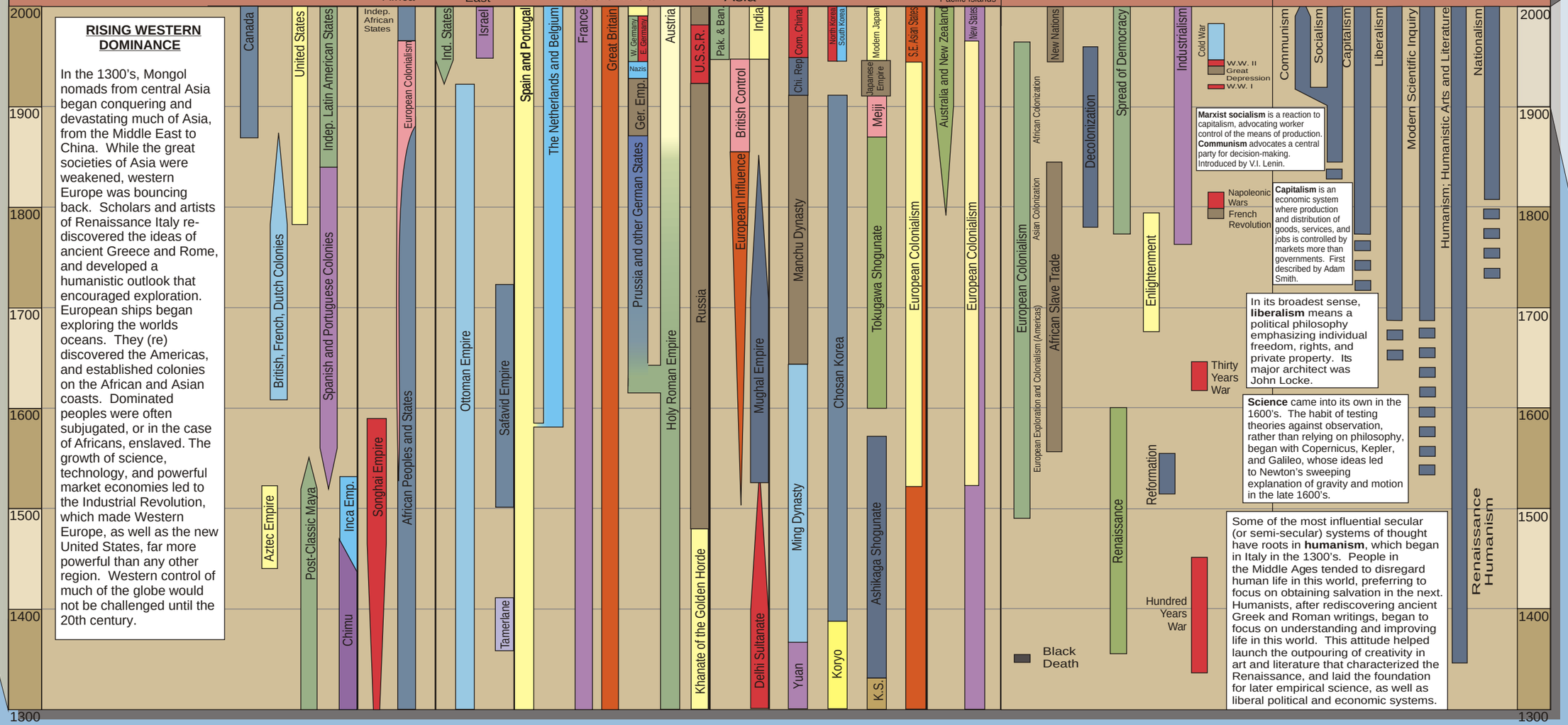
Timeline 15. Major Cultures, States, and Empires (1300 CE to Present)



RISING WESTERN DOMINANCE

In the 1300's, Mongol nomads from central Asia began conquering and devastating much of Asia, from the Middle East to China. While the great societies of Asia were weakened, western Europe was bouncing back. Scholars and artists of Renaissance Italy re-discovered the ideas of ancient Greece and Rome, and developed a humanistic outlook that encouraged exploration. European ships began exploring the worlds oceans. They (re) discovered the Americas, and established colonies on the African and Asian coasts. Dominated peoples were often subjugated, or in the case of Africans, enslaved. The growth of science, technology, and powerful market economies led to the Industrial Revolution, which made Western Europe, as well as the new United States, far more powerful than any other region. Western control of much of the globe would not be challenged until the 20th century.

Marxist socialism is a reaction to capitalism, advocating worker control of the means of production. **Communism** advocates a central party for decision-making. Introduced by V.I. Lenin.

Capitalism is an economic system where production and distribution of goods, services, and jobs is controlled by markets more than governments. First described by Adam Smith.

In its broadest sense, **liberalism** means a political philosophy emphasizing individual freedom, rights, and private property. Its major architect was John Locke.

Science came into its own in the 1600's. The habit of testing theories against observation, rather than relying on philosophy, began with Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, whose ideas led to Newton's sweeping explanation of gravity and motion in the late 1600's.

Some of the most influential secular (or semi-secular) systems of thought have roots in **humanism**, which began in Italy in the 1300's. People in the Middle Ages tended to disregard human life in this world, preferring to focus on obtaining salvation in the next. Humanists, after rediscovering ancient Greek and Roman writings, began to focus on understanding and improving life in this world. This attitude helped launch the outpouring of creativity in art and literature that characterized the Renaissance, and laid the foundation for later empirical science, as well as liberal political and economic systems.

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