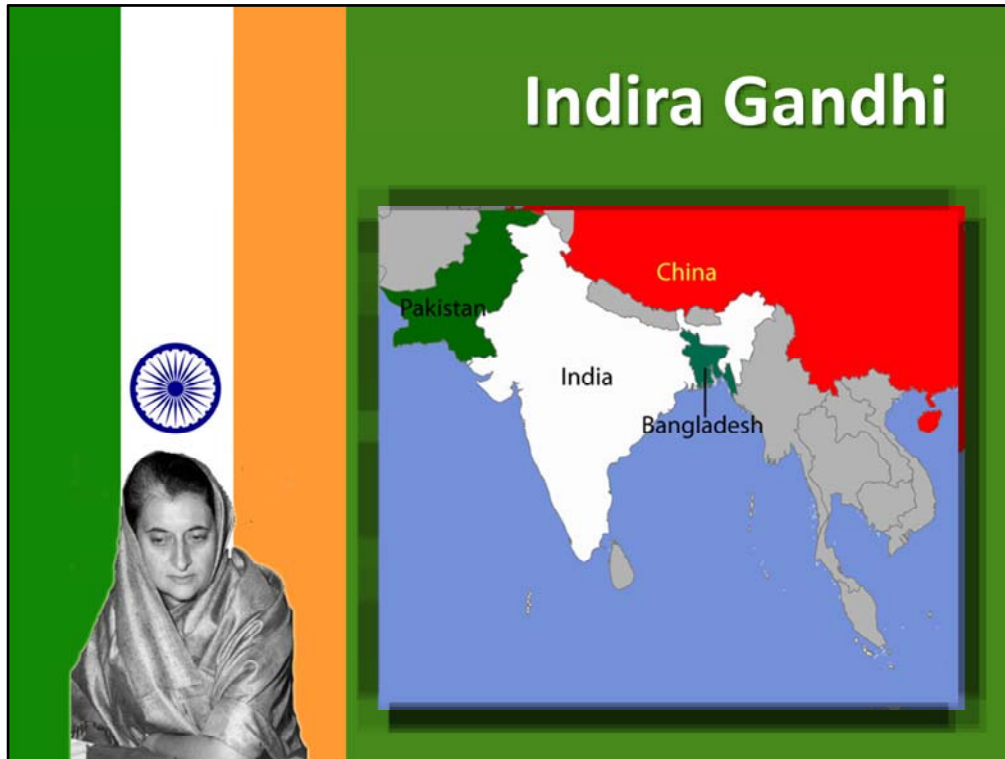


Three Leaders Who Changed the World



During the Cold War, there were several strong leaders in countries outside of the United States and the Soviet Union.

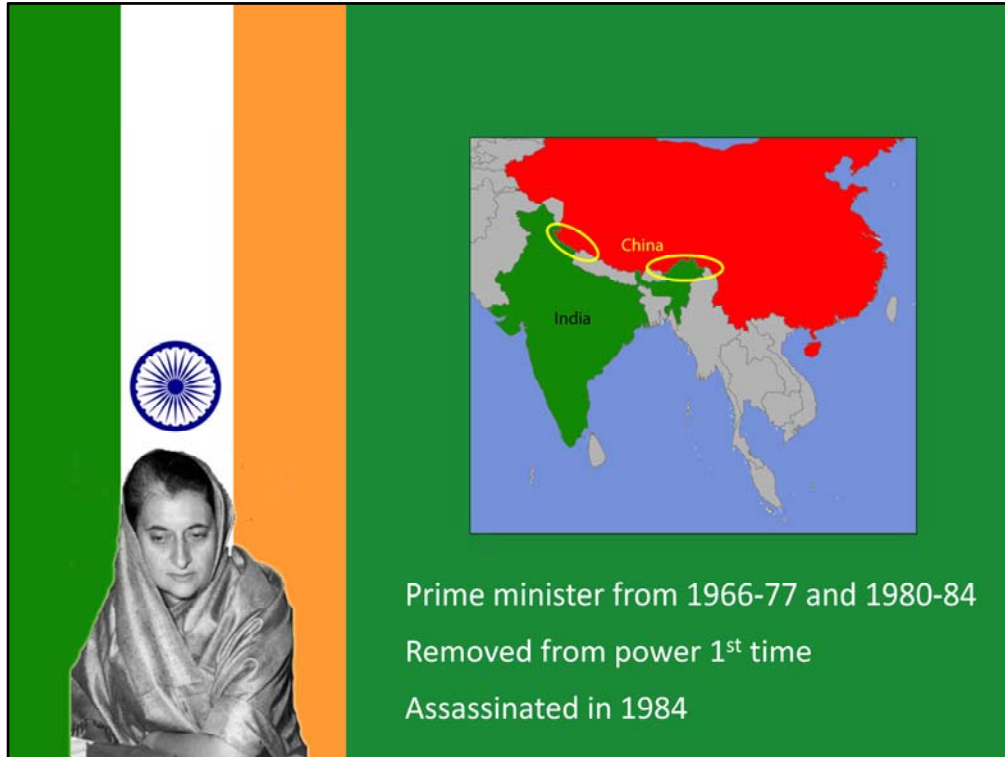
[Image of Margaret Thatcher courtesy Chris Collins of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation]



