

William Tyler | America Faces East | 05.24.23

- Welcome everybody and welcome back, another wonderful week ahead of us. Life is opening up here certainly, and I believe the same is happening in London and the South Africans are being vaccinated and there's a cease in Israel. So things certainly are looking up, thank you. Over to you, William, and thank you.

- Thank you very much, Wendy. And here it's evening really, 5:30. So good evening or good and some of you it's good morning. So wherever you are and whatever time it is you're listening, you are more than welcome. And as Wendy said, I'm going to talk under the title America Looking East, it's America's engagement with Asia, beginning in the late 1890s and ongoing into the 21st century. Now often history is important to tell us why we are where we are at present, and in this case I think it's very interesting and very important to try and get underneath some of the American foreign policy as regards to Asia, but I'm not going to begin like that.

I'm going to begin, for those of you who are Trekkies, for those of you who follow Star Trek, and I'm going to read you those famous lines, "Space the final frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise. It's five year mission to explore strange new worlds to seek out new life and new civilizations to boldly go where no man has gone before the final frontier." The concept of a frontier is a part of American DNA, it was first articulated by the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893. Turner put forward a thesis that America's whole attitude was different than that attitude of Europeans because of the frontier, the ever expanding frontier from the East Coast to the West Coast and he argued that the American frontier established liberty by releasing Americans from European mindsets and eroding old dysfunctional customs.

He said "That American progress had repeatedly undergone a cyclical process on the frontier line as society is needed to redevelop with its movement ever westwards." Everything in American history said Turner up to the 1880s, note the date up to the 1880s, a moment or so ago, I said, America's story in Asia is the 1890s to 2021. Turner's idea of the frontier he said, "Right up to the 1880s, everything in American history up to the 1880s somehow relates to the western frontier." and that's a very most important thing to grasp hold of. The concept of a frontier linked in American DNA with the concept of manifest destiny, which goes right back of course, to the 17th century in the Puritans who arrived in a new world ready to build a new Jerusalem set upon a hill, as they said in Boston.

Now, Turner's theory and analysis of American history, you will not be surprised to hear, has been subject to academic criticism, and a lot of people have got a lot of PhDs writing about Turner's thesis and showing to disprove it, but it seems to have had and taken on a life of its own, it's part at the very least of popular American culture as evidenced by that piece in Star Trek. I feel that very few people when I've spoken about it in Britain have got the significance of that words in Star Trek, the final frontier.

But I wonder how many Americans got the illusion there as well to the frontier concept of Turner.

I think the concept of frontier is still useful in explaining American policy. For example, some American historians today talk about a scientific frontiers right up to of course the modern day of the internet and so on in California. I think using the phrase frontier as a tool of analysis, you can use it in many circumstances, of course it has limitations, but for me, the idea that Turner said it had ended in 1880 because America was now one East Coast, West Coast, the railway line and so on. But I wanted to expand that and say it begins to explain American policy outside of America itself as having reached the West Coast.

American frontiers advance across the ocean, they advance into Asia and I think that's rather important, why did it advance into Asia? Well, for first and obvious thing, Asia was a lucrative trading partner for America as it was a lucrative trading partner for Europeans, but it was far more accessible by America and thus America regarded it as something that it had a right to and perhaps a greater right to the Europeans, even if European empires have reached it before the Americans saw the opportunities business-wise in Asia.

But they also saw a potential threat from Asia, a potential threat to the West Coast from an enemy in Asia, hence a American Pacific fleet and all that story that we know. Interestingly of course, even in World War II, there were only two very tiny examples of the Japanese actually engaging in fighting, not actually on either in the air or off the American coast. In February, 1942, a Japanese submarine attacked targets near Santa Barbara, this led to the Americans interning Japanese Americans, they saw the Japanese as a fifth column in just the same way as Britain had intern Germans in 1940. So in 1942, the Americans intern Japanese and of course pulled in many Japanese Americans who were totally loyal to America as indeed Britain did by interning Germans who were totally loyal to Britain. Many of them in Britain actually Jewish, which is a very strange part of the story.

If you want to know more about the attack on Santa Barbara, you can see Stephen Spielberg's film 1941, which he made in the late 1970s. The only other attack from Asia onto American soil took place in September 1942 when a Japanese plane dropped incendiary bombs on a forest area in Oregon, which was hardly likely to lead to an American immediate surrender. But nevertheless, in the end of the 19th century, America thought it needed to be able to defend its West Coast. Hence later, as we shall see in a moment, its development of the harbour at Pearl Harbour for the Pacific Fleet. So that's how it starts and it starts in the 1890s.

