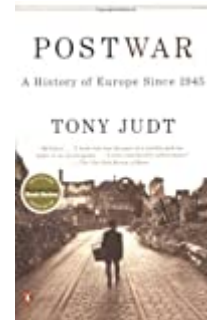


Tony Judt. *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006. 896 pp. \$20.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-14-303775-0.



Reviewed by Werner D. Lippert (Department of History, Indiana University of Pennsylvania)

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Postwar Europe in Splendid Isolation

In *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, Tony Judt illustrates the history of the late twentieth century from a uniquely European perspective. Having criticized Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis's most recent account in the *New York Review of Books* for taking a "parochial perspective" when it comes to non-superpower actors, Judt stays true to his word and offers a truly multidimensional, multinational history that sidelines superpower military prowess and diplomatic influence. In its place we are introduced to a triumphant Europe that, resistant to outside influences, comes into its own right after the devastation and humiliation of three wars. Judt argues that with the end of World War II and the Holocaust, periods of ideological, political, and social extremism ceased to be relevant in Europe. World War II created conditions for a new "European model," inaugurated by a humbling time of "reduction." The atrocities of the past served as a constant reminder to encourage the now "serially homogenous" postwar nations to maintain moderation and look beyond blind nationalism for the benefits of the continent as a whole.

Consequently, Judt's outline follows rubble to rise to

revolution and beyond. Part 1 shows Europe in the immediate aftermath of World War II until 1953 as a battered, broken, helpless continent with diminished caloric intake, forced migrations, and civil conflicts. Such despair sets a benchmark for how far the continent came in the following two decades. This second part, the rise of a prosperous and stable society, comes complete with European role models. Individuals such as Winston Churchill, Konrad Adenauer, Charles de Gaulle and Luigi Einaudi brought Europe from hopelessness and exhaustion to stability and prosperity. Alongside the ideological consensus of a European Social Democracy emerged; it embraced public education, healthcare, and the welfare state as European norms. Popular culture, by way of music, movies, plays, books, magazines, television, fashion, and makeup, also helped to create a European consensus. The economic downturn of the 1970s inaugurates part 3, proving the surprising stability and dedication of western European countries to democratic ideas even as these notions shook regimes in eastern Europe. The end of the Cold War order began with the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978. Next, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, followed by Mikhail Gorbachev's move to end the Soviet

Union's "direct oversight of its client states" (p. 604) ultimately ended the Cold War. The relative bloodlessness with which eastern Europe would overthrow its communist regimes revealed a new aspect of the European soul: disdain for violence. In the last part, Judt takes Europe beyond the Cold War, showing how prior points of crisis, such as the fear of a reemerging Germany and multi-ethnic societies, have disappeared. While post-communist restructuring did not go smoothly, prospects for a united Europe are positive as long as the terrible memories of history remain alive.

To illustrate a trajectory of such European growth and sophistication, Judt focuses on neither military nor alliance aspects, but emphasizes cultural, social, and administrative issues instead. Herein lies *Postwar's* greatest strength as well as its greatest weakness. In unprecedented clarity, Judt draws eastern and western Europe into parallel during the Cold War and beyond, expounding on a common European spirit and identity. By using their common cultural aspects, dedication to a welfare state, and acceptance of larger bureaucracy, he is able to depict various European traits and developments common to European peoples that delineate the developmental path to a prosperous and peaceful Europe. Even though some superpower influences oppressed or delayed this European spirit after World War II, it was resurrected with the fall of communism in Europe. No other author has so convincingly blended the directions indicated by the prosperous *West(bahnhof)* and the dingy *SA¹/₄d(bahnhof)*, thereby concisely demarcating what makes Europe European. By beginning at the end of World War II and tracing its legacy beyond the Cold War, Judt offers a unique "postwar" perspective that explains a lot about this emergent Europe.

Yet, in the effort to follow the triumphal spirit of "true" Europe, European societies invariably had to reject both American as well as Soviet influences outright, defining themselves against both East and West. Judt

must thus go to great lengths to highlight the European success story and diminish outside influences. Anyone who suspects that the Cold War ended because the United States spent the Soviet Union into oblivion will not find evidence for that idea here. Even the generous aspects of American Wilsonianism, which led to the Marshall Plan among other initiatives, appear negative and unpopular, making it easier to label them "extreme" and putting them on par with the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. To Judt, although Europe needed U.S. financial aid to jumpstart European prosperity, most of Europe, West and East alike, resented U.S. interference in European affairs. The only nod Judt gives to American influence on European culture comes in cinema, music, and fashion, although even here, American influences are depicted as "Europeanized." Here, Judt's focus on European cultural and social issues detracts from the larger geopolitical situation of the Cold War and beyond. After all, without American intervention in postwar European affairs, the European cultural center might well have been Moscow rather than Paris.

Nonetheless, the quantity of information this book contains is impressive. It would serve the beginning scholar with a good overview of postwar Europe while experts could glean details of almost encyclopedic proportions from the detailed index and bibliography. Judt utilizes compelling evidence to advance his argument throughout the book and keeps the story of postwar Europe moving forward. Despite some sidelining of major Cold War influences, Judt has put forward an impressive historical work that forces the reader to reevaluate the Cold War in a pan-European context. Certainly, the theme of this book is as timely as it is political. As the European Union struggles for a consensus beyond the very cultural, social, and administrative tendencies, Judt's theme of a resurgent European spirit strengthens such an undertaking and explains much about European acceptance of an administrative "Lisbon path" to a European constitution.

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