

PARTT2PLAGO

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World Contemporary History – Hist. 107

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Final Exam

Part Two

What were the global challenges that faced the United States when it became the sole superpower after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991?

America is among the most hated countries in the world according to numerous sources. America, however, has the largest military budget and is an economic powerhouse on a global scale, sure we have a lot of problems but every country does, even Switzerland (Harff 55). Depending on global warming and how technology and the governments of the world tackle it depends on the state of humanity at the end of the 21st century. As a superpower, the U.S has to deal with the issues of global warming and technological advancements. The U.S has also to deal with the emerging economies. India is developing; China and Russia are still strong. Brazil is developing and so is Canada, the UK is well developed. This implies that for the U.S to remain the superpower, it must work around the clock. Moreover, capitalism is failing and the ratio in pay is horrendous from CEO to even the middle management. America has a ton of influence (hard and soft), strongest and most advanced military, among the best minds in the world and has some of the best colleges and universities. The Chinese people are still fighting for their voices in the global community, while the Chinese government sets its rules on resistant world order. The USA rules from the benevolent Greco-Roman origins of its legal and philosophical origins. Chinese transformation of the world order has only the past to be its guidance and that was not friendly to the U.S.

The primary barrier to the United States maintaining its position is the inability to greatly increase its economic capacity. In the early 20th Century, the United States was able to greatly improve its position thanks to early industrialization, plentiful natural resources, capacity for population growth, a relatively well-educated population, and good governance. Going into the early 21st Century, the US no longer has most of these advantages. Nearly all countries are now industrialized, natural resources are being exploited to their maximum potential, and education has greatly improved globally as has

global governance. The only advantage that remains, in my opinion, is the capacity for population growth, however, immigration restrictions keep the US from fully benefiting from this potential.

Since World War II, the US has maintained a decisive military advantage, and that does not seem likely to subside anytime in the next few decades. The problem is that the US is no longer able to use this military advantage to expand its influence (Harff 45). The costs of total war are impossibly high thanks to nuclear weapons, while limited warfare has proven to be costly and ineffective. As such, American military dominance only means that no one can directly challenge the US. This by itself is a pretty significant advantage, but it merely delays a decline in status, it does not improve it.

If the US really wants to maintain its status, it needs to encourage immigration. People tend to think that China overtaking the US is inevitable because of Chinese massive population, but there's no reason why the US population needs to remain static. The US has both the wealth and the land to take in millions of more people. Each additional immigrant increases consumer demand as well as production capacity. There is no shortage of highly educated individuals seeking visas to live in the US. If the US population density matched the global population density, it would have a population of over 480 million (population density). China's GDP growth may still outpace the American GDP growth, but the additional population would greatly delay convergence and by delaying convergence, the chances that convergence never happens also increases. The only other hope is for a major productive shift on the scale of the industrial revolution taking place in the US. However, even if the US greatly increases investment into research and education, it is unlikely that the US would be first to adopt or effectively apply any revolutionary invention. The countries that generally take advantage of new ideas are those that are in most need of new ideas to ensure their survival. The survival of the US is under no threat, so it is unlikely to recognize the advantages of nascent technology over the technologies currently in place and serving the US very well. The United States doesn't control the growth of other nations, so even if it does do positive things to promote its dominant position, it's only a matter of time before another country such as China takes over, at least by economic measures (Yahuda 7). Arvin Subramanian, an Indian economist, is one of many who also predicted that China would

supplant the U.S. as the world's dominant economic power by 2030, even in the most optimistic. Only a return to widespread political unrest and instability in China could prevent this from happening.

What the United States can do is continue to build its soft power in areas like research and education-U.S. universities are likely to be the best in the world for a long time, and will continue to attract aspiring entrepreneurs and leaders from all over the world. But this will require a substantial increase in investment in education, as well as policies more friendly to immigrants and ones that will relieve students of crushing debt (Harff 72). Also, if the U.S. economy returns to good health and Congress gets its act together, the United States can present its model of democratic governance and capitalism as a desirable alternative against China's authoritarian capitalism. The United States doesn't have to have the largest GDP to be a role model for countries around the world.

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GENERAL COMMENTS

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