

*America's World:*

*The Rise of the United States and the Long American Century*

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**Overview**

Henry Luce feared the world was on the precipice of a new Dark Age. From his vantage point as the famed publisher of *Life* magazine in New York City, Luce had witnessed one of the most spectacular military campaigns in history: In a mere eighteen months Adolf Hitler's armies had crushed Poland, conquered France, and forced their vanquished British allies to escape across the English Channel from the port city of Dunkirk, barely evading the pursuing German Panzer divisions. By Spring of 1941 Hitler's legions were sweeping across Central Europe, the Balkans, North Africa, and the Middle East, while his ally Joseph Stalin gleefully looked on from the sidelines. Though Britain would survive the ensuing "Battle of Britain" it remained isolated from the continent and helpless to stop Hitler's march. In Asia, Germany's powerful Japanese allies had already launched a devastating invasion of China and much of South East Asia while secretly preparing for total war throughout the Pacific. Only the United States could stop Hitler and his allies from conquering the world. But with the majority of Americans and many of their political leaders believing World War II to be solely a European affair with which the United States must not involve itself, democracy's future seemed doomed.

With the fate of the world at stake, Luce wrote one of the most celebrated and controversial editorials of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—a call to arms imploring the American people to meet the Nazi challenge and accept the burden of world leadership. The article was entitled "the American Century." Unlike President Woodrow Wilson, who offered grandiose justifications to gain support for American entry into World War I, Luce did not argue for intervention in order to impose a set of universal principles on the world. Rather, he made a more personal argument, that the United States needed to stop Hitler

because the world he threatened was, in fact, already America's world, and that the war he waged was more than just a European conflict; it was a battle for the survival of the American way of life and America's vision for the future of the world.

More than America's physical security was at stake. At risk was a global society founded on American ideals that the United States was honor bound to defend. "Once we cease to distract ourselves from the lifeless arguments about isolationism," Luce argued, "we shall be amazed to discover that there is already an immense American internationalism. American jazz, Hollywood movies, American slang, American machines and patented products are in fact the only things that every community in the world, from Zanzibar to Hamburg, recognizes in common. Blindly, unintentionally, accidentally and really in spite of ourselves, we are already a world power in all the trivial ways—in very human ways."

For its many critics, most notably Professor Andrew Bacevich, "The American Century" was a declaration for unrestricted American internationalism, one which saw the United States abandon its pre-war isolationism and dedicate itself into remaking the world in its image. In his co-edited book, *The Short American Century*, Bacevich argues that with the end of World War II the United States adopted a foreign-policy platform aimed at democratizing the world and building a liberal-international world economy centered on American power. During the ensuing years the U.S. risked a nuclear holocaust in battling the Soviet Union in a decades-long Cold War, militarily intervened throughout the third world to defeat the threat of Soviet-backed communism, and initiated modernization campaigns designed to turn the less developed nations of the world into American-style liberal democracies. The consequences of these efforts,

Bacevich and others critics insist, were devastating to the United States: a costly arms race, the ever-present threat of nuclear war, interventions that took the lives of hundreds of thousands, and modernization plans that many contend have largely failed to meet their objectives, the most emblematic of course being the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the failed “Arab Spring” each of which plunged the Middle East into chaos and damaged America’s reputation abroad. They conclude that it is time for the United States to abandon the hubris of this “short American Century” and focus on more modest policies based on preserving the immediate needs of America’s national security while avoiding ideologically-based interventions.

Many of these criticisms are understandable, particularly as Luce declares so unhesitatingly that “It is for America and for America alone to determine whether a system of free economic enterprise—and economic order compatible with freedom and progress—shall or shall not prevail in this century.” However, context matters in assessing Luce’s motivations. The world Luce lived in was a world on the verge of catastrophe, a world where one of the vilest, most destructive and genocidal ideologies had seized power in Germany, waged a war that triumphed over what was left of democratic Europe, and seemed poised to impose its brutal system on the entire world. With Great Britain struggling merely to survive and the only credible challenger to Hitler being a communist Soviet Union that would remain an ally until Germany invaded six months later, it was neither hyperbole nor zealotry for Luce to assert that only the United States could preserve liberal democracy.

However, these critics miss a far more critical point: The idea of American Century, its “yearning to reshape the world” as these critics describe it, was never meant

to imply the use of military or economic coercion or the creation of a dominant American empire as Bacevich and others have asserted. I argue instead that the world's fascination with America's society—i.e., its political and economic philosophies, and the products of its culture—represented the original foundation of American internationalism. European elites fiercely debated whether they should adopt America's republican form of government and mass consumption, mass production economy while the general public devoured American culture: its art, literature, film, music, with a passion that stunned national elites. This is what Europeans would call, the Americanization of the world.

Furthermore, the concept underpinning the American Century, i.e., creating an Americanized world, had been a well-established objective of United States policy for nearly a century before Luce wrote his editorial. America's efforts to "reshape the world" begins in earnest after the American Civil War when the nation emerged from that devastating conflict, freed from the burden of slavery, and ready to "enlighten" an aristocratic world to the virtues of liberal democracy. The war had barely ended when America's leading internationalists affirmed that the "Americanization" of the world was their ultimate goal as only then would the world enjoy peace and prosperity. However, European opposition was stiff. "The American idea is strikingly opposed to the European one" wrote the editors of the weekly journal *The Nation* in 1865, since European society had been "founded on force" and America's had been "founded on freedom." "Indeed," they concluded, "our institutions are an exact inversion of theirs." As the historian John Lothrop Motley wrote in 1868, "the hope of the world lies in the Americanization of the world."

The campaign these 19<sup>th</sup> century internationalists launched was breathtaking in its ambition and swift in its impact. By the 1880s the world was locked in debate about the new American vision of the future, and the long term impact of this rising power. In 1878 the former British Prime Minister William Gladstone was among the first to recognize the wake being created by America's rise. Even with Britain at the peak of its power, Gladstone warned the British people that "America is passing us by as if in a canter" and that it should prepare itself for the day when America becomes "what we are now—head servant in the great household of the world."

Yet these changes were taking place at a time when the United States had little in the way of deployable military power and an economy that was unquestionably a growing but still secondary to the dominant British economy. The government had quickly demobilized America's Civil War army while the American Navy slipped into irrelevance as no funds were spent upgrading America's fleets into the new iron-hulled warships that made up the European navies. Thus, Americanization could not occur at the point of a gun or under threat of economic sanction, but by the genuine interest of the European public in the potential benefits of American society.

It would be another famous journalist, England's William T. Stead, who at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would best illuminate the impact of Americanization. According to Stead, the global transformation predicted by so many was now at hand. In his classic book *The Americanization of the World, the Trend for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* he explored how region by region the world of the turn of the century was being changed by the spread of America's social, economic, and political model, and how in response nations had to adopt mass production rather than elite production, expand suffrage beyond rich, white

males, and develop art and entertainment aimed for mass audiences rather than primarily the elite. Stead argued that the world must come to terms with this spreading “Americanization” and called for Britain to accept its inevitable, subordinate, role in the new American World.

The global processes recognized by Stead and other 19<sup>th</sup> century writers signified a radical transformation of the world, reflecting the growing adoption of America’s political, economic, and cultural beliefs—soon every region of the world faced the choice of resisting in isolation or conforming to a new norm. Indeed, this dichotomy would fuel the global conflict we saw during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and underpin much of international politics today. For the past two centuries Americanization and thus “the American Century” has offered a vision of the future many considered so disruptive that it has led to—and still is causing—upheaval throughout the world.

### **Objectives**

The decades-long debate about the value of the American Century and its utility as a guiding principal of American foreign policy has obscured an even more important question: How did American power arise to begin with? What was it about American society that empowered this brand new nation to construct in less than a century, a society that extended from coast to coast on a vast continent and dramatically impact the future of world’s vastly older cultures? This is the question I will tackle in *America’s World*.

*America’s World* is the first book of its kind to consider the 19<sup>th</sup> century process of Americanization central to the rise of American power and the creation of the

American Century and explain how it occurred. I argue that the success of “Americanization” is a direct result of the type of American society that emerged after the first European colonization of the continent, a disruptive culture expressed in America’s historic willingness to embrace radical changes regardless of the social costs, changes that had originated as a challenge to the prevailing aristocratic world with a goal to creating a new world based on political and economic liberalism. *America’s World* will explore the reasons behind America’s rise to power and its success in defeating a series of challengers after its reached the pinnacle of world power.

The story begins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Great Britain first established the American colonies and explores how America’s disruptive identity first emerged which inevitably sparked the crisis with Great Britain that led to the war for independence. The book then examines Europe’s initial reactions of Europe’s elite, who after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 journeyed en mass to study the “American experiment.” Here we will see the growing fears of Europe’s aristocracy that this new republic would continually strengthen, spreading unopposed across a vast continent that provided it with the resources necessary to become a world power—fears that reached their crescendo with the Revolutions of 1848 which were inspired by American democracy—and made famous by the legendary musical *Les Miserables*.

I will then try to answer an important, but little recognized, question: why didn’t those fears about the United States convince Europe to intervene in the American Civil War to ensure a Southern victory? Had the South won the war, the United States would have collapsed into two separate countries that likely would have faced many years of continued conflict over the disposition of the western U.S. territories, derailing its path to



global power. Additionally, this chapter will explore how the struggle over slavery masked the clash of civilizations between the North and South that would determine the future of the country—and world. With the North's victory the new American model reigned triumphant resulting only shortly thereafter in the great American invasion of Europe.

*America's World* then examines how the emergence of the great class of American entrepreneurs, a natural outgrowth American economic and political liberalism, rebuilt the nation from the devastation of the Civil War, turning the U.S. economy into a powerhouse that would awe the world. At the same time, America's political, business, and cultural leaders would spearhead the first wave of Americanization on the European continent, challenging Europe's aristocratic society with America's radically new political, economic, and social model. These "invaders" as they were derisively known in Europe, inspired a major debate across the continent regarding Europe's future in the burgeoning American century.

The divisions sparked by this invasion shook European society to its core pitting those who argued for Europe to emulate the American future against those who felt that Europe's very identity was at stake. This contest took center stage after World War I and the Great Depression paved the way for the collapse of European society and unleashed Europe's extremist parties to seize power across the continent. The ensuing Second World War was the final battle to prevent America's rise to power as I argue that Hitler viewed "Americanization" inspired by the "Jewish Conspiracy" the greatest threat to both Germany and Europe.

