

NGCSU HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

HISTORY 1112: World Civilizations Since 1500

E-Textbook

Section Three: 1914-Present



This image shows a woman street vendor selling food and snacks outside Bangalore, India, in 2007. Home to more than fifteen million people, Bangalore and other Indian cities such as Mumbai have enjoyed rapid growth as a result of globalization—both cities are now important global IT (information technology) centers.

Source: <http://bangalore.metblogs.com/archives/images/2007/01/RuralGlobalization.JPG>

Unit Goals

After reading this section, students should be able to:

Outline key features of twentieth century world history.

Analyze the case that the twentieth century differs from previous historical periods in key ways.

Explain the origins, course and outcomes of the global wars of 1914-1918 and 1937-1945.

Outline the key features of the Cold War and the reasons behind its end.

Identify key features of the post-Cold War world, and compare and discuss their impact on human societies in different regions.

Identify important challenges facing humanity as the twenty-first century continues.

Summary: The World, 1914-Present

Most scholars of world history categorize the era since 1900 as one of seismic and dizzying global change. As the century began, Europeans maintained their hegemony over a global structure that reinforced their economic and political authority – over a quarter of the globe’s land mass lay within European colonial territories. Established over the previous three centuries, all this territory and power disappeared in a series of **global conflicts** and **economic collapses**. Inter-European conflicts transformed rapidly into massive global wars that re-drew the geopolitical fabric between 1914 and 1945, ending European supremacy and ushering in the new “**superpower**” age, exemplified in the rise of the continental powers, the **United States** and the **Soviet Union**. The superpowers confronted each other warily over the next four decades during the “**Cold War**” of **1945-1991**, engaging in ideological contests, pursuing costly arms races, and providing support to a myriad of client states across the world in “proxy wars” that turned the Cold War hot. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the United States faced few nation-state rivals, but a new challenge emerged in the form of an Islamic fundamentalist revival that had grown during the later years of the Cold War, beginning first with the **Iranian Revolution of 1979**, and then through the formation of new radical Islamic paramilitary groups, who arose during the 1980s as part of U.S.-supported efforts to defeat the Soviet Union after its invasion of Afghanistan. These religious groups, including **Al-Qaeda** (“the base”), led by **Osama bin Laden**, a radicalized Saudi Arabian engineering student who participated in the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, were angered by what they saw as U.S. and Western arrogance toward Muslims and the Arab world. In 1996, bin Laden issued a *fatwa* (declaration) that declared **jihad**, or “holy war,” against the United States and other “western” nations. On September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda launched a series of attacks on the United States, killing nearly three thousand people in New York City and Washington, D.C. In response, U.S. President

George W. Bush declared “War on Terror,” and the U.S. and its allies invaded Afghanistan in November 2001, and later invaded Iraq in 2003. In May 2011, U.S. Navy Seals stormed a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and killed Osama bin Laden. Although all American combat troops departed from Iraq at the end of 2011, the wars in Afghanistan and against terrorism continue today. Elsewhere in the world, states such as China, India and Brazil experienced rapid growth that propelled them into the ranks of the world’s largest economies. By 2006, a multipolar global system had developed, one that saw older powers like the United States joined by rising regional counterparts in Eurasia and the Americas.

(For more on the September 11 attacks, see the 9/11 Digital Archive, located at <http://911digitalarchive.org/index.php>. Start with the “FAQs” section, then search the rest of the site.)

The Twentieth Century – A New Global Era?

Many scholars have argued the twentieth century represents a new epoch in world history.¹ Supporting this view, several large-scale changes occur throughout this period, including the following;

Firstly, **global population increased** enormously – by 2011, over seven billion people populated our planet. Life expectancies rose and infant mortality declined during the twentieth century, as improved sanitation and living conditions—through projects such as swamp drainage and land reclamation—combined with greater access to advanced medicines and vaccines through the efforts of international organizations such as the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, part of the **United Nations**. These changes led to increased pressure on environmental and natural resources, and encouraged significant human migration, both by choice and through necessity or coercion. Massive global demographic and migratory movements, first in the period 1880-1920, and again after 1945, transformed regional and national populations across the world. Unlike earlier migrations, which primarily involved movement from Europe and East Asia into less populated areas, the modern migratory waves saw a reverse, as tens of millions of people from the “undeveloped” regions, or the “Third World,” took legal and extra-legal measures to move to the industrialized regions.

(For more on global population growth, see the lecture overview at http://www.globalchange.umich.edu/globalchange2/current/lectures/human_pop/human_pop.html.)

(On global migration patterns, see the maps at https://qed.princeton.edu/getfile.php?f=World_Migrations_since_1500.jpg and https://qed.princeton.edu/main/Image:Human_Migration_1918-98.jpg.)

