The Collapse and Recovery of Europe 1914–1970s

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES
• To examine the history of Europe between 1914 and the 1970s as an organic whole made up of closely interconnected parts
• To consider the repercussions of nationalism and colonialism in Europe and Japan
• To increase student awareness of the effects of the two world wars
• To help students imagine the appeal of totalitarian movements in the twentieth century

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Opening Vignette
A. The last veterans of World War I are dying.
   1. disappointment that it wasn’t the “war to end all wars”
   2. but now the major European states have ended centuries of hostility
B. The “Great War” (World War I) of 1914–1918 launched a new phase of world history.
   1. it was “a European civil war with a global reach”
   2. between 1914 and the end of WWII, Western Europe largely self-destructed
   3. but Europe recovered surprisingly well between 1950 and 2000
      a. but without its overseas empires
      b. and without its position as the core of Western civilization

II. The First World War: European Civilization in Crisis, 1914–1918
A. By 1900, Europeans, or people of European ancestry, controlled most other peoples of the world.
B. An Accident Waiting to Happen
   1. modernization and Europe's rise to global ascendancy had sharpened traditional rivalries between European states
   2. both Italy and Germany unified ca. 1870
      a. Germany's unification in the context of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) had embittered French-German relations
      b. rise of a powerful new Germany was a disruptive new element
   3. by around 1900, the balance of power in Europe was shaped by two rival alliances
      a. Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy)
      b. Triple Entente (Russia, France, Britain)
      c. these alliances turned a minor incident into WWI
   4. June 28, 1914: a Serbian nationalist assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne
      a. Austria was determined to crush the nationalism movement
      b. Serbia had Russia (and Russia’s allies) behind it
      c. general war broke out by August 1914
   5. factors that contributed to the outbreak and character of the war:
a. popular nationalism  
b. industrialized militarism  
c. Europe’s colonial empires

C. Legacies of the Great War  
1. most had expected WWI to be a quick war  
   a. Germany was finally defeated November 1918  
2. became a war of attrition (“trench warfare”)  
3. became “total war”—each country’s whole population was mobilized  
   a. enormous expansion of government authority  
   b. massive propaganda campaigns to arouse citizens  
   c. women replaced men in factories  
   d. labor unions accepted sacrifices  
4. the war left widespread disillusionment among intellectuals in its wake  
   a. led to questioning of Enlightenment values  
   b. led to questioning of the superiority of the West and its science  
5. rearrangement of the map of Central Europe  
   a. creation of independent Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia  
   b. created new problems of ethnic minorities  
   c. triggered the Russian Bolshevik revolution (1917)  
6. the Treaty of Versailles (1919) made the conditions that caused WWII  
   a. Germany lost its colonial empire and 15 percent of its European territory  
   b. Germany was required to pay heavy reparations  
   c. Germany suffered restriction of its military forces  
   d. Germany had to accept sole responsibility for the outbreak of the war  
   e. Germans resented the treaty immensely  
7. dissolution of the Ottoman Empire  
   a. the Armenian genocide  
   b. creation of new Arab states  
   c. British promises to both Arabs and Jews created a new problem in Palestine  
8. in Asia and Africa, many gained military skills and political awareness  
   a. Britain promised to start the process of creating self-government in India in return for war help  
   b. Japan was strengthened by the war  
   c. Japan’s assumption of German privileges and territory in China inspired some Chinese to adopt Soviet-style communism  
9. the United States appeared as a global power  
   a. U.S. manpower had been important in the defeat of Germany  
   b. the United States became Europe’s creditor  
   c. many Europeans were fascinated by Woodrow Wilson’s ideas

III. Capitalism Unraveling: The Great Depression

A. The war loosened the hold of many traditional values in Europe.  
   1. enormous casualties promoted social mobility  
   2. women increasingly won the right to vote  
   3. flouting of sexual conventions  
   4. rise of a new consumerism  
B. The Great Depression represented the most influential postwar change.  
   1. suggested that Europe’s economy was failing  
   2. worries about industrial capitalism  
   a. it had generated individualist materialism
b. it had created enormous social inequalities
c. its instability caused great anxiety

3. the Great Depression hit in 1929
   a. contracting stock prices wiped out paper fortunes
   b. many lost their life’s savings
   c. world trade dropped 62 percent within a few years; businesses contracted
d. unemployment soared; reached 30 percent in Germany and the United States by 1932

C. Causes of the Great Depression
   1. the American economy boomed in the 1920s
      a. by the end of the decade, factories and farms produced more goods than could be sold
      b. Europe was impoverished by WWI and didn’t purchase many American products
      c. Europe was recovering and produced more of its own goods
   2. speculative stock market had driven stock prices up artificially high