After World War II, the United States faced a series of challenges from the Soviet Union, Japan, and currently China. *America's World* will explore how a dominant United States defeated the challenges from the Soviet Union and Japan and will turn back China's efforts to create a new China-centered international system. It will conclude with an analysis of America's position in history and its future in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Summary of Key Points**

1. The American Century was not premised on American military domination but the attractiveness of America's social, political, and economic model and their adoption by the world;
2. "Americanization"—defined as the spread of the America's social, political, economic, and cultural systems and their adoption across the world—was the driving force that gave rise to American power in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and provided the United States with a level of influence far beyond what its existing military power would have allowed. Decades later military power would play an increasingly important role as the United States was forced to respond to the threat of war posed by fascism and communism;
3. The process of Americanization began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and has continues until today;
4. We can date the onset of the American Century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as Americanization swept through Europe and much of the world;

5. The American Century can be divided into two eras, the first American era begins in 1880 and lasts until the onset of the Great Depression in 1932 when many across the world blamed the American economic social system for the disaster. The second American era begins in 1945 after the allied victory in World War II when the United States had regained its dominant position and became a military superpower;
6. The willingness of the United States to encourage disruptive innovation-- i.e. radical innovations capable of transforming the nation economically, culturally, and technologically—has empowered Americanization by constantly refreshing American society. For instance, American Jazz would sweep across 1920s Europe and cause significant social tension within European society, tensions that would erupt as the radical political forces captured the continent in the 1930s. Jazz would soon be replaced by Rock music as the new dominant music form, which too swept the world though it was vilified in many quarters. Today Rock has been supplanted by Hip Hop, whose style has inspired artists throughout the world and in countless languages; these transformations have allowed for the continued influence of American musical tastes and the continued Americanization of those regions;
7. The process of Americanization ignited a clash of civilizations between the elite-driven, hereditary aristocracy of Europe and an American culture and society that appealed to the general public.

8. This clash of civilizations erupted after World War I when many of Europe's aristocracies collapsed in the war's aftermath. The extremist parties seized power, many denouncing the Americanization of the continent;
9. Adolf Hitler launched World War II to unify the European continent and prepare it for a final war with the United States in order to stop the Americanization of the European continent;
10. Shinto extremists in Japan emulated Hitler by also pledging an eternal struggle to destroy America in order to rid Japan of Americanization, heavily influencing Japan's decision to go to war against the United States;
11. The current struggle with Islamic extremism offers many similarities with past American battles against European and Asian extremist forces, all of which were premised on fear of the Americanization of their countries;
12. America's willingness to accept the costs of disruptive innovation has resulted in the massive advances technology which has fueled America's growth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and maintained America's lead in the 20<sup>th</sup> century;
13. The depth and breadth of Americanization makes another rising challenger unlikely to overthrow the American system.
14. America might not be a truly exceptional nation but it is unique throughout history.

## **Narrative**

### **An American Empire?**

At the heart of the debate about the American Century is a question uncomfortable for most Americans: Was the phrase "American Century" simply an alias

for an American Empire? Was it a reflection of a level of American dominance over the international community *on par* with that achieved by ancient Rome in the Mediterranean or Great Britain's 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial empire? For those who stress the importance of America's military and economic dominance, the answer is yes. I argue, however, that when we consider the process of "Americanization," we begin to recognize an entirely different side to America's rise to power, one that was fueled by a multitude of influences that transcended military or economic coercion and that were reflective of the attractiveness of American culture, and the interest and desire of the world community to adopt American practices and emulate American society.

Given its own colonial past Americans have historically cringed at any portrayal of themselves as an imperial power, yet given its's far-reaching dominance of the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars have insisted that America had indeed carved out its own imperial space, a "Greater United States" according to historian Daniel Immerwahr. For scholars like Bacevich, Immerwahr, and Harvard University historian Niall Ferguson, America is indeed an empire, a true heir to Rome and Great Britain. The United States maintains fleets and military bases the world over; its currency has been the world's reserve currency for over seven decades; it once had a handful of colonies and territories, and now has dependent allies on every continent. Therefore, *whether* America is an empire is not the question—the answer is apparent. The real issue is *if* the United States is doomed to follow—or perhaps already is following—in the footsteps of all of history's other great empires that eventually decayed and collapsed. Faced with this foreknowledge, the United States might be compelled to act in order to forestall this possible dénouement and prevent the emergence of a new era dominated by another world power.

**Importance to Current Events**

This is more than just an arcane dispute among historians; correctly determining the true nature of American power is fundamental if we are to answer questions that the United States must address to maintain its leading status in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Indeed, identifying the factors that enabled America's rise to power and the creation of the American Century will define the type of foreign policy the United States must pursue going forward. For instance, those who contend that the United States is an empire reliant on military and economic power for its supremacy question whether the U.S. will endure as the leader of a world that is becoming "flat"—a world where the increasing capabilities of other states are supposedly eroding America's material advantages. If this be the case then like all past empires America faces the possibility of a "decline and fall"—to quote the great British historian Edward Gibbon—fated to be eclipsed by a new world leader, like China, who many argue is already on the verge of surpassing American power. Radical measures, such as a more assertive foreign policy backed by a significant military buildup, might be needed to arrest this decline.

I argue to the contrary, that it was not just its material dominance that empowered America's leadership of the world community, it was also the attractiveness of both its culture and society and their rapid emulation throughout the world. American culture intentionally sought to disrupt and transform the prevailing social order of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was through Americanization, or the rapid spread and adoption of American culture throughout the world, where America first exerted its global influence. The aristocratic elites of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were not just faced with a rising power across

the ocean, but an American-sponsored economic, political, and cultural challenge to their nation's identities, an endlessly adapting challenge whose novel ideas and inventions would penetrate their borders, fascinating and inspiring their publics and changing their societies forever.

It was this ongoing process of “disruptive Americanization” that both created the American Century and enabled the U.S. to maintain its world leadership. By adopting a whole range of ever-changing American practices: be they economic production, republican governance, or cultural attributes, the United States created the first global civilization shattering the aristocratic world order that had dominated for millennia while narrowing cultural differences across the nations of the world. Consequently, the “American Century” reflects the globalization of American society that has shaped and influenced how countries behave but—save for a few tragic cases—relies far less on military coercion than the great imperial powers of history.

This means that nations which today aim to overthrow the American global order are confronted with challenges unlike those faced by any previous rising power. A new rival would not merely have to surpass the most powerful and most innovative military and economic power in the world, it would have the onerous task of creating its own cultural and social model that would attract the interest of the vast majority of the world to the point that it could transform an “Americanized” world into its own vision. With the spread of its Confucian institutes, its efforts to entice nations with financial assistance, and access to its domestic market, China is today expressing the ambition to do so—yet how likely are they to build an attractive social and cultural model that will sweep the

world? Furthermore, even if China is trying to do so, how difficult and costly would it be for the United States to respond in kind?

These are the questions that will frame the foreign policy choices the United States must make in order to prosper throughout the rest of the century. Indeed, today we already see a nascent debate emerging over how aggressively the United States should answer China's Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank or its territorial claims in the South China Seas, whether the U.S. should find ways to accommodate a rising power or, instead, to contain an inevitable foe. As the cornerstone of a research project I have organized at Columbia University and funded by the Department of Defense, my book will help American policymakers to better understand the nature of these challenges, place them in the proper global context, and formulate the most appropriate responses.

### **The Power of “Disruptive Americanization”**

More importantly, comparing America with past empires entirely misses the most defining characteristic about both the rise and the evolution of American power—that by the time of its emergence, the United States had become a truly unique power, unlike any other great power that had come before it. It was a power that intentionally sought to disrupt the existing global order, transforming it from one dominated by aristocracies and despotism into a new American model based on a republican form of government and economic liberalism, but through social transformation, not military intervention. In only a few decades after the American Civil War, that transformation was obvious.

Why did “Americanization” succeed so quickly? Because the process of social and cultural diffusion was not the result of government policies. It was a product of the



world's genuine interest in the ideas promoted by American thinkers, the rapid evolution of American society, and the wish of millions to adopt these principles at home. They were not the result of efforts by the United States to force the spread of its ideas through either coercion or specific government policies—an argument that has important ramifications regarding the potential effectiveness of a state-directed soft power campaign as an instrument of American foreign policy. This is a crucial argument of my book, namely that the origins of America's universal influence came first, from the “undirected” spread of American culture, politics and economics, and through their enormous appeal to the bottom of the world's aristocratic social order. However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the role of the America government was far less significant in spreading its influence though the government did sponsor programs like trade and science fairs to promote the products of American society.

Therefore, America's standing in the world was not initially a reflection of its coercive, hard power, like Rome's legions, Great Britain's Navy, or Napoleon's *Grand Armee*. The advent of America's hard-power supremacy after World War II doesn't change this dynamic as the world had already been “Americanized” long before then—indeed, I contend that this was an important factor in causing the war. Thus the power of “Americanization” has provided—and will continue to provide—the United States with advantages that will drive continued American leadership of the world community throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century—and at far less of a burden than that required to maintain military and economic dominance, a weight that had crushed all previous great powers. This is the real meaning of the American Century.

However, while the spread of American influence was intended to be benign, its impact was powerfully disruptive, resulting in political, economic, and social upheaval on a global scale. It was this disruptiveness combined with America's willingness to embrace upheaval that enabled the United States to create the type of society it is today. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the new vision of society developed and spread by Americanization empowered the general public across Europe and Asia to strive for something better, a vision that would challenge the aristocracies and despotisms that had long dominated the world. As we shall see below, it was this disruptive quality to America's culture that would give rise to a "The Long American Century" that would change the world forever.

### **Creating *America's World***

American influence spread with a speed so stunning that it easily outpaced the empires that have come before it. In roughly one hundred years contact with American society transformed practically every region of the globe. How was the United State able to "Americanize" the world so quickly, especially Europe already the center of world power and culture for centuries? America's meteoric rise was a consequence of the way the founders first created the nation, similar in many respects to one of today's stellar Silicon Valley startups. The goal of every Silicon Valley entrepreneur is to discover the most "disruptive" ideas and build new businesses that will dramatically transform their markets. And so it was with the Founding Fathers, who consciously built a nation that would embody a set of disruptive ideals capable of changing the world. The New World was the ideal place to attempt such an audacious effort; largely isolated from Europe and

populated with people who themselves had left their homelands at great risk in order to build a better life in the new colonies. The pattern would continue as the descendants of these first colonists soon left the safety of the emerging communities along the Atlantic Coast to explore and settle the continent's unchartered interior. By the time of the revolution, America had already become a nation of risk-takers and entrepreneurs.