¹ For a supporting view in the American context, see the digital essay “Twentieth Century Revolutions,” written by Steven Mintz retrieved from and located at http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=206.

This “**demographic divide**” paralleled the rise of another gap, the “**digital divide,**” that began in the 1990s and accelerated in the twenty-first century as the internet and other real-time digital media proliferated rapidly but unevenly across the globe. Many countries, either out of suspicion or penury, were slow to implement reliable internet infrastructure, particularly cable or satellite access, meaning that today billions of people lack access to cheap and secure landline broadband internet services. Given how central these have become across much of the old “First World,” the “digital divide” is already having an impact in communities that cannot leverage the knowledge and educational opportunities that broadband services provide. Fortunately, mobile telephony services have been modified innovatively by many in Africa and Asia, and entirely new systems of mobile device use for microbanking and trade have appeared that may perhaps resolve the need for fixed cable networks.

(For an extended discussion of the digital divide, see the World Information Society Report, 2007, located at <http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/worldinformationsociety/2007/WISR07-chapter2.pdf>.)

Global urbanization accelerated dramatically in the twentieth century, prompting the appearance of non-Western “mega-cities” such as Mexico City, Beijing, Tokyo, Shanghai, Karachi, and Sao Paulo. Municipal authorities, with varying degrees of success, developed local systems of governance to manage their constantly-growing domains. Agricultural improvements, particularly mechanized solutions such as tractors and trucks greatly improved global agricultural output after 1940 with far less labor, forcing whole generations of rural laborers into the cities, industrial areas, and transport hubs.

Accelerated global industrialization stoked global urbanization, and increased gaps between rich and poor across most of the world, although living standards rose significantly in absolute terms for the majority of the population. In 1900, global life expectancy from birth averaged around thirty-five years – today it is seventy, and climbing. Improvements in public health, medical knowledge, and education are responsible, along with the successful eradication of chronic diseases such as smallpox and polio, and improvements in treating and managing diseases like HIV.

Shifts in global manufacturing patterns occurred, as heavy industries and consumer goods production gravitated from Europe and the United States to the Pacific Rim, particularly China, Japan, Korea and Mexico. These shifts, driven primarily by labor costs, encouraged strong GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth in all of these countries, and resulted in significant improvements in living standards for their workers. In other states, such as India and Brazil, domestic industrial infrastructure developed that freed them from dependence on European or American manufacturers and produced similar results. Global trade expanded enormously during the twentieth century, and the **internationalization of the economy after 1945** led to a prolonged economic boom across much of the “Free World;” Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand between 1950 and 1970. Contrastingly, command economies in the

Soviet Union and its satellites stagnated due to poor management practices, unrealistic production targets and lack of modern business technology. By the 1980s, many former command economies, particularly China and India, abandoned their rigid controls in favor of blended systems that combined elements of command and free market structures. Massive wealth generation has resulted, creating thousands of newly wealthy individuals in both states. This shift by the world's two most populous countries dramatically escalated global economic growth, transformed the global economy, and vividly demonstrates the multipolar nature of our contemporary world.

(For discussion – with your instructor, download and analyze several of the graphs located at <http://www.prb.org/Publications/GraphicsBank/PopulationTrends.aspx>. What do these data sets indicate about the growth of urban areas across the world during the twenty-first century?)

A new international order appeared, as colonial empires collapsed and were succeeded by postcolonial states across Asia, Africa and Oceania. Fanned by modern media and communications technologies, and led by local educated elites, popular nationalism erupted across the world in the 1920s and 1930s, spreading from the West and Europe into Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Between 1945 and 1975, these areas would gain their independence from European colonial control, vastly increasing the size of the international community of nation-states. New types of states also appeared that directly challenged western political models. In 1979, a popular revolution in Iran led by **Sayyed Ruhollah Khomeini** deposed the pro-Western Iranian monarchy of Reza Shah Pahlavi and replaced it with a Shi'a Islamic republic, the first theocratic state of its kind in modern world history. Since the revolution, Iran has established itself as an important regional power, helping to establish and support other Shi'ite groups such as **Hizbollah** (The Party of God) in Lebanon, and also forging alliances with other regional states such as Iraq and Syria, moves that have alarmed regional rivals, including Saudi Arabia and Israel.

In early 2011, a new round of popular demonstrations, known as the “**Arab Spring**,” or “Arab Awakening,” swept across North Africa and the Middle East. Beginning in Tunisia and spreading to Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Syria, Morocco, Bahrain, and Yemen, by the end of the 2011 these movements, which called for an end to dictatorships, popular sovereignty, greater educational and economic access, and greater social justice, had succeeded in deposing dictatorships in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen. Conflict and violence continued in Syria, as President Bashar Al-Assad's regime attempted to use military force to crush anti-government protests. Many of the protestors were young people, including large numbers of university students.

