

GERMAN HISTORY FROM 1945 UNTIL 2005
The Former German Democratic Republic and East Germany Today

Division – Reunification - Challenges

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Course-Description

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Following defeat in the Second World War, the German Empire (Deutsches Reich), which had only just been united in 1871, once again disintegrated into several smaller zones, from which two new German states, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), emerged. This division into two German states lasted forty long years, spurred on by the politics of the Cold War, the ideological schism that had split the world into two hostile blocks. With the beginning of reforms in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev in 1985, followed by the eventual collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the pressure for reform thrust its way into the Eastern European block states. These Warsaw Pact states, which until this point had been domestically and internationally under the control of the Soviet Union, quickly began calling for the dissolution of their authoritarian governmental systems. Then in the autumn of 1989, within the framework of a peaceful revolution, the authoritarian state system of the German Democratic Republic collapsed, which furthermore freed the way for the reunification of the two German states. However, the Reunification of 1990 introduced, and continues to create, a multitude of challenges – above all economic concerns – which have not yet been solved, and which have produced a gap between those in the East and in the West, and which have detrimentally affected the everyday life of those in the East. Whether the EU has the ability to solve these difficulties faster and better, as of yet, remains to be seen.

Topics:

History of the Soviet Occupation Zone (1945-1949);
History of the GDR;
Reforms in the Soviet Union and the collapse of the GDR;
Marxism as philosophy and Marxist-Leninism as state ideology;
Problems in reunited Germany with special attention paid to the “new federal states” (neue Bundesländer).

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- Maier, Charles S., Das Verschwinden der DDR und der Untergang des Kommunismus, Frankfurt a. M. 2000
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