

Cold War Conflicts and Social Transformations, 1945-1985



I. The Division of Europe

A. Origins of the Cold War

1. At conferences in Teheran in late 1943 and Yalta in early 1945 Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt agreed to divide Germany along a north-south line, leaving Soviet troops to liberate eastern Europe.
2. According to the Yalta agreements, eastern European governments were to be freely elected but pro-Russian.
3. At Potsdam, new U.S. President Harry Truman insisted on immediate free elections in eastern Europe; Stalin refused. This was the origin of the Cold War.

B. West Versus East

1. In May 1945 Truman cut off aid to the U.S.S.R.
2. In October he declared that the U.S. would not recognize governments established by force against the will of their people.
3. In the meantime, Soviet agents used French and Italian Communist parties to agitate against “American plots” to take over Europe.
4. The U.S.S.R. also put pressure on Iran, Turkey, and Greece. Along with the Chinese civil war, this convinced Americans that Stalin was bent on exporting communism by subversion throughout the world.
5. U.S. response was the “Truman Doctrine,” aimed at containing communism. President Truman asked Congress for and obtained military aid to Greece and Turkey.
6. Stalin’s blockade failed to force West Berlin into submission as the U.S. and Britain airlifted supplies into the city.
7. In 1949 the U.S. led the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; eventually, the U.S.S.R. organized its eastern European satellites into the Warsaw Pact.

8. Communist victory in the Chinese civil war followed by the Korean War only deepened Americans' fear of a communist conspiracy to dominate the globe.

II. The Western Renaissance, 1945-1968

A. The Postwar Challenge

1. In politics, Catholic "Christian Democratic" parties dedicated to democratic ideals dominated Italy and West Germany in the postwar generation. Both socialists and Christian Democrats maintained or expanded European welfare states.
2. U.S. military protection and American Marshall Plan financial aid also helped western Europe to recover from the war.
3. France combined flexible government planning with a "mixed" economy of public and private ownership to achieve high growth rates.
4. Western European nations abandoned protectionism to create a large "Common Market" that certainly stimulated economic growth.

B. Toward European Unity

1. Europe made progress toward economic unity (the "Common Market" was created in 1957) but not political unity.

C. Decolonization

1. The most basic cause of imperial collapse was the rising demand of Asian and African peoples for national self-determination, racial equality, and personal dignity.
2. The power difference between rulers and ruled in European colonies greatly declined after 1945.
3. Opponents of imperialism gained influence in postwar Europe.
4. India played a pivotal role in decolonization.
5. India's nationalism drew on Western parliamentary liberalism.
6. Chinese nationalism developed in the framework of Marxist-Leninist ideology.
7. Most Asian countries followed the pattern of either India or China.
8. In the Middle East, the movement toward political independence continued after World War II.
9. The establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine led to decades of conflict between Israelis and the Arab states and between Israelis and Palestinians.
10. Gamal Abdel Nasser led a nationalist revolution in Egypt.
11. Nasser's success inspired nationalists in Algeria.
12. In much of Africa south of the Sahara, decolonization proceeded much more smoothly.
13. European countries increased their economic and cultural ties with former African colonies in the 1960s and 1970s.

D. America's Civil Rights Revolution

1. In the 1950s and 1960s blacks and their liberal allies in the Democratic party challenged and reversed discriminatory laws and practices that had made African Americans second-class citizens.

2. After Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory in the 1964 presidential election, Congress and the administration set up a social welfare system and antipoverty program similar to the social programs of European states.

III. Soviet Eastern Europe, 1945-1968

A. Stalin's Last Years, 1945-1953

1. Following 1945, Stalin returned the U.S.S.R. to a rigid dictatorship, focusing investment on heavy industry, reestablishing tight control of culture, and purging millions of subjects.
2. Stalin exported his system, including forced-draft industrialization and collectivization, to the countries of Eastern Europe. Among East European communist leaders, only Josip Broz Tito in Yugoslavia maintained independence from Stalin.

B. Reform and De-Stalinization, 1953-1964

1. Stalin's successor as party leader, Nikita Khrushchev, launched a program of "liberalization" or "de-Stalinization."
 - a. He denounced Stalin's Great Purges to the 20th Party Congress.
 - b. He shifted investment somewhat from heavy industry to consumer goods and agriculture.
 - c. De-Stalinization created a literary ferment as authors such as Boris Pasternak and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote about the terror and concentration camps of the Stalin years.
 - d. Khrushchev declared that "peaceful coexistence" with the capitalist West was possible. He let occupied Austria become truly independent in 1955.
 - e. Khrushchev's reforms stimulated rebellion in the East European satellites.
 - f. In 1956 riots in Poland led to formation of a new government, which won more autonomy from the U.S.S.R.
 - g. In Hungary, a reformist government fell to Soviet invasion after promising free elections and leaving the Warsaw Pact (1956).

C. The End of Reform

1. In 1964 party leaders deposed Khrushchev and replaced him with Leonid Brezhnev. Khrushchev's liberal policies were a threat to the party's monopoly on political power.
2. One reason Khrushchev fell was apparent Soviet humiliation in the Cuban missile crisis, when an American naval blockade of Cuba forced Khrushchev to remove Soviet missiles from the island.
3. Brezhnev's "neo-Stalinist" direction was confirmed in 1968, when the Soviet Union intervened militarily in Czechoslovakia to stop Communist party leader Alexander Dubcek's reforms.

IV. Postwar Social Transformations, 1945-1968

A. Science and Technology

1. During World War II scientists in the major combatant powers generally worked for the state to create or improve weapons.
2. The development of the atomic bomb by the U.S. was the most dramatic result of this development.

