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European Politics in Transition

Fourth Edition

European Politics in Transition

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Preface

When we first published *European Politics in Transition*, a colleague offered a friendly caveat about our choice of title. After all, aren't transitions supposed to be relatively brief and demarcated? The theoretical issue is worthy of extended analysis. Indeed, much discussion in the literature on regime change focuses on the thorny question of when democratic transitions begin and end. Whatever one's position on this debate, we are confident that the period since the third edition of *European Politics in Transition* was published in 1997 indisputably deserves to be considered a transition—and an unfinished one at that.

Who would have wagered then that the timetable for launching the euro would be respected, that the European Central Bank would succeed in acting as central banker for the bulk of the member states of the European Union (EU), and that the EU would be steadily moving toward integrating a significant number of new member states in East-Central Europe (as well as considering Turkey)? Given the increasing centrality of the European Union in the politics of member states (and the candidate members treated in the chapters on East-Central Europe), we have opened *European Politics in Transition* (following the Introduction, which provides a general framework) with an expanded section on the EU. We have planned *European Politics in Transition* so that instructors can assign sections in the order they prefer. But by placing the EU front and center, we wish to highlight its

centrality to the comparative politics of Europe. The section on the EU is now expanded and organized to parallel the chapter outline of the country sections, an indirect tribute to the quasi-polity-like character of the EU.

We have also expanded our coverage of the EU in the country sections to permit running analysis of the interplay between the EU and national politics. Four of the five chapters of the country treatments now include a subsection on the EU. Thus, we identify the EU as the last historical juncture in the first chapter of each country section; in the second chapter, we provide a subsection on European integration; the third chapter of each section emphasizes the European dimensions of governance and policy-making; and the fifth chapter in each section includes the challenges of European integration.

The fact that we stress that European politics is in transition is not intended to deny important continuities in the politics of the countries studied in this book. As in the third edition of *European Politics in Transition*, we organize our treatment within the same framework for measuring continuity and change that is used in *Introduction to Comparative Politics* (Houghton Mifflin, revised edition, 2000), a general introductory text that we co-edit with William Joseph. The four themes that frame the book, and that are introduced and analyzed in the Introduction, provide a useful way to organize the detailed descriptions of political institutions, processes, and forces analyzed in the country

sections. The four themes include (1) the state in a world of states, (2) governing the economy, (3) the democratic idea, and (4) the politics of collective identity. We believe that these themes are a useful grid to chart the statics and dynamics of politics in the countries selected for study in this book. They also provide instructors rich possibilities for organizing comparative analysis.

We continue to believe in the centrality of political economy in understanding European (and, indeed, any country's) politics. For this reason, we devote one of the five chapters in each country section to governing the economy. Indeed, the increasing importance of the EU—as well as the intense debates around EU policies and decision making—underline that the problems of an industrial (and postindustrial) society are far from solved, and that an adequate understanding of *European Politics in Transition* requires close attention to political economy. With that said, the character of Europe's political economy, as well as economic policy, is a moving target. In the first two editions of this book, we focused on the postwar settlement, based on cross-class growth coalitions in the economic and political sphere, propelling interventionist states to pursue policies directed toward Keynesian counter-cyclical demand management and ample provision of social services. We continue to describe the postwar settlement, but it is now past history, a historical juncture that has been succeeded by a mix of market-friendly EU regulation and national state deregulation.

At the same time, there is no consensus within and among the states analyzed in *European Politics in Transition* about the proper mix of state and market forces. If European integration and the demise of communism have discredited a doctrinaire form of nationally based state-directed socialism, the center or center-left remains a major—indeed, at the time we write, *the* major—political force in Europe. Moreover, on the center-right of the spectrum, a more moderate approach that combines a commitment to neo-liberalism with a greater concern

to cushion citizens from the dislocating effects of global market forces has replaced the more doctrinaire form of neo-liberalism popular in the 1980s and 1990s. There is a lively debate within European politics about the appropriate extent and character of state intervention in the mixed economy. At the same time, adherents of the Third Way try to press their claims for a new orientation that transcends left and right.

As three of our four themes suggest, we also highlight the importance of dimensions other than political economy in the shaping of European politics. The first of these themes involves the dynamics of state formation. Notwithstanding the great power of the EU, European states continue to occupy center stage. The 2000 EU summit at Nice illustrated that the moment has not yet arrived when important EU decisions will routinely be made by majorities that do not include the representatives of most member states or reflect the interests of the most powerful. In order to understand European politics, it is essential to accord critical attention to how states are organized and to their executive, representative, and judicial institutions.

