

CHAPTER 35

Power, Politics, and Conflict in World History, 1990–2010

Chapter Outline Summary

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- invasion of Afghanistan, 1979

B. The Explosion of the 1980s and 1990s

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- disease

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- reforms, 1985

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- missiles limited

- withdrew from Afghanistan

- glasnost*

- perestroika*

- foreign investment encouraged

- military spending down

- new constitution, 1988

- re-elected, 1990

D. Dismantling the Soviet Empire

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- Bulgaria

- free elections, 1989

- Hungary, Poland

- new governments, 1988

- Czechoslovakia

- new government, 1989

- East Germany

- communist leaders out, 1989

- Berlin Wall falls, 1989

- Bulgaria, Romania

- communists kept some power

- Ethnic struggles

- Yugoslavia broken apart

E. Renewed Turmoil in the 1990s

- Gorbachev

- coup, 1991

- Soviet Union dissolved by late 1991

- resigned

- Boris Yeltsin

- succeeded Gorbachev

succeeded by Vladimir Putin

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Spain, Portugal, Greece
democracies

Latin America
all but Cuba by 2000
Mexico

non-PRI president
South Korea, Taiwan
democracy expanded

Philippines
new government

South Africa
apartheid ended

Nigeria
democratic government, 1999

Indonesia
end of authoritarian government

Georgia, Ukraine
democratic elections

Uzbekistan
democratization suppressed

Saudi Arabia
local elections

Kuwait
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Beijing

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Armenia, Azerbaijan

Czechoslovakia split

Yugoslavia

Orthodox Serbs

Catholic Croats

Serbs

Muslim Bosnians

Slovenia, Croatia

independent, 1991

Serbs attack Croats, Muslims

NATO intervenes

Bosnia-Herzegovina recognized

- Kosovo
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 - Serbia, Montenegro
 - replaced former Yugoslavia

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 - peaceful division
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Chapter Summary

International contacts. The end of the cold war suddenly brought a new direction to world affairs in the late 20th century. One of the most important developments in this period was increased world awareness of political rights. Not only did international organizations provide tangible support and relief, they also cast a light on abuses, helping those working to effect change in their own countries.

Chapter Summary. The collapse of the Soviet Union and its subject regimes ended the cold war. Global history took a sharp turn. Colonialism’s end opened new possibilities for both human improvement or international and social conflicts. Democracy spread in many world areas, as the center of communism fell apart. From renewal of historical strife to genocide, ethnic struggles covered the globe.

The End of the Cold War. By the 1980s, reforms began a process ending in the disintegration of the Soviet empire and the end of communism in eastern Europe. Conservative and untalented Soviet leaders were unable to solve growing problems. To counter the threat of Islamic fervor unleashed by the Iranian revolution, the Soviets in 1979 invaded Afghanistan and became caught in an unpopular and expensive

war. Western Europe's successful economy put communism on the defensive in eastern Europe. China demonstrated how a communist authoritarian nation could flourish by joining the international economy. The United States increased its pressure on the Soviets by large increases in military spending and interventions in favor of anti-Marxist regimes.

The Explosion of the 1980s and 1990s. By the mid-1980s, the intense rivalry with the United States contributed to a deteriorating Soviet economy. Forced industrialization had caused extensive environmental disaster throughout eastern Europe. Related diseases impaired morale and economic performance. Infant mortality rates soared. Industrial production slowed and economic growth stopped, but one-third of national income continued to go to military production. Younger leaders recognized that the system might collapse.

The Age of Reform. In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev introduced reforms. He urged nuclear reduction and negotiated with the United States a limitation of medium-range missiles in Europe. The war in Afghanistan was ended by Soviet withdrawal. Internally Gorbachev proclaimed *glasnost*, or openness (the freedom to comment and criticize). He urged use of market incentives and a reduction of bureaucratic controls. But strong limits on political freedom remained and the centralized planning apparatus resisted reform. Gorbachev's policies partly reflected an ambivalence about the West as he reduced isolation but still criticized Western values. He wanted reform, not abandonment, of basic communist controls. The keynote to reform was *perestroika*, or economic restructuring. This meant more private ownership and decentralized control of aspects of the economy. Foreign investment was encouraged and military expenditures were reduced to free resources for consumer goods. In 1988 a new constitution gave considerable power to a parliament and abolished the communist monopoly of elections. Gorbachev was elected to a new and powerful presidency in 1990 as people argued for or against reform. The economic and political conditions provoked agitation among minority nationalities; some demanded independence.

