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THE AGE OF EUROPEAN DOMINATION

THE GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

The globalizing of America started long before 1913. As we trace the history of U.S. foreign relations from 1913 to 1945, it is important to recall that the nation had come into existence and conducted its external affairs in a world in which technological and economic globalization had begun to connect different parts of the globe. The main agents of this transformation had been Europe and North America, comprising much of the "West" that had come to dominate the rest of the world (the "non-West") not only economically but also militarily, politically, and even culturally. We should not lose sight of the non-West, however, even when we consider American foreign relations in the framework of globalization. After all, until at least the second half of the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and the Chinese Empire in East Asia had been centers of wealth, power, and influence. In fact, as the European nation-states fought one another almost without interruption throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a dispassionate observer might have predicted that those states would soon exhaust themselves and that the more unified empires of the Middle East and East Asia – collectively known as Asia, the Orient, or the East – might in the long run prove much more important determinants of world affairs.

As William McNeill, Paul Kennedy, Christopher Bayly, and others have shown, however, toward the end of the eighteenth century, the West and the non-West began to diverge to such an extent that, whereas in 1800 the world's economic wealth was more or less evenly distributed in various parts of the globe, a hundred years later the West had

come to account for, and dominate, the bulk of it.[1] In part this was because in Europe the nation-state was in a virtually constant state of war or of war preparedness and had to develop a centralized administrative structure for mobilizing armed forces and collecting taxes to pay for them. These, which John Brewer has termed the "sinews of power," were systematically developed by the European monarchies throughout the seventeenth century, and during the following century the struggle for power among the nation-states came to define the basic nature of European international relations.[2] Concepts of "great power," "balance of power," and "reason of state" were developed as guides to national policy, justifying domestic and external measures for the enhancement of each state's relative power.

Such competitiveness, while fragmenting Europe into contending units, also had the effect of increasing the region's overall power in relation to the more unified and thus less militarily oriented empires elsewhere. Because successful wars entailed effective strategies and advanced military weaponry, it is not surprising that the European wars coincided with vast developments in science, technology, and strategy. By the end of the eighteenth century, European armies and navies were equipped with arms far more sophisticated than those in use in the Middle East or East Asia.

Such a situation alone, however, would not have ensured European predominance in world affairs. The pursuit of power, as William McNeill has noted, is ultimately wasteful of national resources.[3] If the rise to power of Spain, the Dutch republic, and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been a product of their respective military strengths and successfully waged wars, these same phenomena exhausted their resources and divided national opinion, thus undermining domestic unity, which was essential for the augmentation of power. The same fate appeared to visit Great Britain, a latecomer to the European power scene, as it fought the American colonies during the 1770s and the 1780s.

[1] William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West* (New York, 1963); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York, 1987); C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Oxford, 2004).
[2] John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power* (New York, 1989).
[3] William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power* (New York, 1984).

What saved, and indeed perpetuated, European predominance were two additional factors, also making their appearance during the eighteenth century: the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment. The two were connected in the sense that modern rational thought, unfettered by traditional constraints, made possible the phenomenal growth of productivity, turning first Britain and then other countries into the workshops of the world.

Economically, it is well to recall that as late as 1800 China was producing more manufactured goods than any other country.[4] Already by then, however, the Industrial Revolution had come to Britain and was beginning to turn that island country into the world's center of textile manufacturing. More efficiently produced and consequently cheaper cotton yarn and fabrics were spreading out to all parts of the globe, bringing with them immense trade and shipping revenues. With an increasing working population employed at factories, and with the building of railroads that connected city with countryside, the demographic landscape of the country was changing, increasing the overall population but also creating new classes of people, now more subject to laws of supply and demand on a worldwide scale than earlier. Overseas sources of cotton and other raw materials as well as food were sought, and new markets had to be found to sell goods produced at home. The increasing wealth of Britain would spill over other European countries as they would sell more to an increasingly prosperous British population, and as British capital would be brought over to modernize their own economic systems. The result was that Europe's relative economic position was fast improving, soon to overtake that of China and all other parts of the globe.