This is an American historian and George Herring in a big lengthy book, but I think an extremely good one. It's not one to read if you want to go to street quickly, it's called the American Century and Beyond, and by it's by George Herring, I'll put these on my blog tomorrow. And Herring writes this, "What was once called the Spanish American War." the war of 1898, when Spain and America went to war. "What was once called the Spanish American War was the pivotal event of a pivotal decade, bringing the large policy of America to fruition and marking the United States as a world power." This is a turning point, it's the Spanish American War, "Come on William, what on earth has that got to do with Asia?" It's the Spanish possessions in Asia and specifically the Philippines, which turns American history.

Herring says "The pivotal event of a pivotal decade." the large policy of a politician, the Republican president, William McKinley of a greater America, a stronger America, its industry and economy is burgeoning and it now wants its place in the power struggles of the world. Herring goes on to say, "The war that is the Spanish American War itself has being reduced to comic opera, it's consequences to missed as an aberration." He said, "That's entirely wrong, we should not view the Spanish America War as some side effect, something that's isn't important, a side event with sort of humorous bits and pieces in it. No, we shouldn't do that." He says, "This is wrong, such interpretations ignore the extent to which the war in its consequences represented." He says, "A logical culmination of major trends in 19th century American foreign policy." and then a key sentence. "It was lesser case of the United States coming upon greatness almost inadvertently then I be pursuing its destiny." There's that word again, manifest destiny. It's destiny, deliberately and purposefully.

So Herring argues, and I must say I agree with him, American did not acquire imperial status by accident. I mean the same as being said with the British Empire that we acquired it in a moment of distraction. Both are quite untrue, both Britain and America acquired imperial possessions as a decided policy. America and Britain both had an underlying reason, which is economic, if you were wishing to be of the woke generation today, a young historian, whether British or American or whatever would describe this as exploitation, I'm not sure that we should. That word carries a lot of luggage, it's simply economic, let's leave it at that.

This expanding frontier then during the Spanish American War advances from the West Coast into the Pacific and something else important has happened at this juncture. At this juncture, there is a poem which is very non PC written by Rudyard Kipling when he was living in the States, you remember he married an American woman and rather disliked his American in-laws, I'm afraid. But he wrote a poem called "The White Man's Burden", and the crux of it was that the British Empire was finished and it was handing on the duties of Britain as an imperial power to the Americans. And in a book, which is a British publication called "How It Happened in America", which is a book called "Firsthand Accounts", there's this little sentence introducing a whole passage on the 20th century. "If the 19th century belonged to Britain, the 20th century was America's, to astute observers this was clear at the outset." and one of those astute observers was Kipling living at that moment in America, who saw that there was a change happening.

This is 15 years before the First World War, which most people would indicate is the handover of power from Britain to America? No, no, no. It begins now in the 1890s and it begins with the Spanish-American War and in particular in the Philippines, nearer home the American supported Cuba independence, Cuban independence, now independence from Spain. In the Philippines many people thought the Americans were going to do the same, but they didn't, the Philippines have been ruled by Spain for 333 years.

There was a common saying in the Philippines, by the time we get to second half of the 20th

century, which said "We spent 300 years in a Spanish monastery and we spent 50 years in an American whore house." because the Americans, although they went in to defeat the Spanish, never left. You remember, I'm sure the Americans remember, and other people I guess do also that it was a naval victory overwhelmingly that in Manila Bay, Commodore Dewey of the American Navy on board USS Olympia in a matter of hours defeated a Spanish squadron, the Spanish Pacific Squadron under Admiral Montojo, it was a complete and total American victory.

But there was a problem as soon as the Americans had defeated the fleet, other people turned up in particular the Germans. This is 1890 or 1898, this is the 1890s. In 1890, the Kaiser had dismissed Bismarck and now was well into belt politic, world politics, demanding that Germany should have its place in the sun and Germany's indication was that the Americans would be beaten by the Filipinos, if not by the Spanish, and Germany would move in to claim the Philippines. Now, the Americans clearly were very unhappy about such a situation, and instead the Americans went on to take the complete surrender of all Spanish forces in the Philippines and didn't leave. In Cuba they left and handed over power to the Cubans, the Filipinos expected part to be handed to them. It was not handed to them, and the Americans fight the Filipino freedom movement.

But of course, as we well know, the Philippines becomes an imperial possession of America and remains so until after the Second World War. That wasn't the only place the Americans gained control, like the British, Islands were quite important in those days for naval base and later of course for aircraft base and the base the Americans got was Guam. Now they did take Guam almost by accident on route to the Philippines when additional troops were being sent from America to the Philippines. They were diverted by sealed orders to take Guam and they captured it pretty well without a fight. So Guam and the Philippines, by the end of 1898 are American. But that wasn't the only place that became American, there had been ongoing situation in Hawaii since 1893.