(For more on the Iranian Revolution, see the excellent and deep website located at <http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/his135/Events/Iran79.htm>. For more on the Arab Spring, see the website “The Middle East in Revolt,” constructed by TIME Magazine, at <http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,2045328,00.html>, the interactive timeline constructed by the British *Guardian* newspaper at

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline> and the “Issue Guide: Middle East and North Africa,” produced by the Council on Foreign Relations, at <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east/issue-guide-middle-east-north-africa/p23929>. Also useful is the Youtube interview of Dr. Sean Foley of Middle Tennessee State University conducted by Asadullah Ali in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2011, located at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFKZe71t0Vg>.)

(For discussion: Watch the video “The TIME Cover Speaks: Ideas from Arab Youth,” at http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,799827024001_2053205,00.html. How do the young interviewees define their desires for a post-revolutionary Arab World? What do they appear to desire most? What do you think of their arguments? Do their frustrations resonate with you?)

New international organizations such as the **United Nations** (1945-) sought to balance competing national, regional, and ideological interests among an ever larger group of sovereign states. Other powerful global actors appeared, such as **regional power groupings** including the EEC (European Economic Community, later the **European Union (EU)**), and **ASEAN** (Association of South East Asian Nations), **multi-national corporations** (such as IBM, Wal-Mart, and Google) and **non-governmental actors** (NGOs), such as Amnesty International and MSF (*Medicins Sans Frontieres*, or Doctors without Borders), who joined criminal groups and terrorist organizations in challenging the international *status quo*. By 2005, most economic growth occurred *outside* the West for the first time in over two centuries, and rising regional powers, such as China, India, and Brazil, seem poised for increased roles within the twenty-first century international system.

Interestingly, another key development was the **increased empowerment of individuals**, who through the use of new communications and military technologies such as cellular phones and plastic explosives, gained access to new levels of personal and technological mobility and agency. The appearance of organizations such as WikiLeaks (see www.wikileaks.org) demonstrates the range of new opportunities for individual action the twentieth century created.

All of these transformations were either created by, or profoundly affected by the First World War of 1914-1918. It is not an understatement to suggest that we live in a world shaped by that conflict of nearly a century ago.

(For more on the United Nations, see their website at <http://www.un.org/en/>.)

(For a recent discussion on the rise of new regional powers, such as the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), see the May 2010 Goldman Sachs report, “Is this the BRIC’s decade?” at <http://www2.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/brics/brics-reports-pdfs/brics-decade-pdf.pdf>)

(For Discussion: Look at the maps showing the global connections of Starbucks and McDonalds at https://qed.princeton.edu/getfile.php?f=Starbucks_and_McDonald%27s.jpg. What does this graphic suggest about the features of twenty-first century globalization?)

Ideology and Conflict – Global War/Depression/War (1914-1945)

Between 1914 and 1945, a series of conflicts erupted across the world, resulting in untold misery and the deaths of hundreds of millions of soldiers and civilians. The lethality of industrial weaponry came into its own during this period, as new weapons systems such as tanks, aircraft, chemical weapons, submarines, aircraft carriers, guided missiles, and finally atomic weapons vastly increased humanity's ability to kill and maim. Atomic weapons, used by the United States against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, introduced the possibility of human self-extinction, either deliberate or accidental, for the first time in our species' history. Between the two largest of these conflicts raged hundreds of others, each a smaller, but still horrific, reflection or extension of the larger struggles of 1914-1918 and 1937-1945. Mass executions of civilians and identified "enemies" demonstrated the murderous results of radical "utopian" ideologies such as Bolshevism, Nazism and racist Japanese militarism that emerged during and after the "paradigm shifts" of the 1870s-1900s. (See Etext Section 2, 1750-1914.) Massive areas of western Eurasia and East Asia, and southeast Asia were devastated, and required many years of recovery. Tens of millions lost everything: their possessions, homes, family members, and communities.

World War One and the World it Created

The "Great War" of 1914-1918, known to contemporaries as "The War to End All Wars," was the largest and most destructive European conflict since the Thirty Years' War of 1618-1648. Beginning in Balkan Europe as a confrontation between the Kingdom of Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire over the former's role in the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne in Sarajevo in July 1914, the war soon escalated into a continental, and then global, conflict. Millions of troops from dozens of nations and colonies fought in Europe, Asia, Oceania and Africa. By its end in November 1918, over ten million young and old men, women and children were dead, and dozens of millions more endured painful injuries for the remainder of their lives. Lower-level conflicts smoldered and blazed across the world, started by political upheavals and territorial realignments brought by the 1914-1918 war.