A second theme also not directly related to political economy (although with important indirect connections to it) is the democratic idea. Such diverse issues prominent in the recent past as the democratic deficit exacerbated by the growing weight of the EU, political scandals, and political reforms like the gender parity law passed in France in 2000 and a set of constitutional reforms underway in Britain illustrate that the meaning and practice of the democratic idea continue to generate extensive public attention.

The third theme highlights that political identities are wide-ranging and variegated. Although class and economic cleavages continue to divide the body politic, we also emphasize the importance of collective identities based on ethnicity, gender, and age. Which of these cleavages becomes salient in given countries and at given times, how they interact and are connected to partisan cleavages, and differences in their intensity and impact across countries are

puzzles that instructors will doubtless wish to explore.

We have made several other significant changes in the organization of the country sections to improve coverage. The first chapter in each country section includes a subsection discussing the geographic setting (size, population, resource base, etc.) and the political implications of the geographic setting, and a subsection linking themes and implications. The second chapter includes a subsection on the generation gap, and the subsection on each country in the international political economy takes on issues of globalization. The fourth chapter has a new subsection on political parties and the party system, and the treatment of collective identity explicitly treats social class, citizenship, and nationality, as well as ethnicity and gender, while our treatment of representation and participation includes coverage of protest and social movements. As a result, instructors who have previ-

ously used *European Politics in Transition* will find that this edition both reflects the approach we have developed in earlier editions and involves a top-to-bottom updating and refinement of our coverage to reflect epochal developments and scholarship of the past few years.

We have been fortunate to receive excellent advice from many colleagues, including Margaret C. Gonzalez, Southeastern Louisiana University; Kerstin Hamann, University of Central Florida; Jonah D. Levy, University of California, Berkeley; Neil Mitchell, University of New Mexico; John D. Nagle, Syracuse University; Susan E. Penksa, Westmont College. We are grateful to the superb staff at Houghton Mifflin Company, including Mary Dougherty, Fran Gay, and Tracy Patruno, and at Books By Design, Nancy Benjamin.

M. K.
J. K.

Brief Contents

Preface xix

Part I: Introduction 1

MARK KESSELMAN AND
JOEL KRIEGER

Part II: The European Union and the Future of European Politics 37

GEORGE ROSS

- Chapter 1: The Making of the European Union 39
- Chapter 2: Politics and Economics 46
- Chapter 3: European Institutions 79
- Chapter 4: The EU and Its Policies 103
- Chapter 5: Europolitics in Transition: Four Challenges 126

Part III: Britain 151

JOEL KRIEGER

- Chapter 6: The Making of the Modern British State 153
- Chapter 7: Political Economy and Development 168
- Chapter 8: Governance and Policymaking 188
- Chapter 9: Representation and Participation 206

- Chapter 10: British Politics in Transition 222

Part IV: France 231

MARK KESSELMAN

- Chapter 11: The Making of the Modern French State 233
- Chapter 12: Political Economy and Development 249
- Chapter 13: Governance and Policymaking 265
- Chapter 14: Representation and Participation 284
- Chapter 15: French Politics in Transition 306

Part V: Germany 315

CHRISTOPHER S. ALLEN

- Chapter 16: The Making of the Modern German State 317
- Chapter 17: Political Economy and Development 344
- Chapter 18: Governance and Policymaking 361
- Chapter 19: Representation and Participation 379
- Chapter 20: German Politics in Transition 402

Part VI: Italy 411

STEPHEN HELLMAN

- Chapter 21: The Emergence of the Modern Italian State 413
- Chapter 22: Political Economy and Development 437
- Chapter 23: Governance and Policymaking 457
- Chapter 24: Representation and Participation 476
- Chapter 25: Italian Politics in Transition 501

Part VII: East-Central Europe in Transition 513

DAVID OST

- Chapter 26: The Making of Modern East-Central Europe 515
- Chapter 27: Political Economy and Development 537
- Chapter 28: Governance and Policymaking 558
- Chapter 29: Representation and Participation 577
- Chapter 30: East-Central European Politics in Transition 598

