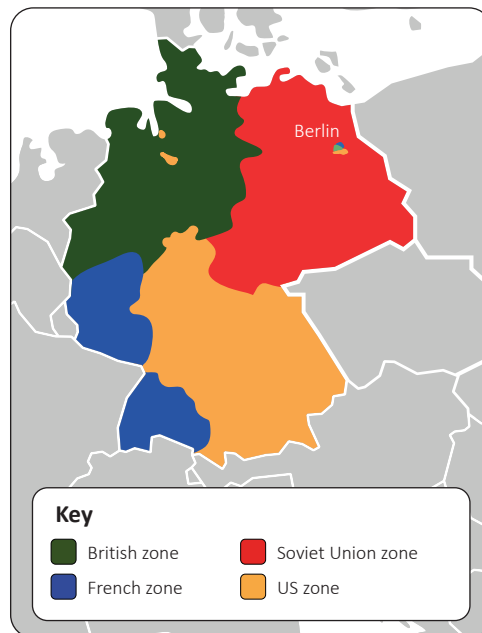


# Post-war world

A post-war world faces problems with its governments, finances, communities, morals and the health and wellbeing of its people. Leaders take actions to restore peace, rebuild communities and strengthen economies. They also guard against future wars. Consequently, post-war periods often experience rapidly developing new initiatives and emerging technologies.

## Allied-occupied Germany 1945–1949

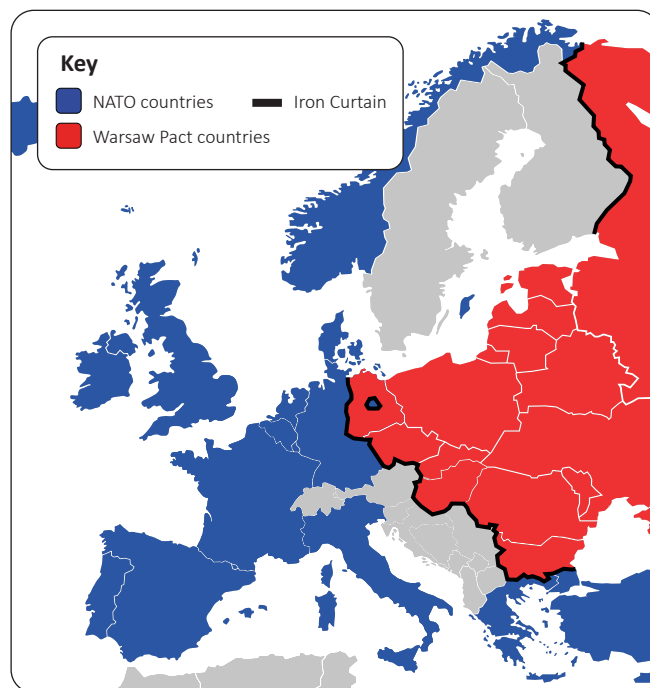
After the Second World War, the Allied Powers could not agree on a suitable punishment for Germany, so they divided the country into British, American, French and Soviet zones, where each decided their own terms. They divided Germany's capital, Berlin, in the same way. In 1949, Germany split into two independent nations: West Germany, formed from the British, American and French zones, and East Germany, which was the Soviet Union's zone. In West Germany, the Allied Powers reduced the German army, removed Nazi ideas, took war criminals to court and restored democracy. In East Germany, the Soviet Union installed a communist regime, which meant the state took ownership of people's businesses and controlled their finances and some of their personal freedoms, such as the ability to travel abroad. In 1961, the east and west sides of Berlin were separated by the Berlin Wall. This structure remained for 28 years, and the Soviet army killed anyone attempting to escape from East into West Germany.