Several causes are identifiable, including tensions increased by **militant nationalism and imperial rivalry**; industrial **imperialism** (see Etext Section 2, 1750-1914) multiplied the possibilities for **inter-state conflict**, particularly between European states. Examples included crises in North Africa between 1897 (Fashoda) and 1911 (Agadir). Larger states engaged in mutual antagonisms through **technological arms races**, such as the Anglo-German naval rivalry of 1901-1914, that further destabilized international relations. Anxiety about **new, non-European rivals** (such as Japan and the United States) also prompted increasingly xenophobic diplomatic policies. Increased **domestic unrest** such as strikes and minority protest movements

(Irish Home Rule in Britain, feminists and socialists everywhere) alarmed elites, who increasingly saw war as a means of shoring up national and social unity at home. Increased international anxiety led to the development of **alliance systems**, collective security arrangements designed to prevent war but whose secret protocols actually *accelerated* it, as each alliance member's foreign policy was now placed at the disposal of other partners, transforming regional crises, such as the ongoing Balkan conflicts, into a continental war.

(For Discussion: With your instructor, read the article located at http://www.bimcc.org/articles/20071116_BIMCC_Formatting_Europe_Conf_Abstract_6_barro_n.pdf, and then examine the maps showing Europe in 1914 at <http://bibliodyssey.blogspot.com/2008/08/dogs-of-war.html>. What do these satirical images suggest about European relations before the war's outbreak?)

By 1914, two alliance systems faced each other across Europe: the **Triple Entente** of Britain, France and Russia (later joined by the United States in 1917), and the **Central Powers** of Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Over the next four years they would fight for control of Europe, and European colonial possessions across the world. In Western Europe, grisly **trench warfare** dominated the struggle, as the lethality of defensive weapons forced the belligerents to construct thousands of miles of subterranean defenses. The static and horrific nature of trench warfare generated imaginative technological responses, such as tanks, flamethrowers, and ground-attack aircraft. The war also created cosmetic surgery and prosthetic limbs, as medical science struggled to respond to the ghastly injuries created by white-hot shrapnel, which severed flesh and bone but often failed to kill.

(For maps of the First World War, see the PBS site located at <http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/maps/index.html>. On trench warfare, see the sites at http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch1_trench.html, and <http://www.worldwar1.com/tlbtw.htm>. To see the impact of trench warfare on the human body, see the images at <http://www.endthiswar.org/war2.htm>.)

Elsewhere, similar conditions prevailed across larger areas of territory, as **total war** altered the societies engulfed within it beyond recognition. Multi-cultural empires that depended heavily on agriculture - including Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire - collapsed, unable to adjust their economies and societies to total war's demands. This new form of warfare erased distinctions between combatants and non-combatants, required new levels of financial and organizational commitment by states, and brought civilians into the firing line as legitimate targets in a war of all-or-nothing industrial struggle.

In this intense environment, governments gained far-reaching powers over public speech, including mail censorship, suspension of *habeus corpus* and other basic legal rights. Economies shifted direction, as civilian production gave way to military priorities such as shells and bullets. These distortions fractured the peacetime networks of global trade that infused Europe, and all parties emerged from the conflict severely in debt, with the notable exception of the United

States. They also shaped dramatic, if temporary, changes in the workforces of combatant states, as military manpower demands provided opportunities for women, in industrial, educational, and professional contexts. Women were used heavily in weapons industries, particularly artillery shell manufacturing, and in recognition of their efforts received increased political rights after the conflict; the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution is one example.

Territorial reorganization was another major, if temporary, legacy of World War One. Four huge empires – Tsarist Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire – imploded after 1917, creating massive power vacuums across most of Eurasia that persisted for years. Treaties signed after the war, including the **Treaty of Versailles**, loosely based on principles included in the “**Fourteen Points**” enunciated by U.S. President **Woodrow Wilson** in 1918, oversaw the dismemberment of the four empires; tens of millions of people experienced identity transfers, and many forcibly resisted, or fell victim to what would later be called “**ethnic cleansing.**” Tsarist Russia’s collapse created a power vacuum ultimately filled by the **Bolsheviks**, a radical Marxist group that saw in their Russian triumph the beginning of the fulfillment of Karl Marx’s international revolutionary vision; a “Socialist Utopia,” a world in which nation-states and capitalist economies no longer existed. In Europe, leftist revolutions inspired by the success of the Bolsheviks swept across the defeated and truncated states of Germany and Hungary. Nearby, throughout central Europe and the Balkans, new nation-states appeared out of the dead empires, enlarging the global community of nations and complicating world affairs. In time, many of them took on increasingly radical political forms, including military dictatorship and other authoritarian systems, as parliamentary democracy failed to deliver rapid, lasting economic prosperity. In 1919 more than two dozen eastern European states, old and new, were democracies – by 1939 there were none.