Ultimately, the United States would become an enormously successful “startup” because the founders conceived a new type of disruptive social order created specifically to supplant the prevailing aristocratic form of government that had dominated the world until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In America's case it was a culture premised on the rule of a representative government and an egalitarian society based on the principles of classical liberalism: free markets, free elections, a reduced role of the state in society, diminished class differences, and empowerment of the individual. These were revolutionary principles that framed the national identity of the United States, America's *disruptive identity*, that captivated the 19<sup>th</sup> century global community. This disruptive identity empowered Americans to capitalize on the vast resources of the continent irrespective of the upheavals such revolutionary policies caused. Indeed, America's cultural model would prove so attractive that it would enthrall millions across the world, undermining the hereditary aristocracies that had ruled for millennia—while simultaneously menacing those who felt that the spread of such ideals presaged the destruction of their own nation's cultural identities. Spreading these American ideals became the central “mission” for the new nation; the Founding Fathers intended to launch the American experiment with a revolutionary zeal, because, like the Blues Brothers, they believed they were on a “mission from God.”

Much has been written about American's historic sense of mission, the collective belief that it was an "exceptional" country tasked by God to lead the world into a new era. Thomas Paine would write in his revolutionary war classic *Common Sense* that "the cause of America is, in great measure, the cause of all mankind" and later that the revolution "had thrown a beam of light over the world, which reaches into man." In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century it was Hermann Melville who argued that "we Americans are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time."

Today such rhetoric is dismissed as a quaint—or even destructive—form of nationalism, a reflection of a time when Americans truly believed in their own "exceptionalism." Indeed, in 1966 sociologist Robert Bellah would coin the phrase "civil religion" to describe this fusion of theology and secular policymaking by America's politicians throughout the country's history. Leaving aside the normative question of whether the American model was the *better* path for the world, I argue that the spread of the American model certainly did *change* the world as the revolutionaries had hoped. It was none other than the Europeans themselves who spoke of "Americanism" and "Americanization" and who had expressed both exhilaration and anxiety at the unfolding of the new American age. Few in Europe questioned that the rise of America was disrupting the world.

"Disruption" has taken on many meanings but the definition I use comes from a business concept conceived by Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen called "disruptive innovation." Disruptive innovation describes the process where new business models transform market sectors "by creating new markets or reshaping existing

markets by delivering relatively simple, convenient, low-cost innovations to a set of customers ignored by other industry leaders.”

For instance, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Henry Ford engaged in disruptive innovation through the invention of the Model T, the first automobile mass-produced for the low-end consumer market. Previously, the major car manufactures in Europe, whether Daimler Benz, Peugeot, or Rolls Royce, eschewed these lower-end markets, aiming to build market-share in elite markets with much wider profit margins. By making the automobile available to millions of lower and middle class consumers, Henry Ford upended that “less profitable” market and ensured that mass production, a business practice Europeans abhorred, would prevail as the dominant mode of production. We see a similar process today as smart phones and tablet computers replace expensive personal computers, which in turn had replaced high-priced mini-computers and even more exorbitant mainframes.

In *America's World*, I argue that from the arrival of the first English colonists in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, commoners who had fled the brutal impoverishment and religious conflicts of that era, the American communities developed a social and cultural model that allowed for the enormous flexibility needed to survive the unforgiving American frontier. This was a model that would encourage the discovery and adoption of the most disruptive economic, scientific, and social innovations that later gave the United States a distinct advantage over international competitors with uncompromising class structures.

Furthermore, I contend that the flexibility of the American model combined with the founder's “sense of mission,” i.e. its desire to change the world, drove America's global expansion allowing the United States to swiftly rise from a curious political

experiment into a great power that would redefine the global community. My book will reinterpret that ascent by weaving traditional diplomatic history with economic and cultural history and, uniquely, the history of technology. In this way I will provide a far richer understanding of the American experience than one normally finds in histories of this era, particularly what made the United States so “exceptional” and what the United States must do to maintain its global leadership and continue the American era.

In fact, the history of technology provides us with some of the best examples of how America's more egalitarian social order paved the way for the disruptive breakthroughs that would inspire the world's “Americanization.” It was not the support of the United States government that first inspired America's hi-tech innovations and new economic methods that played such a crucial role in propelling America's rise to power in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was the great scientists like Thomas Edison and the Serbian-born American Nikola Tesla, along with their wealthy benefactor, J. P. Morgan, and the other great industrialists—Cornelius Vanderbilt, Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and Henry Ford—who empowered America's spectacular ascent. After World War II American innovators would play an even more important role in helping America maintain its supremacy: First in defeating the Soviet system during the Cold War, then outpacing a resurgent Japan in the 1970s, and currently providing a key advantage in America's competition with a rising China.

In both of these cases Robert Noyce, one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century, led a team of other brilliant scientists and engineers at the legendary Silicon Valley startup Fairchild Semiconductor. As chapter nine explores, the breakthroughs produced at Fairchild created the electronics age but might not have ever happened had

the United States not been so flexible. The story surrounding their astonishing success demonstrates the vital disruptiveness of the American model and is a seminal chapter in this book. Indeed, this is the first time their story has been included in a book on American history—a critically important expression of American power in the post-World War II era.

### **The Price of Disruption**

The founders of the “American startup” created a country based on liberal international principles and a culture that not only accepted disruptively revolutionary ideas, they encouraged them. The challenge to the world’s aristocracies and despotisms came, however, with enormous costs as across the world the United States was marked as a nation to be feared. Many were alarmed by the alacrity with which the United States accepted the price of its disruptive ambitions, be it the catastrophic ferocity of the American Civil War or the upheaval of industrialization. Throughout the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the price Americans were willing to pay to achieve their disruptive ambitions would remain enormous. By the year 1900 the world’s elites had come to view the evolution of America’s disruptive ideas with a peculiar combination of hope, cynicism, and fear, resulting in a century of both great American innovation and massive global upheaval.

Despite the costs, these types of rapid transformations are what enabled America to blaze across the North American continent, rapidly industrialize into the world’s greatest economy, create cultural instruments that would challenge foreign competitors, and industrial goods that would sweep the world. This is not unlike how Apple, Google,

Amazon and countless other American companies have entrenched themselves in every corner of the world. The ability to innovate disruptively is, therefore, a core element of the American cultural model and a significant reason for both its success and for the adverse reactions that emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europe's finest debated the meaning of the new American era asking themselves what would Europe's role be in this new age? Could Europe remain "Europe" and still compete with the rising American colossus? The answer to these questions by Europe's late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century political extremists motivated these fringe groups as they were rising to prominence after the chaos left by World War I. These extremists believed the continent's fate was doomed unless they could rally Europe behind their banner and stamp out the mortal threat to Europe's future posed by America. The leader of these extremists was none other than Adolf Hitler, his answer: World War II, a war to prevent America's rise. The result was Armageddon, Germany's destruction, and the triumph of the American Century.

### **The Competition**

There are of course many works that chronicle America's rise but no work stresses the importance of its disruptive, cultural model in redefining the boundaries of American power. Nor do any recognize the critically important process of "Americanization" in driving the spread of American power across the globe. One reason is that while the study of culture has become a central element of historical work today, "cultural historians" deliberately avoid exploring the geopolitical impact of American cultural expansion, fearing that such studies would be indistinguishable from the loathed



field of traditional diplomatic history. Ironically, traditional diplomatic historians are equally averse at studying culture for fear of being labeled a “culturalist” by their more traditionalist colleagues —such is the state of the field of academic history.

Consequently, “Americanization” is a long neglected subject mentioned in passing by only a few cultural histories and largely for its peculiarity. Therefore, by incorporating the role of Americanization in explaining the expansion of American power my book will advance beyond traditional diplomatic history and cultural studies. Indeed, this book will do what few have done before: Integrate traditional diplomatic history with cultural history, economic history, and history of science into a single narrative for a groundbreaking, comprehensive explanation for the rise and permanence of the American Century.

Pulitzer Prize winning historian Walter McDougall has written a series of works attempting to understand the American experience, most notably, *Promised Land*, *Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* which explores the various extremes of American foreign policy that were often infused with religious principles. McDougall posits an “old testament” 19<sup>th</sup> century premised on the four contrasting structural beliefs: Liberty of exceptionalism, unilateralism or isolationism, the American system or the Monroe Doctrine, Expansionism vs Manifest Destiny, which he contrasts with a 20<sup>th</sup> century New Testament centered on the rise of progressivism, Wilsonianism, containment, and more recently “global meliorism” or a world made better by man’s effort. At the core of McDougall’s argument in *Promised Land*, *Crusader State* is the idea of “civil religion” what he considers the driving force behind American foreign policy where religious and secular principles have combined to create a belief

structure that justifies American intervention around the world. In *Freedom Just Around the Corner: A New American History, 1585-1828* looks at the past to see how America's "civil religion" formed with the settlement of the colonies and the early years of the republic. McDougall saves his harshest criticism for his forthcoming book *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy: How America's Civil Religion Betrayed the National Interest* in which he will argue that civil religion drove America's "misguided" bid for global hegemony.

There is much that I admire in McDougall's works, indeed they must be considered among the classic works on the American experience, however, I differ with McDougall and others who promote the idea of a "civil religion." I contend to the contrary, that the use of religious phrasing was to aid in mobilizing the American people in support of a cause or a mission, that their mission serves a higher purpose, but did not predetermine the decisionmaking that went into an actual policy. The history of the Cold War offers an excellent example of this. The famous historian Townsend Hoopes has long argued that underlying the policy choices of American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was a puritanical vision of the world, a Manichean battle between Good America and the Evil Soviet Union. Despite years of exhaustive research in Dulles' classified papers as Secretary of State I have never found any policy where Dulles' religious beliefs motivated his decisionmaking. At the core of Dulles' arguments were clear cut national security concerns, especially regarding American policy towards the Soviet Union. This I feel is true for the rest of America's great statesmen who, I believe, felt it easier to motivate a population behind a cause through religious appropriation than complex national security arguments. This is not to say that these politicians necessarily

lied, indeed many did truly feel there was a vague “higher cause” for the country to attain, however, specific decisions were still grounded in traditional cost-benefit analysis.

