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# THE COLD WAR AND AFTER: 1945 TO THE PRESENT

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After World War II, there were many changes in Europe. Great Britain, France, and Germany saw their influence diminish as the Soviet Union and the United States became global superpowers. Europe was divided between Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe and U.S.-dominated democratic Western Europe. This division would persist for nearly fifty years, until the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s. The fall of the Soviet Union accelerated Europe's drive toward unity and cooperation.

## KEY TERMS

Abstract Expressionism	<i>glasnost</i>
Berlin Air Lift	globalization
Berlin Wall	iron curtain
Brezhnev Doctrine	Korean War
Cuban Missile Crisis	Marshall Plan
decolonization	nationalization
détente	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ethnic cleansing	<i>perestroika</i>
European Economic Community	Truman Doctrine
European Union	Warsaw Pact
existentialism	welfare state
feminism	

## KEY CONCEPTS

- After World War II, Eastern and Western Europe were separated by a global rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union that continued until the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s.
- After the war, the economies of Western Europe rebounded. Governments embraced various forms of social welfare policy at home while confronting decolonization abroad.
- The aftermath of war led many artists and intellectuals to question the meaning of traditional society, while advances in technology influenced the rise of popular culture.

For a full discussion of Europe from 1945 to the present, see *Western Civilization*, 7th and 8th editions, Chapters 28–30.

## COLD WAR BEGINNINGS

Most historians agree that a post-war rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union was unavoidable. Their biggest conflict centered on the fate of Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union wanted a buffer zone against potential military threats from the West; the United States saw Soviet domination as a threat to the democratic freedom of the liberated nations in Eastern Europe. When conflict emerged in Greece and Turkey, the United States issued the Truman Doctrine, which promised financial support to nations threatened by communist expansion.

Of all the U.S. efforts to assist Europeans after the war, one of the most important was the Marshall Plan, which provided massive financial aid to promote economic recovery and foster political stability. The plan helped Europe rebuild, but also led to further conflict with the Soviet Union. Mutual suspicions led to a long-term rivalry and forced the United States to remain active in foreign affairs. To respond to Soviet aggression around the world, American diplomat George Kennan designed a policy that called for “long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.”

Cold War tensions erupted in postwar Germany in 1948. When the Western powers set out to unify their zones, the Soviets blockaded West Berlin, necessitating a dramatic airlift. The Soviets eventually ended the blockade but set up a communist East Germany.

That Churchill and Truman had not told Stalin about the Manhattan Project accounts for much of the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb in 1949, the United States worked to produce larger and more lethal nuclear weapons, sparking the arms race. The concept of mutual deterrence was used to prevent nuclear annihilation.

Military alliances were also used as a means to European security. In 1949, nine Western European nations, the United States, and Canada formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), agreeing to provide military assistance in the event of an attack. In 1955, the Soviet Union responded by forming its own military alliance, the Warsaw Pact, with seven East European countries.

## EUROPE AND THE WORLD

Cold War tensions quickly spread beyond Europe, especially after the Chinese communists defeated the American-backed nationalists in 1949. In 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea, United Nations forces—mostly Americans—were sent to turn back the invasion. Mao Zedong sent Chinese troops into North Korea, leading to more fighting and eventually a stalemate. China had officially entered the Cold War.

European powers found they could no longer continue colonial rule. The cost was prohibitive, and indigenous peoples were rebelling. The success of decolonization varied according to location. In Africa, the process was typically nonviolent, often led by Western-educated intellectuals such as Kwame Nkrumah, who guided Ghana to independence in 1957. But only after the Mau Mau uprising proved an unsustainable drain on Britain's resources did Britain grant Kenya independence, in 1963. Where a substantial European population existed, the transition to independence was more complicated. The French experienced great difficulties in North Africa, especially in Algeria, where nationalists fought a guerilla war for many years, until they won independence in 1962.

In the Middle East, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq achieved independence at the end of World War I. After World War II, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon became independent states. They formed the Arab League to promote Arab unity, but were unified on only one issue: the settlement of Palestine. Britain had taken control of the area after World War I, but the Zionist movement and increased Jewish settlement caused friction, and the pressure for an independent Jewish state in Palestine was powerful. Although Jews were a clear minority in Palestine, the United Nations divided Palestine into two states; the state of Israel was created in 1948. Tensions with its neighbors continue to this day.

In 1956, two years after taking control of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company, threatening British and French ships' passage to the Indian Ocean. Israel joined with Britain and France to attack Egypt. The United States and the Soviet Union forced a withdrawal, arguing that the invasion was a return to colonialism. Nasser emerged as the leading figure in the Pan-Arab movement.