(See Wilson’s Fourteen Points, and a brief analysis by Colonel Edward House, his foreign policy advisor, at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/doc31.htm>.)

One of the most influential of these new authoritarian nations was the **U.S.S.R.** (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), or **Soviet Union**, born in 1922 after four years of bloody revolution and civil war in which millions of Russians and others died. Bolshevik forces, or the Reds, fought with anti-Bolsheviks and elements of the deposed Tsarist regime, or the Whites, for control of the territories of the former Russian Empire. After achieving victory and cementing Red control over much of the former imperial territories, the leader of the Bolshevik revolutionaries, **Vladimir Lenin**, died in 1924. His successor, **Josef Stalin**, went on to transform the U.S.S.R. into an industrial superpower through a combination of crash industrialization and enormous repression, which saw him imprison or murder millions of Soviet and eastern European citizens. The Soviet Union’s example would inspire the creation of numerous other socialist states, some of which, such as the People’s Republic of China, North Korea and Cuba, remain today. For its part, the U.S.S.R. became a major participant in international affairs until its demise in 1991.

(For more on Lenin and Stalin, and Russian and Soviet history, see Professor Alexander Chubarov's amazing site located at <http://www.allrussias.com/index.asp>. Click on the "History" tabs on the left of the main page.)

The end of the war in November 1918 brought temporary peace, and for some years afterward a general global economic recovery occurred, as reconstruction efforts stimulated many industrial sectors in Europe and elsewhere. Soon, however, the war's ongoing economic effects re-asserted themselves. **Overproduction of agricultural commodities** such as grain—which expanded as part of wartime growing initiatives during the 1914-1918 war, particularly in Canada, Russia, Australia, and the United States—led to a series of over-productive harvests that drove down prices and led to a wider collapse in agricultural commodity prices by 1929.

As agricultural production declined, industrial and commercial production—which had also greatly expanded during the war and remained over capacity during the early 1920s—followed, as rural, then urban consumers reduced discretionary spending. Then, in the United States on Tuesday October 29, 1929, commercial real estate speculation failures led to a general collapse in market values on the New York Stock Exchange. American investors, stung by domestic losses, called in foreign loans and investments, leading to a collapse of several European banks and credit houses as credit and other forms of liquidity vanished. These failures cascaded through the global financial system. Tens of thousands of banks closed, and the **Great Depression** began. By 1933, more than one in three workers, from Japan to California, were unemployed. Of those who could still claim employment, more than half of all workers were "under-employed," working part-time or itinerantly. Thus, by the early 1930s a **majority of workers**, particularly young men without savings or other assets, found themselves without full-time employment, and increasingly without self-respect and hope. In this desperate environment, radical politics flourished.

(On the Great Depression, see Cary Nelson's great site located at <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/depression/depression.htm> and also the excellent essay by Marquette University emeritus professor Gene Smiley at <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/GreatDepression.html>.)

By 1933, many people had lost faith in existing political structures, particularly parliamentary democracy. Many of the same people viewed events in the Soviet Union with horror and trepidation, and sought new political certainties to the right. Several new movements appeared to fill that void, movements such as **Benito Mussolini's Fascists** in Italy, who arose from the experience of the trenches and promised a better, more organized future. In Germany, the parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Republic gave way to the **National Socialist Party (Nazis)**, led by **Adolf Hitler**, a former Corporal and signal runner in the Bavarian Army, who promised to end Germany's international humiliation and restore national pride through the construction of a "Thousand Year Reich," or empire. In Japan, civilian parties lost power and were replaced by a military dictatorship, led by **Hideki Tojo** and supported by the Japanese emperor, **Hirohito**; like their Fascist and Nazi counterparts, Japan's military leaders promised

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national renewal through creation of an expanded regional empire. These new movement-dominated regimes sought to take advantage of the economically-weakened international system and achieve territorial goals through aggressive conquest. Japan moved first, annexing Manchuria, part of northeastern China, in 1931. Italy attacked Ethiopia in 1935, deploying chemical weapons and incendiary bombs against poorly armed opponents. Japan moved again next, attacking China proper with an invasion of Beijing and northern China in 1937, beginning the Second World War in Asia. Nazi Germany sent troops and equipment to assist General Francisco Franco's Nationalists in the **Spanish Civil War** of 1936-39, and later annexed several territories, including neighboring Austria in 1938 and Czechoslovakia by March 1939. Western powers such as France and Britain warned Hitler that any further aggression would mean war. With the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, Hitler flouted this ultimatum, and the Second World War began in Europe.