Walter Russell Mead has written several critically important books analyzing the principles that have motivated the American political tradition. In *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* and *God and Gold: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World* Mead contends provides us with a broad historical analysis of origins of American foreign and economic policy, how they emerged during the early years of the republic, survived a century and a half of challenges, and their prospects in the new millennium. My work is certainly influenced by Mead’s writings, however, I argue that much of what Mead considers a consequence of America’s political tradition—particularly the interplay between Wilsonian moralists, Hamiltonian liberal economics, Jacksonian populism, and Jeffersonian libertarian, comes instead from how the colonies first emerged throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially how they built a society based on the willingness to adopt disruptive innovations to survive. Consequently, the process of Americanization was less a product of these differences in political philosophy than the type of civil society that had emerged in the United States and that much of the world found attractive. It was this system, inspired by the various political leaders, that provided the foundation for American power and determined America’s role in the world.

Another classic work explaining America’s rise to power is Walter LaFeber’s *The American Age*, a traditional study of American diplomatic history from the birth of the nation onward. It is a magisterial effort that had laid the foundation for how diplomatic historians have examined the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its influence on the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However,

like most traditional diplomatic histories, it ignores the cultural influences that drove American internationalism. Two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist Hal W. Brands has written a multitude of works on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century America, examining the role of key political thinkers and economic elites in the nation's rise; yet, like LaFeber, overlooks culture's influence. Stephen Ambrose's *Rise to Globalism* and Michael Hunt's *The American Ascendance* focus on the post-World War II era when America's combined economic and military might was second to none. Other authors that focus on the emergence of American power in the 19<sup>th</sup> century include Fareed Zakaria whose *From Wealth to Power* attempts to explain why the United States, despite its already great economic power, did not emerge from its self-induced isolation until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—a premise that I argue is fundamentally flawed.

Most recently, historian Daniel Immerwahr advances a new concept, “the Greater United States” taken from a book of the same name published in 1900. Immerwahr contends that by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century American had truly joined the ranks imperial nations, possessing territories within the continental United States which had yet to qualify for statehood and colonial possessions around the world. Immerwahr contends that these territories demonstrate not merely an American empire, but a Greater United States that includes all territories where America claimed sovereignty. However, America has refused to recognize that this “Greater United States” reflects an empire true to its definition, a hidden empire that historians must grapple with. Immerwahr presents a provocative new take regarding American identity, however, his definition regarding where America has claims on sovereignty is so vague as to include any region of the world where America has economic, political, and military interests. Indeed, any country

that accepted American military bases is considered part of this “hidden empire.” Immerwahr is still in the early stages of his research, and there is much to applaud in his work, however, I contend that the concept of a “Greater United States” or hidden empire too generalized to be of much analytical use. For instance, many of these territories possessed significant amounts of self-rule while others were granted independence after only a few decades. But my most significant concern is the reasoning he gives for the American expansion, the lust for empire. While that was an opinion expressed by some, it was also the subject of much recrimination from those who opposed such ambitions for the United States. An even more important motivation, however, was the security of the nation. Had the United States not occupied the territories that were freed from Spain in 1898, other European powers would have seized them, in particular Germany who was eager to build its own global presence. Naval bases in the Philippines would have provided the German High Command an invaluable base of operations in the South China Seas. Indeed, the Germans maintained a squadron of warship in Manila Bay throughout the Spanish-American war, ostensibly “to protect its interests.” The Germans were also interested in challenging American influence in South America and the Caribbean and had built a fleet to match that of United States. A German move would have led to a crisis and possibly a war the United States was not prepared to fight, especially as Germany fielded one of the finest armies in the world. Thus these possessions were not simply ideological trophies, but important to American national security.

Council on Foreign Relations fellow Charles Kupchan contends in *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* that the American era is

indeed over, that the centuries of Western advantage over the rest of the world have come to an end. Published in 2012, Kupchan argues that the Western world is stumbling both economically and politically due to the growing dissonance within the European Union as a result of the economic crisis and partisan polarization within the United States.

Consequently, with the end of the West's material dominance and the waning of its ideological dominance, the 21<sup>st</sup> century will belong to no one. Written at the peak of the global economic crisis, Kupchan's book is already outdated. In 2015 American economic power has once again become a leading force within the world and Germany has emerged as Europe's leader, reducing the threat of a breakup of the Union, though the looming reality of Brexit in 2016 unnerves many; the issue will be decided one way or the other with the June referendum. *America's World* will challenge Kupchan on several fronts, particularly on what precisely constitutes the American age.

In 2014, controversial author Robert Kagan published a provocative new work, *The World America Made*, that challenges the claims of American decline, dismisses the arguments of scholars who claim that the world would operate fine without America at its apex, and seeks to demonstrate the importance of the United States by posing a simple question: "What would the world look like today without the United States?" His work will directly compete with my book, in particular my concerns regarding the future continuation of American power. A crucial distinction between our two works is that Kagan lacks the appreciation for the importance of culture in America's rise to power that my book provides thus offering a much more robust rejection of the "American in decline" argument than Kagan musters. Consequently, I anticipate that *America's World* will be discussed in juxtaposition to Kagan's *The World America Made*.

*Global Dawn*, written by the noted cultural historian Frank Ninkovich, provides us with a fascinating study of the role culture played in defining 19<sup>th</sup>–century American internationalism. That is his major goal and this outstanding book adds considerably to our knowledge. However, like traditional cultural historians, Ninkovich only tangentially discusses the impact of American cultural expansion on the international community and the world's counter reaction. His book ends with the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and thus does not cover periods central to my work.

Building on Ninkovich, *America's World* will establish that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the world had already come to consider America a world power—not through its military might but through the growing domination of its now global culture and the transformation of global society that it inspired. My work will prove the success of American cultural expansion, what made the American model so appealing to millions of Europeans, how it has maintained its dominance in the face of relentless challenges throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and discuss its prospects as the 21<sup>st</sup> century progresses.

Two Harvard political scientists, the late Samuel Huntington and Joseph Nye, have re-infused the study of cultural relations and their impact on the international community, both arriving at strikingly different conclusions. It is Huntington who offers the most radical prediction. In his famous *Foreign Affairs* article “Clash of Civilizations” Huntington declared that the end of the Cold War had transformed international politics, opening the floodgates to ethnic and religious conflict. According to Huntington, this “clash” occurs at two levels—the micro-level, where adjacent groups along the “fault lines” of civilizations struggle; and the macro-level, where states from different civilizations compete for relative military and economic power, struggle over the control

of international institutions, and competitively promote their particular political and religious values, often forming alliances with “kin countries within their own civilizational spaces.” There are many criticisms of Huntington’s work, perhaps most pronounced by Fouad Ajami who demonstrates that Huntington’s civilizational “fault lines” often break down upon closer inspection. Nevertheless, the logic of a “clash” between civilizations does help to frame Europe’s reaction to America’s rise to power in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many Europeans spoke of a coming confrontation between the Old World and the New, and whether Europe should resist or emulate the American model. Radicals like Hitler took the notion of a clash literally and viewed war as the only option. Therefore, while much of the substance of Huntington’s work is questionable, the theme itself helps define the broader concept I propose; it is of special importance as we try to understand the implications of the rise of China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Nye takes a significantly different view, arguing that American foreign policy should seek to exploit the overall attractiveness of American cultural instruments, what he calls “soft power,” to improve American relations in the world. While Nye first proposed this argument in the early 1990s, it was with the world’s reaction to the 2003 invasion of Iraq that soft power became a household name. Nye contends that the United States needs to project those aspects of its national identity that are most attractive and in doing so will repair the damage to America’s international image created by George W. Bush’s Middle East wars. America must offer an attraction sufficient to “convince others to follow,” since the “appeal of one’s ideas” is of paramount importance to any aspiring great power. My study will show that the quality of attraction so important to Nye’s work is itself a significant part of the problem. What may be attractive to one segment of a



country's population might alienate another segment, which in turn increases tensions within those countries leading to a struggle over their impressions of American culture. Consequently, soft power might be a problematic tool for America foreign policy. Indeed, the improper use of soft power might have as destabilizing an effect as military action.

The spread of jazz music is a case in point. For Nye, American music represents a positive form of soft power: Even though jazz *eventually* became widely accepted, in the 1920 and 30s Europeans considered it a threat to their cultural identities, serving as an indicted symbol of American cultural imperialism. Many intellectuals and elites across the European political spectrum considered jazz a disruptive force that threatened to undermine Europe's cultural traditions. These fears escalated to the point that listeners were often subjected to violent reprisals. When the Nazis seized power, "Brown Shirts" brutally attacked German citizens who listened to American jazz or danced to American swing music. This is just one example of how American culture can lead to social instability.

I distinguish myself from Nye by contending that the spread of American culture posed a major challenge to the world by threatening the cultural and political identity of the nations that America sought to "enlighten." The global reaction would come to be known as anti-Americanism, which I define succinctly as the world's resistance to the spread of American civilization. Eventually this struggle would lead to World War II and would inflame the Cold War. Nevertheless, the United States would succeed in spreading American cultural influence throughout the world and creating a global economic system based largely on the principles of liberal economics. History clearly

demonstrates that “soft power” is in reality a double-edged sword inspiring wide and varying reactions, even including global war.

In summary, this is what most distinguishes my book from the many that have come before; that the key element of 19<sup>th</sup> century American internationalism—culture—was also an important cause of the birth of anti-Americanism. European intellectuals considered American cultural power either as a beacon to a promising future or a mortal threat to Europe’s historic identity. American culture, therefore, was not a benign influence but a revolutionary force that dramatically changed the world but, ultimately, not without unleashing the greatest war in human history.

### **The Audience and the Author**

*America's World* is drawn from a major study I have organized at Columbia University entitled “Culture in Power Transitions: Sino-American Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” The project will examine the role of culture in the rise of global powers, or what academics refer to as “hegemonic states,” and will compare the uses of culture in the rise of the United States and China. The project is a multi-university effort supported by a three-year, \$1.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Defense Minerva Research Initiative. *America's World* represents the first of two books sponsored by my study and is intended to create a general framework clarifying how culture became an important instrument through which the United States could spread its influence globally. My second book will explore how America’s cultural challenge led to conflict with the other great powers of the international community: Great Britain, Imperial and Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and ultimately China. The project will revolutionize how

international affairs are studied because of our use of sophisticated data-analysis software called Computer Aided Text Analysis (or CATA). CATA programming enables scholars to analyze millions of pages of text within a relatively short time frame. It will also supplement our historical analysis with a quantitative data set about the role culture has played in America's rise in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and of China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The research behind this project meets the most rigorous academic standards; however, the implications of this study reach beyond academic or national security audiences; indeed, our conclusions will be tailored for audiences across a broad, inclusive spectrum.

