

A HISTORY OF THE SEVENTIES

The political, cultural, social
and economic developments
that shaped the modern world

Bas Dianda

Series in World History



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIOC Anglo Iranian Oil Company

BOP Balance of Payments

BOT Balance of Trade

CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination
against Women

CEO Chief Executive Officer

CIA Central Intelligence Agency

CPSU Communist Party of the Soviet Union

DDT Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane

DEA Drug Enforcement Administration

DNC Democratic National Committee

DOD Department of Defense

ECU European Currency Unit

EFI Eritrean Front of Independence

EPA Environmental Protection Agency

EPA (Japan) Economic Planning Agency

ERA Equal Rights Amendment

ERW Explosive Remnants of War

EPRDF Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

EPA Environmental Protection Agency

ERA Equal Right Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

ETA, Escadi Ta Askatasuna meaning "Basque Homeland and Liberty"

EUA European Unit of Account

FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation

FED Federal Reserve System

GDP Gross Domestic Product

G7 Group of Seven

IBRD International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

ICP Iraqi Communist Party

IMF International Monetary Fund

IRA Irish Republican Army

IRS Internal Revenue Service

KGB Committee for State Security (translated)

KIA Killed in Action

LGB&T Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

NEPA National Environmental Policy Act

NPT Treaty of Non-Proliferation of the Nuclear Weapons

OPEC Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

PCE Personal Consumption Expenditure

PCF French Communist Party

PCI Italian Communist Party

PLO Palestinian Liberation Organization

P2 Propaganda 2

SALT Strategic Arms Limitation Talks

SAVAK *Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar* (Organization of National Intelligence and Security of the Nation")

TP Transitional Period

WMD Weapons of Mass Destruction

PREFACE

The purpose of this book lies in the identification of specific links between the seventies and future events.

Since such connections are political, "*A History of the Seventies*" may be held as a political work but in this regard, it is useful to specify the meaning of the term "Politics".

Politics is the investigation into the set of processes that are able to generate a context productive of events. Accordingly, a serious political investigation of whatever occurrence cannot overlook the economic and cultural aspects associated with it. Political developments, economic trends and cultural tendencies will be part of the next chapters as inseparable determinants prevailing in the setting of the decade.

The seventies constituted an extraordinary breeding ground for change and future developments and this work looks back on them in the pursuit of those starting points that may account for occurrences that have taken place later. This is "History of political developments" that represents the most fascinating and meaningful part of History, by reason of its ability to connect facts occurred in different periods and give a meaning to events whose worth and significance may be not clear at the moment.

Along these lines, it is possible to see that many important events of the last decades and even some crucial situation that is still underway relates to facts, cultural tendencies and economic issues that were part of the seventies.

The investigation into the connections prevailing between the decade and the incidents of the following years is compounded by lack of a uniform straightforwardness. Accordingly, not always such links take the shape of a direct cause-effect relation or, to term it better, of a foundation-cause; conversely, in some case, they act as influences that stretch over time and, whether unchanged or transformed by their merging with different trends, bring future occurrences into being.

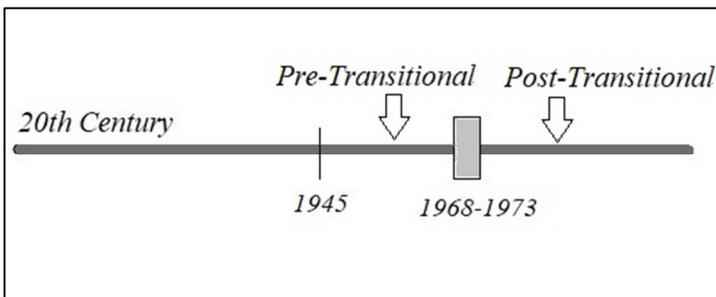
The decade was unquestionably endowed with the quality of being a breaking point of unequalled strength and at the same time, a great source of new milieus. Decades are mostly a notch in the ordinary passing of time and each of them is an imperceptible small step along the route from the past to the future; others, however, are more consequential and capable of challenging the sense of history. Taking a long view of the smooth unfolding

of history, from time to time it is possible to come across stages that break the linear continuity of development, whether slowing or accelerating it or even changing its course.

Apart from epochs devastated by major calamities, as for instance the two World Wars, any significant change generally needs to spread through a span of time rather long before coming out clearly. Instead, the power of transformation of the seventies was so outstanding in terms of intensity and speed that their capacity to convert the previous systems into new order was almost unique. Hardly ever in history the gap between the beginning of a decade and its end has been as noticeable as it happened during the 1970s and of fact, the world in 1980 was largely different from the world in 1970.

Years of metamorphosis, therefore, that will be covered resorting to eight sections that unfold as follows:

The First Part of this book highlights the importance of the Seventies over the course of the 20th century and particularly, during its second half. From the perspective adopted throughout the next pages, the seventies coincided with a major turning point, by reason that the world that entered the Transition Period (1968-1973) was significantly different from the world surfacing from it; accordingly, the “Post-War Era”, so called with reference to World War II, should be divided into “Pre-Transitional” and “Post-Transitional”.