(On Fascism, see the sites at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/mussolini-fascism.html> and Stephen Kreis's essay at <http://www.historyguide.org/europe/duce.html>; for Nazism, see the sites at <http://www2.bc.edu/~weiler/fascism.htm>, which includes transcripts of Mussolini and Hitler's speeches, and for context read Raffael Scheck's excellent online lectures, beginning at <http://www.colby.edu/personal/r/rmscheck/GermanyD6.html>; for Japan, see the site at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/07/rise-of-japanese-militarism> and also the official Chinese interpretation at <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/123611.htm> - for evidence of Japanese atrocities, see the National Archives PDF files at <http://www.archives.gov/iwg/japanese-war-crimes/>, and an American eyewitness report from 1937 at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/nanking.asp>.)

World War Two proved even more brutal and violent than its predecessor. It was more **mobile**, which meant less safety and security for civilians. It was more ideological—the aggressor nations, particularly Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, encouraged their soldiers to perceive the struggle as a “**war of annihilation**” against racially inferior enemies. **Extra-legal murder and violence against civilians** was common. In China between 1937 and 1945, the Japanese military raped and murdered millions of Chinese civilians with bayonets, bullets, and chemical and biological weapons. In Europe, the Nazis engaged in similar violence, and took the process one step further with the **Holocaust**, a deliberate program of shootings and industrial mass murder that targeted the regime's “enemies,” including the handicapped and mentally ill, Jews, homosexuals, Sinti and Roma (gypsies), and other “*untermenschen*” (subhumans) such as Poles and Slavic peoples. More than twenty million people were killed across Eastern Europe between 1941 and 1945, by shooting, gassing, and deliberate mistreatment. These actions coined a new term that entered international speech, **genocide**, and encouraged the publication of the Anglo-American **Atlantic Charter** of August 1941, which became the foundation for much of the post-war international system.

(See the text of the Atlantic Charter, part of Yale University's Avalon Project, online at <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>; on the Holocaust, see the online resources

provided by Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to Holocaust victims since 1953, at <http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/index.asp>.)

On the defensive until 1943, over time the superior resources of the Allied nations of Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and many others pushed back the aggressor powers, finally ending the war in Europe on May 8, 1945. In Asia, the war continued until August 15, and ended with a massive display of **atomic weaponry** over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The dawning of the atomic age transformed global power relations forever, and began the process of **nuclear proliferation** that continues today.

(On nuclear proliferation, see the site located at http://nobelprize.org/educational/peace/nuclear_weapons/readmore.html and the map of nuclear explosion sites at [https://qed.princeton.edu/main/Image:Main Atmospheric and Underground Nuclear Explosions since 1945.jpg](https://qed.princeton.edu/main/Image:Main_Atmospheric_and_Underground_Nuclear_Explosions_since_1945.jpg).)

World War Two generated a series of global changes that continue to exert contemporary influence. Technologically, the war produced new products such as guided rockets, jet airplanes, cellular telephones, advanced inorganic materials such as plastics, and computers. Space exploration grew out of these technologies, resulting in extra-planetary travel by humans for the first time—in 1969, humans visited the Moon. European intellectual Hannah Ahrendt summed up the significance of these advances, and their importance for all of humanity;

“We have come to our present capacity to ‘conquer space’ through our new ability to handle nature from a point in the universe outside the earth. For this is what we actually do when we release energy processes that ordinarily go on only in the sun, or attempt to initiate in a test tube the processes of cosmic evolution, or build machines for the production and control of energies unknown in the household of earthly nature. Without as yet actually occupying the point where Archimedes had wished to stand, we have found a way to act on the earth as though we disposed of terrestrial nature from outside, from the point of Einstein’s ‘observer freely poised in space’.”²

We are still coming to terms with the impact of these technologies on our lives.

(On the space programs of the superpowers, see the account of John Wilford located at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/14/science/space/14mission.html> and the NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) summary at <http://history.nasa.gov/factsheet.htm>.)

² Hannah Ahrendt, “The Conquest of Space and the Nature of Man,” within *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 279.