*America's World* will be valuable to all: academics, policymakers, historians, but most importantly to laypeople who have a passionate interest in America's international competitiveness and who wonder if the United States can maintain its world power status in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since 9/11 the United States has been consumed by the highly emotional debates that have taken place around the world over America's proper role and concerns as to whether the American model can survive in the face of a rising China, demonstrating the general public's appetite for a book on this subject. The book will also appeal to a wide segment of history readers as it touches on a number of eras that have long interested the lay historian, such as my unique and controversial argument that the spread of American culture helped precipitate World War II.

In addition, *America's World* will appeal to international audiences. I have consulted with many experts on China and have been told that the Chinese are avid readers of any study on rising powers and that my book will hold great interest for them. These experts note that the Chinese are particularly concerned about how a nation can rise to power while avoiding war with currently established powers. Therefore, my

history of America's rise to power and discussion of China's possible future clash with the United States are topics of great importance to many Chinese readers and, especially, to the Chinese foreign policy establishment. In addition, Europeans also remain interested in better understanding the divisions and commonalities between Europe and the United States; one only has to look at the great success of Robert Kagan's book *Of Paradise and Power* as proof. Book tours in both China and Europe would likely generate significant interest in *America's World*.

This is not the first time I have written a work that challenges established, conventional wisdom. My previous book *Undermining the Kremlin* contested the prevailing, decades-old opinion that America's post World War II policy sought merely to contain Soviet expansion through a series of defensive military and economic measures. I argued to the contrary that, through the use of covert action and psychological warfare, the United States intended to precipitate the collapse of the Soviet regime at the outset of the Cold War. I also demonstrated that the evolving nuclear balance of power both stimulated and deterred American postwar policies. My study revolutionized how scholars looked at America's Cold War national security policy and received numerous favorable reviews. The prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs* described *Undermining the Kremlin* as "ambitious" and "adds considerably" to our knowledge of the era. Andrew Nagorski of *Newsweek* called the book "compelling" and "scrupulously researched." *Millennium: The Journal of International Affairs* published by the London School of Economics wrote that *Undermining the Kremlin* "is a very important book on the early Cold War." The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations awarded

my book the prestigious Stuart L. Bernath Book Prize for outstanding book on the history of American foreign affairs.

Since I based *Undermining the Kremlin* on my doctoral dissertation, I wrote it for an academic audience. This will not be the case with *America's World* with its broad themes and provocative arguments that will attract the same readership that has eagerly consumed Niall Ferguson's works, including his bestseller *Colossus* (Penguin Press, 2004) and his acclaimed *Civilization: the West and the Rest* (Penguin, 2011); Robert Kagan's bestselling work *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (Vintage, 2003); Fareed Zakaria's *Post American World* (W.W. Norton, 2008); and Adam Tooze's *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (Penguin, 2008) and its sequel *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1939* (Allen Lane, 2014). These books were prepared with academic rigor. Indeed, Tooze's works are massive volumes (848 and 609 pages respectively) comprising densely packed economic analyses of European history in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that are replete with dozens of charts and economic statistics, demonstrating that a wide audience exists for provocative historical work—even in a field as tedious as economic history. We see this today with the great success of economist Thomas Piketty's *Capital* (Belknap Press, 2014), which is a complex, 700-page academic treatise about capitalism's inherent economic inequalities that has become a *New York Times* bestseller. These works showcase that there is a significant market for challenging, multifaceted, historical and public policy works written for a popular readership. *America's World* will be written for this audience.

My academic work and professional experiences have provided me with the necessary background and standing to participate in today's policy debates. Along with writing an award-winning book, I have been awarded three highly selective fellowships in the field of foreign affairs—two at Harvard University: The Olin Institute of Strategic Studies and the Harvard Kennedy School; and at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. These fellowships have afforded me a priceless education and contacts with today's policy elites. While at Stanford, I assisted Secretary of State George Shultz with a major project to better understand anti-Americanism and how to ameliorate its effects; it was from this work that I developed my argument about the destabilizing nature of American cultural expansion. For the past six years I have been a Research Scholar at the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, which has a long tradition of supporting work in public policy and foreign affairs. My current project with the Department of Defense will not merely offer resources with which to write an exceptional book, but will also provide access to high-level national security decisionmakers with whom I will be able to interact and inform.

## **Chapter Outline**

### **Prologue: Life in an Americanized World**

You can't escape it; America's influence permeates the world. It is so taken for granted that we don't even notice just how much the world has adopted American

practices, indeed we don't realize that many practices—even the most trivial—now common in Europe, originated in the United States. American music has become the world's music, American movies are the world's blockbuster movies, American-style food can be found everywhere, even American Tex-Mex can be found in the leading cities of the world and even in the most out of the way places, like Belgrade, Tirana, or Tehran. American English has become the world's de facto lingua franca, the common language used by peoples from across the world; living in Europe I frequently hear broken English spoken between peoples of different nationalities. American phrases are now incorporated into foreign languages; in Croatia many people express their angry at something by saying “sad sam (now I am) *pretty pissed off*,” among other hilarious English-Croatian combinations.

Then extent of the world's adoption of American truly struck me when traveling through Copenhagen and Stockholm seeing Danish and Swedish teenagers milling around the many 7-Eleven convenience shops spread throughout both cities. It could have been any city in America, kids drinking slurpees, eating hotdogs and candy, reading magazines about the American movie stars with whom they were so enamored—they even spoke perfect American English full of “likes” and “ums” just like any teenager from Southern California—but it wasn't Southern California, it was Denmark and Sweden. Ironically, I doubt that any of these kids even understood just how “American” they looked and acted. But their ancestors would have recognized the differences and they would have been shocked at how different the teenagers of today are.

Many have written about how American culture has spread throughout the world but there is much debate as to how much, or even whether, it matters. Many scholars,

even cultural historians, who recognize the globalization of American culture consider its impact trivial, accepting the reality of America's cultural expansion but rejecting any belief that it mattered in a world measured by balances of power.

In *America's World*, I reject these conclusions; I contend that the spread of what I call America's disruptive cultural model, its ever-evolving political, economic, social, and cultural systems, were the primary influence driving world politics for the past two centuries. They forced dramatic changes in European society, changes that were so comprehensive that the Europeans invented a new word to define them, "Americanization," with numerous books and articles published throughout Europe and America examining how Americanization was transforming the world.

Americanization would result in much soul searching amongst the entire European political strata, from reformist who advocated for the adoption of America's ways to the nationalists who feared that "Americanization" threatened the very core of what it meant to be a "European," and finally to radical extremists who considered it such a threat that they advocated radical policies designed to cleanse Europe of this influence, even if it meant war. All sides recognized, however, that Americanization had by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century placed the United States at the center of the world leading to what we now call "the American Century."

## **PART ONE: The Origins American Internationalism**

### **Chapter One: Americanization and the American Century**



In 1941 with a world inflamed by war, *Life* magazine's publisher Henry Luce made an impassioned appeal for the United States to join the conflict before it was too late. The reason he gave, a reason so misunderstood today, is that it was America's responsibility to defend the world it had created, a world that existed in the American Century. The ensuing decades have led to many misconceptions regarding his meaning; was it an age of unbridled American military intervention, was it the launching of an American Empire?

My introduction offers a new interpretation of the American Century, what it really meant, its true importance to American history, and why its meaning has been misunderstood. The problem, I argue, lies with the often repeated fallacy that America's international presence first emerges in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the rise of American military and economic power. According to this fallacy, America would take its place as the world's leading nation only after World War II and create a new empire, an heir to Rome and Great Britain.

I contend that this narrative is wrong and instead of an empire America would create a new "global society" that would powerfully influence the world in ways an empire never could. It was this global society—a product of the American Century—that Luce implored the American people to protect against Hitler's depredation. In coining the phrase "The American Century" Luce simply warned that the United States needed to defeat Hitler because it was already America's world that faced destruction. Luce directly challenged America's "isolationists" who opposed American entry into the war because they believed that this was yet another European conflict into which the United States should not be dragged.

There is little denying the importance of Luce's article, however, those who exaggerate its importance do so because they fail to understand its true place in the history of American internationalism. The belief that it is America's historic duty to lead the world into a new era of peace and prosperity has existed since the beginning of the republic, indeed it was the hope of the founding fathers that the American revolution would spark a world-wide revolution that would overthrow the world's conservative, aristocratic governments. This idea would take a far more central role in the aftermath of the Civil War. America, having paid a horrific price to destroy the evil of slavery felt it had gained the right to release Europe from its own despotic bonds and enlighten the continent on the virtues of democracy.

Indeed, America would unleash a massive program to transform the world and create the global society Luce would extoll. But it wasn't the U.S. government that was at the epicenter of this great reformation. It was American civil society that would lead the charge: intellectuals, businessmen, artists, innovators of all stripes, would engage the counterparts in Europe seeking to demonstrate the superiority of American ways. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century their success was obvious, to the point that many feared the very concept of what it meant to be a European was under challenge. This was the heart of Americanization, not simply the adoption of American practices or the uses of American products, but the very transformation of a society and a people to begin to behave as an American might. Americanization so disrupted the existing world that it enabled a rapid expansion of American influence throughout Europe and Asia, influence that predated the global spread of American military power by decades. Thus the American Century is reflective not of America's military and economic dominance but of a world America had

created through the diffusion of its culture and the spread of its economic and political systems across the world.

## **Chapter Two: “Disruptive” Americanization**

In only a few decades America’s cultural model swept the world; a century and half later it continues to do so. What is it about the American model that first enabled it to challenge the aristocratic societies of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, inspiring a new generation to reject despotism and hereditary class structures, to consider republican forms of government and an economic model that encouraged economic production aimed for the general public, and arts and entertainment that appealed to the commoner. What was it about America’s cultural model that American influence continues to grow today, and has empowered the Americanization of the world and the continued longevity of the American Century?

I argue that to understand Americanization and the continued longevity of the American Century we must understand the disruptive nature of American power, that is, the willingness of the United States to adopt practices that intentionally seek to overthrow existing beliefs. Called disruptive innovation, throughout its history, American society has frequently embraced new ideas and new methods that overthrow previous versions. It is because of the continual transformation of American society and the constant spread of each American advance throughout the world, replacing earlier American innovations with newer versions, that the world has remained constantly Americanized. While a single American innovation might grow old and stale and be overtaken by an indigenous version, the constant series of innovations that America has exported: new cultural

products, political and business models, and technological advances, has kept America ahead of the rest of the world and maintained the Americanization of the world. This chapter will explore the meaning of disruptive innovation and its importance in the continued Americanization of the world.

