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The World in 1900s

Wiki Paper

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The 1900s a World of Change (1880 to 1914)

The 1900s was a time of great change. The world had finally become truly globally connected. A person could now travel across the world by steam boats, railways, cars, and planes. If you could not travel to the place or wished to tell your friends about your trip, there were telegraphs and postcards to help you tell them sooner or show them. Power was also moving the last of the old empires would soon start to see their demise in the horizon and desperately cling to what was left. While the old powers were weakening they also were witnessing the rise of new empires and global powers. The 1900s were truly an era of mobility and endless change

The Old and Rising Powers

The Global Policemen (Great Britain)

Great Britain was starting over. Its kingdom was wondering how much longer she could maintain a hold on her colonies. In 1857 the Indian Nation rebelled against their British rulers. The crown jewel of Britain was forcibly trying to remove herself and shine on its own. For years Britain rule had gone unchallenged. The Boer wars would then follow in 1899 again challenging



Citation 12

the power of this great empire. Winning only after taking heavy losses and committing many atrocities. The world later discovered the real toll that the war took on

Britain. They started to wonder who would surpass her.

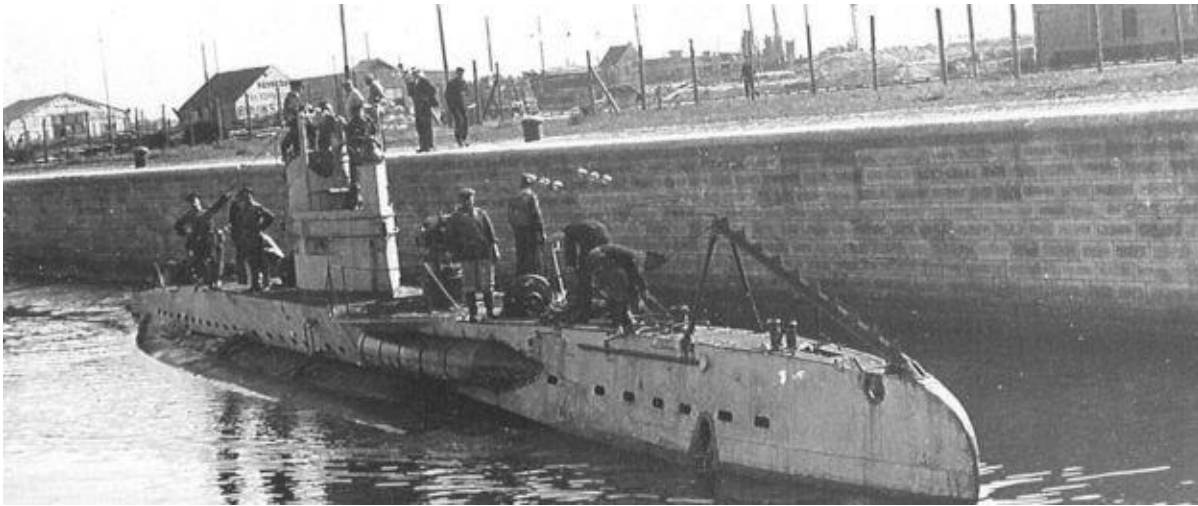
To make up for the Indian rebellion the British Empire started building railroads and telegraphs improving travel and communication around India. Making it much easier to mobilize a force if India was to rebel again. Still by 1880 the British Empire had built “nine thousand miles of railroad... [and] twenty thousand miles of telegraph”.¹ This infrastructure would later help India become more unified and provide an infrastructure for independence, but for now it was a way for the British to place a firmer hold on India.

