Chapter 41


OUTLINE

I. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s marked the beginning of a period of remarkable change. By then, decolonization had produced over a hundred new nations since the 1960s. Local sovereignty was accompanied by ethnic and religious clashes. With the Soviet Union gone, a true global economy became possible. Former Communist countries, and even the remaining Communist regimes, embarked on market reforms, and international trade agreements gained strength. New wealth and new middle classes emerged, but poverty also increased.

II. The End of the Cold War

A. Introduction

A decline in leadership, a resurgence of Muslim culture, and the expansion of the Western economy all contributed to Soviet decline. China’s successful entry into the global economy increased pressure on the Soviets, as did increasing pressure from the United States.

B. The Explosion of the 1980s and 1990s

Economic disruption forced political changes that led to the dismantling of the Soviet Union after 1985, spurred in part by the need to compete with the United States. Environmental deterioration contributed to a declining sense of well-being in East Europe and the Soviet Union. Industrial production began to slip as a result of poor worker morale and continued central planning. As production dropped, the percentage of gross national product devoted to the military reached unacceptable proportions.

C. The Age of Reform

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev began to dismantle some of the most obvious flaws of the centralized state and economy. The new leader acted to reduce nuclear armaments and ended the war in Afghanistan. Internally, the new policy of glasnost was intended to provide a more open atmosphere, in which criticism of the government would be somewhat tolerated. While Gorbachev hoped to introduce some Western management techniques, he continued to be critical of Western culture and politics. With some misgivings, Gorbachev opened the Soviet economy to Western investment and limited trade. Although Gorbachev’s reforms failed to stimulate the economy, they did open markets to more private initiatives. The Soviet Union reduced expenditures on the military and attempted to redirect funds into the production of consumer goods. A new Soviet constitution in 1988 granted some powers to a new parliament, the Congress of People’s Deputies. Parties other than the Communists began to develop. In 1990,
Gorbachev was elected to the newly powerful position of President of the Soviet Union. After 1988, ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union began to agitate for national self-determination. By 1991, Georgia and Lithuania voted for independence.

D. Dismantling the Soviet Empire

As the Soviet military power weakened, states in East Europe moved toward independence. Bulgaria moved away from communism in 1987 and 1989. Hungary installed a non-Communist government in 1988. In Poland, Solidarity, the non-Communist labor movement, became the primary political voice after 1988. East Germany expelled its Communist government in 1989 and took down the Berlin Wall in 1990. By the end of the same year, unification between East and West Germany was completed. Czechoslovakia moved away from communism in 1989. Of all the independence movements, only the ouster of the Romanian leadership led to violence. Even within the newly independent nations of East Europe, ethnic violence was common. Slow economic growth and political indecision led to the reestablishment of Communist governments in Poland and Hungary by 1994. Both Mikhail Gorbachev and his successor, Boris Yeltsin, withdrew Soviet troops and allowed political self-determination in East Europe.

E. Renewed Turmoil in 1991 and 1992

An attempted coup against Gorbachev’s government failed in 1991, as popular demonstrations supported the democratic trend within the Soviet Union. Sensing the weakness within the central government, ethnic minorities moved toward independence in the Baltic republics, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, and the Muslim regions of central Asia. The Soviet Union ceased to exist and was replaced by a loose confederation of republics, the Commonwealth of Independent States. Boris Yeltsin replaced Gorbachev as the Russian president in the final stages of the process. As in East Europe, the new republics were devastated by internal ethnic violence. Yeltsin himself was forced to suppress conservative elements within the Russian parliament but was unable to establish a firm basis for continued democratic government. Russian leadership never fully pursued economic reform, and the economy remained weak and corrupt. Vladimir Putin was elected as Yeltsin’s successor in 1999, vowing to end corruption but also attacking the opposition press.

F. The Spread of Democracy

The end of the Cold War was associated with a wave of democratization around the world. The process began in the 1970s, accelerating in the 1980s and 1990s. Latin America saw almost universal democratization, but new democracies appeared on every continent. Only China and the Middle East remained apart from the trend. Democracy’s greatest vulnerability was the popular expectation that it would bring economic prosperity, which has not always occurred.

III. The Great Powers and New Disputes

A. Introduction

The most obvious result of the end of the Cold War was the dramatic increase in the power of the United States. Russian power, while it did not evaporate, was dramatically reduced. Other countries, in particular China, worried about unchecked U.S. power. By 2001, even Western European nations were concerned about U.S. power. No counterweight to U.S. power appeared, and even Japan lagged behind. The United States sought to export its model of free-trade economics and began to worry about terrorism. It became involved in a number of regional
conflicts, most notably in 1991 in the Persian Gulf and in the late 1990s in the Balkans. The
terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, made clear the anger of Middle Eastern terrorists against
the United States, and led the United States to quickly topple the regime in Afghanistan that had
harbored the terrorists responsible for September 11.