Decolonization in Asia and Africa (1945-1975)

Another of World War Two's most important legacies was **decolonization**, which saw peoples in the colonial world across Africa and Asia throw off European colonial rule and establish independent nation-states. Already underway in the 1930s, this process gained momentum after the British left India in 1947, as part of a postwar realignment that recognized European powers, bankrupted and decimated by two global wars, no longer possessed the means or the will to maintain their colonial empires. Although these efforts often required violence, and left behind legacies that still present challenges to national unity, they ushered in a much more diverse, and complex, international system. Emerging out of colonial rule during the Cold War, many of the newly independent states found themselves drawn into the orbits of the competing superpowers. Some took a different path, and sought separation from the bipolar system. In 1955, twenty-nine nations, most newly-independent from colonial rule, came together in Bandung, Indonesia to form the **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**. Today, the NAM includes more than 118 nations, and acts as an advocacy group for the interests of the developing world.³ Many new nations struggled to develop their economies in the increasingly competitive global market; for some critics, this demonstrated the pernicious influence of **neo-colonialism**, or the continuous, ongoing economic and financial influence of the former colonizers. For more information on decolonization in Asia, read the EText Essay Module, "Imperialism and Decolonization in Southeast Asia," located [here](#).

(For more on decolonization, see a map at <http://pages.uoregon.edu/mccole/303Spring2011/maps/decolonization.jpg> and read the article at <http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=7158>.)

Bipolar World to Multipolar World (1945-1991)

Between 1945 and 1991, the ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated international affairs. In Europe, both sides sought to maintain regional control through formation of collective security and economic assistance programs, such as **NATO** (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, formed in 1949) and the **ERP** (European Recovery Program, better known as the "**Marshall Plan**," after U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall) in the West, and the **Warsaw Pact** and **COMECON** in the East. The two sides' mutual fear and ignorance of each other led to their support of opposing sides in many local and regional conflicts, such as the Korean War (1950-1953), the wars in Vietnam (1945-1954, and 1963-1975), Cuba (1959), Angola (1961-2002), Nicaragua (1979) and Mozambique (1977-1992). Throughout the era, U.S. policymakers pursued a policy of **containment**, first outlined in the **Truman Doctrine** (1949) that sought to limit the global expansion of Communism. This policy often failed to notice significant shifts within the communist bloc, such as the **Sino-Soviet split** between China and the Soviet Union of 1959-1964.

³ For current news and information on the NAM, see the organization's news website located at <http://www.namnewsnetwork.org/v2/index.php>.

(On the Cold War, see the site at

<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/coldwarfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.flash>. Read the text of the Truman Doctrine at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp.)

Free from Soviet influence, the People's Republic of China under leader **Mao Zedong** sought to modernize China's economy through a range of "shock" reforms, such the 1958 **Great Leap Forward**, which sought to decentralize industrialization throughout rural areas and tie rural communities more closely to communist doctrine. It proved disastrous, and national productivity dropped dramatically. Later attempts by Mao to protect his leadership and restore revolutionary fervor, such as the **Cultural Revolution** of the 1960s, led by mass student demonstrations, further destabilized Chinese society and threatened the continued existence of the regime. With Mao's death in 1976, his successors, including **Deng Xiaoping**, turned away from Maoist policies and began a long program of economic reform designed to restore market incentives and encourage economic growth. These policies gradually bore fruit, and by the 1990s China began a sustained period of explosive economic expansion that continues today.

(On Mao and his rule, see the site at <http://www.oxfordreference.com/pages/samplep02>.)

Improved Prosperity, 1945-1968

The twenty years after 1945 saw a resurgence of economic growth across many regions of the world, spurred by growing international demand and long economic upswings in Europe, the United States, and also in Asia. Living standards rose for many, although dire poverty persisted. By the late 1960s, however, this cycle of growth faded, leading to growing political and social anxiety, particularly among young people, who faced an uncertain future. This discontent spilled over in **1968**, as youth in Europe, Australia, Canada, Britain, and the United States, many on college campuses, participated in protests and formed grass-roots movements aimed at improving social conditions and championing minority rights. Inspired by the American **civil rights movement**, these groups evolved into more formal organizations, such as the **Greens**, who sought greater environmental protections and awareness, and the **feminist movement**, that sought equality for women in gender, social, and economic relations. The 1968 protests also heralded the arrival of another new phenomenon—the emergence of global youth culture. All of these movements have survived into the twenty-first century. For more on the 1968 protests, read the Etext Essay Module, "Whatever Happened to the Revolution?," located [here](#).

The Collapse of Communism

By the 1970s, behind the "Iron Curtain" that separated free, western Europe from its communist eastern European neighbors, all was not well in the socialist paradise. After the Second World War ended, Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin had used the victorious Red Army and local communist collaborators to create a network of communist satellite states that stretched, in Winston Churchill's famous words, "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic." To ensure that none of these states could break away from his enforced union, Stalin created