Index 611

Contents

Preface xix

Part I: Introduction 1

MARK KESSELMAN AND JOEL KRIEGER

What Makes Europe . . . Europe?	4
<i>What Is the Meaning—or, Rather, Meanings</i> <i>—of Democracy?</i>	4
<i>What Economic System for Democracy?</i> <i>Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy</i>	7
<i>The Cultural Context</i>	8
The Approach: Four Themes	9
<i>Theme One: A World of States</i>	10
<i>Theme Two: Governing the Economy</i>	11
<i>Theme Three: The Democratic Idea</i>	12
<i>Theme Four: The Politics of Collective</i> <i>Identity</i>	14

European Politics in Transition: Critical Junctures	15
<i>Industrialization, State Formation, and the</i> <i>Great Divide</i>	15
<i>World War II and the Emergence of the</i> <i>European Model</i>	17
<i>The European Model: Crises, Variations,</i> <i>and Challenges</i>	25
<i>From the 1990s to the Twenty-First Century:</i> <i>A New European Model?</i>	29
Conclusion	31
Bibliography	34

Part II: The European Union and the Future of European Politics 37

GEORGE ROSS

Chapter 1: The Making of the European Union 39

Critical Junctures	40
<i>"Nevermore War Amongst Us . . ."</i>	40
<i>Fine-Tuning the Golden Age?</i>	41

<i>Euroclerosis, Europessimism, and the</i> <i>Collapse of National Postwar</i> <i>Settlements</i>	42
<i>The Millennium: Puzzles Within</i> <i>Puzzles</i>	42

Europolitics and European Politics in
Transition 44

Chapter 2: Politics and Economics 46

"Europe" Is Born 46
 Postwar Alliances, Postwar Stalemates 47
 Integrating Coal and Steel 48
Integrating the Europe of Postwar
Settlements 50
 Establishing the EEC 51
 First Years 53

Dark Clouds of Crisis 55

Globalization and the Liberal Renewal
of Europe 60

Nowhere to Go But Up? 60
 Toward a "Single Market" 61

After Maastricht: Years of New Dangers? 68

Business Not as Usual 68
 *When the Going Gets Tough, Do the Tough
 Get Going?* 72
 Keeping the Future Open 73

Chapter 3: European Institutions 79

The "Triangle" Plus One 79
 European Commission 80
 Council of Ministers 86
 European Parliament 89

European Court of Justice 95
New Institutions with Open Futures 97

Chapter 4: The EU and Its Policies 103

The Single Market 103
The EU Budget 107
The Common Agricultural Policy and the
Structural Funds 111
Competition and Industrial Policy 116
Social Policy 119
Environment, Transportation, and External
Trade 122

Chapter 5: Europolitics in Transition: Four Challenges 126

Economic and Monetary Union as a Beginning
Rather Than an End? 126
Will "Western" Europe Become All of Europe?
Enlarging the Union 130
A Big Switzerland? The EU as Regional Power
or Global Presence? 134
European Institutions: Democracy and
Legitimacy? 137
Institutional Plumbing and the 2000
Intergovernmental Conference 138
Toward a Great Debate? 141
The Democratic Dilemma 143
Bibliography 148

Part III: Britain 151

JOEL KRIEGER

Chapter 6: The Making of the Modern British State 153

British Politics in Action 153
Geographic Setting 155
Critical Junctures 156
 Formation of the United Kingdom 156
 The Seventeenth-Century Settlement 156

*The Industrial Revolution and the British
 Empire* 158
 *World Wars, Industrial Strife, and the
 Depression (1914–1945)* 160
 Collectivist Consensus (1945–1979) 161
 *Margaret Thatcher and the Enterprise
 Culture (1979–1990)* 161