Allied-occupied Germany

## Cold War 1945–1991

The Cold War was not a military war but a political rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. To prevent future threats from Germany, the Soviet Union established communist governments in the eastern European territories that it had gained during the war. However, the United States and its allies saw the spread of Soviet communism as a threat to democracy. A political line, called the Iron Curtain, was drawn between communist and democratic countries. In 1949, the United States and its allies formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). It aimed to defend the member countries from attack, secure peace in Europe and protect the freedoms of democracy. In 1955, the Soviet Union and seven other central and eastern European countries formed an alliance called the Warsaw Pact, where they agreed to defend each other from an attack by NATO. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved in 1991, when the Iron Curtain came down and the Cold War ended. However, NATO peacekeeping forces still continue to support peaceful conflict resolution today.



Countries involved in the Cold War in 1990



## Nuclear age

The United States dropped the first atomic bombs on the two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War. Their objective was a swift end to the war with a minimum loss of life, but the destruction of the cities led many to object to their use. After the Second World War, mistrust between the Cold War nations led to a nuclear arms race, with the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France all developing and hoarding nuclear weapons. In 1959, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) held its first meeting, with the aim of convincing governments to ban all nuclear weapons.

## International agreements

The consequences of war are so damaging that, in post-war periods, countries often seek international agreements to prevent future conflicts. For example, the Geneva Conventions banned chemical weapons, such as mustard gas, after the First World War and banned torture and genocide after the Holocaust of the Second World War. In 1945, 50 countries, including the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China, signed the United Nations Charter, pledging to maintain international peace. Now, there are almost 200 members. In 1948, the United Nations approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a list of 30 rights and freedoms that everyone in the world should enjoy. This list continues to form the basis of international human rights law. The United Nations is an active organisation today, protecting human rights, assisting refugees and reducing climate change.



General Assembly of the United Nations

## Decolonisation of the British Empire

After the world wars, Britain's military and economic strengths were seriously weakened. The efforts required to rebuild Britain left little time to maintain their command over colonies in the British Empire. Other factors, such as the Japanese control of British territories in Asia and the United States' disapproval of building empires, meant most British colonies became independent nations by the end of the 1960s. During this time, the British Commonwealth was renamed the Commonwealth of Nations. The Commonwealth of Nations exists today and is based on free and equal cooperation between the countries.



Flags of the Commonwealth countries in Parliament Square, London



## Welfare state and the National Health Service

After the Second World War, the participating countries were in turmoil, and millions of people had been displaced. Countries found themselves in debt, with huge numbers of unemployed, poor, disabled and traumatised citizens. Soldiers returned from the war to severe shortages of food, goods and housing. Many nations created a welfare state, a government where public funds protect people from poverty and ill health. In Britain, there was also a large-scale social housing project to provide inexpensive homes.

In 1948, it became compulsory for workers and businesses in Britain to pay a tax called National Insurance. This money was used to help individuals who were unemployed or unable to work due to sickness or old age. In the same year, the National Health Service (NHS) provided the world's first free healthcare. Both the welfare state and the NHS still offer services in Britain today.



## Technology

Many innovations made for military purposes during the Second World War were rapidly developed for civilian use after the war. For example, microwaves developed for radar were used in cooking, and radar used to detect planes were used to predict the weather. The first electronic computer used for codebreaking led to the civilian use of computers, and nuclear technology used in bombs was harnessed to make electricity in nuclear power stations. Jet engines invented for fighter planes were used to make passenger aeroplanes in the 1950s, and their speed and range opened up world travel for ordinary people. Finally, the nuclear arms race of the Cold War led to the Space Race, where the United States and the Soviet Union competed for supremacy in space as well as on Earth.



Space shuttle launch

## Glossary

<b>colony</b>	A nation controlled by another country.
<b>communism</b>	A system where the government, instead of individuals, owns land and businesses. Everyone works to produce food and goods, which they share with the population.
<b>decolonisation</b>	Granting independence to colonies.
<b>democracy</b>	A system of government where people vote for Members of Parliament to represent their views.
<b>disarmament</b>	Reducing the number of weapons that a country holds.
<b>displaced</b>	Forced to leave home, usually for an event like a war or natural disaster.
<b>Holocaust</b>	The killing of millions of people by the Nazis in the Second World War, based on ethnicity, religion, political beliefs or sexual orientation.