COMECON, a collective economic structure that linked all eastern European economies to the Soviet Union's. The system never worked efficiently, and placed enormous burdens on the Soviet economy as the primary producer of finished goods, a recipe for disaster if the U.S.S.R. ever stumbled. By the 1980s, the controlled economy of the Soviet Union teetered on the brink of collapse. Low productivity, poor quality consumer goods, and rampant corruption merged with sky-rocketing defense and security budgets to paralyze the Soviet system, and identical conditions prevailed across most of communist eastern Europe. These challenges confronted the new Soviet leader, **Mikhail Gorbachev**, who took power in 1985 and immediately launched a wave of reform measures, including **perestroika**, or "restructuring" of the economy, and **glasnost**, or "openness," which offered Soviet citizens opportunities for public speech not seen since the 1917 revolutions. Gorbachev had hoped his reforms would revitalize Soviet Communism – he could never have imagined the outcome. His reforms unleashed a storm of criticism of the regime in the Soviet Union, and emboldened reform movements across Eastern Europe. By 1989, these pressures led to the collapse of Communism across the region, as Communist governments melted away, and quintessential symbols of Cold War Europe, such as the **Berlin Wall** (1961-1989), were breached by joyous Berliners, many of whom had not seen each other for decades. Two years later the Soviet Union itself collapsed—new nations such as Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan appeared, while Russia reconstituted itself as the Russian Federation.

Events in Eastern Europe in 1989 were seen across the world; in China, university students launched a protest movement aimed at greater free speech and political evolution based in Beijing's **Tiananmen Square**. China's leaders, alarmed at the prospects of anarchy and social unrest, initially ignored the protesters but then reacted violently, using the military and police forces to suppress the protests. Many protesters died, China's reform movements were driven underground, and their leaders were imprisoned or forced into exile. Twenty years on, China remains a Communist one-party state, as do Vietnam, North Korea, Laos, and Cuba.

Globalization 3 – The "Inter" Era (1989-Present)

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 was watched live across the world by hundreds of millions of people. This dramatic event not only ended the division of Berlin and Germany—it also heralded the arrival of what some have called the "global village," an interconnected and interdependent world. The Wall's collapse, broadcast live, was the first real-time, globally televised event of major historical significance since the 1969 Moon landing, and indicated that, regardless of distance or cultural identity, all humans were now part of a global system that transcended borders and other traditional boundaries. Several features of this new "global web" are significant, including interconnectivity and interdependence.

Interconnectivity is the term used to describe the development, maturation and effects of new global communications networks, such as the internet, satellite television, and more recently mobile devices and social network platforms. These new technologies have greatly enhanced global communication, educational access, and the speed and spread of knowledge. They have

also weakened states' ability to control and monitor information flows in and out of their borders. Some nations, such as China and Iran, have placed restrictions on these technologies, with varying results. Also, the increased **interdependence** of global commercial, financial, trade, and manufacturing systems have provided the foundations of recent global economic growth, particularly in "underdeveloped" regions, and also have led to global diffusion of industrial manufacturing and service operations such as call centers, a process known as **outsourcing**. Many regions, such as Asia and Latin America, have experienced sustained economic growth as a result of these developments.

These network transformations have facilitated the creation of "global culture"—as **globalized media outlets**, such as Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, have expanded globally, everyday constants such as advertising, food, and leisure activities have become increasingly global rather than local in focus. These forces, often emanating from the United States, interact with local and regional traditions to produce what historian Craig Lockard describes as "**hybridization**," seen in popular cultural forms such as music (the global diffusion of hip-hop is an example), fast food such as McDonalds and Pizza Hut, movies (for example, "Bollywood," the Indian film industry), and video games.

These forces have not been universally welcomed—indeed, many have been met with both passive and active resistance. This active resistance has appeared in the form of **protest movements** such as People's Global Action, who use global telecommunications technologies to recruit followers and organize demonstrations against organizations they accuse of expanding global capitalism at humanity's expense, such as the **World Economic Forum**. Islamic terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda have also appeared to challenge what they perceive as globalization's attempts to undermine Islamic traditions and social stability.

Despite these detractors, globalization has fostered increased contact and communication between all the world's peoples, and promises to deliver significant improvements to many groups, including women across the developing world, and the massive numbers of young people who will dominate global populations by 2020.

Looking Ahead – Twenty First Century Challenges

Many critical global challenges confront us today. These include threats from "failed states," climate change, economic sustainability, resource scarcity-based conflict (over resources like oil, water, arable land, electricity and other energy resources), uncontrolled population growth, pandemics, global crime and piracy, human trafficking, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons proliferation, and terrorism. All of these challenges are significant, and will require significant cooperation and effort from peoples around the world if they are to be overcome. However, in the interconnected world of the twenty-first century, they cannot be ignored, for their effects will be felt by all of us over the long term. The last five centuries of world history have conclusively proven that no region, culture or community can remain aloof from others

and be successful; our ability to work together and achieve mutual prosperity will define humanity's path as the twenty-first century continues.