I. World War II and the American Empire

A. Preface: U.S. global status prior to WWII

1. Largest economy and expanding (a central concern for

Entering WWII was the threat that Germany and Japan posed

2. Did not have as large an imperial footprint as the European empires

a. Expanded into Pacific politically, economically, militarily

i. Philippines “Benevolent Assimilation”

ii. Hawaii

b. Claimed Latin America: Monroe Doctrine,

Roosevelt Corollary: Nicaragua, Panama, Cuba

c. Asia and The Great White Fleet 1907-1909

<https://www.google.com/search?q=the+great+white+fleet&rlz=1C1RUCY_enUS692US693&sxsrf=APwXEdeqBg4NF0oxyCHEauB9AtwETmL0Hw:1682883603907&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjKuaL7rdL-AhUMroQIHTOwCIkQ0pQJegQIBBAC&biw=1920&bih=937&dpr=1#imgrc=gGFwj0Wd37VrxM>

3. Ideologically

a. Warren Harding: conquest of Philippines “manifest destiny”

b. Woodrow Wilson: “universal values” and self-determination ` except. . .

c. Domestically: WWI and elimination of dissent, Red scare,

birth of Consumerism,

B. WWII: "Nightmarish world of violence and death", however created conditions for the emergence of the American Empire

1. 70 to 80 million people killed, millions more wounded, injured, majority

non-combatants

2. Much of Europe and Asia destroyed

a. millions of homes, factories, buildings, infrastructure, productive capacity

b. entire cities destroyed, reduced to rubble

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/unsung-witnesses-battle-stalingrad>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/15-powerful-photos-of-the-blitz>

c. massive population displacement, starvation, disease

d. The Painted Bird by Jerzy Kosinski:

3. New Strategies of War

a. Sir Arthur “Bomber” Harris: saturation bombing of major cities

b. civilian populations the target/break the will of the people

c. saturation bombing with incendiary bombs

i. every major Japanese city, Tokyo

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Tokyo#/media/File:Tokyo_kushu_1945-3.jpg>

ii. every major European City, Dresden (Slaughter House Five, Vonnegut)

<https://www.businessinsider.com/photos-dresden-germany-bombing-world-war-ii-2018-2#survivors-of-the-first-wave-of-attacks-emerged-from-the-citys-ruins-on-february-14-and-were-greeted-by-hundreds-of-us-bombers-targeting-the-citys-railways-bridges-and-transportation-infrastructure-the-next-day-more-us-bombers-attacked-the-city-8>

d. Atomic weapons

i. Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Documentary Atomic Café)

ii. Fat man and Little Boy

iii. Hiroshima, John Hershey

<https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/hiroshima-nagasaki-75>

e. arbitrary execution, torture, mass murder of civilians (Rape of Nanking, Iris Chang)

f. Napalm: Royan, France

g. Genocide: Holocaust (Eichmann in Jerusalem: the Banality of Evil, Hannah Arendt)

4. Break down of Colonial Empires

a. War: self-destruction of imperial powers, break up of empires

b. movements of national liberation, wars of national liberation

i. Algeria (The Battle of Algiers, movie)

ii. Vietnam (Hearts and Minds, documentary)

c. socialist, communist movements in Europe

C. Ways in which this created conditions for the rise of the American Empire.

1. "Relatively" little loss of life compared to Europe (Soviet Union)

2. Infrastructure not destroyed, but expanded and improved

3. War production increased industrial productive capacity: means of production

4. Transfer of means of production to private sector

5. Government subsidized research and development in newly developing

areas: computers, aerospace, nuclear technology, tied to University

6. Rise of military-industrial complex

7. Huge increase in size of government bureaucracies: departments, offices

8. Increase in size and concentration of ownership in corporations

9. Ended the depression, economic boom, workers had money

10. Europe and Asia efforts to rebuild depended heavily on U.S. loans, in return

they would become global consumers of the U.S. economy.

II. The question: how is the U.S. going to go about shaping global and domestic society?

A. Imperial project needs to:

a. both consolidate and expand its power economically, politically and materially

b. needs a narrative to justify its imperial project

c. \*imperial narratives are primarily for the domestic population, manufacturing

consent.

B. Global problems

a. movements of national liberation throughout former colonies

b. Latin America: “most dangerous”

c. socialist and communist movements in Europe

C. Domestic problems

a. labor

b. population: two decades of depression and war, not supportive

of capitalism

c. marginalized and excluded groups

d. population ambivalence towards technology: promise and fear of technology, especially nuclear

D. Answer

a. global narrative; Evil vs Good, Communism vs Freedom

b. domestic narrative: American Dream and fear of Communism

E. Success: Francis Fukuyama “End of History”?

“The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident… in the total exhaustion of viable systemic alternatives to Western liberalism… seen also in the ineluctable spread of consumerist Western culture.”

In the next several lectures, we are going to examine the post-WWII emergence of the American empire domestically. First, we will examine the American Dream, and the narrative (new iteration of American Exceptionalism) supporting it. Then we will examine how it was created, government subsidies, corporate welfare, and technology. And lastly, we will examine the dark side of the American Dream, contradictions, inclusions and exclusions