## **PART TWO: CREATING AMERICA'S WORLD**

### **Chapter Three:**

#### **The Origins of the American Way**

In chapter three I pose a simple question: how did America's disruptive identity form? Why was it that this new nation, far more than any of its aristocratic competitors, would embrace a philosophy that favored upheaval over stability and the common man over the hereditary elite. To answer these questions one begins by recognizing that America was a country of transplants, people who left their home countries to create a new life in the North American continent. Fleeing the tyranny and repression of their homelands the first colonists came to America's shores to build a new world for themselves. Given the harsh conditions simply to survive they needed to create a wholly new society, much different from what they had experienced in England. There are five points that demonstrate how different they were.

First, in stark contrast to the Spanish experience in South America, the English colonists who had settled North America had no wealthy Native American civilizations from which they could plunder nearly limitless quantities of gold. Chasing visions of vast wealth, Spanish aristocrats battled for the right to be named viceroy of in the new Spanish

colonies, hence the transplantation of Spain's hierarchical society to the Americas. There were no such riches awaiting the English colonists, only a harsh eight-week voyage followed by a difficult struggle to survive, hardly appealing to London's aristocrats; those few aristocrats who did dare the voyage often returned soon thereafter. Consequently, the leaders of the new colonies came largely from men who were singled out—even elected—by the colonists themselves, although within the so-called “royal colonies” these leaders had to be approved by the Crown. As a result, England's hereditary aristocracy was not transplanted to the North America continent allowing for the eventual growth of an egalitarian society. With the advent of slavery in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Southern colonies would create their own hierarchical society, one based on the racial superiority of the white colonists over their African slaves creating an inherent conflict that would not be resolved until the American Civil War.

Second, these colonists were mostly outcasts, some fleeing religious persecution, but the majority seeking out a better life for themselves in the New World. Many were victims of England's notorious Enclosure Acts, laws passed by Parliament and supported by the Crown that combined England's small farms into huge fields in order to increase their productivity. In essence, these first colonists—America's first immigrants—were seeking a second chance at life, inspiring future generations of immigrants for centuries to follow. While their mother countries considered these American immigrants failures—or as historian Nancy Isenberg suggests “white trash,” people who did not possess the necessary upbringing and social status necessary for success and subsequently had to leave their homelands—the struggles of the New World made clear that potential failure lurked around every corner and that given the incredible difficulties they experienced and

the life and death nature of their existence, failure wasn't a mark of shame, but a setback to be overcome.

Third, given the vast distance between London and the New World and the subsequent disinterest of the English nobility to venture to the colonies, the first Americans created a country without the day to day supervision of the English crown, what came to be known as Britain's policy of "Salutary Neglect." These first colonists had to create new societies from scratch, communities designed to survive and prosper on the North American continent. This created a "do it yourself" sensibility based on the belief that that one cannot rely on the government for everything resulting in an American civil society that would propel the new nation forward in the future.

Fourth, playing without a safety net, the new colonists were forced to take great risks in order to survive, the first such risk being the voyage across the Atlantic itself, then the ordeal of arriving in a new world absent any comforts from civilization. Later, this type of risk taking would be emblematic of the first pioneers, who continued to explore the New World despite the unknown dangers that lurked.

Fifth, without the presence of the hereditary aristocracy or landed gentry, the colonists were able to develop a more egalitarian society that enabled people to rise to prominent positions in ways that would have been impossible in elite-driven Europe. We call this a Horatio Alger story, the rags to riches rise of the common man based on his own innate abilities rather than the station of his family within a society. This would be less so than in the South, nevertheless, this egalitarian ethic would make possible the rise of some of the greatest businessmen and inventors of the past century.

Therefore, desperate for a new start, these individuals flocked to the New World where many would die given the harsh conditions and climate of North America. The colonies survived because their members took dramatic risks and persevered despite hunger and disease that ravaged the early colonial period. Eventually they would successfully revolt against the English Crown, the most powerful country in the world in order to create a new nation based on these principles.

#### **Chapter Four: Europe Takes Notice**

With the end of both the Napoleonic Wars in Europe and the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain, many observers became curious of this new upstart, and intellectuals from across the continent came to the U.S. to examine this experiment: the most famous being Alexis de Tocqueville, but there were many others as well, including Britain's Frances Trollope and Germany's Nikolaus Lenau. Chapter Four will examine the writings of these first European investigators, what did they think of this new American society and how much of an opportunity or threat did they think it posed will conclude by exploring this first set of observations at what was becoming known as "the American experiment" and how they inspired the Revolutions of 1848, first wave of pro-democracy revolutions across Europe and immortalized by *Les Miserables*.

The Europeans were especially interested in the growing political crisis over slavery and whether the North and South could continue to find a way to compromise or was Southern secession inevitable. How this new nation, so full of promise, would handle the greatest problem of its short life would determine the fate of the American model.

**Chapter Five: EUROPE AND THE AMERICAN ARMEGGEDON**

On April 12, 1861 Confederate forces from South Carolina fired upon Fort Sumter, an act that ignited the American Civil War. The war became the most devastating war in American history. By the time Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox four years later, over 750,000 Americans lay dead and another 300,000 were wounded; much of the South lay in ruins. Economists have calculated the adjusted financial costs of the war at 64 *trillion* dollars.

Europeans were immediately enthralled, and horrified, by the ensuing battle and would avidly follow news reports as they were published. By the start of the war many in Europe had become disgusted with slavery and were genuinely appalled at its continued use in the Southern states. Yet, European manufacturers imported vast amounts of Southern cotton, so much so that these manufacturers, not to mention the European ports through which cotton was imported, would be especially hard hit with the loss of that trade. Europe was in a quandary as to whom to support. Throughout the war European newspapers provided their millions of avid readers with the very latest updates from the front lines, the Europeans had become absorbed with tales from the vast battle fronts spread across the United States.

Given the growing fear surrounding a rising United States many Europeans considered this war as an opportunity to break up a rising power before it could effectively challenge European interests throughout the world; support for the South was their obvious answer. European abolitionists saw this as the moment slavery might finally be destroyed and lobbied their governments to support the North. Others were simply horrified by the massive battlefield deaths the North and South suffered and called for



European peacemaking efforts. Had the Europeans intervened on the side of the Confederacy as some called for, the American experiment would have come to an end.

The chapter will explore the war's origins as a true "Clash of Civilizations," how the Europeans viewed the conflict once it began, and answer why the Europeans chose to not formally intervene to save the Confederacy and force a negotiated settlement of the conflict, knowing full well that in doing so they might just prevent America's rise to continue. Decades later, many Europeans would lament this lost opportunity.

### **Chapter Six: Entrepreneurs,**

#### **The "Ordinary" Giants Use Tesla as guide to discuss differences between US and European economic values—Discuss Ford through European eyes**

While many nations would have disintegrated due to such enormous costs the United States emerged a nation reborn. The North's victory coupled with the massive reconstruction efforts the nation faced, helped unleash a badly needed entrepreneurial spirit that would create an industrial revolution that would rebuild the nation and transform the world. The generation that emerged from the Civil War launched one of the greatest economic transformations in history, the rise of an economy based on mass consumption and mass production, an economy and society that valued opportunity and change. There is no better example of this attribute than the life of the Serbian inventor Nikola Tesla.

Born in what is now Croatia in 1856, Tesla was quickly recognized as scientific genius. By the age of 27 Tesla designed the induction motor, the first electric motor that would become the main drive unit for countless electric devices, from fans to pumps, to

elevators and other electrically-based machinery. Today, nearly one-third of the world's electrical supply fuels Tesla's induction motor. However, in 1883 when he first presented the motor in Strasbourg, France he found no interest from European investors. Friends insisted that his only option was to come to the United States, where he would make his home until his death in 1943.

The opportunities that this emerging American society offered Tesla are also evident in the lives of the other great entrepreneurs of the age and success of received in coming to the United States, especially business geniuses like Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Henry Ford.

Chapter six will explain why how what these figures pioneered commercial and scientific advances that could not be emulated elsewhere, indeed that they would likely never had the opportunity to try. Rockefeller was the son of known con-artist Bill Rockefeller, who made his meager living selling elixirs just as did the traveling salesmen of the we see in the great movie westerns. Cornelius Vanderbilt came from a poor family, quitting school at 11 years old to support his family. He would go on to build a commercial shipping empire and sell it to become king of the railroads. Andrew Carnegie was born in Scotland in a cottage with a single, main room shared with other families. They were largely destitute and in 1848 emigrated to the United States in order to find a better life and in the end, he created the greatest steel foundry in the world. Henry Ford was the son of Irish and Belgian immigrants, small farmers living in rural Michigan who built the automotive industry practically from scratch. These were not men born into wealth, power, or education like the "gentlemen" we see in depictions of Jane Austen novels. "These were hard working "tradesmen" the pejorative for people who had to

work in order to survive, building an ethic that would shape the new country for a century to come.

Europe recognized both the opportunity and threat that these innovators presented, fear in particular that the world economy that they were creating would revolutionize the world and cause upheaval throughout Europe. Awed by America's rapid industrial growth and the new technologies that were modernizing the nation, many in Europe felt it necessary to emulate the American model if Europe were to remain relevant in this emerging American age. Others feared the implications for the European way of life should American practices be transplanted across the Atlantic. As one of the leading pioneers behind of the mass consumption/mass production society, the assembly line, and rationalization of the work place, Henry Ford would become the symbol of Europe's impending ruin. They feared that Europe's beautifully designed automobiles would be replaced by America's simplistic Model-T, that production aimed for the masses would empower them to rise against the hereditary European aristocracy, and that workplace rationalization would turn humanity into robots merely repeating the same workplace movements in perpetuity. As we shall see in the following chapters, the disruption caused by Americanization would change the world.

### **Chapter Seven: Europe and the American Invaders**

With the scourge of slavery finally erased from the nation's conscience, America's intellectual and industrial entrepreneurs felt the time was right to promote America's emerging society. American intellectuals traveled to Europe hoping to convince Europe's finest that a republican form of government was inherently superior to

hereditary aristocracies. American businessmen spread throughout the European continent investing millions of dollars in European businesses, exporting vast amounts of American goods, and promoting trade fairs that crisscrossed the continent demonstrating the latest in American innovations. In turn, Europeans would come to the United States to study new American business practices. The phenomena that Europe had been observing at a distance for so many decades had now reached its shoreline—the “American Invaders” had arrived—and the Americanization of the world would soon follow.

