

CHAPTER 38-A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS

Between 1989 and 1991, the communist government of the Soviet Union and its control over the satellite nations of Eastern Europe collapsed with unbelievable speed. In 1989, when Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev attempted to reform the soviet system, the economy, already weakened by the economic competition of the Cold War, collapsed. With the collapse came movements for freedom in Eastern and Central Europe. First Poland, then Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia all separated themselves from the Soviet Union. And in 1990, the Berlin Wall was torn down and Germany was reunited.

The end of the last century also marked the start of a global economy with worldwide agreements on trade and the creation of multinational corporations not bound by the laws of any one country. In Asia, Japan rose from the destruction of World War II to be a world economic power in what is referred to as Japan's "economic miracle." The "Little Tigers," - Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan - followed the Japanese model and became very competitive in the world economy. After the death of Mao, China began to move to a market economy and in 2001 joined the World Trade Organization.

This period also saw the development of organizations such as the European Union, OPEC, ASEAN, and NAFTA to assist members in regional trade networks. Supporters saw all of these as positive developments; critics saw the changes as widening the gap between rich and poor and as damaging to the environment and local economies.

During this period, demographics and environmental issues also increased in importance. Huge population increases have brought into question how many people the planet can sustain, and population control continues to be a highly political and religious issue. Increased industrialization has resulted in pollution issues and what many believe is global warming. There are also the issues of poverty, labor servitude and child labor.

This time period has also been plagued by global terrorism and incidents such as 9/11, the rise of al-Qaeda, the creation of Islamic states with *sharia* law, as well as the United States invasion of Iraq. All of these issues present problems that will continue into the future.

Also during this period, there has been an increased emphasis on gender issues and women's rights. In many countries the status of women has improved, but basic issues such as literacy and equality still present challenges. On a positive note, the number of women around the world assuming political roles and positions of power in their countries in on the increase.

Key Concept 6.1 Science and the Environment

- I. Researchers made rapid advances in science that spread throughout the world, assisted by the development of new technology.

Key Concept 6.2 Global Conflicts and Their Consequences

- V. Although conflict dominated much of the 20th century, many individuals and groups including states opposed this trend. Some individuals and groups, however, intensified the conflicts.

Key Concept 6.3 New Conceptualizations of Global Economy, Society and Culture

- I. States, communities and individuals became increasingly interdependent, a process facilitated by the growth of institutions of global governance.

- III. Popular and consumer culture became global.