CHAPTER 31

Western Society and Eastern Europe in the Decades of the Cold War

After World War II: A New International Setting for the West

Europe’s infrastructure, its economy, its people were devastated by World War II, to the point that survival itself was in doubt for the first years following the wars. The forces pushing toward decolonization became apparent soon after the war. Although violent, costly struggles resulted in some areas, decolonization was generally smooth from the 1950s through the 1970s. Western powers sometimes maintained positive relations with their former colonies. Yet the process also returned waves of embittered colonists to their home countries.

The Cold War, between the United States and the Soviet Union, was one of the most important factors in the postwar world. The Soviet Union created an eastern bloc, including Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. The United States, led by Harry Truman, was more antagonistic to the Soviet Union than were European powers. Winston Churchill called the division between the two spheres the iron curtain. The U.S. Marshall Plan, providing aid to Europe, was in part a means of resisting communism. In the immediate postwar period, Germany was the main battleground. The 1947 Soviet blockade of Berlin was countered by a United States airlift to bring in supplies. In 1948, Germany was divided into East and West Germany. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), bringing together the North American and European powers, was matched by the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact countries. The onset of the Cold War meant increasing U.S. intervention in Europe. However, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were soon engaged in other world areas. U.S. militarization was one result of the Cold War, while European powers devoted less of their budgets to arming.

Resurgence of Western Europe

Following the war, European leaders were greatly influenced by their wartime experiences. Military defeat discredited fascism, and Europe moved to the left, supporting democracy and welfare institutions. Political reconstruction in Germany was initially slow, and was then influenced by the Cold War. Italy and Germany both drew up new constitutions.

The welfare state grew out of the postwar need for reconstruction. In the United States, welfare programs began with the Depression-era New Deal. Typically,
states passed unemployment insurance, public health measures, family assistance, and housing aid. Governments relied on so-called technocrats, who were skilled in fields that Europe required for rebuilding.

- Student protests were common in Western countries in the 1960s. Material culture and social inequalities were common targets. In the 1970s, the Green movement became a significant political force. Recession was also widespread in the 1970s, reversing the trend toward larger governments.

- During and after World War II, many Europeans desired greater harmony among their nations. By 1958, six European powers had created the European Economic Community, later called the European Union. Initially motivated by economic goals, as the union grew, it also added a parliament and judiciary. Europe gained a mechanism for ensuring general peace.

- Substantial economic growth in postwar Europe was helped by agricultural improvements and a shift to production of consumer products. Steady growth occurred in the service industries. Immigration fed the need for labor. Material wealth and spending on leisure and luxuries increased substantially.

**Cold War Allies: The United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand**

- While the North American allies Australia and New Zealand did not experience the burst of growth that occurred in Europe after the war, growth did occur.

- Canada followed its own path of development, but continued economic cooperation with the United States. Asian immigrants changed Canada's makeup, and French Canadians pushed for autonomy. Australia and New Zealand shifted their alignment away from the British sphere to one dominated by the United States. Australia traded increasingly with Japan.

- In 1947, Harry Truman declared support for those resisting oppression. In part, this meant resistance to communism. A number of U.S. agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency, the Strategic Air Command, and the military, were important tools that supported the Truman doctrine. The United States invaded North Korea in 1950, after the North Korean communist government had launched a surprise attack on South Korea. Dwight Eisenhower's presidency focused on containment of the Soviet Union, with notable failure in Cuba. The policy of containment resulted in the invasion of Vietnam. Public opposition, and the failure of the undertaking, led to withdrawal in 1973. The U.S. defeat in Vietnam led the country to change its attitude toward involvement in world affairs, but not official policy. Ronald Reagan's presidency, beginning in 1980, continued a policy of aggression toward the Soviet Union. Under George Bush, and to a lesser extent Bill Clinton, the United States continued to lead military actions overseas.

**Culture and Society in the West**

- Social conflicts in Europe were eased by greater prosperity, though class and race divisions did not disappear.