Dismantling the Soviet Empire. The states of eastern Europe took advantage of the new times to seek independence and internal reform. Soviet troops were withdrawn. Bulgaria arranged free elections in 1989; Hungary and Poland in 1988 installed noncommunist governments and moved toward a free economy. Czechoslovakia did the same in 1989. East Germany in 1989 removed its Communist leaders; the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and full German unification occurred in 1991. The only violence occurred in Romania when an authoritarian ruler was overthrown. The communists retained power, through elections, in Bulgaria and Romania; in Albania a more flexible communist regime took control. The new situation in eastern Europe was marred by ethnic clashes. Yugoslavia fell apart and brutal fighting broke out among its former components. The new governments faced serious economic and environmental problems.

Renewed Turmoil in the 1990s. In 1991 Gorbachev survived an attempted coup because of popular support. Central authority weakened. Minority republics sought independence and the Baltic republics gained independence. By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union had been replaced by a loose union of republics. Gorbachev had resigned and was replaced by Boris Yeltsin. Economic and political tensions were rampant. By the late 1990s, Yeltsin had lost support and was succeeded by Vladimir Putin. He pledged reforms and commitment to democracy. Debate continued over the future of Russian society.

The Spread of Democracy. From the late 1970s multiparty democracy had spread to many new regions. The success of the European system, including the Common Market, influenced Spain, Portugal and Greece to move to democracy. Latin America followed, beginning with Argentina and Brazil. By 2000, all the Latin American countries had democracies, with the exception of Cuba. Mexico elected its first non-PRI president since the revolution. Democracy also expanded in South Korea and Taiwan in the 80s. The Philippines also elected a new government. The wave of democracy affected the Soviet bloc, including most of east central Europe and Russia. Africa showed more variation. Democracy defeated apartheid in South Africa, and Nigeria became democratic in 1999, but most regimes remained authoritarian. Indonesia followed, with the end of the authoritarian system that had prevailed. A renewed wave of democratization took place between 2004 and 2005. Georgia and Ukraine ignored Russia's wish, holding democratic elections. Other areas of the former Soviet Union followed, although elections were

harshly repressed in Uzbekistan. In Arab countries, too, experimentation with democracy occurred. Some, such as Saudi Arabia, held open local elections. In Kuwait, women were allowed to vote. The Palestinians conducted open elections. Egypt, on the other hand, kept down the opposition.

Democracy and its Limits. China, North Korea, parts of the Middle East and central Asia resisted the democratizing trend. Demonstrations in Beijing in 1989 were violently suppressed. The fall of communism in Europe only served to encourage democracy. Moreover, from the 1990s, and especially under Jimmy Carter, the United States encouraged democratic reform. Questions remained. Would democracy be validated in a country only if economic conditions improved? How is democracy defined? What if local elections are held, as in Iran, but clerics hold great power at the national level? Questions are also raised by the United States' role in supporting democracy, while also allying with authoritarian regimes.

The Great Powers and New Disputes. The United States became the sole superpower, while Russia's power dramatically declined. Regional conflicts became more evident with the disappearance of the great rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The Former Soviet Union. The totalitarian Soviet Union had suppressed ethnic and religious conflict, without eradicating it. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, clashes arose. The Chechnya conflict emerged in Russia itself. The new nations of Armenia and Azerbaijan engaged in ethnic squabbles. Czechoslovakia split peacefully. Yugoslavia saw the most significant hostilities, among Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, Serbs and Muslim Bosnians and minority nationalities. Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in 1991. As the conflict spread, Serbs attacked Croats and Muslims, ultimately committing genocide. NATO stepped in and recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina. Fighting in Kosovo also ended with NATO involvement. Serbia and Montenegro replaced Yugoslavia.

Endemic Conflicts. Many other regional conflicts surged following the end of the cold war—not caused by the cessation, but allowed to flare because of it. The Middle East was the site of several clashes. Iraq and Iran continued their struggle, with Saddam Hussein's Iraq emerging dominant. Iraq then invaded Kuwait, in 1990. Iraq faced a coalition in the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Continuing hostilities between Israel and Palestine were heightened in 2001 and 2003, with Palestinian suicide bombings countered by Israeli destruction of Palestinian cities and camps. Tensions between India and Pakistan focused on Kashmir, and included testing of nuclear bombs.