Culturally, the Enlightenment ideology, with its emphasis on rationalism, combined with earlier traditions of British liberalism and produced the typically eighteenth-century idea of history as progress, in which humanity was pictured as being capable of unlimited development. Underlying were the concepts of human rights and liberty. Collectively, groups of people were said to possess inalienable rights as citizens, equal before the law, and individually each person was seen as endowed with a right to pursue material well-being as well as spiritual contentment. Such concepts pitted men and women against larger entities such

[4] Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*, 149.

as the church and the state, and for this reason the clash of perspectives between individual conscience and religion – and, more seriously, between citizen and state – became a key theme of eighteenth-century European thought.

To return to the observation made at the outset, it is important to note that the United States emerged on the world stage as it was being molded by the military, economic, and cultural developments in Europe. They provided the point of departure for the young nation's foreign and domestic affairs. Its very existence as an independent republic was aided by the European military rivalries, in particular the French-British struggle for power. The Founders took it for granted that if the nation were to protect its independence, it would have to be prepared for war, which would necessitate military force and a bureaucracy to pay for and administer it. Furthermore, national power would be enhanced through territorial expansion and the removal of potential threats nearer home. All these objectives were pursued by the U.S. government, formally established under the Constitution in 1787.

Economically, too, the nation was no less part of the European developments. It was cut off from the protective arms of the British Empire and shut out of the West Indies markets, but otherwise the Americans continued their economic activities as they had done as British colonials, producing food, selling its surpluses overseas, and sending ships abroad to engage in carrying trade. The independence gave such activities further impetus as it coincided with the Industrial Revolution in England. Demands for American wheat, fish, lumber, and other primary products increased. Their carrying trade took them to North Africa, the Indian Ocean, and East Asia. Apart from their political identity as citizens of the newly independent United States, Americans' economic activities distinguished them little from those of the Europeans. They were part of the global economic penetration by the West.

Culturally, America was as much a product of British liberalism and the Enlightenment as of the indigenous conditions. From the beginning, to be sure, Americans were self-conscious people, considering themselves exceptional – citizens of the New World, not tainted by the ills of the Old. But the revolt against Old World traditions was also a European phenomenon, going back to the Reformation and to early modern currents of thought, and therefore American exceptionalism was in part an extension, a further development, of the European phenomenon.

Republicanism was a good example. It was an ideology that stressed a community of virtuous citizens who were imbued with a concern for public welfare even as they pursued their individual interests. The ideals had been in England for a long time, but they were taken seriously by the American leaders who believed in the possibility of their implementation in the New World. Here the physical environment of the American continent, with its rich soil and expanding horizons, seemed well suited for the experiment. As best exemplified in James Madison's thought, republicanism had a rare opportunity to flower in the new land, as the population would multiply without producing a concentration of wealth and power. Instead, the people would live in frugal prosperity, conscious of their precious liberties.[5] It is clear that these ideas grew out of the European background and that viewed from outside the West, they could be seen as a refinement of, not a departure from, European thought.

In one sense, however, America was unique, or at least significantly different from Europe in the late eighteenth century. American society was more cohesive in the absence of feudalism, the established church, monarchical institutions, and other privileged classes. To be sure, the existence of slavery and of the indigenous Indian populations, who never acknowledged the independence of the thirteen colonies, meant a society that was deeply divided, and the division would steadily undermine national unity.[6] But in the early stages of the Republic's history, the nation was spared serious cleavages of the kind that rent France and other countries apart in Europe. Among the white majority in America, there were occasional crises and even uprisings, but on the whole they did not threaten to tear apart the political entity or the social fabric. There was a cohesiveness in America that could create a sense of nationhood – a nationalism that transcended the factional alignments or ethnic traditions of the citizens and was founded upon a shared consciousness of how the independence had been won. The absence of a serious division was a source of strength for the new nation, perhaps the key to its acceptance as a member of the European-defined community of nations.

[5] Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic* (Chapel Hill, 1988).
[6] On Native American responses to the independence of the thirteen colonies, see J. L. Wright, *Britain and the American Frontier* (Athens, Ga., 1975).

