

**‘Ideologies constituted a destructive force in Europe.’ Do you agree? Explain your answer with reference to history in the period 1945-1991.**

An ideology is a set of common ideas and knowledge shared by a unit, group, organization or country that determine its members’ values and preferences. During the Cold War, there were basically two main ideologies, namely capitalism and communism. These ideologies led to suspicion and confrontation between the two major blocs, constituting a destructive force as to Europe’s political, economic, social and diplomatic development. Meanwhile, these ideologies also facilitated European economic development. Therefore, what the question suggests was valid to a large extent.

Politically speaking, ideologies destroyed the territorial integrity of some countries and brought them to long-standing division. Since the world communist revolution aimed at overthrowing capitalist regimes and establishing new governments with dictatorship of the proletariat, its rise would inevitably attract fear and opposition from capitalist countries and lead to the conflict between the two blocs. Some countries became the victims of the ideological conflict and their sovereignty was undermined. In terms of Greece, the communist faction grew rapidly during the Second World War and became able to challenge the Greek government and attempt regime change, triggering the *Greek Civil War* 希臘內戰(1944-49) that posed a short-term threat to Greece’s national sovereignty. In terms of Germany, according to the *Potsdam Agreement* 波茨坦協定, Berlin, the capital of Germany as a defeated power, was divided into four zones that were temporarily controlled by Britain, the US, France and the USSR. However, Britain, the US and France from the capitalist bloc wanted a strong Germany to stop the spread of communism in Europe, while the USSR from the communist bloc worried that a strong Germany would pose a new threat to its national security. For this reason, the two sides failed to reach agreement on the issue of Germany. In the end, Britain, the US and France merged their occupational zones in West Germany and introduced democratic reforms. Strongly opposing these actions, the USSR launched a *blockade on West Berlin* 封鎖西柏林 to show its dissatisfaction. The reunification of Germany thus became unachievable in the foreseeable future. In addition, the USSR even ordered the East German government to build the *Berlin Wall* 柏林圍牆 in 1961, aggravating the division between East and West Germany. Germany thus became a victim of the ideological conflict in Europe and remained divided for more than half a century. It was clear that ideologies destroyed the sovereignty of some European countries and kept them divided for a long time.

Economically speaking, ideologies destroyed European economic cooperation. There was mutually suspicion between capitalist and communist countries since the former worried that the spread of communism would destabilize capitalist regimes, while the latter worried that liberal and democratic ideas from the capitalist side would be introduced to communist countries through trading and destabilize communist rule. As a result, ideologies inevitably destroyed economic cooperation between the two blocs and made it difficult for them to work together. For example, when America proposed the *Marshall Plan* 馬歇爾計劃 in 1947, it invited Eastern European countries to join, but the Soviet Union did not allow them to since the Plan was considered an attempt to undermine Soviet control over Eastern European countries with economic assistance. In the same year, the Soviet Union introduced the *Molotov Plan* 莫洛托夫計劃 to start economic cooperation in Eastern Europe and control its satellite states. Therefore, with the competition between the Marshall Plan and the Molotov Plan, the European economy was divided into two. Afterwards, Western European countries established economic organizations such as the *European Economic Community* 歐洲經濟共同體 and the *European Free Trade Association* 歐洲自由貿易聯盟. However, due to their suspicion of communist and the tight Soviet control over Eastern Europe, Eastern European countries failed to participate in the Western European economic integration effort before the end of the Cold War in 1991. This greatly destroyed economic cooperation between Eastern and Western Europe. It was therefore clear that ideologies kept the European economy divided and was a destructive force to economic cooperation.