- The greatest social changes in the postwar West involved women. Many women employed during the war continued to work after the peace. By the 1920s, women comprised up to 44 percent of the workforce. Yet women's pay was often lower than men's, and women were most frequently employed in clerical posi-
tions. Women won the vote, and increasingly attended universities. Advocates for women’s reproductive rights were often successful. These changes are partially responsible for declining birthrates and for children starting school earlier. Divorce became a common phenomenon. The new feminism, voiced by Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, attempted to redefine women’s roles. The movement was successful in bringing forward new political issues.

Despite profound changes in Western society, cultural development often followed well-established lines. The United States was a growing power in intellectual life, as the country drew scholars from many areas. Important European scientific research continued, with such work as Francis Crick’s study of DNA. In the arts, styles that had been shocking and ultramodern in the 1920s became familiar in the 1950s. “Pop” art used new media to bring art and popular culture together. Europeans generally took the lead in film. In the 1960s, Godard, Antonioni, and Bergman further developed the art of filmmaking. It is difficult to generalize about the social sciences, with the possible exception of a tendency to collect large databases of information for study.

European popular culture was heavily influenced by the United States. In particular, U.S. television series gained large audiences in Europe. In popular music, however, the influence generally moved in the other direction. As in the United States, sexual behavior underwent a number of changes; for instance, premarital sex became more common.

Eastern Europe After World War II: A Soviet Empire

Soviet post-war policy included a wish to protect the country from invasion and a desire to maintain its position as a world power. Pacific islands taken from Japan late in the war and influence in North Korea and Vietnam increased the Soviet sphere.

While expanding its influence in many areas, the Soviet Union first extended its influence in Eastern Europe. The many young nations of the area had struggled between the wars and then had fallen to the Nazis. The Soviets took all but Albania, Greece, and Yugoslavia by 1948. In the region, the Soviet Union exported its collectivization program, and industrialization, while silencing opposition. The Warsaw Pact formed a separate economic sphere. Some social and economic problems were addressed, but the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961, making the Soviet approach to choice clear. Easing of Stalinism in 1956 led to high expectations. Poland showed some independence, with Soviet approval. A Hungarian uprising was viciously suppressed, but overall Soviet control did loosen. A more liberal Czechoslovakian regime was condemned by the Soviet Union. The Polish Solidarity movement was allowed to develop, under close scrutiny. While differences continued between countries, by the 1980s Eastern Europe had been transformed by Soviet influence. Conversely, the need to keep east European opposition under control kept the Soviet Union preoccupied.

Propaganda was used by the Soviet leaders, vilifying the United States. Control of the media, of travel, and of the borders allowed the government to maintain control over its own people. Stalin’s organization of the state and society, dominated by the Communist Party, continued with few changes.
The Soviet government was an innovative attempt to expand the state with popular support, while promoting a new, common, culture. Its attack on the Orthodox Church began soon after the 1917 revolution, and mainly consisted of hampering the church's ability to influence the young. In the area of culture, as well, the government set its own agenda, often in opposition to Western trends, ballet and classical music were important exceptions. Literature developed with relative freedom, often choosing themes that celebrated the Soviet experience. The author of *The Gulag Archipelago*, Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, is an example of a writer that adhered to many Russian values, while criticizing much of the Soviet government. The sciences and social sciences continued to hold a preeminent position, though under government control.

Industrialization in the Soviet Union, along with most of Eastern Europe, was complete by 1960. Heavy industry was still given priority over manufacturing consumer goods. The drive to increase production had a serious, adverse impact on the environment. Leisure activities became important, and a division between workers and managers followed industrialization in the Soviet Union, as it had in the West. Changes in family structure, including a falling birthrate and increasing women’s employment, also resembled Western developments.