Scheme of the Temporal Development of the Past Century

The Second Part of the book analyzes the political, economic and cultural climate of the decade that, acting as the starting point of many future important developments, has inevitably to be subjected to detailed scrutiny.

The Third Part delves into the gap between the Pre-Transitional and Post-Transitional Period, trying to identify the most important discontinuities prevailing between them. This section is key to comprehend the strength of

transformation of the decade and its essential influence over the course of the post-war age.

The Fourth Part deals with the Oil Crisis, its disruptive impact and its far-reaching effects on the industrial world.

Instead, the Fifth Part establishes connections between the Seventies and related events that occurred in the developing countries. Ethiopia, Iran and Iraq but also Chile, Egypt and Bangladesh were all directly affected by facts and trends that characterized the seventies.

The Sixth Part deals with the Second Oil Crisis, which related closely to the Iranian Revolution, and the Seventh Part investigate the role of the seventies in the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Finally, the last Part draws attention on important cultural legacies that survive even nowadays and exert strong influence over the present.

“A History of the Seventies”, therefore, aims at shedding light on the nature and developments of a decade that is often downgraded to the role of a bridge between two other periods deemed to have been far more influential. In truth, the 1970s played a decisive role in the historical development of the second half of the 20th century.

PART 1

T TYPOLOGY OF THE TIME SPAN 1945-2018

1. The Seventies' Gap

During the seventies, the general sensibility underwent a radical change. A new perspective emerged and the spirit of the second part of the decade was overwhelmed by a different attitude.

The early seventies had been shaped by the same tendencies of the late sixties, including fervent anti-militarist campaigns, the battle for civil and political rights, the crusade for the gender equality, the struggle for liberties and the fierce opposition to the wild commercial policies carried out by large corporations.

The last years of the decade, instead, took on a different quality. The new mood was based on the pursuit of self-fulfillment rather than social targets and the novel trend appeared to be more individualized, tailored on own personal needs and seeking individual realization. In some way, freedom remained a dominant urge but, stripped of the previous political meaning, the word assumed in the late seventies a diverse value. The key difference between the two stages of the 1970s just lay in it: at the end of the decade the youth insisted in pursuing a better life but without turning to politics; rather, the new generations entrusted the expansion of the personal autonomy that, free from the shackles of the old and long-established social schemes, appeared as the most viable way of reaching the personal actualization. The urge to subvert the political system and to increase the dignity of all social strata waned, while the focus of attention shifted onto the self. The young generations asserted their right to lay aside habits that have been typical of their parents and older brothers; accordingly, they came to identify the best route to wellbeing in their personal conduct.

Evidently, the disillusionment that had stemmed copiously from the harsh context of the first part of the decade had shattered their confidence in the feasibility of political transformations. Trust in social changes had heavily been undermined and replaced by a strong sense of detachment from the public affairs; in short, the years of the great political "crusades" had come to an end.

The gap between the beginning and the end of the seventies was so encompassing that manifested itself even as a change in taste. Fashion tendencies and music, which in the early years of the decades had been shaped by the counterculture, developed into a more extended horizon

marked by new clothing trends and the prevalence of different musical genres. Similarly, as memories of the roaring tumult of the anti-Vietnam rallies were increasingly dwindling away, technology entered the life of the ordinary people at growing pace.

Transformations of the personal and public outlook impacted necessarily also on the hopes of the young people, whose cultural change did not result from the gradual and imperceptible replacement of the old with the news; instead, long-established behavioral codes metamorphosed brusquely into a different system of values.

The ordinary typology of the 1970s is showed in the figure 1.1. Yet such a scheme, though largely adopted, overlooks the severe discontinuity present within the decade.

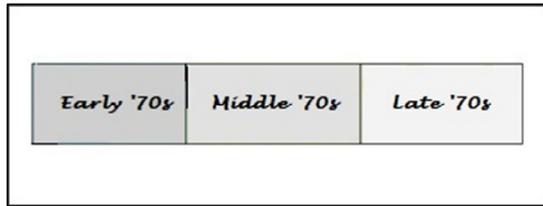


Figure 1.1 Ordinary Typology of the 1970s

The world emerging from the 1970s was completely different from the world at the onset of decade and the cleavage was particularly noticeable. New cultural, political and economic tendencies generated important effects that, with a view to describing those years in the most complete way, cannot be omitted. It seems appropriate, therefore, to resort to a different typology of the seventies, capable of highlighting adequately the deep discontinuity that marked the period and as year generating discontinuity, the seventies had their critical moment in 1973. Many facts occurred in 1973, a year that set the stage for crucial developments and opened the door to a new world.

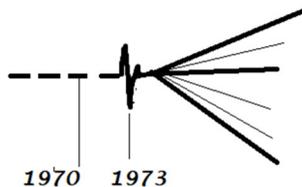


Figure 1.2 1973 as Tippling Point

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