Socially speaking, ideologies destroyed social interactions between European countries. After the Second World War, communism grew in the post-war adverse economic circumstances and aroused fear from capitalist countries such as Britain and France. Meanwhile, communist countries were also worried that liberal and democratic ideas from the capitalist side would be introduced to Eastern Europe and destabilize communist rule there. Therefore, the two sides did not interact with each other, and after the Second World War, the Soviet Union even stopped all kinds of transportation, communication and trade between Eastern and Western Europe and build entanglements along the boundaries of its satellite states to make sure that liberal ideas would not reach Eastern Europe. As a result, social interactions were completely interrupted. Also, when tension was added to the ideological conflict due to the Soviet invasion of *Afghanistan* 阿富汗 in 1979, capitalist countries such as Britain, France and West Germany boycotted the *Moscow Olympics* 莫斯科奧運會 and further undermined social interactions between the two sides. Moreover, in terms of the United Nations, interactions between European countries were also greatly destroyed by

ideologies. Since the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* 聯合國教科文組織 was controlled by Western capitalist countries such as Britain and France, Eastern European countries such as the Soviet Union were not admitted to the organization in the early days after the Second World War. This limited interactions between Eastern and Western European countries in social aspects such as education, technology and cultures. Also, even though the Soviet Union became a member in 1954, interactions between the two sides remained limited since the two blocs were still highly suspicious of each other and these countries focused on their own research programs instead of discussing them on an international platform. It was therefore clear that ideologies constituted a major destructive force as to social interactions between European countries.

Diplomatically speaking, ideologies greatly destroyed the relationships between European countries. As the communist USSR converted a large number of Eastern European countries into communist states after the Second World War, it became the leader of Eastern Europe in the post-war period. Its attempt to promote world revolution through the *Comintern* 共產國際 induced fear among capitalist countries in Europe, especially during the Berlin Crisis of 1948 when the Soviet Union imposed an unreasonable blockade on Berlin. In response, they established the *NATO* 北約 in 1949, which prompted the Soviet Union to establish the *Warsaw Pact* 華沙公約組織 after West Germany joined the NATO in 1955. These two military organizations led to hostility between Eastern and Western Europe and greatly undermined their relationship, preventing them from establishing stable and favorable diplomatic ties for a long period of time. Afterwards, the American deployment of missiles in *Italy* 意大利 and *Turkey* 土耳其 in 1959 also undermined these countries' relationships with the Soviet Union, which at that time considered them as enemies and would first eliminate them once it started war with America. Apart from the relationships between Eastern and Western Europe, the relationships within Eastern Europe were also destroyed by ideologies. With the rise of liberal and democratic ideas in Czechoslovakia, democratic reforms historically known as the '*Prague Spring* 布拉格之春' took place in 1968. Facing this threat to Eastern European communist rule, the Soviet Union sent Warsaw Pact troops to suppress the reforms and greatly undermined the relationship between Czechoslovakia and other Eastern European countries such as the Soviet Union. It was therefore clear that ideologies not only destroyed the relationships between Western European capitalist countries and Eastern European communist countries, but also undermined relationship within the communist bloc in Eastern Europe.

To a small extent, ideologies constituted a constructive force in Europe.

Economically speaking, ideologies promoted cooperation among Western European countries and their Eastern European counterparts separately. Speaking from an economic perspective, communism is mainly supported by the proletariat and the worse the economic circumstances are, the easier communism can gain popular support. After the Second World War, the US worried that the poor economic circumstances would become a perfect breeding ground for communism, thus introducing the *Marshall Plan* 馬歇爾計劃 in 1948 to provide economic aid amounting US\$13 billion to Western European countries. The loans prompted them to establish the *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* 歐洲經濟合作組織 to distribute the aid. Meanwhile, for fear that Eastern European countries would be lured by the Marshall Plan, the Soviet Union introduced the *Molotov Plan* 莫洛托夫計劃(1947) at the discussion stage of the Marshall Plan and established the *Council for Mutual Economic Assistance* 經濟互助委員會 in 1949 to build economic ties among Eastern European countries. In addition, in order to get away from the ideological conflict between the two superpowers, Western European countries also made different attempts to foster cohesion within the region since the 1950s. For example, countries such as France, West Germany and Italy established the *European Economic Community* 歐洲經濟共同體 to unite as the third force other than the US and the USSR. This was also an example of cooperation indirectly facilitated by ideologies. Therefore, ideologies were the main reason for economic cooperation among Western European countries and that of their Eastern European counterparts, having some contributions to Europe.

In conclusion, ideologies did facilitate economic cooperation, but the ideological conflict kept Eastern and Western Europe divided for a long time, prevented them from cooperating with each other and even created hostility between them, greatly destroying the relationships between European countries. Therefore, ideologies constituted a destructive force in Europe to a large extent.

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