Stalin’s death in 1953 jeopardized the system he had created. However, the system was sufficiently entrenched to survive. Nikita Khrushchev monopolized power in 1956, and condemned Stalin's methods. More criticism of the state was allowed. Khrushchev brought the Soviet Union close to war with the United States when he refused to back down in Cuba. Khrushchev’s failed scheme to open Siberia to cultivation led to his fall from power. The 1960s and 1970s were relatively stable in the Soviet Union.
Latin America: Revolution and Reaction into the 21st Century

Latin America After World War II

Following World War II, authoritarian rulers held power in several Latin American countries, including Perón in Argentina and Vargas in Brazil. Dissent was often countered by oppressive measures.


Radical Options in the 1950s

Unsatisfied desire for reform built up in many countries, including Venezuela and Costa Rica, where elections brought reformers to power. In 1952, a revolution broke out in Bolivia, but conservative forces won the day.

Guatemala, like Bolivia, had an Indian majority and an extremely inequitable distribution of resources. Juan José Arévalo was elected in 1944. His program included land reform, in the face of such large foreign companies as the United Fruit Company. Arevalo was replaced in 1952 by Jacobo Árbenz. The United States moved to protect United Fruit from Arbenz’s more radical program and to stop perceived communism. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency organized an invasion force, bringing in a pro-U.S. regime. Guatemala’s problems continued, and a guerilla movement emerged.

Unlike Guatemala and Bolivia, Cuba had a population mostly descended from European colonists and African slaves. By the 1950s, Cuba was firmly in the U.S. sphere of influence. Fulgencio Batista ruled Cuba from 1934–1944. Undertaking reforms, his regime moved close to dictatorship. In 1953, Fidel Castro launched an unsuccessful attack on the Cuban military. Fleeing to Mexico, Castro joined Ernesto “Che” Guevara, and the two raised troops and invaded Cuba in 1956. By 1958, they were in control, and Castro’s movement had become more radical. U.S. opposition pushed Castro into the Soviet camp. The United States face-off with Cuba became part of the Cold War. Castro’s reforms were sweeping, and particularly successful in the area of social welfare. The Cuban economy, on the other hand, required Soviet support. Reform in Cuba, and the island’s resistance to U.S. pressure, made it an attractive model for other Latin American countries.
The Search for Reform and the Military Option

In Latin America, revolution continued to be a likely option to resolve persistent problems. Another option, taken by Mexico, was the stability of one-party rule. Christian Democrats, especially in Chile and Venezuela, offered the support of the church in seeking social reform and protection of human rights. Liberation theology, combining Catholic theology and socialism or Marxism, was another popular solution.

Military involvement in Latin American politics was a long-standing tradition. Often acting in reaction to the threat of reform, including communist programs, military groups took action in Brazil and Argentina. In Chile, the socialist President Salvador Allende was removed by the military. Military regimes aimed to impose neutral regimes that would stabilize their economies. Brutality was used when it was thought necessary. Economic growth was achieved in some cases, but at the cost of more equitable resource distribution. Military regimes varied, and in some cases sought popular support and social and land reforms.

By the middle of the 1980s, military regimes were giving way to civil governments. Elections were held in Argentina in 1983. El Salvador and Guatemala were returned to civilian rule in 1992 and 1996. Inflation, debt, and the drug traffic plagued Latin American economies. While democracy spread, some countries took more radical paths. Hugo Chávez’s regime in Venezuela gained a following in other countries.

The United States cast a long shadow over Latin American developments throughout the 20th century. U.S. influence included private investment, outright invasion, and sometimes both. More than 30 U.S. military actions occurred in Latin America before 1933. Nicaragua’s Augusto Sandino led armed resistance against U.S.-trained forces, inspiring the Sandinista movement. U.S. intervention led to the establishment and then control of so-called banana republics. Widespread hostility to U.S. interference was voiced by Pablo Neruda. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy was a brief change to more equitable relations. The U.S. Alliance for Progress provided over $10 billion to help economic development in Latin America. The 1970s and 1980s were typified by U.S. involvement in Latin America on an ad hoc basis to protect U.S. interests. Financial support from the United States to Latin America is largely for military spending.

Societies in Search of Change

Important social changes occurred in Latin America in the 20th century, in spite of disappointments in attempts to bring about larger social reforms.

