

# PART VI REVIEW 1914-Present

## BROAD TRENDS



# **GLOBAL POWER AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

- During the first half of the 1900s, two world wars profoundly shaped global affairs.
- After 1914, Europe's position of world dominance was badly weakened by World War I.
- Europe retained its position of global importance, as well as its overseas empires, for three more decades.
- The United States, after World War I, became the world's richest and most powerful nation.

- World War II completed the process of dismantling Europe's global dominance.
- The war left world power roughly divided between two superpowers, the United States and the USSR.
- For four and a half decades after World War II, most of the world was divided into hostile camps, led by the United States and the Soviet Union.

- This geopolitical struggle was known as the Cold War. Although the superpowers never went to war against each other directly, they used other nations as proxies in their struggle. They also engaged in a nuclear arms race, the largest and most expensive weapons buildup in world history
- From the 1940s through the 1970s, a mass wave of decolonization deprived the European powers of their empires. Dozens of new nations were formed.
- During the late 1980s and early 1990s, communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed. This sudden and dramatic development helped bring an end to the Cold War.

- The only remaining superpower in the post-Cold War era is the United States.
- A rising economic and political power is China, the world's most populous nation.
- The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have begun a new global struggle, the U.S.- led war on terror. It has also sharpened tensions between much of the developed West and the Islamic world, especially the Middle East.
- The gap between high tech and low-level warfare has grown wider than ever before in history.

# POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

- The level of popular representation in national governments grew.
- Women gained the vote in most Western nations, then in most other countries.
- Between the world wars, democracies tended to be politically weak and economically depressed.
- The most dynamic governments of the interwar period were the new totalitarian dictatorships, which aimed to control as many aspects of their subjects' lives as possible.

- After World War II and during the Cold War, the primary form of political and economic organization in the West although capitalism was modified to varying degrees by social welfare systems.
- A number of regimes, led by the Soviet Union and China, adopted communist economic systems. Their political systems tended to be dictatorial.
- The nations of the Third World, which joined neither the U.S. alliance nor the Soviet bloc during the Cold War, experimented with a variety of political and economic systems.

- During the late 1980s and early 1990s, communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This development ended the Cold War. It also left China as the world's major communist state.
- The globalization of culture and economics has led some scholars to speculate that the nation-state may either fade away altogether or cease to be the primary form of political organization.
- Whether or not this prediction will prove true, regional diplomatic alliances and regional economic blocs, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the European Union, have become increasingly important.

# ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENTS

- During the first half of the century, the West were fully industrialized. Certain other parts of the world achieved significant degrees of modernization and industrialization as well (such as Japan, parts of Latin America, and parts of China).
- A number of countries experimented with communist economies (the Soviet Union, then, after World War II, Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, and others).

- During the 1930s, the Great Depression, emanating from the United States, had a tremendously negative impact on the economies of most of the world.
- World War II consumed a huge amount of the world's economic resources during the first half of the 1940s.
- After World War II, a great split between the capitalist West and the communist Soviet bloc (and China) emerged. This split prevailed until the end of the Cold War.

- Also after World War II, a different split emerged between the developed world, whose prosperity steadily grew and the non-developed and developing (or Third) world, which lagged behind. This disparity is sometimes referred to as the north—south split.
- After the 1950s and 1960s, Western economies began to move from industrial economies to postindustrial economies, based less on manufacturing and more on service, information, and advanced technology (especially computers). This trend continues.
- During the 1970s, a general economic crisis, characterized by energy (particularly oil) shortages, recession, unemployment, and general slowdown struck most of the capitalist West.

- A general rise in overall prosperity took place in Western economies during the 1980s and 1990s. The same was true in China. The Soviet bloc experienced a severe economic downturn during this time.
- The 1950s and 1990s were also an era of greater economic globalization and the clout of multinational corporations all became increasingly important. This trend still continues and is steadily accelerating.
- The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the USSR has forced a number of countries to make a painful, difficult transition from communism to free-market economies.

- Escalating industrialization, increased energy and resource consumption, massive engineering projects, and the production of toxic, chemical, and nuclear waste have all helped exponentially to increase humanity's impact on the environment.
- Environmental awareness in the West grew slowly during the early 1900s, then expanded after World War II. Green movements have grown in size and influence.
- The emission of greenhouse gases is thought by most scientists to be causing global warming. The best-known international effort to cooperate in understanding and reversing the trend is the Kyoto Protocol (1997).

# CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

- Mass media and mass communications technology have transformed the cultural sphere. Cinema, radio, television, and other electronic media have been used to create high art.
- Scientific advancement proceeded at a breathtaking pace and scale. Fields that were especially innovative were physics, biotechnology, rocketry, electronics, and computers.

- Worldwide, different cultures have begun to mix, interact, and blend to an unprecedented degree. This celebration and acknowledgement of different traditions and styles is generally referred to as multiculturalism.
- Since the 1990s, the proliferation of personal computer technology, particularly access to the Internet and World Wide Web, has led to an information revolution.

# GENDER ISSUES

- Women's movements began to campaign for greater equality and the right to vote during the late 1800s and early 1900s.
- By causing large numbers of women to move into the workplace, World War I greatly accelerated the cause of women's equality.
- Most Western nations gave women the vote shortly after World War I.
- World War II gave millions of women the opportunity to work. Many women also served in the armed forces (almost always in noncombat roles).

- The development of reliable contraception gave women with access to it unprecedented control over pregnancy.
- During the 1960s and 1970s, a great feminist movement, agitating for women's liberation and equal rights swept Canada, the West
- Since then, women's movements have sought to achieve more than simple legal equality and the right to vote. Their goals have been to reach full cultural and economic equality.
- Progress toward equal treatment of women has been uneven in other parts of the world.

# ***QUESTIONS & COMPARISONS TO CONSIDER***

- What kind of impact did the world wars have on the non-Western world? Compare different regions, such as Africa and Asia. How did the wars affect women?
- Compare two or more of the twentieth century's major revolutions, such as the Russian, Chinese, Cuban, or Iranian.
- Investigate the process of decolonization as it played out in various parts of the world (compare, for example, India and Africa).

- Compare the effects of the Cold War on the West, the East, and the so-called Third World.