D. Worldwide empires made the Great Depression a worldwide problem.

E. The Depression was a major challenge to governments.
   1. capitalist governments had thought that the economy would regulate itself
   2. the Soviet Union’s economy had grown throughout the 1930s
   3. in response, some states turned to “democratic socialism,” with greater regulation of the economy and more equal distribution of wealth
   4. the New Deal (1933–1942) in the United States
      a. Franklin Roosevelt’s administration launched a complex series of reforms
      b. influenced by the British economist John Maynard Keynes
      c. Roosevelt’s public spending programs permanently changed the relationship between government, the private economy, and individual citizens
      d. didn’t work very well: the U.S. economy only improved with massive government spending because of WWII
   5. Nazi Germany and Japan coped the best with the Depression

IV. Democracy Denied: Comparing Italy, Germany, and Japan

A. Democratic political ideals came under attack in the wake of World War I.
   1. the challenge of communism
   2. in the 1920s and 1930s, authoritarian, nationalist, anti-Communist regimes were a more immediate problem to victors in WWI
   3. authoritarian states of Italy, Germany, and Japan allied with each other by 1936–1937

B. The Fascist Alternative in Europe
   1. new political ideology known as fascism became important in much of Europe in period 1919–1945
      a. intensely nationalistic
      b. exalted action over reflection
      c. looked to charismatic leadership
      d. against individualism, liberalism, feminism, parliamentary democracy, and communism
      e. determined to overthrow existing regimes
      f. conservative/reactionary: celebrated traditional values
   2. fascism appealed to dissatisfied people in all social classes
      a. fascist movements grew thanks to the devastation of WWI
b. appeared in many Western European lands
c. became important in Austria, Hungary, Romania, Spain
d. achieved major power in Italy and Germany
3. fascism first developed in Italy
   a. social tensions exacerbated by economic crisis
   b. Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) put together a private army, the Black Shirts, to use violence as a political tool
   c. Mussolini’s movement took the ancient Roman fasces as symbol
d. once in power, Mussolini built state power

C. Hitler and the Nazis
1. German fascism was more important than that of Italy
2. took shape as the Nazi Party under Adolf Hitler (1889–1945)
3. many similarities to Italian fascism
4. grew out of the collapse of the German imperial state after WWI
   a. a new government, the Weimar Republic, negotiated peace
   b. traditional elites were disgraced
   c. creation of myth that Germany had not really lost the war but had been betrayed by civilians (socialists, Communists, and Jews)
   d. 1920s: vigilante groups (the Freikorps) assassinated hundreds of supporters of the Weimar government
   e. widespread economic suffering: massive inflation in 1923, then the Great Depression
   f. everyone wanted decisive government action
   g. the National Socialist (Nazi) Party won growing public support
5. the Nazis had only 2.6 percent of the vote in 1928; 37 percent in 1932
6. as chancellor, Hitler suppressed all other political parties, arrested opponents, censured the press, and assumed police power
   a. successfully brought Germany out of the Depression
   b. by the late 1930s, had majority support
   c. invoked rural and traditional values
7. used Jews as the ultimate scapegoat for the ills of society
   a. emphasis on a racial revolution
   b. Jews were increasingly excluded from public life
8. celebration of the superiority of the German race
   a. Hitler as mystical Führer
   b. rule by intuition and force, not reason
9. the rise of Nazism represents a moral collapse within the West
   a. highly selective use of earlier strands of European culture
   b. made use of modern science

D. Japanese Authoritarianism
1. Japan was also a newcomer to “great power” status
2. like Germany and Italy, moved to authoritarian government and territorial expansion
3. important differences:
   a. Japan played only a minimal role in WWI
   b. at Versailles, Japan was an equal participant on the winning side
4. 1920s: Japan was apparently moving toward democracy
   a. expansion of education
   b. creation of an urban consumer society
   c. greater individual freedoms, including for women
d. lower-class movements worked for greater equality
5. elite reaction
6. the Great Depression hit Japan hard
   a. led many to doubt that parliamentary democracy and capitalism could help resolve “national emergency”
   b. development of Radical Nationalism (the Revolutionary Right)
7. shift in Japanese public life in the 1930s
   a. major government posts went to prominent bureaucrats or military figures, not to party leaders
   b. the military became more dominant
   c. free expression was increasingly limited
   d. the government adopted many themes from the Radical Right
   e. major public works spending pulled Japan out of Depression rapidly
   f. increasing government oversight of economic matters
8. Japan was less repressive than Germany or Italy