It was already decades since the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, Nicholas Lenau, and Frances Trollope had circulated throughout Europe. The insatiability of late 19<sup>th</sup> century American business interests in Europe seemed to confirm the worst fears that Lenau and Trollope had warned of in their memoirs, while Tocqueville’s optimistic analysis of America’s future was by then dismissed as “sugar-coated.” Concerns grew that America’s businessmen were bringing with them an economic model based on the new concepts of mass production and mass consumption that would upend the European social order.

Chapter seven will explore how the process of Americanization first unfolded, focusing in particular on how Europeans reacted to the new American business and economic practices that for the first time were reaching the European shoreline —i.e., the first wave of Americanization to hit the world. It will examine how Europeans reacted when first confronted with radically new business concepts like mass production, mass consumption, and the assembly line. Would Europe choose to follow America’s path or would it resist the American way.

This chapter will demonstrate the extent to which exposure to these new American ways split European society. Many intellectuals viewed these new modes of production as a future for Europe to emulate, others considered this new vision terrifying. To match the productivity of the American assembly line, humanity would be reduced to automatons whose sole function was to work from morning until night, repeating the same tasks again and again like a piece of machinery. Consequently, books entitled *The American Invaders* or *The American Enemy* became bestsellers throughout Europe making ever more dismal predictions about what the new American century would bring.

Europe was faced with stark choices. With the growth of American economic prowess, it had become imperative for Europe to either emulate American methods or counter the American system if it were to match the burgeoning growth of the United States and avoid a rapid descent into economic and political irrelevance. The question was whether it was possible to match the United States and yet remain maintain traditional, European culture. For many European intellectuals, the American model would represent the end of European civilization and a descent into American barbarism. Extremist political forces coopted these concerns and made them a core part of their ideological rejection of the European establishment. As we shall see in the next chapter the rise to power of the Italian fascists, Soviet communists, and German Nazis after the disaster of World War I led to a major confrontation with the United States and World War II.

## Chapter Eight

### **Walter Lippmann America's World—Use Walter Lippman as guide to organize material **Rethink this****

As the great American journalist Walter Lippman observed, the 20<sup>th</sup> century opened with so much hope. A member of the Harvard's legendary class of 1910, Lippman and his cohorts helped to create many of the advances in science, technology, and business that were transforming the world; their confidence in mankind's future was enormous. However, in 1914 World War I erupted, a war that so many had thought impossible, a war whose devastation would rival the worst catastrophes in human history. The repercussions of this conflict would be felt for the rest of the century and would include the Great Depression and World War II.

A stalwart "Wilsonian" Lippmann witnessed the efforts made by his mentor, President Woodrow Wilson to keep the war from spreading across the Atlantic. However, incompetent German diplomacy, culminating in Germany's decision to launch unrestricted submarine warfare against all shipping to France and Britain, coupled with the massive support Britain and France received from Wall Street's bankers (equal to trillions when adjusted for GDP) compelled Wilson to support enter the war against Germany in 1917.

Wilson's negotiating failures at the Versailles Conference, where so many of his ideals and hopes for a new world order were discarded by the other heads of state, shocked and disillusioned Lippmann and convinced many America politicians to return to isolationism resulting in the infamous rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and America's refusal to join the League of Nations. Lippmann would never waver in his belief that

America must maintain its internationalism and became a prolific writer in defense of American internationalism

Yet, despite the American government rejection of internationalism, victory in war did lead to an upsurge in American prestige and influence. American bankers were Europe's creditors, American consumer goods were sold throughout Europe, America's production methods were being closely studied, and American culture had become immensely popular. Even Germany, now a republic, had come to the conclusion that it must cease being America's rival and instead tie its future to the United States.

But by 1932, Europe would turn it back on the U.S. and reject America as an example to follow. The Stock Market Crash of 1929 had led to the worst depression in recorded memory with many across the world—and in the United States—directly blaming American liberalism. Lippmann repeatedly made impassioned defenses of American liberalism, providing the public with best explanations of the Depression while seeking to understand the attraction of authoritarianism so evident throughout Europe and what many feared would for the United States.

However, in Europe, the extremist parties that had long hated America were now in positions of power throughout continent and moved to eradicate America's decadent influence. Their leading champion was Adolf Hitler, who believed a second world war with the United States inevitable, indeed necessary if Europe were to beat back Americanization. Lippmann worked tirelessly to get Americans interested in the catastrophe occurring in Europe. Eventually, the United States would enter the war, at the cost of over a million casualties and tens of trillions of dollars adjusted for the current GDP. The result was Armageddon, Germany's destruction, the collapse of all of

Europe's great empires, and total American supremacy. But America's victory in World War II did not automatically mean the restoration of the American social and cultural model in Europe. It would take another decade and the miracle known as the Marshall Plan for American liberalism to once again be seen by the world as a concept to emulate.

Chapter eight will examine the complex interplay between the growing Americanization of Europe, the rise of Hitler, and the two world wars that destroyed Europe's global leadership through the eyes of Walter Lippmann. Of all America's great 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectuals, Lippmann's writing were among the most influential in shaping American policy and explaining the intricate interplay between the process of Americanization, the Great Depression, and World War II. I end the chapter exploring Lippmann's new role in advocating for the Marshall Plan in order to reverse two decades of virulent anti-American rhetoric spewed by the Nazis, Italian Fascists, and Soviet communists to restore confidence in the American system, a confidence that was essential if America's new global supremacy was to survive its first great test: The Cold War with the Soviet Union.

## **PART THREE: DEFENDING AMERICA'S WORLD**

### **Chapter Nine**

#### **Robert Noyce and the Soviet Challenge**

A new challenger to U.S. primacy quickly emerged in the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Union, a country that believed itself to be the epicenter of an entirely



new social order that would overthrow America's capitalist society and position itself at the center of a new communist world order.

America's answer to the Soviet challenge demonstrated the importance of America's disruptive identity. Despite all of America's material advantages, the Soviet Union would rapidly catch up with America's scientific know-how in the immediate postwar period. The world was stunned that the Soviet Union could match American nuclear developments blow for blow, exploding its first atomic bomb in September 1949, a decade earlier than many had anticipated, then matching America's detonation of the "super," with its own the multi-megaton hydrogen bomb in 1955, followed only a few years later with the explosion of the 58 megaton "Tsar Bomba"—the Emperor's Bomb—the biggest nuclear detonation ever recorded—that demonstrated how easily this technology could lead to the world's destruction.

In 1957, for the first time, the USSR actually surpassed the United States in one of the most important technologies of the era—rocketry. On Oct. 4 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik into orbit, the first nation in history to launch a satellite into space. This achievement shocked the world and proved an immense blow to the prestige of the American system.

President Dwight Eisenhower desperately needed to respond to the Soviet triumph but worried that American science had fallen too far behind the Soviet Union to catch up. Eisenhower and his advisors feared that Sputnik meant that American had become a second class nation in the sciences, even doubting whether the American model could compete in the Cold War with a totalitarian nation that could mobilize its resources as it saw fit. Eisenhower would lament that whereas the Soviets could assign their best

students to the sciences, he could only hope to inspire Americans to do so. These fears, however, were quickly put to rest.

The response to Sputnik would come from the most unlikely place, a group of young scientists who worked in an area near San Francisco then mostly known for Stanford University and fruit orchards, what would soon be known as Silicon Valley. In one of the clearest displays of the strength of the American model, these young scientists—the infamous “Traitorous Eight”—revolutionized the electronics industry by developing the integrated circuit that enabled the navigation systems that allowed American intercontinental missiles to target the Soviet Union and guided the Apollo missions to the Moon. Eventually, it laid the foundation for the modern computer that changed the world. This example of American disruptive innovation, something that could never have been emulated elsewhere at that time, demonstrated both how America won the Cold War and, in particular, what set America apart from the world.

## **Chapter Ten**

### **Pax Nipponica meets the iPod**

As the Soviet threat to supplant the United States waned in the 1980s, a new challenger emerged, not a military threat like the USSR but a challenger who boasted a rival economic model which many believed would in fact surpass the United States. “Future historians may well mark the mid-1980s as the time when Japan surpassed the United States to become the world’s dominant economic power,” wrote Harvard professor Ezra Vogel, Director of the Center for U.S.-Japan Relations, in an article

entitled “Pax Nipponica.” Vogel was part of a growing consensus that believed the economic crises of the late 1970s had exposed the fundamental failure of the American model. Japan’s meteoric rise from a devastated nation to the world’s second largest and second most powerful economy was due to its radically different system which stressed conformity within Japanese society and cooperation between the government and private spheres in industrial trade policy, research, and development—concepts antithetical to the American model. It seemed clear to many that Japan’s cultural model—the cooperation between its private and public sectors, the conformity of its population, the homogeneity of its social norms—had led to a juggernaut that would force America’s individualist society to either emulate or risk fading into historical obscurity.

Vogel was far from alone in predicting a Japanese-dominated world. For nearly two decades, from the late 1970s to the late 1990s, numerous writings appeared, contending that a new era had emerged, that the American era would soon end. Hollywood would follow suit with movies like *Blade Runner*, *Die Hard*, and *Black Rain* picturing a Japan superior to its American competitors. Of course, this world never materialized.

Much has been written explaining why this future never occurred and how Japan’s rapid ascent led to a decade of stagnation, culminating today in China’s overtaking Japan’s position as the world’s second largest economy. Most attribute it to the bursting of the Japanese property bubble in 1993.

However, I contend in chapter seven that the story is not simply one of Japan’s stagnation but of the reemergence of America as the most dynamic and innovative economy in the world because of its ability to embrace the disruptive change that the

Japanese could not. For instance, American corporations like Sun Microsystems were willing to risk their futures on the new personal computer, while Japanese companies remained focused on the staid mainframe and mini-computer markets. But the differences between the U.S. and Japan were even more profound.

These distinctions can be summed up on one question: How is it that Sony, one of the most advanced conglomerates in the world comprising world-renowned music, film, and technology divisions never thought of creating the iPod, the device that would lead to the first great technological and social revolutions of the new century. Instead, it would be a moribund Apple that would create this revolutionary device which in turn, just a few years later, spawned the iPhone—and even more disruptive technology. Within a few short years, Apple would become the largest company on Earth and the world would never be the same. Soon other dynamic companies would follow: Google, Amazon, and Facebook to name only a handful, the new age of tech came with a heavy American accent and would reinvigorate the American era.

