This chapter focuses on some of the principal developments in world politics from 1900 to 1999: the development of total war; the advent of nuclear weapons, the onset of cold war, and the end of European imperialism. It shows how the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union became the key dynamic in world affairs, replacing the dominance of—and conflict among—European states in the first half of the twentieth century. It also examines the ways that the cold war promoted or prevented global conflict, how decolonization became entangled with East-West conflicts, and how dangerous the nuclear confrontation between East and West was. Finally, the chapter considers the role of nuclear weapons in specific phases of the cold war, notably in détente, and then with the deterioration of Soviet-American relations in the 1980s.
3. International history of the twentieth century

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