While firming their hold on India in the southern part of the British Empire Gandhi started to organize Indians in South Africa. Gandhi campaigned against the treatment of colored men in Southern Africa. These colored men did not include the African community. Gandhi was

¹ Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 251-252

an advocate of nonviolence movements, and he successfully managed to create an idea of Indian identity in South Africa that was against British rule and had equal treatment among their white counter parts in the empire.²

The Late European Power (Germany)



Citation 8

Germany saw its self-growing in power and with their young nation defeating France in 1871 in the Franco – Prussian war they were ready to prove their power. Germany came in late to the Industrial Revolution, but she still managed to boast one of the most rapidly growing economies and industrial producers of Europe and the world. To prove their power, Germany needed a slice of Africa to start the process of colonization. Doing as many other European empires before, they justified it by “claiming that it Christianized the heathen[s]... [or that it brought] everyone the miraculous benefits of free trade”.³ Really these nation just needed resources to fund their booming industries.

² Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1987), 288

³ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1998), 38

This young power quickly found itself butting heads with England. Germany going so far as to refuse the idea disarming its navy in The Hague Conference. To make things worse the Germans bases were all opposite of the British. There was no way around it, the German navy was preparing for a battle with the British navy.⁴ Thus starting a power struggle with England and her navy as Germany expanded its own navy. This was not the end of struggles Germany's growth would face. Germany was in an arms race with Russian which had created a huge tension between these powers.⁵

The Republic (France)

Another old power was finding itself caught in a similar problem as Britain. France started controlling areas much too large to be ruled directly by their Republic.⁶ France originally planned to expand and create a larger French state. In 1895 France founded the



Citation 6

Federation of French West Africa, solidifying their control and shifting control from the military to civilians.⁷ Algeria managed to adopt this ideal, but as the French Empire expanded slowly the French stopped giving civilians rule and kept them under Military controlled areas. Not only because of them stretching their resources, but also because of fear that too many black Frenchmen would control France.

⁴ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, 319

⁵ Niall Ferguson, "Sinking Globalization," *Foreign Affairs* (2005)

⁶ Collins, *A history of Sub-Saharan Africa*. 301

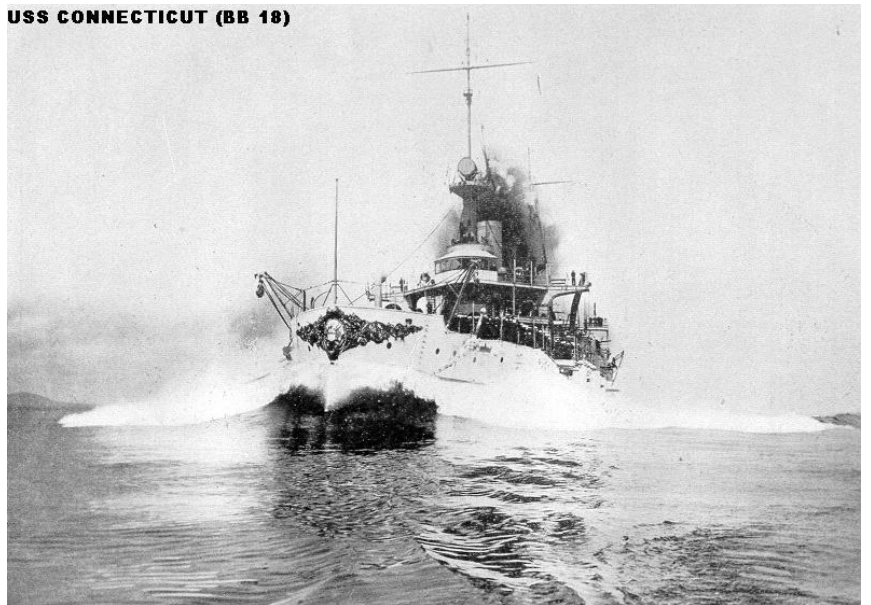
⁷ Gamble, *Contesting French West Africa*, 1.