## Chapter Eleven

### **China: A New Specter from the East Improved Chinese production capabilities, new type of industrial age?**

While there is no doubting China's remarkable ascent over the past several decades, chapter eight will try to determine: What does China's perceived rise truly mean to the world and to America's global preeminence? Does its "authoritarian" model of economic development offer a true competitor to American liberalism? This debate has focused almost solely on China and its future; few scholars, however, reference the other

half of the equation: The United States. America's disruptive culture has resulted in the electronics and social media revolutions. Indeed, these examples prompt a crucial question: Can a China become a world leader in innovation if it considers Facebook and other American social media such a threat that it must block their use in China? My answer is that it is impossible for any nation to become a leading innovator if it fears the products of its innovation.

The American cultural model is uniquely attuned to create the type of disruptive innovations that have advanced the world over the past century, indeed, the greatest century of ever accelerating innovation in history. That the Chinese political leadership fears the destabilizing impact of the free flow of information gives us a starting point from which to assess the degree of China's future challenge to America. A similar debate occurred in the Soviet Union with the advance of computer technology, and attempting to keep pace with the United States brought the Soviet system to its knees. Similarly, China's fear of political instability forced it to adopt measures that are strangling its country's innovativeness. To counter this, the Chinese government is expending great resources building cyber-attack capabilities that allow it to steal massive volumes of information without having to spend the necessary time in product development. That is not, however, real, indigenous, innovation, indeed, any nation that relies on such methods will always find itself several steps behind a highly innovative opponent like the United States. I will explore how America's great innovation machine will answer the Chinese challenge, as it did the Japanese challenge, and ensure the continuation of the American Century.

## Chapter Twelve

### Islamic Extremism: “Why do they Hate Us”

On September 11, 2001, a date that no American then living will ever forget, thousands lost their lives in one of the deadliest terror attacks ever. Throughout the ensuing years Americans have repeatedly asked “why do they hate us,” and “what can we do to lessen that hatred?” This has inspired a major debate within the U.S. foreign policy community between those who contend that the attacks were motivated by a desire to force the withdrawal of American combat forces from the Middle East and others who believe they resulted from a broader fear of American cultural penetration of the region. Chapter twelve will demonstrate how Islamic extremism comes from the same roots that fueled 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century European radicals, the fear of Americanization uprooting a once proud cultural and national identity. This is highly contentious argument in current American foreign policy circles.

All agree that the planners of this terrible act were Islamic extremists who had become consumed with hatred for the United States. These radicals denounce, what they claim are, America's efforts to dominate the world and its frightening ability to spread “decadent” American culture throughout the Middle East. But American interests in Saudi Arabia—the holy land of Islam—were key to their radicalization. After the first Persian Gulf War, Presidents Bush and Clinton authorized the stationing of thousands of American troops to protect the Saudis from a revanchist Sadaam Hussein who they feared might strike against Saudi Arabia in order to avenge his defeat in the first Persian Gulf War. The presence of these thousands of foreigners incensed these radical groups, especially since they included women in positions of authority—and who could drive

automobiles. Their response was to strike at the West, hitting the most important symbol of American capitalism—the World Trade Center. First came a truck bombing effort in 1993, followed by the successful attacks in 2001, which in turn led to the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq inflaming the Middle East for the next decade.

University of Chicago Professor Robert Pape, a noted scholar in the field of international relations, argues that the rise of Islamic extremism and its use of suicide bombing is directly related to the occupation by Western military forces of the Middle East in general and Saudi Arabia in particular. According to Pape, Islamist strategists have used these suicide attacks to try to force the withdrawal of American forces from the Holy Land and, eventually, the entire Middle East. Once those forces are withdrawn, the suicide attacks will subside.

Middle Eastern scholars believe that Pape is focusing far too narrowly on tactics at the sake of long-term strategy. The late Middle East scholar Fouad Ajami among others, argued instead that the origins of Islamic extremism can be traced decades before the deployment of American forces in the Middle East. The leaders of Al Qaeda: Osama Bin-Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Khalid Sheik Mohammed, were themselves influenced by another radical Islamist, an Egyptian scholar named Sayyid Qutb who years earlier had studied in the United States. From 1948-1950 he attended Colorado State Teachers College in the town of Greeley, Colorado—those two years changed the Middle East.

Far from inspired by the American dream, Qutb was horrified about what he considered American's lack of morals, its soulless society, its individual freedoms, free market system, and its "animalistic mixing" of the sexes. Upon his return to Egypt he published *The America I have Seen*, a searing critique of American society based on a

grotesque mischaracterization of U.S. history; unfortunately, that immensely popular book would lay the foundation for radical Islamic anti-Americanism, culminating in decades of upheaval in the Middle East.

I contend that far from being unique, the story of Sayyid Qutb is yet another version of the pattern that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Europeans wrote about their visits to America, many of them damning indictments about American society. We have already seen how these parallel condemnations became the foundation for Europe's own extremist parties culminating in the rise of fascism. Just as American culture permeated Europe, so too does American culture today pervade the Middle East where anyone with a satellite dish can watch American television, where shopping malls exist allowing Middle Easterners to buy the latest Western fashions, and where books about American politics proliferate. Indeed, the Arab Spring is itself the by-product of this cultural penetration and a clear counterpoint to the radical Islamist threat.

Therefore, in Chapter twelve, I will examine this critical question: is Islamic radicalism a byproduct of American culture or a reaction to American policies—or some variant of both. I will demonstrate that the answer is a variant of both arguments, while the great Islamist thinkers were clearly motivated by the writings of Sayyid Qutb and have expressed a visceral hatred for the United States, their tactics have focused on exploiting American policy miscues and the concentration of forces in Islamic territory to mobilize followers to carry out acts of terrorism.

Yet, while both arguments have merit, it is not equal merit. Without Sayyid Qutb there might not be an Islamist threat today. It was his denunciation of American policy, much like the European radicals only decades before, that inspired the great challenge to



the United States. He and his followers are motivated by a fear of America's disruptive identity, that the spread of American culture spells doom to traditional Islamic society, and that only a return to the life under the first four "Rashidun"—or righteously guided—Caliphs from the seventh century will save Islam today. As long as American culture pervades the Middle East, this threat will not abate. The questions this leaves us is what might the United States do to dampen this extremism, and how can the United States use its successful penetration of the Middle East against the radical extremists?

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **Defining America's Place in History**

This book began with a discussion of what American power represents; namely, does American power and influence constitute an empire. Throughout the previous chapters I have argued that American power is far different from that of previous great power and empires, that it is indeed a unique power in history, perhaps not the exceptional nation is often claimed but something quite different nonetheless. But many disagree contending that America is indeed an empire that will follow the same trajectory as have all past empires. As discussed earlier, Niall Ferguson is one of these dissenters, but the most prominent is Paul Kennedy.

In 1988 Kennedy published his epic work *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* where he outlined what he considered the inexorable pattern that all great powers and empires have followed throughout history, a pattern that he contended the United States was emulating. Great powers, Kennedy argued, followed an inevitable trajectory of expansion beyond what their resources can bear, resulting in economic overextension and

military overstretch resulting in the inevitable decline of that great power relative to other powers in the world. The United States, burdened by heavy defense spending during the four-decade Cold War with the Soviet Union, could soon follow that path unless it balances its economic investments with its military spending.

It's been nearly thirty years since Kennedy published this world-famous study, but the debates continue even today. Many disagreed with his findings and overtime even Kennedy himself has stepped back from his harshest predictions, recognizing that the military burden the United States had to shoulder was but a fraction of that of previous great powers. Nevertheless, Kennedy raised the specter of America's "relative decline" particularly in conjunction with other rising powers, like China, and while many criticized his argument, it resonates to this day. Is America a nation in decline? The answer is no, but not for the reasons Kennedy's critics contend.

My argument is that America's cultural model spread before America emerged as a true world power, therefore, the traditional indices of power—economic and military—explain only part of the story. America's growing global influence first emerged as a consequence of its social, political, and economic model and how millions across the world yearned for its adoption in their own countries. The American era began decades before the United States had built the dominant military force we have come to associate with it. Furthermore, America's disruptive identity, in particular its eagerness to embrace radical new technologies and ideas, alters our ability to predict the future. Who could have predicted the integrated circuit, the personal computer, or social media? Therefore, do these histories from past centuries truly mean anything in an age of radical innovation?

Chapter thirteen will examine these questions asking in particular, how does America really stand with the great powers and empires of the past? What of its future? I will contend that America must be considered a truly unique nation because it has literally broken the mold on what it means to be a great power. The hold of America's culture and the influence of America's model remains fully entrenched around the world; as Henry Luce contended on the eve of World War II "American civilization" has become a global civilization. In essence, America has redefined what it means to be a great power and any challenger will have to do much more than challenge the military and economic power of the United States in order to overtake it. They will have to create their own, attractive model capable of unseating America's or they will simply remain a great power in an American world.

### **Conclusion: Disruption, Americanization, and the Future of the America's World**

The irony of the American Century is that its greatest strength could also be its greatest threat. Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American leaders have charged the nation with spreading the American system—or, as they called it, the American way of life—throughout the world. As we have discussed earlier the world has changed dramatically since the rise of American power in the aftermath of the American Civil War, after great struggle republican governments have been established on every continent, American manufacturing methods have been adopted throughout the world, and American culture remains the world's culture. One would conclude that the process of Americanization as discussed in this book would lead to a leveling of the world making it easier for other nations to surpass American power as they won't have to

burden themselves with rediscovering the wheel. Many books have been published of late arguing exactly that point, for instance, Thomas Friedman's book *The World Is Flat*, or Friedman's co-authored work with Michael Mandelbaum *That Used to be Us* both of which argue that the world has caught up to the United States. We see this as well with those who stress the rise of Asia and conclude that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the Asian Century.

However, these works miss a critical point. Other nations might be able to catch up by embracing Americanization (whether they admit it or not) but what has driven American advancement is the willingness to adopt disruptive innovation that has made possible the great leaps that have defined the American era. This poses several questions. Can either America's allies and adversaries adapt to the rapidly changing international environment as the U.S. has shown it can? Is it possible for an authoritarian model of economic development, championed by China and Russia, to advance rapidly enough to challenge American primacy over the course of the next few decades? Will an authoritarian model be able to create disruptive innovations that could usurp the American model? What about the future of Europe, or a potentially resurgent Japan? And what of the United States, what might be the next wave of disruptive innovations that will empower the American Century into the future?