**FIELD**: HISTORY- WORLD HISTORY

EUROPEAN HISTORY

**Introduction**

European history spans across countries and encompasses various civilizations, movements, conflicts and transformations. European history starts from ancient times to present day, highlighting key events, ideologies, and developments that have shaped the continent.

**Ancient Europe (Prehistory to 476 AD)**

The story of European history begins in prehistoric times when tribes and cultures inhabited the continent. The first early European modern humans appear in the fossil record about 48,000 years ago, during the Paleolithic Era. Settled agriculture marked the Neolithic Era, which spread slowly across Europe from southeast to the north and west. The later Neolithic period saw the introduction of early metallurgy and the use of copper-based tools and weapons, and the building of megalithic structures, as exemplified by Stonehenge. During the Indo-European migrations, Europe saw migrations from the east and southeast.

The period known as classical antiquity began with the emergence of the city-states of ancient Greece. Later, the Roman Empire came to dominate the entire Mediterranean basin. The Migration Period of the Germanic people began in the late 4th century AD and made gradual incursions into various parts of the Roman Empire.The bronze age and iron age witnessed the emergence of advanced civilizations such as the Minoans, Mycenaeans, and Colts. The classical period of ancient Greece and Rome brought significant achievement in philosophy, literature, art and governance. The fall of the western Roman Empire in 476 AD marked the transition of the Medieval period.

**Medieval Europe/Middle Age(476-1492)**

The period is often considered to have its own internal divisions: either early and late or early, central or high, and late.The middle ages saw the rise and fall of empires, feudalism, and the dominance of the Catholic church. During late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, political, social, economic, and cultural structures were profoundly reorganized, as Roman imperial traditions gave way to those of the Germanic peoples who established kingdoms in the former Western Empire. New forms of political leadership were introduced, the population of Europe was gradually Christianized, and monasticism was established as the ideal form of religious life. These developments reached their mature form in the 9th century during the reign of Charlemagne and other rulers of the Carolingian dynasty, who oversaw a broad cultural revival known as the Carolingian renaissance. The first great empire of the Middle Ages was the Frankish Empire of Charlemagne, while the Islamic conquest of Iberia established Al-Andalus. The Carolingian Empire, the Viking age and the Byzantine Empire shaped the early medieval period.

In the central, or high, Middle Ages, even more dramatic growth occurred. The period was marked by economic and territorial expansion, demographic and urban growth, the emergence of national identity, and the restructuring of secular and ecclesiastical institutions. It was the era of the Crusades, Gothic art and architecture, the papal monarchy, the birth of the university, the recovery of ancient Greek thought, and the soaring intellectual achievements of St. Thomas Aquinas. The High Middle Ages witnessed the rise of powerful states like England, France and the Holy Roman Empire. The crusades were significant events that showcased European zeal for religious conquests. The Renaissance starting in Italy, sparkled intellectual and artistic advancements, transforming Europe.

**Early modern Europe/ post-medieval period( 1493-1789)**

The age of discovery and exploration brought European powers into contact with the wider world. Columbus's Voyage to the Americas, Vasco da Gama's navigation to India, and Magellan's circumnavigation to the globe expanded Europe's knowledge and influence.In 1492: The first documented European voyage to the Americas by the Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus; the end of the Reconquista, with the final expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula; the Spanish government expels the Jews.

1494: French king Charles VIII invaded Italy, drastically altering the status quo and beginning a series of wars which would punctuate the Italian Renaissance.

1513: First formulation of modern politics with the publication of Machiavelli's The Prince.

1517: The Reformation begins with Martin Luther nailing his ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany.

1526: Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor gains the crowns of Bohemia and Hungary.

1545: The Council of Trent begins Counter-Reformation and marks the end of the medieval Roman Catholic Church.