Women’s roles changed slowly. Ecuador, Brazil, and Cuba granted women the right to vote by 1932. Feminist and suffrage movements became more active. In some countries, women gained the vote, only to join parties that denied them further rights. Entering the workforce in large numbers in the early decades of the 20th century, women still lagged behind men in pay. Women in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia are influential in small-scale commerce and have become a political force. Concerning the position of women, by the mid-1990s, Latin America stood between industrialized and developing nations.
Population growth was high in Latin America, and accompanied by significant population movements. Mexican migrant labor into the United States reached 750,000 per year by 1970, primarily coming from Mexico. The figure is about 5 million for movement within the continent. Industrialization, political repression, and instability have contributed to the phenomenon. Moreover, movement from rural to urban areas has created large urban areas surrounded by shantytowns. Unlike rural workers moving into towns during European industrialization, the new arrivals often failed to make it into the ranks of industrial workers. A divided urban population has resulted.

Latin America remains overwhelmingly Catholic. Popular culture has maintained its energy. Striving for social justice and welfare has invigorated artistic expression. Frustrated desire for change led some writers to pursue “magical realism.” Writers such as Gabriel García Marquez combined close observation of his own culture with a fantastic setting.
CHAPTER 33

Africa, the Middle East, and Asia in the Era of Independence

The Challenges of Independence

- Nationalism continued to be a force in newly independent nations, often used by leaders against departing Europeans. Yet when the latter did leave, improvements were not as great as many expected. Distribution of goods already in short supply often led to difficulties. Struggles for independence had often brought about unity, which could disappear when the foreign regimes departed. When artificial boundaries established between rival peoples disappeared, conflict often broke out. Bangladesh established its independence following years of conflict arising from the partition of India. The work of just keeping countries together absorbed a great deal of energy.

- Rapidly growing populations were a problem in all of the developing countries. New crops, especially those from the New World, led to population growth, as did better infrastructures under colonial rule. Moreover, since the early 20th century, health care has added to population growth. The problem has been most obvious in Africa, where population growth rates have been extremely high, in spite of the AIDS epidemic. Developing countries, behind in industrialization, had trouble feeding or employing their growing populations. Cultural attitudes have prevented birth control from becoming popular, in particular in areas where religion or society requires sons. Infant mortality has also dropped.

- The move from rural to urban areas that occurred in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries occurred also in developing nations, with the difference that industrialization is generally absent, leaving newcomers unemployed and destitute. Urban poor are often a volatile political force. Urban sprawl includes large unplanned shantytowns. Overpopulation in rural areas has had a profound environmental impact.

- Women’s suffrage was often incorporated into new constitutions, although women’s roles have often expanded only slowly. The example of such powerful women as Indira Gandhi—daughter of Jawharlal Nehru—or Corazon Aquino is misleading, because they came to prominence through their husbands or fathers. Benazir Bhutto, prime minister of Pakistan, was preceded in the office by her father. Early marriages and large families leave the majority of women in
developing countries little time for other pursuits. Malnourishment among women is high because of the tradition of giving the best food to their children and husbands. Rights granted by law are often severely limited by religious revivalism in many countries.

Nationalist leaders hoped to industrialize, but were hampered by insufficient capital. Cash crops and mineral resources are key in many nations. These primary products have been subject to price swings, leaving nations vulnerable to market forces. Leaders in Africa and the Middle East have often blamed the neo-colonial economy, but other factors play a part. In many countries, a tiny minority absorbs a disproportionate amount of revenue. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have aided industry in developing nations, but the aid often required economic restructuring.

Paths to Economic Growth and Social Justice

Leaders of new nations are still seeking solutions to the problems of development.

Authoritarian rule has been a common, but largely unsuccessful, response. The example of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana illustrates the point. Genuinely wishing for reform, he finally opted for Soviet support, alienating Western powers. Crucial revenue from cocoa exports dropped when cocoa prices fell. To stay in power, Nkrumah resorted to oppression and to the celebration of what he called a unique version of socialism. He accepted comparisons with Confucius and Mohammad, increasing opposition. Suppressed dissenters rose up during his brief absence in 1966 and deposed him. Military regimes have succeeded Nkrumah.