B. Regional Disputes and Alliances

The end of the Cold War highlighted a number of regional rivalries. It also raised questions about
the future role of NATO. Regional economic unions, such as the European Union and NAFTA,
incorporated new nations and grew in importance. The Middle East remained a trouble spot. In
2003, the United States and Britain overthrew Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Israeli-Palestinian
relations remained violent despite increased autonomy for the Palestinians. Tensions between
India and Pakistan led to both testing nuclear weapons.

C. Ethnic Conflict

The post-Cold War is particularly notable for the upsurge in ethnic conflict. New global
interactions increased opportunity for conflict, as did the collapse of the multiethnic regimes of
the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. In Britain, France and Spain, minority ethnic groups gained
varying degree of greater autonomy, but Europe also saw an anti-immigrant backlash.
Throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, ethnic clashes were much more violent,
with large-scale wars in various areas, particularly Chechnya and Yugoslavia. The collapse of
Yugoslavia and the ensuing violence eventually led to intervention by NATO. Ethnic violence
was not confined to Europe and appeared in numerous places. The worst was Rwanda, where
hundreds of thousands died. Ethnic conflict had gone beyond violence to reach the level of
genocide.

IV. Globalization

A. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the development of new technologies opened up broad new
possibilities for globalization. Particularly noteworthy was the rapid emergence of former
Communist nations into global networks. The new interconnectedness called globalization rested
on three things: the end of the Cold War and growing commitment to global markets, new
technical achievements, and a growing number of people accustomed to global connections.

B. The New Technology

Cell phones and other technologies have made constant contact with all parts of the globe
possible. Computer miniaturization, e-mail, and the Internet have made instantaneous transfer a
vast amounts of information possible. Satellites have given us simultaneous worldwide broadcasts.

C. Business Organization and Investment

International investment accelerated rapidly in the late 20th century. Multinational corporations
operated in multiple countries, seeking out cheap raw materials and labor. In many cases, these
corporations had more power and wealth than the countries in which they operated.
D. Migration

The use of short-term immigrants who later return to their home countries increased in the developed world, where an end to population growth in some countries necessitated the use of foreign workers and new technologies. Europe and the United States saw large-scale immigration, resulting in truly multinational populations.

E. Cultural Globalization

Global cultural exchange rapidly accelerated in the 1990s, mostly in terms of mass consumer goods. American-style fast food spread to almost every region of the globe, evidenced most clearly by McDonald’s. American television and movies also had a wide impact, and American traditional holidays, such as Halloween, spread to other countries. Japan also had a major impact in global mass consumer culture, as seen in the frenzy over Pokemon in the United States. Western-style clothing became common worldwide. Local cultures, however, frequently adapted the U.S.-dominated global culture to their own needs.

F. Institutions of Globalization

Political institutions have not kept pace with cultural and economic globalization, leaving the process of globalization with only modest controls. The importance of international economic organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, has grown. These organizations are dominated by the industrialized powers and have promoted free-market reforms.

G. Protest and Economic Uncertainties

Accelerated globalization has sparked widespread protest. Many see globalization as dangerous to the environment, as exploitative towards workers, and as benefiting wealthy nations to the detriment of poor ones. Several countries since the mid-1990s have experienced severe economic crises, increasing criticism of globalization.

V. A World of Religious and Ethnic Conflict

A. Introduction

Resurgent nationalism has run counter to the trend of globalization, as has have nationalist struggles by minority groups in various countries. Ethnic competition has resulted in the complete breakdown of a handful of new states, particularly in Africa. Religious differences have contributed to many of these ethnic rivalries.

B. Religious Revivals

Religious movements have insisted on their own distinctiveness and have often been suspicious of consumerism and the values of global culture. Conservative and fundamentalist religious groups gained much ground in many countries in the 1990s. Fundamentalism ran counter to globalization by rejecting toleration and appealing to those left behind by economic growth.

C. Global Terrorism

A new wave of international terrorism developed around 2000, usually based on ethnic or religious rivalries and targeting civilians. While terrorism is not new, technological advances
increased its destructive power, as evidenced by the particularly brazen attacks of Sep.11, 2001. Terrorism normally provoked extensive retaliation and has rarely achieved its goals. It has, however, complicated globalization.

VI. Global Warming and Other Perils

A. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union made clear that Soviet and East European industrialization came at a high environmental cost. This raised concerns about China’s industrialization, as well as that of a number of developing nations. Money and expertise to aid development in Asia and Africa has been greatly reduced in the post-Soviet era. In Africa, post colonial industrialization has done severe damage to the environment while doing little to raise standards of living. Global wealth is overwhelmingly concentrated in the industrialized nations, which hold only one-fifth of the population.

B. Environmental Issues and Global Concerns

Environmental issues have become a focal point of debate. Most scientists agree that human activity has led to substantial warming of the planet. Global warming could lead to significant ecological changes, costal flooding, and extreme weather. Not all of this is the product of industrialization. The destruction and burning of tropical rain forests, which do not replenish themselves easily, is another factor. International agreements to curtail global warming have not yet had much impact.

C. Disease

Rapid global transport has spread disease, such as AIDS and SARS.