In Asia, British worries that massive bloodshed would accompany Indian independence were justified; the partitioning of India proved deadly, as millions of Hindus and Muslims shifted across the India-Pakistan border. Unwilling to leave Southeast Asia, French forces fought a bloody guerilla war, led by the Communist Ho Chi Minh. Vietnam was divided between the communist north and the pro-Western south, and would remain divided until the mid-1970s. But its experience with the Vietnamese nationalists forced France to grant independence to Laos and Cambodia.

Cold War politics hung over decolonization. As the European powers relinquished control over their territories, the superpowers supplied military and financial support to emerging states in an effort to thwart rival expansion. This often led to armed conflict—as in Vietnam, starting in the mid-sixties. Some newly independent nations,

however, chose to remain nonaligned, frustrating the superpowers, which were unable to exert direct influence.

## THE SOVIET UNION

Despite being a global superpower, the Soviet Union nonetheless faced tremendous hardships at home. With the USSR's economic infrastructure destroyed by the war, Stalin used drastic measures to spur economic renewal. Soon after, the country witnessed unimaginable industrial growth, thanks largely to the astounding efforts of the Soviet workers. The Soviets also had great success in science, highlighted by the launching of Sputnik in 1957. But consumer goods and adequate housing were scarce, and political terror continued unabated, as dissent was put down.

The Soviet Union continued to dominate Eastern Europe except in Yugoslavia, where Josip Broz Tito, exploiting Yugoslavian nationalism, insisted on an independent communist state free from Soviet influence. Upon Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev took over and initiated a process of de-Stalinization. Many people in Eastern Europe used this opportunity to press for political freedom. In 1956, first Poland and then Hungary attempted to gain independence. Poland was given some independence after pledging to remain in the Warsaw Pact. In Hungary, the ruling Stalinist party was ousted in favor of the reform-minded leader Imry Nagy. Soon after, the Red Army removed Nagy from office and put down all dissension. Hungary's experience dimmed prospects for revolts in Eastern Europe.

Another problem bedeviling the Soviets was the city of Berlin. West Berlin, an affluent island in destitute East Germany, was an embarrassment to Communist leaders as many East Germans escaped into West Berlin. In 1961, Khrushchev ordered the construction around West Berlin of a wall, which became a bleak symbol of a divided Europe.

Meanwhile, Khrushchev and the United States had a confrontation over the deployment of Soviet missiles in the Caribbean. In 1959, Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro set up a government modeled on Soviet communism. Unwilling to have a communist country so close to the homeland, the United States attempted to overthrow Castro. An invasion by U.S.-backed Cuban exiles was an embarrassing failure. The so-called Bay of Pigs invasion encouraged Castro to form closer ties with the Soviet Union.

On the pretext of preventing American attacks, Khrushchev set out to build nuclear missile sites on Cuban soil, a plan the United States firmly rejected. In response, Khrushchev pointed out that American missiles were located in Turkey, on the Soviet border. The United States ordered the Soviets to halt all missile-laden Soviet ships sailing to Cuba and blockaded Cuba to prevent their arrival. After many tense hours, Khrushchev agreed to turn the fleet around, on the condition that the United States promise not to invade Cuba and remove its missiles from Turkey. To avoid another close call, both superpowers made genuine efforts to improve communication.

Khrushchev's popularity among Soviet leaders declined, and in 1964, the Soviet Politburo forced him into retirement. His successor

was Leonid Brezhnev, whose nearly two decades of leadership were marked by a more relaxed atmosphere within the Soviet Union. The superpowers entered a period of reduced tensions called *détente*, signified by the Antiballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 and the Helsinki Agreement of 1975. *Détente* came to an end with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Reagan increased the tension by providing military aid to Afghan rebels.

### AP Tip

During the period of *détente*, the United States set out to improve relations with Communist China. By the end of the 1970s, the two nations had created a “strategic relationship” to counter Soviet influence in Asia.

When Brezhnev died in 1982, the Soviet Union was involved in an unpopular military engagement in Afghanistan that drained resources from needed economic development. Further, the Soviet political structure had become ossified, as the political elite dismissed any attempts at reform. The Soviet economy was faltering because workers had little incentive to increase productivity. Innovation lagged behind the West’s, and alcoholism soared. Brezhnev’s successor, Yuri Andropov, began reform. One step was the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as party secretary in 1985.