Ethnic and Other Conflicts: A New Surge. A surge in ethnic conflict was prominent in the post-cold war era. Increased global interaction and the collapse of multinational countries generated hostilities. In Europe, ethnic groups gained new opportunities for expression, while at the same time, movements arose to limit immigration. Czechoslovakia peacefully divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but other states proceeded less peacefully. The Muslim region of Chechnya in Russia declared independence in 1990 and a persisting harsh conflict followed. The foremost example of a multiethnic state's collapse was Yugoslavia during the 1990s. An international military force intervened to impose peace. Another intervention was required to halt strife in Kosovo. The 1990s also witnessed African disorder in Rwanda, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. Hutu-Tutsi rivalry broke out in Rwanda, involving Uganda. Sudanese conflicts led to over 2 million deaths. No concerted global reaction followed.

Thinking Historically: Terrorism, Then and Now. The unsuccessful attempt to bomb the World Trade Center in New York in 1993 brought to the attention of the United States a problem that much of the world had been dealing with for decades. That attention turned to horror when terrorists again attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. Terrorism had its precedents in the decades before World War I, but with important differences. In the earlier period, most terrorists were compelled by anarchism, Marxism, or the liberation of colonized peoples. Targets were generally monarchs or other highly placed individuals. This became more difficult as technology made targeting high-profile individuals more risky. Terrorism at the turn of the 21st century, on the other hand, has mostly been from religious extremists or minority nationalists, with the addition of radical environmentalists. The involvement of women is also new. The targets have also changed, as attacks on ordinary citizens have increased. Technology has also assisted terrorists, from the vulnerability of communications networks, to the use of various toxic weapons. The goals of terrorists have rarely been

met. Unlike the earlier terrorism, where the plight of minority groups or the oppression of leaders was thus publicized, modern terrorism has instead focused world opinion against terrorism.

The United States as Sole Superpower. Russia's virtual global demilitarization has left the United States without an obvious military rival. One of the effects has been growing apprehension on the part of other countries. Temporary alliances have been formed in opposition to the United States. The European Union has grown stronger, but some of its members have resisted greater melding of interests. Debate within the United States has led to no consensus on the country's global role. On occasion, the United States has intervened in the internal affairs of other countries. The presidency of George W. Bush, beginning in 2001, has seen opposition of the United States to international agreements, which have been interpreted as limits to its sovereignty.

Anti-American Terrorism and Response. The attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 has shed new light on U.S. global policies, especially in the Middle East. The "War on Terror" has dominated U.S. foreign policy. In response to the September 11th attack, the United States struck first at Afghanistan. On grounds that Iraq was suspected of harboring weapons of mass destruction, Iraq was then attacked. The occupation that resulted from invasion of the latter has not led to a restoration of order.

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: New Global Standards, New Divisions. The end of the cold war brought important changes to many countries, and intensified continuing patterns in others. With great optimism, some declared the "end of history," predicting the end of Soviet-U.S. conflict would lead to the end of all conflict. With time, however, it is clear that old hostilities continue, and that the power of the United States is at the same time too great for some, and not great enough to effect global change.

KEY TERMS

Mikhail Gorbachev: leader of the U.S.S.R. (1985–1991); inaugurated major reforms that led to the disintegration of the communist regime.

Glasnost: term meaning openness; Gorbachev policy opening the opportunity to criticize the government.

Perestroika: term meaning economic restructuring; Gorbachev policy for the economic rebuilding of the U.S.S.R. by allowing more private ownership and decentralized economic control.

Boris Yeltsin: successor to Gorbachev; failed to reform the economy; succeeded by Vladimir Putin in 1999.

Persian Gulf War: 1991 war between Iraq and a coalition of Western and some Arab states; Iraq defeated, Saddam Hussein left in power.

LECTURE SUGGESTIONS

1. **Were the direct or indirect effects of the end of the cold war most influential?** Compare the collapse of the Soviet Union on regimes it had supported. Consider also the breakup of the Soviet Union itself. How did the disappearance of Soviet-U.S. tensions change political situations around the world? Which conflicts simply continued, and were now given more attention? Which conflicts simply flared up?