<i>New Labour's Third Way</i>	162
<i>Britain in the Euro Era</i>	164
Themes and Implications	164
<i>Historical Junctures and Political Themes</i>	164
<i>Implications for Comparative Politics</i>	166
Chapter 7: Political Economy and Development	168
The Postwar Settlement and Beyond	168
State and Economy	171
<i>Economic Management</i>	172
<i>Social Policy</i>	174
Society and Economy	178
<i>Inequality and Ethnic Minorities</i>	179
<i>Inequality and Women</i>	180
<i>The Generation Gap</i>	182
The Dilemmas of European Integration	183
<i>Economic Integration and Political Disintegration</i>	183
<i>Implications of Maastricht and the Common Currency</i>	184
Britain and the International Political Economy	185
Chapter 8: Governance and Policymaking	188
Organization of the State	189
The Executive	190
<i>Cabinet Government</i>	190
<i>Bureaucracy and Civil Service</i>	193
Public and Semipublic Institutions	197
<i>Nationalized Industries</i>	197
<i>Nondepartmental Public Bodies</i>	198
Other State Institutions	198
<i>The Military and the Police</i>	199
<i>The Judiciary</i>	200
<i>Subnational Government</i>	201
The European Dimension	202
The Policymaking Process	203
Chapter 9: Representation and Participation	206
The Legislature	206
<i>Legislative Process</i>	206
<i>House of Commons</i>	207
<i>House of Lords</i>	208
<i>Reforms in Behavior and Structure</i>	208
Political Parties and the Party System	210
<i>Labour Party</i>	210
<i>Conservative Party</i>	211
<i>Liberal Democrats and Other Parties</i>	213
Elections	214
<i>Electoral System</i>	214
<i>Trends in Electoral Behavior</i>	214
Collective Identities	216
<i>Social Class</i>	216
<i>Citizenship and National Identity</i>	217
<i>Ethnicity</i>	218
<i>Gender</i>	218
<i>Protest and Social Movements</i>	219
Chapter 10: British Politics in Transition	222
Continuities, Transitions, and Changing Agendas	223
<i>Constitutional Reform</i>	223
<i>Identities in Flux</i>	224
The Challenges of European Integration	225
British Politics in Comparative Perspective	226
Bibliography	229

Part IV: France 231

MARK KESSELMAN

Chapter 11: The Making of the Modern French State 233

- French Politics in Action 233
- Geographic Setting 234
- Critical Junctures 236
 - Creating Modern France* 236
 - The Ancien Régime* 237
 - The Two Faces of the French Revolution, 1789–1815* 238
 - Many Regimes, Slow Industrialization: 1815–1940* 239
 - Vichy France (1940–1944) and the Fourth Republic (1946–1958)* 240
 - The Fifth Republic (1958 to the Present)* 242
 - France in the Euro Era: Decline or Renewal?* 243
- Themes and Implications 244
 - Historical Junctures and Political Themes* 244
 - Implications for Comparative Politics* 247

Chapter 12: Political Economy and Development 249

- The Postwar Settlement and Beyond 249
 - State and Economy* 249
 - Planning* 250
 - Dirigisme Under de Gaulle* 250
 - Economic Management* 250
 - Welfare State* 258
- Society and Economy 260
 - Inequality and Ethnic Minorities* 261
 - Inequality and Women* 261
 - The Generation Gap* 261
- The Dilemmas of European Integration 262
- France and the International Political Economy 263

Chapter 13: Governance and Policymaking 265

- Organization of the State 265
- The Executive 267
 - The President* 268
 - The Prime Minister and Government* 273
 - Bureaucracy and Civil Service* 275
- Public and Semipublic Institutions 276
- Other State Institutions 276
 - The Military and the Police* 277
 - The Judiciary* 277
 - The Economic and Social Council* 279
 - Subnational Government* 279
- The European Dimension 280
- The Policymaking Process 281

Chapter 14: Representation and Participation 284

- The Legislature 284
- Political Parties and the Party System 289
 - The Major Parties* 289
 - Small Parties* 291
- Elections 293
- Collective Identities 297
 - Organized Interests* 297
 - Social Class* 297
 - Citizenship and National Identity* 299
 - Ethnicity* 299
 - Gender* 302
- Protest and Social Movements 303

Chapter 15: French Politics in Transition 306

- Continuities, Transitions, and Changing Agendas 306
 - The Strikes of December 1995: May 1968 Revisited?* 306

<i>Oui to Roquefort Cheese, Non to Genetically Engineered Products (GMOs)</i>	308
<i>New Issues and Sources of Partisan Conflict: Economy and Identity</i>	309

The Challenge of European Integration	311
French Politics in Comparative Perspective	311
Bibliography	313