Gorbachev, who had come of age during Khrushchev’s rule and understood the value of reform, saw the necessity of radical change. He first called for *perestroika*, or “restructuring,” to energize the flagging Soviet economy with a limited free market and ownership of private property. Next he initiated a policy of *glasnost*, or “openness,” to encourage discussion of the country’s problems by both citizens and officials. These reforms released enormous pent-up frustrations that were felt everywhere, from newspaper editorials to rock concerts. Coupled with reforms that took political authority away from the Communist Party, the Soviet Union was primed for a massive change, and ethnic groups within the country began to push for greater independence.

By 1991, the Soviet Union had ceased to exist. Soviet hardliners initiated a coup against Gorbachev, but it failed when Gorbachev refused to cooperate with the hardliners and a large resistance movement led by Russian president Boris Yeltsin emerged. Gorbachev resigned, turning leadership over to Yeltsin. Under Yeltsin, Russia implemented a free-market economy and a democratic form of government but experienced many problems, including widespread corruption and the rise of organized crime.

## TRANSITION IN EASTERN EUROPE

In 1968, more than ten years after Hungary had attempted to free itself from Soviet domination, a reform movement sprang up in Czechoslovakia. Alexander Dubcek sought to create “communism with

a human face,” but the Soviet military, invoking the Brezhnev Doctrine, crushed this “Prague Spring.” In 1980, Polish workers formed an independent labor movement, Solidarity. Led by Lech Walesa, it earned the support of many Poles, including intellectuals and the Catholic clergy. The Polish Communist government attempted to stifle Solidarity, but unrest increased, leading to free elections. Gorbachev stood on the sidelines as Walesa was elected president in 1990.

As more reform movements emerged throughout Eastern Europe, East Germans began streaming to neighboring Hungary, and millions of people took to the streets. In November 1989, the East German government opened all of its borders with the West, and the Berlin Wall, the long-time symbol of the Cold War, was the scene of celebration as delirious people took it down with sledgehammers. Soon after, East and West Germany were unified.

The fall of communism brought tragic consequences in Yugoslavia, which broke apart in the late 1980s. Volatile separatist movements fought each other for territory and soon began a genocidal rampage referred to as “ethnic cleansing.” All told, nearly 250,000 Bosnians were killed and another two million left homeless. NATO forces halted Serbian attacks against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, but only through a concerted bombing campaign did the Yugoslav forces relent.

## THE REVIVAL OF WESTERN EUROPE

Western Europe’s remarkable recovery after World War II shaped the political landscape for many nations. Although communism had an influence early on, Western Europe embraced moderate democracy with an emphasis on social welfare.

In the post-war years, France was dominated by Charles de Gaulle. The former resistance leader helped establish a French provisional government after the war, and then became president in 1958, launching the Fifth Republic. De Gaulle built a strong military and established France as a nuclear superpower. Throughout the 1960s, the French economy grew steadily, but the nationalization of industry and resulting overwhelming deficits were a problem. As the government attempted to deal with rising costs, student protests and labor strikes brought an end to the de Gaulle presidency in 1969. During the 1970s and 1980s, France shifted to the left as socialist François Mitterrand enacted reform measures favoring workers. Continued economic troubles led to the election of conservative Jacques Chirac in 1995. Faced with high unemployment, many French began speaking out against the large number of immigrants who had recently settled in the country. This led to rising tensions within France—still a significant issue in the twenty-first century.

With the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, West Germany began a stunning renewal. Its leader, Christian Democratic Konrad Adenauer, established close ties with other Western European nations and the United States. West Germany dealt harshly with former Nazi officials, most notably during the famous Nuremberg trials, and a healthy economy allowed it to pay reparations to Holocaust victims. The threat of a communist invasion led it to re-arm and join NATO in 1955.

In the following decades, West Germany moved from center-right politics to the center-left politics of the Social Democrats. Chancellor Willy Brandt initiated a policy of *Ostpolitik* to improve contact with East Germany, but most of his successors concentrated on improving the West German economy. As unemployment fell and wages skyrocketed, West Germany experienced a severe labor shortage and turned to foreign “guest workers” to fill key jobs. These workers, essential to the economy, still have not been fully accepted, socially or politically.

In 1945, the British people voted Churchill’s Conservative Party out of office. The Labour Party, led by Clement Attlee, created the modern welfare state. Major industries and the Bank of England were nationalized, and health care was socialized as the government required doctors and dentists to participate in the national plan.