The Wind from The West (United States)

Across the ocean the United States had finished their Civil War, and needed to re-invent who they were. The Industrial Revolution had started to take full swing. The Americans soon found themselves a rising power in a world of European rule. The United States entered war with Spain on April 1898 coming out the victors in August 1898. This war marked the end of Spain being a world power and the rise of the United States. The victory over the Spanish gave America colonies and America also became an imperial country with the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

With a new need for a Naval Force to monitor their colonies, ships needed to be built and then they would be tasked with traveling the globe. The showing of naval power and travel was called a “crude and untimely flexing of American muscle”.⁸ As a new nation that has just entered the worlds power arena a flexing of muscle could be needed

USS CONNECTICUT (BB 18)



Citation 11

when everything is changing. On another hand Roosevelt wanted the ships to be seen it was an “exercise ...of public relations: it would popularize the nation”.⁹ The United Sates is rising in a

⁸ James R, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet* (Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1988),24

⁹ James, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*,13

world of declining powers and a showing of power would not only help keep diplomatic relations stay in check, but also show the people that their nation is strong. The cruise of the new battleships was not meant to be threat to anyone. Rather a showing of the advancement in technology created by the arms race between the old and new world powers. Proving that the United States was just as capable as any of the old empires.¹⁰

The Wind from The East (Japan)

Japan had witnessed the fall of China to foreign powers and quickly started to fear for its own sovereignty. Before witnessing the fall of China to foreigners, Japan had been opened by the United States in 1853 when American battle ships sailed in and forcibly established trade with Japan. In order to prevent being taken over by foreigners Japan quickly found itself modernizing. Quickly what used to be agricultural land was destroyed and turned into factories. Japan grew so quickly that by 1904 industrialization matched their agriculture industry.¹¹

Citation10



¹⁰ James, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet* 163

¹¹ "TOKYO IN 1904 AND 1905." In *Consul in Japan, 1903-1941: Oswald White's Memoir 'All Ambition Spent'*: Renaissance Books, 2017. 28

With a huge industrial power Japan wanted to test its might and in 1905 they went to war against Russia. That same year Japan defeated the Russian Baltic fleet.¹² Japan had been the first non-white power to defeat a European power. This sent shock waves all over the world and placed Japan as a new world power and a fear to the old powers. Yet another rising power showed itself with the naval power to defeat a European nation.

The Japanese military and industry was not the only parts modernizing so were its cities. The roads had electric tram lines along them making transportation quick and efficient. One could travel Japan's largest city, Tokyo, in around 18 minutes.¹³ The cities were not the only places modernizing. The farmers were as well. With a new market to provide for, plus their own, farmers needed new techniques. Farmers were experimenting with their crops. Mixing soil from different parts of the island, trying new seeds, and new techniques for growing crops all to keep feeding a growing market.¹⁴ They adopted more western methods of farming to maximize the crop output and moved to hardier seeds. Japan was modernizing every aspect of life in order to keep up with the Westerners and as the nation grew Japan would also become a bigger factor in the world.

The Effects of a Changing World

The 1900s was an era of great change and possibilities. Every nation was either trying to maintain its power or where new powers trying to get a hold of what was left and expand their influence. This made the world of the 1900s hectic and full of possibilities. In the words of Christopher Clark, "policy-making was not the prerogative of single sovereign individuals.

¹² Emerson, *1913: in search of the world before the Great War*. New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2014.411

¹³ "TOKYO IN 1904 AND 1905." In *Consul in Japan, 1903-1941: Oswald White's Memoir 'All Ambition Spent'*. 27

¹⁴ Dore, "Agricultural Improvement in Japan: 1870-1900." , no. 1 (1960) .70

Initiatives with a bearing on the course of a country's policy could and did emanate from quite peripheral locations in the political structure. Factional alignments, functional frictions, within government, economic or financial constraints and the volatile chemistry of public opinion all exerted a constantly varying pressure on decision-making processes".¹⁵ The world was changing and all the factors that created alliances whereas unstable as the powers that ruled over this era. The British Empire was being challenged by its most loyal colonizes, new players in Europe like Germany where growing rapidly and wanted a piece of the Colonial pie, France was also out stretching itself and losing the ability to maintain its republic ideals in colonies and the idea of one giant united France, The United States had taken out a world power and replaced it, claiming its mantle as a new world power, and Japans defeat of a European nation shocked the world giving it the respect it deserved as a world power. The 1900s was an era of changes as old and new powers struggled to maintain or expand their standing.

Word Count: 1714

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¹⁵ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*. New York: HarperCollins, 2013.168

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