Part V: Germany 315

CHRISTOPHER S. ALLEN

Chapter 16: The Making of the Modern German State 317

German Politics in Action	317
Geographic Setting	319
Critical Junctures	320
<i>Nationalism and German Unification (1806–1871)</i>	320
<i>Second Reich (1871–1918)</i>	323
<i>Weimar Republic (1918–1933)</i>	326
<i>Third Reich (1933–1945)</i>	328
<i>A Divided Germany (1945–1990)</i>	331
<i>The Postwar Settlement</i>	335
<i>Helmut Kohl and the Challenge of German Unification (1990–1998)</i>	336
<i>Germany in the Euro Era</i>	337
Themes and Implications	339
<i>Historical Junctures and Political Themes</i>	339
<i>Implications for Comparative Politics</i>	341

Chapter 17: Political Economy and Development 344

The Postwar Settlement and Beyond	344
State and Economy	347
Society and Economy	354
<i>Inequality and Ethnic Minorities</i>	354
<i>Inequality and Women</i>	355
<i>The Generation Gap</i>	356
The Dilemmas of European Integration	356
Germany and the International Political Economy	357

Chapter 18: Governance and Policymaking 361

Organization of the State	362
The Executive	363
<i>The President</i>	364
<i>The Chancellor</i>	364
<i>Bureaucracy and Civil Service</i>	368
Public and Semipublic Institutions	369
Other State Institutions	371
<i>The Military and the Police</i>	371
<i>The Judiciary</i>	372
<i>Subnational Government</i>	374
The European Dimension	376
The Policymaking Process	377

Chapter 19: Representation and Participation 379

The Legislature	379
<i>The Bundestag</i>	380
<i>The Bundesrat</i>	383
The Party System and Elections	385
<i>The Political Party System</i>	385
<i>Electoral Procedure and Results</i>	394
Collective Identities	394
<i>Social Class and Cleavage Structures</i>	394
<i>Citizenship, Ethnicity, and Identity</i>	397
<i>Gender</i>	399
Protest and Social Movements	399

Chapter 20: German Politics in Transition 402

Continuities, Transitions, and Changing Agendas 403

The Challenges of European Integration 406
Germany in Comparative Perspective 407

Part VI: Italy 411

STEPHEN HELLMAN

Chapter 21: The Emergence of the Modern Italian State 413

Italian Politics in Action 413

Geographic Setting 415

Critical Junctures 415

The Risorgimento and Liberal Italy (1848–1922) 416

Fascism (1922–1945) 419

Fascism's End and the Republic's Birth (1945–1948) 422

The DC-Dominated Postwar Republic, 1948–1994 424

1994–The Present: Toward a Second Republic? 426

Italy in the Era of the Euro 431

Themes and Implications 432

Historical Junctures and Political Themes 432

Implications for Comparative Politics 434

Chapter 22: Political Economy and Development 437

The Postwar Settlement and Beyond 437

Economic Interventionism Within Postwar Polarization: From Reconstruction to Miracle 437

Crisis: The Late 1970s and Afterward 441

State and Economy 443

Economic Management Since the 1980s 443

Welfare all'italiana 447

Society and Economy 450

A Legacy of Polarized Class and Political Relations 450

A Legacy of Gender, Generational, and Regional Differences 451

From a Country of Emigrants to One of Immigrants: Ethnic Tensions 453

The Dilemmas of European Integration: Italy and the International Political Economy 453

Chapter 23: Governance and Policymaking 457

Constitutional Principles and the Organization of the State 457

The Constitution of 1948 458

Chronic Problems of Governance: Stable Parties, Unstable Cabinets 459

The Principles of Italian Parliamentary 459

The Executive 459

President of the Republic: An Increasingly Controversial Role 460

The Prime Minister and the Cabinet 461

Public Administration and Para-State Agencies 464

The Regular Public Administration 464
State Enterprises, Autonomous Agencies, and Special Institutions 465

Other State Institutions 467

The Judiciary 467

<i>Local Government</i>	470
<i>The Comuni</i>	470
<i>The Regions</i>	471
The European Dimension	472
Policy Processes: Continuity and Transition	473
Chapter 24: Representation and Participation	476
The Legislature	476
<i>Parliament's Powers and Anomalies</i>	476
<i>Pure Bicameralism</i>	476
<i>Committees That Legislate</i>	477
<i>The Parties' Powers</i>	477
<i>The Secret Ballot</i>	477
<i>Blurred Boundaries Between Government and Opposition</i>	478
Representative Principles and the Electoral System	478
<i>The Abrogative Referendum as an Instrument of Protest and Change</i>	479
Political Parties and the Evolution of the Party System	480
<i>The Party System Through the Late 1980s: Christian Democratic Centrality</i>	481
<i>The End of the Old Equilibrium (1989 and Beyond)</i>	481
<i>Christian Democracy and Its Successors</i>	482
<i>Between Left and Right: Minor Centrist Parties and Formations</i>	483