V. A Second World War
A. World War II was even more global than World War I.
   1. independent origins in Asia and Europe
   2. dissatisfied states in both continents wanted to rearrange international relations
B. The Road to War in Asia
   1. Japanese imperial ambitions rose in the 1920s and 1930s
   2. Japan had acquired influence in Manchuria after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905
      a. 1931: Japanese military units seized control of Manchuria
      b. Western criticism led Japan to withdraw from League of Nations
      c. by 1936, Japan was more closely aligned with Germany/Italy
   3. 1937: major attack on the Chinese heartland started WWII in Asia
   4. international opinion was against Japan; the Japanese felt threatened
      a. growing belief that Western racism was in the way of Japan being accepted as an equal power
      b. Japan was heavily dependent on foreign strategic goods, especially from the United States
      c. imperialist powers controlled the resources of Southeast Asia
   5. 1940–1941: Japan launched conquest of European colonies (Indochina, Malaya, Burma, Indonesia, and the Philippines)
      a. presented themselves as liberators of their fellow Asians
      b. the reality was highly brutal rule by the Japanese
      c. December 1941: attack on Pearl Harbor
   6. Pearl Harbor joined the Asian and European theaters of war into a single global struggle
C. The Road to War in Europe
   1. Nazis promised to rectify the injustices of Versailles
   2. at first, Britain, France, and the USSR were unwilling to confront German aggression
   3. war was perhaps actually desired by the Nazi leadership
      a. Hitler stressed the need for “living space” in Eastern Europe
      b. began rearmament in 1935
      c. 1938: annexation of Austria and the German-speaking parts of Czechoslovakia
d. 1939: attack on Poland—triggered WWII in Europe

4. Germany quickly gained control of most of Europe
   a. rapid defeat of France
   b. air war against Britain
   c. invasion of the USSR

5. Germany’s new tactic of blitzkrieg was initially very successful
   a. but was stopped by Soviet counterattack in 1942
   b. Germans were finally defeated in May 1945

D. World War II: The Outcomes of Global Conflict
1. an estimated 60 million people died in WWII
   a. more than half the casualties were civilians
   b. the line between civilian and military targets was blurred

2. the USSR suffered more than 40 percent of the total number of deaths

3. China also suffered massive attacks against civilians
   a. in many villages, every person and animal was killed
   b. the Rape of Nanjing (1937–1938): 200,000–300,000 Chinese civilians were killed; countless women were raped

4. bombing raids on Britain, Japan, and Germany showed the new attitude toward total war

5. governments’ mobilization of economies, people, and propaganda reached further than ever before

6. the Holocaust: some 6 million Jews were killed in genocide

7. WWII left Europe impoverished, with its industrial infrastructure in ruins and millions of people homeless or displaced

8. weakened Europe could not hold onto its Asian and African colonies

9. WWII consolidated and expanded the communist world
   a. Soviet victory over Germany gave new credibility to the communist regime
   b. Soviet authorities played up a virtual cult of WWII
   c. communist parties took power across Eastern Europe
   d. communist takeover of China by 1949

10. growing internationalism
    a. creation of the United Nations (1945) as a means for peaceful conflict resolution
    b. establishment of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (1945)

11. the new dominance of the United States as a global superpower

VI. The Recovery of Europe
A. Europe recovered in the second half of the twentieth century.
   1. rebuilt industrial economies and revived democratic systems
   2. the United States assumed a dominant role within Western civilization and in the world at large

B. How Europe recovered:
   1. industrial societies are very resilient
   2. the major states of Western Europe integrated their recovering economies
   3. an extension of European civilization existed: the United States
      a. the United States was a reservoir of resources for the whole West
      b. by 1945, the center of gravity of Western civ. was the United States
      c. the United States was the only major country not physically touched by WWII
      d. by 1945, the United States accounted for 50 percent of all world
production
4. the United States took the initiative to rebuild Europe: the Marshall Plan
   a. magnificently successful
   b. required the European recipients to cooperate with each other
   c. 1951: creation of the European Coal and Steel Community
   d. 1957: creation of the European Economic Community (Common Market)
   e. 1994: transformation of EEC into the European Union
   f. political and military security against the Soviet threat
C. Japan underwent a parallel recovery process.
   1. U.S. occupation between 1945 and 1952
   2. remarkable economic growth for two decades after WWII
   3. Japan depended on the United States for security, since it was forbidden to
      maintain military forces
VII. Reflections: War and Remembrance: Learning from History
A. Santayana said: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to
   repeat it.”
   1. but most historians are cautious about drawing particular lessons from the
      past
   2. history is complex enough to allow different people to learn different lessons
B. Historians are skeptical of the notion that “history repeats itself.”
C. The wars of the twentieth century led to unexpected consequences.