If such was the world of the late eighteenth century in which the United States made its appearance, the following century at once confirmed and added variations to the picture. The nineteenth century opened with French revolutionary wars in which France, led by Napoleon Bonaparte, sought to establish its military, political, and ideological domination over Europe and the world beyond, and in the end failed in the face of a determined opposition on the part of most other countries. The Napoleonic wars brought much destruction to European nations but, significantly, did not diminish the relative power of Europe in the world. On the contrary, as they continued with their Industrial Revolution, mobilized masses for warfare, improved military technology, and absorbed Enlightenment thought, the Europeans emerged out of the wars in an even superior position to people in other areas of the globe than before. The United States, even as it collided with France and Britain over its rights as a neutral in the European wars, did not remove itself from the overall trend. It continued to constitute part of the West-centric world.

At the same time, however, America's one strength – national unity or domestic cohesiveness – began to erode to such an extent that by the middle of the nineteenth century the nation had come to exist in separate compartments, defined in economic and geographic terms. The North on the whole stood for a conception of the nation in which free white labor would develop the economy, protected by a system of import duties on manufactured foreign goods, whereas the South, pursuing a slavery-based economy and in need of free trade to market its cotton and to obtain cheap consumer goods, held to a view of the nation as a compact, dissolvable when some segments felt they no longer benefited from the association. Such cleavages made it difficult for the United States to conduct itself as a unified nation. At a time when in Europe nationalistic movements were creating a potent force for the establishment of unified states, America, even as it extended its territorial domain beyond the Mississippi and eventually to the Pacific, threatened to become fractured. It was fortunate that in the mid-nineteenth century the European powers on the whole maintained a stable relationship with each other and more or less left the United States alone.

It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that outside of Europe Americans continued to expand their activities and interests – as part

of the expansion of the West in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. America's own industrialization began during the War of 1812 against England, although it would pick up momentum only after the Civil War. In the meantime, it was in trade and shipping that the Americans excelled; their ships were almost as numerous as British, prying open new markets in the Middle East and East Asia and establishing connections with the newly independent states of Latin America. Clearly, such activities added to the wealth of individual Americans, but whether they also augmented national power on the whole was in question in the absence of domestic unity. In the middle of the century, the United States was already being recognized as a would-be economic giant, but that did not translate into making the nation a formidable player in world affairs. In the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America, where "informal empire" held sway – ad hoc systems of control exercised by the West over indigenous peoples for facilitating trade – the American presence was conspicuous.[7] That such informal empire might have brought about an enhancement of American influence in the global picture could be seen in Commodore Matthew Perry's expeditions to Japan, undertaken in 1853 and 1854. It was a dramatic moment, revealing America's emergence as a Pacific power. Perry himself had visions of the United States holding sway over the western Pacific. Such visions had no way of becoming realized while the nation grew steadily divided. It should be noted, however, that at this time few European nations were intent upon systematically extending territorial control, apart from economic interests, in other parts of the globe. In this sense, too, America was still part of the West.

The same can be said of the cultural dimension. The nineteenth-century world continued to be dominated by European culture, but European culture underwent significant transformation. To the eighteenth-century legacies were now added romanticism, socialism, and a host of other ideologies that brought about new perspectives on national and international affairs. Romanticism, by exalting emotion over intellect, and the primeval over the modern, generated nationalistic movements all over Europe – not the nationalism of the French Revolution espousing universalistic values but rather ethnic nationalism, each ethnic group

[7] On "informal empire," the pioneering study is Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians* (New York, 1961).

stressing its own tradition and developing a political self-consciousness opposed to domination by others. Socialism, on the other hand, created self-consciousness among certain classes of people in an industrializing society, giving workers a sense of group solidarity. Thus both romanticism and socialism abetted particularistic tendencies, exalting the role of society or class as an intermediate existence between state and individual.

Because earlier traditions had focused on the rights and interests of the state or the individual, these nineteenth-century additions complicated perceptions, nowhere more so than in discussions of international affairs. Earlier, statecraft (reasons of state, balance of power, national interests) and human rights (equality, liberty, pursuit of happiness) had been the two guiding principles, often at variance with each other. Romanticism and socialism both questioned the bases of the existing state boundaries and organizations, and at the same time placed individual rights in the larger framework of a community. International relations, in such a context, would mean much more than interstate relations, on one hand, or individual pursuits of commerce and other activities, on the other. War, for instance, would signify much more than clashes over territorial boundaries or trading rights, and peace more than a product of rational human behavior. Instead war could come from romantic forces – the shedding of blood for noble causes, defined ethnically – or from a class collision between capitalists and workers. Peace might be defined as an ultimate goal after romantic aspirations had been satisfied, or after a classless world had been established and states had withered away.