India, under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, is a good example of how the Cold War influenced events throughout the world and how some politicians used this conflict to their advantage.

After gaining independence from England following World War II, India was split into two countries: India and Pakistan. Pakistan had two major states, East and West, which surrounded India. When East Pakistan fought for independence from the West in 1971, India provided support for East Pakistan's military. The U.S. supported West Pakistan in the conflict, fearing the growing regional influence of the Soviet Union, which supported India.

After India and the new country of Bangladesh defeated Pakistan, Indira Gandhi sought even closer ties between India and the Soviet Union. The two countries viewed each other as important allies against American and Chinese influence in the region. Meanwhile, the United States continued to support Pakistan as a check on India's growing power.



Gandhi wasn't only concerned with Pakistan and the United States. She was also worried about China's nuclear weapons capabilities. The two countries shared a long border and had recently fought a war. In 1967, China successfully tested its first thermonuclear weapon. In response, Gandhi authorized the development of nuclear weapons, culminating in 1974 with India's own successful test. The world now had another nuclear power to deal with, one which seemed to be allied with the Soviets.

Indira Gandhi was twice selected as Prime Minister of India. She achieved most of her greatest accomplishments during her first term in office from 1966 to 1977. She was removed from power because of corruption charges. After being re-appointed prime minister in 1980, she ruled for another four years until she was assassinated by Sikh extremists.



By the 1970s, China had been a communist country for over two decades and was a world power. While it had developed nuclear weapons in the 1960s, its economy, had grown little under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung. In the 1960s, Mao's Great Leap Forward resulted in deaths of millions due to failed agricultural policies. The Great Leap was followed by the Cultural Revolution, when millions of Chinese were persecuted in the name of rooting out capitalism. These policies were both failures and did little to help the economy grow.

After Mao died in 1976, he was replaced by Deng Xiaoping, a moderate who had been purged from the government during the Cultural Revolution. Deng ruled from 1978 to 1992. He is best known for instituting economic reforms which created a socialist market economy. This transformed China into an industrial powerhouse. These reforms included opening the country to foreign investment, engaging in world trade, and allowing some private ownership. Deng still believed in communism, but promoted these reforms as a means to industrialize the country.

The resulting economic growth has been phenomenal. Within fifteen years, China quadrupled its Gross National Product. Over the last thirty years, the country's economy has grown about ten percent per year on average. By 2010, it had the world's second largest economy after the United States.

Although Deng Xiaoping reformed the economy, he did not promote political reforms. In 1989, while he was leader, the army used live ammunition to crush protests centered around Tiananmen Square. These protestors wanted more political reforms. Deng also helped institute China's one-child policy in order to limit population growth.

Much like Mao, Deng continued to regard the Soviet Union as an adversary due to its proximity and influence.



One of the most important allies that President Ronald Reagan had during his two terms in office was Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Ideologically, these two leaders of the English-speaking world had much in common. Both strongly disapproved of communism and, at first, were highly distrustful of the Soviet Union's leaders. They were also the leading economic conservatives in their respective countries.

Economic conservatives promote lower taxes and less government involvement in the economy as a way to promote economic growth. Often, conservatives support reduced government spending. Economic conservatives are pro-business, encouraging free trade and reduced government regulation while often taking a harder line against trade unions.

As prime minister and leader of the Conservative Party in Britain from 1979 to 1990, Thatcher followed an economic conservative agenda during her three terms, much as President Reagan did during his two terms.

Also, like Reagan, Thatcher used the military more in foreign relations. When Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982, the United Kingdom responded with military force. The war lasted two months and ended with Britain re-establishing control over the disputed territory. Thatcher purchased a number of nuclear missiles from the United States, tripling Britain's nuclear capacity.

Like Reagan, Thatcher welcomed the political reforms implemented by Mikhail Gorbachev, which led to the end of the Cold War.