V. Toward the Future

A. Introduction

While humans have long attempted to forecast the future, this has often been futile.

B. Projecting from Trends

Basing predictions on current trends has often failed. Many trends of the late 20th-century, such as democratization, seem fragile, making prediction even harder, as do the presence of contradictory trends.

C. Big Changes

Some analysts believe that the future will represent a stark departure from the past, because the basic world framework has changed dramatically.

D. The Problem of the Contemporary World

The fundamental changes of the 20th century make any predictions about the future very difficult. We know, for instance, that the role of Europe and of women has changed dramatically, but those very changes make it hard to see into the future.
VI. Global Connections: Civilizations and Global Forces

Globalization seems to be leading to greater homogenization and a lessening of the distinctiveness of individual civilizations. But globalization can falter, and it can also cause cultures to react to defend their distinctiveness. World history has been defined by the tension between local features and larger connections. It may be premature to believe that global homogeneity will change this altogether.

TIMELINE

Insert the following events into the timeline. This should help you to compare important historical events chronologically.

U.S-NATO war against Yugoslavia  mass genocide in Rwanda
collapse of Soviet Union  United States and allies conquer Iraq
NAFTA inaugurated  Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan

1988
1991
1992
1994
1999
2003

TERMS, PEOPLE, EVENTS

The following terms, people, and events are important to your understanding of the chapter. Define each one.

SALT II  Mikhail Gorbachev  perestroika
glasnost  Persian Gulf War  euro
Kuwait  Kashmir  Slobodan Milosevic
Kosovo  Rwanda  globalization
guest workers  IMF  multinational corporations
greenhouse gases  population bomb
MAP EXERCISE

The following exercise is intended to clarify the geophysical environment and the spatial relationships among the important objects and places mentioned in the chapter. Locate the following places on the map.

Indicate countries on the map involved in major ethnic clashes, civil war, and border disputes since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Does geographical position still control a country’s ability to participate successfully in the global economy, or has technology given all countries equal access to the global economy?
MAKING CONNECTIONS

The following questions are intended to emphasize important ideas within the chapter.

1. What developments led to the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991? How did the decline of the Soviet Union affect political developments in East Europe?

2. What forces drove the trend of democratization from the later 1970s onwards?

3. What have been the common elements of regional conflicts since the fall of the Soviet Union?

4. What has enabled the increases in globalization?

5. What has been the impact of multinational corporations?

6. How effective have government and international organizations been in controlling globalization?

7. How and why have people resisted globalization?

8. How has globalization and increased industrialization effected the environment?

9. Why is it difficult to predict future developments in world history?

PUTTING LARGER CONCEPTS TOGETHER

The following questions test your ability to summarize the major conclusions of the chapter.

1. What has been the global impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union? To what extent did its collapse cause global change, and to what extent was its collapse the product of global change?

2. To what extent has globalization created a single world culture and world economy?
SELF-TEST OF FACTUAL INFORMATION

1. Which of the following did NOT contribute to the collapse of the Soviet Union?
   
   a. increased pressure from the United States  
   b. the spread of AIDS  
   c. environmental deterioration  
   d. industrial stagnation

2. The Soviet leader who instituted wide-reaching reforms in the 1980s was:
   
   a. Mikhail Gorbachev.  
   b. Boris Yeltsin.  
   c. Slobodan Milosevic.  
   d. Vladimir Putin.

3. Glasnost and perestroika are Russian terms meaning:
   
   a. openness and central planning.  
   b. central planning and economic restructuring.  
   c. openness and economic restructuring.  
   d. central planning and industrialization.

4. Which of these best characterizes the Russian economy by the late 1990s?
   
   a. full market reforms and strong economic performance  
   b. full market reforms accompanied by widespread corruption  
   c. strong economic performance accompanied by widespread corruption  
   d. poor economic performance and widespread corruption

5. Which region remained largely authoritarian in the 1990s?
   
   a. Africa  
   b. Latin America  
   c. Eastern Europe  
   d. newly industrialized nations of the Pacific Rim

6. In which of the following places was ethnic conflict settled peacefully?
   
   a. Chechnya  
   b. Czechoslovakia  
   c. Yugoslavia  
   d. Rwanda
7. Why did Italy, Greece, and Japan need immigrant labor in the 1990s?
   a. rapid industrialization
   b. the need to import high-skilled workers
   c. the development of new high-tech manufacturing sectors
   d. their own almost nonexistent population growth

8. In eastern Russia, a “Chinese market” is likely to sell:
   a. Chinese groceries.
   b. Chinese style clothing.
   c. Western style clothing.
   d. Chinese arts and crafts.

9. In exchange for loaning money to developing countries, the IMF has demanded:
   a. increased tariffs and labor protections.
   b. joining the Kyoto accords on global warming.
   c. reduced government spending and open competition.
   d. increased government spending and open competition.

10. Major contributors to greenhouse gases are:
    a. cattle and sheep
    b. chlorofluorocarbons
    c. the rain forests
    d. giant oil spills