The divisiveness of nineteenth-century thought was accentuated by developments in the biological sciences, some of which stressed distinctions among different races. Away from the conception of unity of humankind, various theories of racial distinctions postulated autonomous and unchanging characteristics of racial groups, with almost always the white race viewed as the norm, the most advanced. Then there were developments in anthropology, linguistics, historical study, and other subjects in which racial, ethnic, and national differences were likewise emphasized. The revival of Protestant Christianity fitted into the picture insofar as Protestant missionaries redoubled their efforts to proselytize among the less enlightened. Of course, they believed it possible to save the unenlightened from their "moral darkness" and, in so

doing, assumed it was possible to change even the heathen. There was a tension between such a belief in the malleability of people and the cultural determinism inherent in various theories of racial distinctions. But the two were joined by a firm belief in Western superiority.

American culture in the nineteenth century was part of the broader Western civilization in that these European ideas had their counterparts in the United States. Not all of these ideas were taken with the same degree of seriousness; romanticism was most conspicuous among Southern sectionalists, and socialist experiments in the Midwest. But theories of race differences were virtually universally accepted. By the 1840s, apart from a tiny minority who believed in complete racial equality, Americans in all parts of the world had come to take the superiority of the white race for granted.[8] In this respect, too, they belonged to the same universe as Europeans. Americans were Westerners, culturally as well as economically, and the temporary passivity of U.S. foreign affairs, induced by growing domestic tensions, did not alter the equation.

THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN STATES

The Civil War forever put to rest the question of national unity of the United States. There might still continue sectional differences, and most certainly ethnic cleavages would not disappear, but the political unity of the nation would never again be challenged. The significance of this for American foreign relations is obvious. The government would be able to conduct foreign affairs without fearing their immediate impact on domestic cohesiveness. To be sure, elected leaders would have to be sensitive to various interest groups and proclivities of the population, but at least they would be able to take for granted the continued existence of the nation as a unified entity.

The timing of this phenomenon could not have been more opportune, for the end of the Civil War coincided with significant developments in Europe–Italian unification, German unification, the Franco-Prussian War, the birth of the Third Republic in France, the reform bill of 1867 in Britain, and the emancipation of serfs in Russia in 1861 – all of which added up to bringing Europe into the age of the modern states.

[8] Reginald Horseman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981); Michael H. Hogan, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, 1987).

The modern state, characterized by centralized administration and armed forces, secular public authorities and institutions defining the limits of acceptable behavior for people within the boundaries, mass participation in the political process, unified domestic markets and systems of production and distribution, extensive networks of transportation and communication, and legal codes distinguishing citizen from foreigner – such a state was an outgrowth of the earlier nation-state that had come into existence in the seventeenth century, but the modern state was built upon a society that was more cohesive and integrated a far greater segment of the population into the entity. A modern state was a greater power than its earlier manifestation in that it possessed nationalized mass armed forces equipped with ever newer weapons and because the state itself, rather than a monarchy or an aristocratic order, was the focus of loyalty. Above all, the modern state benefited from, and in turn promoted, rapid technological advances. By the 1870s, innovations such as the telegraph and the telephone had begun to facilitate long-distance communication, contributing immeasurably to a nation's political, military, and economic integration. Electricity freed humans to organize themselves more easily than in the past for social and cultural activities. Railroads had already enabled people in different areas of a country to come closer, and now steam-propelled ships were taking them to all corners of the earth.

At this time, only Western countries were transforming themselves into such modern states. In non-Western parts of the world, traditional systems of governance and social organization continued. Nevertheless, it should be noted that when they, too, began to change, the West served as a model. For them modernization meant Westernization in most respects. When Japan, China, Turkey, Iran, Mexico, and others undertook to transform themselves, they inevitably pattered themselves after Western nations in such areas as centralized administration and military force, industrialization, and secularized education. In a sense, the modern nation-state became a transnational aspiration throughout the world.

Of course, some modern states were more authoritarian than others, and some were more fragile. Citizens and social classes in some states were more aware of their rights than those elsewhere. Differences among the modern states, as much as their common characteristics, affected their interrelationships, as the subsequent history of international affairs was