<i>The Left</i>	484
<i>The (Center-)Right</i>	488
Elections	493
Collective Identities	494
Interests, Social Movements, and Protest	495
<i>Business Organizations</i>	495
<i>Organized Labor</i>	496
<i>The Church and the Catholic World</i>	497
<i>Protest and Social Movements</i>	497

Chapter 25: Italian Politics in Transition 501

Continuities, Transitions, and Changing Agendas	501
<i>Transition—and Continuity</i>	502
<i>Unresolved Political and Institutional Questions</i>	503
<i>Italy's Changing Social Profile</i>	505
<i>Relations with the Church (and Catholics)</i>	506
<i>Italy's New Immigrants</i>	507
The Challenges of European Integration: Changes in the Economy and Industrial Relations	507
The Broader International Dimension	509
Italy in Comparative Perspective	510
<i>Bibliography</i>	511

Part VII: East-Central Europe in Transition 513

DAVID OST

Chapter 26: The Making of Modern East-Central Europe	515
East-Central European Politics in Action	515
Geographic Setting	518

Critical Junctures	519
<i>Underdevelopment and Subordination: From the Fifteenth Century to World War I</i>	519

<i>Independence (1918–1939)</i>	521	<i>Bureaucracy and Civil Service</i>	563
<i>The Beginnings of Communism</i>		<i>Public and Semipublic Institutions</i>	564
(1945–1949)	523	<i>Other State Institutions</i>	565
<i>The Rebirth of Democracy</i>		<i>The Military and the Police</i>	565
(1956–1989)	525	<i>The Judiciary</i>	567
<i>The Collapse of Communism</i>		<i>Subnational Government</i>	568
(1989–1991)	528	<i>The European Dimension</i>	572
<i>The Road to European Integration</i>		<i>The Policymaking Process</i>	574
(1998–2001)	531	Chapter 29: Representation and	
Themes and Implications	532	Participation	577
<i>Historical Junctures and Political</i>		<i>The Legislature</i>	577
Themes	533	<i>The Procedures of Lawmaking</i>	578
<i>Implications for Comparative Politics</i>	535	<i>Parliamentarians</i>	578
Chapter 27: Political Economy and		<i>Political Parties, the Party System, and</i>	
Development	537	Elections	580
<i>The Peculiar Settlement and Beyond</i>	537	<i>The Importance of Parties</i>	588
<i>The Rise of the Peculiar Settlement</i>	538	<i>Collective Identities</i>	589
<i>Failure and Demise</i>	540	<i>Social Class</i>	589
<i>State and Economy</i>	543	<i>Citizenship and Nationality</i>	589
<i>Economic Management</i>	543	<i>Religion and Politics</i>	591
<i>Welfare State</i>	546	<i>Ethnicity</i>	593
<i>Society and Economy</i>	548	<i>Gender</i>	593
<i>Inequality and Minorities</i>	548	<i>Protests and Social Movements</i>	594
<i>Inequality and Women</i>	550	Chapter 30: East-Central Europe in	
<i>The Generation Gap</i>	551	Transition	598
<i>The Dilemmas of European Integration</i>	552	<i>Continuities, Transitions, and Changing</i>	
<i>East-Central Europe and the International</i>		Agendas	599
Political Economy	553	<i>The Challenges of European Integration</i>	601
<i>Consequences of Globalization</i>	554	<i>East-Central European Politics in Comparative</i>	
Chapter 28: Governance and		Perspective	604
Policymaking	558	<i>Bibliography</i>	608
<i>Organization of the State</i>	558	Index	611
<i>The Executive</i>	560		
<i>Cabinet Government</i>	562		

Europe	2
Britain	154
France	235
Germany	318
German Unification Under Bismarck	324
Postwar Partitioning of Germany and Poland	332

Maps

Italy	414
The Unification of Italy	417
Eastern and Central Europe	517
Europe c. 1918	520
Europe, 1945–1990	524