The end date of the early modern period is variously associated with the Industrial

Revolution, which began in Britain in about 1750, or the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789, which drastically transformed the state of European politics and ushered in the Napoleonic Era and modern Europe.The protestant reformation, led by Martin Luther, challenged the authority of the Catholic church and ignited religious conflicts throughout Europe. The scientific Revolution laid the foundation for Modern Scientific Inquiry, led by figures such as Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton. The enlightenment emphasized reason, secularism, and individual rights.The ensuing rise of global systems of international economic, cultural and intellectual exchange played an important role in the development of capitalism and represents an identifiable early phase of globalization.

**European Empires(1492-1914)**

The Iberian kingdoms were able to dominate colonial activity in the 16th century. The Portuguese forged the first global empire in the 15th and 16th century, whilst during the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century, the crown of Castile (and the overarching Hispanic Monarchy, including Portugal from 1580 to 1640) became the most powerful empire in the world. Spanish dominance in America was increasingly challenged by British, French, Dutch and Swedish colonial efforts of the 17th and 18th centuries. New forms of trade and expanding horizons made new forms of government, law and economics necessary.

The era of colonialism and empire building saw European powers establish colonies and exercise control overcast territories around the world. Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France and Britain were prominent colonial powers. The industrial revolution starting in Britain, brought about significant societal and economic changes; with the rise of factories, urbanization, and the advent of capitalism. The French Revolution inspired by enlightenment ideals, overthrew the monarchy and led to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte whose military conquests reshaped Europe.

**19th Century Europe**

The 19th Century witnessed a series of revolutions and reforms that transformed Europe. The industrial revolution continued to gather Momentum, leading to the rise of industrial working class movements and the emergence of socialism. Europe had been involved in overseas exploration and trade for centuries, but the benefits of the Industrial Revolution enabled Europe to tighten its grip on other continents. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 sought to establish a balance of power among European states after the Napoleonic wars. By 1914 European countries ruled about 30 % of the world’s population.Nationalism increasingly gained groups leading to the unification of Italy and Germany. The Russian Empire experienced significant social and political changes, culminating in the 1917 Russian Revolution.

**World wars and 20th Century Europe**

The 20th Century brought immense suffering and upheaval to Europe through two devastating world wars. World War I explosion in 1914 triggered by assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, redefined European powers dynamics, destroyed empires, and laid the groundwork for further conflicts.The world war was settled by the victors at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919. The major decisions were the creation of the League of Nations; peace treaties with defeated enemies, most notably the Treaty of Versailles with Germany; the awarding of German and Ottoman overseas possessions as "mandates", chiefly to Britain and France; and the drawing of new national boundaries to better reflect the forces of nationalism.Multiple nations were required to sign minority rights treaties.The Treaty of Versailles itself weakened Germany's military power and placed full blame for the war and costly reparations on its shoulders – the humiliation and resentment in Germany was probably one of the causes of Nazi success and indirectly a cause of World War II.

The interwar period witnessed the Treaty of Versailles (1919) the winners recognised the new states (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Yugoslavia, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) created in central Europe from the defunct German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, based on national (ethnic) self-determination. It was a peaceful era with a few small wars before 1922 such as the Ukrainian–Soviet War (1917–1921) and the Polish–Soviet War (1919–1921). Prosperity was widespread, and the major cities sponsored a youth culture called the "Roaring Twenties" or "Jazz Age".

In 1938 Adolf Hitler annexed the Sudetenland. In the Munich Agreement, Britain and France adopted a policy of appeasement, but Germany subsequently took over the rest of Czechoslovakia. After allying with Japan in the Anti-Comintern Pact and then also with Benito Mussolini's Italy in the "Pact of Steel", and finally signing a non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union in August 1939, Hitler launched the Second World War on 1 September 1939 by attacking Poland. Britain and France declared war on Germany, but there was little fighting during the "Phoney War" period. War began in earnest in spring 1940 with the successful Blitzkrieg conquests of Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, and France. Britain defeated Germany's air attacks in the Battle of Britain. Hitler's goal was to control Eastern Europe but the attack on the Soviet Union was delayed until June 1941 and the Wehrmacht was stopped close to Moscow in December 1941.

