES

G.H.W. Bush, Address to Nation on Invasion of Iraq, Jan 16, 1991, Miller Center Ret from: [bit.ly/2pR0udC](https://bit.ly/2pR0udC)



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