With the high cost of the welfare state, the British economy struggled through the ‘50s, ‘60s, and ‘70s, with government leadership alternating between the Labour and Conservative parties. In 1979, Britons elected the first female prime minister, Margaret Thatcher. A Conservative, the “Iron Lady” attempted to restructure the social welfare state by reducing taxes and government bureaucracy. The economy improved, but Thatcher’s policies led to some social unrest.

## WESTERN EUROPEAN UNITY

Europe’s process of unification began with NATO. In 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was set up to create a common market for coal and steel products. In 1957, the Rome Treaty created the European Economic Community (EEC), known as the Common Market. This alliance became the world’s largest exporter and purchaser of raw materials, rivaling only the United States in steel production.

In 1973, Great Britain, Ireland, and Denmark joined the European Economic Community to form the European Community (EC), renamed the European Union (EU) in 1994. A primary EU goal was to create a common currency called the euro. By 2007, the euro had officially replaced thirteen national currencies. Moving into the twenty-first century, the EU began incorporating the nations of eastern and southeastern Europe into the union. This new alliance became the world’s largest exporter of raw materials and was rivaled only by the United States in steel production.

## SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Postwar economic prosperity greatly helped the working class. Increased wages unleashed consumerism, particularly in the auto industry. Through Western Europe’s implementation of the welfare state, members of the working class received expanded health care and old-age pensions. Likewise, access to higher education was made available to them.

At first, women saw few gains. In Britain and West Germany, women were discouraged from working, but as birth rates began to decline in the late 1950s, women had more opportunities to enter the

workforce. They still faced discrimination, as seen by the large disparity between men's and women's salaries. Influenced by the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, women in both Europe and the United States began to assert themselves as a political and social movement advocating for liberation from traditional gender roles. In the 1960s, feminism took the form of the women's liberation movement, which advocated for true equality with men, both economically and socially.

### AP Tip

Europeans witnessed challenges to traditional morals and manners after both world wars. Two areas that saw significant change were sexuality and women's rights. With the introduction of the birth control pill in the 1960s, women enjoyed a newfound freedom that influenced many facets of European life.

Artists continued to reject notions of traditional art as they grappled with the destruction of World War II and the despair of the modern world. During the war, many important artists fled Europe for the United States, shifting the center of the artistic world to New York City. American painters such as Jackson Pollack and Andy Warhol were at the forefront of the artistic movements known as Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art. Disillusionment also influenced literature, as seen in the works of Samuel Beckett, whose play *Waiting for Godot* belongs to the literary movement Theater of the Absurd. The absurdists were greatly influenced by existentialism. Two of the leading voices of existentialism, Frenchmen Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, argued that man, alone in the world and without any preordained destiny, must rely on himself to find hope in an absurd and depersonalized world.

Technology has been transforming. Communication over great distances has become instantaneous, making the world more interconnected than ever before. Europeans see themselves as members of a global, interdependent community. Large multinational corporations span continents, directly influencing the lives of people far removed from their headquarters. Technological advances have dramatically improved life in the developed world, but not in developing nations, presenting a new challenge to the nations of Europe.

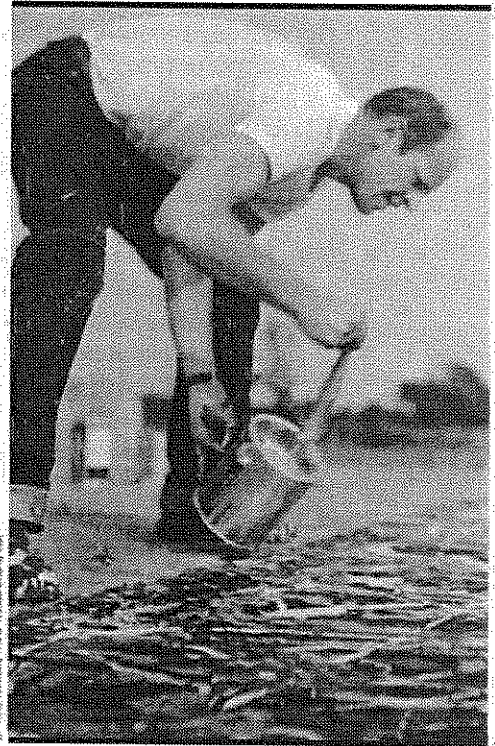
## Multiple-Choice Questions

- The creation of the French Fifth Republic was greatly influenced by
  - an inability to develop a nuclear arms program
  - the growing political power of the French Communist Party
  - continued hostility between France and Germany
  - American dominance over the French economy
  - domestic strife concerning military engagements abroad



2. Which statement best describes the Berlin Airlift?
  - (A) It was a response to Soviet attempts to prevent the formation of a West German state.
  - (B) Its success led to the downfall of both Winston Churchill and Harry Truman.
  - (C) It succeeded largely because of a U.S. threat to use atomic weapons.
  - (D) The Soviets responded to the crisis by constructing a wall around Berlin.
  - (E) The Soviets relented days after the airlift began.
  