3. World War II inspired a new model for science: combining theoretical work with sophisticated engineering and massive government support. This model became known to some as “Big Science.”
4. After 1945 about one-quarter of all men and women trained in science or engineering in the West worked full-time to produce weapons.
5. One result was the space race between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S., culminating in the U.S. landing men on the moon in 1969.
6. The number of scientists in Western societies escalated rapidly after 1945. They were highly specialized and had to work in large, bureaucratic organizations.

B. The Changing Class Structure

1. After World War II a new middle class of managers and experts working for huge organizations replaced the traditional middle class of small property owners, professionals, and independent businessmen.
2. Members of this new middle class often came from working-class backgrounds.
3. The new middle class was based on specialized skills and high levels of education, and was more insecure, open, and democratic than the old one.
4. There was a mass exodus from farms to the cities in Europe. White-collar and service industry jobs increased in number.
5. More social security benefits, such as national health care systems, established a humane floor of well-being.
6. Government-sponsored pension programs made people more willing to go into debt and purchase newly available and cheap consumer products cars, televisions, and so on and to travel.

C. New Roles for Women

1. From the late nineteenth century onward improved diet, higher incomes, the use of contraception, and urbanization caused birthrates to drop.
2. Consequently, married women’s whole lives were no longer occupied with child raising.
3. Three factors helped women get into the workforce in the West after World War II.
 - a. The postwar economic boom.
 - b. The shift to white-collar and service industries, in which women had already been employed for generations.
 - c. Young women gained access to the expanding postwar education system.
4. The trend toward employment of women went furthest in communist eastern Europe.
5. For many women, entering the workforce meant an exhausting “double day” of work and domestic duties.
6. As women came to expect to work for most of their lives, they were less willing to accept lower pay, sexism, and discrimination in the workplace.

D. Youth and the Counterculture

1. Economic prosperity, a more democratic class structure, and the postwar “baby boom” helped create a distinctive youth culture.

2. By the late 1950s in certain U.S. urban neighborhoods, the young fashioned a subculture that combined leftist politics, experimentation with drugs and communal living, and new artistic styles.
3. Greater sexual freedom was part of the new youth culture, as many couples chose to live together without marrying.
4. Several factors contributed to the emergence of international youth culture in the 1960s.
 - a. Mass communications and youth travel
 - b. Postwar baby boom
 - c. Prosperity and greater equality meant that youth had more purchasing power.
 - d. Prosperity also meant that young job seekers were in demand and could behave with relative freedom.
5. Youth culture and counterculture fused in the late 1960s in opposition to middle-class conformity and the perceived excesses of Western imperialism^{3/4}particularly to the Vietnam War.
6. Expanding university populations in Europe and the U.S., together with attendant stresses, helped catalyze the student rebellions of 1968 in France and elsewhere.

V. Conflict and Challenge in the Late Cold War, 1968-1985

A. The United States and Vietnam

1. After French withdrawal, the United States became heavily involved in Vietnam due to the policy of containment of communism.
2. President Lyndon Johnson greatly expanded American involvement.
3. American strategy was to escalate the war through bombing of North Vietnam, insertion of U.S. troops in the South, and military aid to the South. The U.S. did not want to escalate so much as to provoke Soviet or Chinese intervention, however, and so never invaded or blockaded the North.
4. Criticism of the war grew rapidly in the United States, beginning on college campuses.
5. After the communist Tet Offensive against South Vietnamese cities, Johnson called for negotiations with the North and withdrew from the presidential election.
6. Johnson's successor, Richard Nixon, gradually pulled out of Vietnam. In 1972 he reached a rapprochement with communist China, and in 1973 he signed a peace agreement with the North Vietnamese.
7. In the Watergate scandal Nixon was eventually fingered for ordering an illegal break-in to Democratic party headquarters in Washington, D.C. In 1974 he resigned the presidency.

B. Détente or Cold War?

1. Détente began with West German chancellor Willy Brandt's policy of improving relations with East Germany and eastern Europe in general (beginning in December 1970).

2. Détente peaked when the U.S., Canada, and most European nations signed the Helsinki Accords, accepting existing political frontiers and guaranteeing human rights and political freedoms.
 3. The Brezhnev regime in the Soviet Union ignored the Helsinki Accords in practice, and in 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ended détente.
 4. The U.S. responded with a massive military buildup, begun by President Jimmy Carter and continued by the more conservative Ronald Reagan.
- C. The Women's Movement
1. In the 1970s a broad-based feminist movement that aimed at securing gender equality through political action emerged in Europe and the U.S.
 2. One work that influenced the movement strongly was Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949).
 3. Betty Friedan founded the National Organization of Women in the United States in 1966 to press for women's rights.
 4. The new women's movements aimed to change laws regarding women. They pressed for equal pay for equal work, affordable day care, the right to divorce (in Catholic countries), legalized abortion, and protection from rape and physical abuse.
 5. The achievements of the women's movements encouraged mobilization by other groups that were frequent targets of discrimination and harassment, including the disabled, and gay and lesbian men and women.
- D. The Troubled Economy
1. From the early 1970s through the middle 1980s Western economies stagnated. Causes were multiple.
 - a. In heavy foreign debt, the United States went off the gold standard in 1971.
 - b. The oil embargo by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries following the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 raised crude oil prices by four times.
 - c. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 caused Iranian oil production to collapse and again raised oil prices.
- E. Society in a Time of Economic Uncertainty
1. The welfare states of the West cushioned the material impact of economic stagnation. The impact of the recession was rather psychological^{3/4} a more pessimistic mood.
 2. In the 1980s, a reaction to the rapid growth of government spending set in, particularly in Britain. In the United States, President Ronald Reagan cut taxes in 1981 but did not cut the federal budget. A huge deficit resulted.
 3. Economic troubles made university students much more practical and less idealistic than the students of the 1960s.