Military leaders have often used the force at their disposal to impose control after order has broken down. Western governments tended to support these military leaders because they are generally anti-communist. Military dictatorships have varied considerably, from the rule of Idi Amin in Uganda, to that of Gamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt. The Egyptian Free Officers Movement had its roots in the 1930s, beginning with a nationalist agenda. It was founded by Egyptian officers opposed to Turkish rule and influence. It was allied for a time to the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna. The latter movement focused on social reform. The murder of al-Banna in 1949 failed to stop the movement. Egypt’s defeat in the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948 and anger over British occupation of the Suez Canal led to a coup in 1952. The Free Officers took control, and Nasser emerged as leader. The state was used as a tool to bring about land reforms and to establish an educational system. The regime controlled foreign investment and managed to gain control of the Suez Canal zone. Land reform was flawed by corruption and by the maneuvers of large landowners. The Aswan Dam project created significant, unforeseen problems. Anwar Sadat succeeded Nasser, reversing many of the latter’s programs. Private initiative was favored over state-run projects. Sadat also reversed the policy of hostility to Israel. His successor, Hosni Mubarak, has generally followed Sadat’s course. The problems of population growth and massive poverty continue.
India, since it gained independence, has managed to avoid military rule. Rulers such as Nehru have pursued social reform and economic development, while protecting civil rights in a democratic state. Nehru mixed public with private investment. The Green Revolution has increased agricultural yields. High-tech industry has also been an important part of the economy. Yet India’s overpopulation problem is immense, and in spite of a growing middle class, a large part of the nation has not benefited from development.

Among postcolonial nations, Iran underwent a revolution under the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Iran had never been colonized, but had come under Western influence. Modernization under the Pahlavi shahs was briefly stopped by a coup, but they were returned to power with the CIA’s support. The shah alienated both the ayatollahs and the mullahs. Attempts at land reform angered the landowners. A drop in oil prices brought the country to revolution in 1979. Khomeini’s promises of purification and a return to the golden age of the prophet were aimed at removing the shah and the Pahlavi dynasty. Like the Mahdi, Khomeini claimed to be divinely led. Iran was purged of Western influence, and moderate and leftist Iranians were condemned. Secularism was eliminated from the law. The new government planned land reforms, but Saddam Hussein led Iraq’s seizure of Iranian territory, leading the two nations to war. The Iran-Iraq war resulted in devastation for Iran, which finally signed an armistice in 1988. Without regime change, the country did experience some easing of restrictions, and more open elections took place in the 1990s.

Several African countries, including Angola and Mozambique, were still under colonial powers into the 1970s. South Africa stood out, however, as by far the largest country still under white rule. The Afrikaners had imposed white rule in their system of apartheid. Blacks and whites were kept strictly segregated. Overpopulated homelands were reserved for “tribal” groups. The Afrikaners ruled a police state. The African National Congress and other black organizations were declared illegal. Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela were two of many African leaders imprisoned. Another, Steve Biko, part of the Black Consciousness movement, was killed in custody. From the 1960s, African guerillas emerged, countered by suppression. International pressure coupled with exhausting wars against Namibia and Angola led to a change in attitude in the South African government. F. W. de Klerk and fellow moderate Afrikaners began to undo apartheid. All adult South Africans were allowed to vote in the 1994 elections, which brought Nelson Mandela and the ANC to power. Ethnic hostility still plagues the country, in spite of the peaceful ending of apartheid.

Some patterns emerge when examining the new nations. India was particularly successful in creating a democratic state, partly because modern India continues preconquest traditions on the subcontinent. In the Middle East, Islam continues to be a dominant factor. In Africa as in India, the impacts of colonization have merged with older traditions. In the case of Africa, this often means a tendency toward “Big Man” rule.