3. The Warsaw Pact was formed in response to
  - (A) American involvement in Vietnam
  - (B) British and French dominance in Africa and the Middle East
  - (C) West German economic success
  - (D) the formation of a military alliance among Western nations
  - (E) the aftermath of the Korean War
  
4. The policies of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher can best be described as
  - (A) a decrease in government social welfare spending and taxation
  - (B) a return to pre-war colonialism
  - (C) an attempt to cooperate more closely with trade unions
  - (D) an increase in government involvement in social welfare programs
  - (E) a drifting apart of Britain and the United States
  
5. The Soviet Union responded to the "Prague Spring" by
  - (A) initiating a blockade of West Berlin to prevent further defections
  - (B) sending troops into Czechoslovakia
  - (C) constructing missile bases in Cuba to thwart an American invasion
  - (D) invading Budapest in order to overthrow the Nagy regime
  - (E) cutting off trade routes between East Germany and Czechoslovakia
  
6. The Brezhnev Doctrine called for
  - (A) Soviet intervention in any threatened socialist state
  - (B) a Soviet boycott of all Western consumer goods
  - (C) Soviet missile deployment in East Germany
  - (D) a Soviet boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics
  - (E) continued Soviet support of détente
  
7. All of the following statements describe the modern welfare state EXCEPT
  - (A) the state has a duty to provide for the basic social needs of its people
  - (B) the state should engage in the privatization of major industries
  - (C) the state should raise taxes so as to be able to provide inexpensive housing and free medical care
  - (D) the state should cooperate with trade unions to promote the welfare of the labor movement
  - (E) the state should nationalize major industries

8. Throughout the Cold War era, economic progress in Italy continued to be hindered by
- (A) regional economic disparity between northern and southern Italy
  - (B) an unresponsive monarchy
  - (C) a failure to participate in the Marshall Plan
  - (D) major strikes by the coal and steel industries
  - (E) a military build-up along the Albanian border
9. All of the following contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union EXCEPT
- (A) the radical reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev
  - (B) the rise of nationalist movements within the Soviet Union
  - (C) the creation of a new Soviet parliament
  - (D) the appointment of Boris Yeltsin as head of the Communist Party
  - (E) a growing technological gap between East and West
10. All of the following were social trends in the postwar Western nations EXCEPT a(n)
- (A) decline in the number of people working in agriculture
  - (B) increase in the number of women in the workforce
  - (C) increase in the number of white-collar personnel
  - (D) decline in the number of industrial jobs
  - (E) increase in average family size
11. All of the following prompted reforms initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev EXCEPT
- (A) severe economic problems in the Soviet Union, including a downturn in the standard of living
  - (B) an ideological rivalry with the People's Republic of China
  - (C) rising costs of military action in central Asia
  - (D) problems associated with the rigid structure of Soviet bureaucracy
  - (E) a lack of technological progress in the Soviet Union
12. Jackson Pollock, shown painting in the photo to the right, was an exponent of
- (A) Impressionism
  - (B) Post-Impressionism
  - (C) Neo-Expressionism
  - (D) Neo-Impressionism
  - (E) Abstract Expressionism
13. Which of the following ethnic groups was responsible for the "ethnic cleansing" in Yugoslavia?
- (A) Serbs
  - (B) Albanians
  - (C) Bosnians
  - (D) Croats
  - (E) Macedonians



“What peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she . . . finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other.”

14. The above quotation is attributed to
- (A) Jean-Paul Sartre
  - (B) Simone de Beauvoir
  - (C) Margaret Thatcher
  - (D) Charles de Gaulle
  - (E) Alexander Solzhenitsyn

“Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself.”

15. The above quotation is an example of which of the following philosophies?
- (A) deconstructionism
  - (B) Abstract Expressionism
  - (C) existentialism
  - (D) transcendentalism
  - (E) cultural relativism

## Free-Response Questions

1. Compare and contrast the process of decolonization as it related to postwar Britain and France.
2. During the Cold War, Soviet authority was challenged throughout Eastern Europe on several occasions. Analyze the efforts made by TWO Eastern European nations to resist Soviet domination between the years 1945 and 1991.