Over the next year the Germans started to suffer a series of defeats. War raged between the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) and the Allied Forces (British Empire, Soviet Union, and the United States). The Allied Forces won in North Africa, invaded Italy in 1943, and recaptured France in 1944. In 1945 Germany itself was invaded from the east by the Soviet Union and from the west by the other Allies. As the Red Army conquered the Reichstag in the Battle of Berlin, Hitler committed suicide and Germany surrendered.[156] World War II was the deadliest conflict in human history, causing between 50 and 80 million deaths, the majority of whom were civilians (approximately 38 to 55 million).This period was also marked by systematic genocide.

**Post World War II and European integration**

The world wars ended the pre-eminent position of Britain, France and Germany in Europe and the world. At the Yalta Conference, Europe was divided into spheres of influence between the victors of World War II, and soon became the principal zone of contention in the Cold War between the Western countries and the Communist bloc. The United States and the majority of European liberal democracies established the NATO military alliance. Later, the Soviet Union and its satellites in 1955 established the Warsaw Pact. The Warsaw Pact had a much larger ground force, but the American-French-British nuclear umbrellas protected NATO.

Communist states were imposed by the Red Army in the East, while parliamentary democracy became dominant in the West. Most historians point to its success as the product of exhaustion with war and dictatorship, and the promise of continued economic prosperity.

The aftermath of the World War II saw the establishment of the United Nations, aimed at preventing future global conflicts. The Cold War pitted the Democratic Western bloc against the Communist Eastern bloc, with Europe becoming the frontline of this ideological struggle. The process of European integration began with the formation of European Coal and Steal Community (ECSC) in 1952, which eventually evolved into the European Union (EU). The EU aimed to promote economic cooperation, political stability and shared valued among member states. The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet union brought an end to the Cold War and marked a new era for Europe.

**Contemporary Europe**

In the post–Cold War era, NATO and the EU have been gradually admitting most of the former members of the Warsaw Pact. In 2004, the EU gained 10 new members. (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which had been part of the Soviet Union; Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, five former-communist countries; Malta, and the divided island of Cyprus.) These were followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. Russia's regime interpreted these expansions as violations against NATO's promise to not expand "one inch to the east" in 1990.[167] Russia engaged in bilateral disputes about gas supplies with Belarus and Ukraine which endangered the European supply, and engaged in a war with Georgia in 2008. Public opinion in the EU turned against enlargement, partially due to what was seen as over-eager expansion including Turkey gaining candidate status. The European Constitution was rejected in France and the Netherlands, and then (as the Treaty of Lisbon) in Ireland, although a second vote passed in Ireland in 2009.

The financial crisis of 2007–2008 affected Europe, and the government responded with austerity measures. Limited ability of the smaller EU nations (most notably Greece) to handle their debts led to social unrest, government liquidation, and financial insolvency. In May 2010, the German parliament agreed to loan 22.4 billion euros to Greece over three years, with the stipulation that Greece follow strict austerity measures. See European sovereign-debt crisis.

Beginning in 2014, Ukraine has been in a state of revolution and unrest. On 16 March, a disputed referendum was held in Crimea leading to the de facto secession of Crimea and its largely internationally unrecognized annexation to the Russian Federation.

In June 2016, in a referendum in the United Kingdom on the country's membership in the European Union, 52% of voters voted to leave the EU, leading to the complex Brexit separation process and negotiations, which led to political and economic changes for both the UK and the remaining European Union countries. The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020. Later that year, Europe was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recent decades, Europe has faced various challenges and transformations. The EU has expanded its membership, promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity among its members. However, issues such as economic inequality, immigration, nationalism, and Brexit have posed significant challenges to European Unity.

In conclusion, European history is a tapestry of diverse civilizations, cultures, and events that have shaped the continent and influenced the world. From ancient civilizations to the modern day EU, Europe has undergone countless changes experienced periods of great achievement and progress as well as periods of strife and turmoil. Understanding and studying European history is crucial to comprehending the foundations of European society, culture, and politics, and to appreciate it's significant impact on global affairs.

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