There was an attempt by the monarchy in Hawaii in 1893 to introduce a new constitution, but the kingdom of Hawaii was overthrown three days later by Hawaiians, no, no, no, by five Americans, one Englishman and a German. Of course, there were those in Hawaii who wanted to overthrow the monarchy, but the main rust came from these businessmen seeing Hawaii as an opportunity to make money and that was 1893. And there was hesitancy in America politically to take Hawaii, they'd had good relations with the monarchy in Hawaii prior to 1893.

But in 1897, McKinley as the president now decides that annexation might be possible, but he can't get through the Democratic vote in Congress and it's rather sort of dropped. But in 1898, the Americans are fighting Guam, are fighting in the Philippines, and Hawaii suddenly becomes of interest to them, why? 25% of the population of Hawaii in 1898 are Japanese and the Americans worry about the increasing militarization of Japan, which in 1905 is to lead to Japan, defeating Russia in the Russo-Japanese War. And the Americans are very worried that the Japanese might seize Hawaii and use Pearl Harbour as a base and then be within striking distance of California and the West Coast of the states.

And so finally in 1898, McKinley is able to get the annexation bill through Congress and in July, 1898, Hawaii officially becomes a territory of the United States. So you can see that they're moving out and they're protecting their trade interests. They've got a full base in the Philippines and a lot of trade, they've got staging posts in Hawaii where the Pacific Fleet is to be based and they've got Guam and of course later in the 20th century, that's important in terms of airfields as well. So by the turn of the century, 1900, America's role in Asia looks not much different than European countries Britain, Germany, France, or even an Asian country like Japan. Everyone's got an interest, what about China?

Well, China's in a state complete collapse, the monarchy is teetering towards total collapse. There is no real control in China, China is light years behind everyone. These European power and the Japanese are trying to carve up China for their own economic purposes, Americas missed out because it's been fighting the Spanish in 1898. But in 1900 the Americans take part in the squashing of the Boxer Rebellion alongside these other European powers and Japanese. America is making a statement in 1898 in the Philippines in 1900, the Boxer Rebellion, we are a major power and need to be seen to be a major power in Asia.

America had kept out of the Napoleonic war, America kept out of European affairs largely, why? Because many European nationalities were represented in America and Americans fear that if they didn't accept being American, but still sorted themselves as British or German or Polish or whatever, they would import into the United States, the divisions of Europe. But of course, when war did come in Europe in 1914, America did stand aside, but it seemed unlikely that it would be able to stand aside. And in 1917, as everyone knows, America entered the First World War, you might say reluctantly and proportionately, it lost a lot of its young men and as we're in a pandemic at the moment, it lost so many young men have flew before they even got to the shores of Europe. And families had been promised that if they died in battle, their bodies would be brought home, but so many died on the ships taking them to Europe, they just dropped the bodies over the side of the ships.

And then we get the end of the war in 1918 and the Peace Conference 1919 at Versailles and Russia isn't a party to that because it had its revolution in 1917, so although it was ally to France and Britain in 1914, it's no longer a participant in 1918 and so the three big boys are France, Britain and America. The French are led at the conference Georges Clemenceau, he wants to reduce Germany to a mediaeval rural state. Britain is led by Lloyd George, who I might flippantly say was more interested in spending time in Paris with his girlfriend than necessarily engaging in high diplomacy, that's perhaps unfair.

But Lloyd George was worried and rightly so about the electorate in Britain, the man who had vision was the American president, the academic from Princeton, Woodrow Wilson. You remember that Woodrow Wilson came to Versailles with so many points that he wanted discussed that Clement so said, "Who is this man? Even the Lord God Almighty only had 10 commandments." And Wilson argued for an international body to oversee international peace,

the so-called League of Nations. Wilson was suffering from ill health, wasn't unable to push through his policies back home, and America retreated to its default position of isolationism from Europe, which meant that it didn't join the League of Nations, which was the American idea, the great idea.

So let's be quite clear what I'm saying in terms of Europe, America seeks to be isolated, whereas in terms of Asia, it wants to be involved. Now I think that particular scenario is one that's not being grasped in the 21st century by Britain or the EU, that the Americans are not in an isolationism position, but they are or could well be. Think about Trump and NATO for example, in Europe and Britain coming out of the EU, probably actually muddies those waters for the Americans. But America is fixated on Asia in the 1890s, the 1900s, and now the 2020s. And in the inter war years, America was able to establish its policy of non-intervention in Europe to withdraw from that scenario.

"Within a year, America had retreated into collective isolation." John Lewis writes "And refused to ratify the treaty of Versailles which included ratifying the League of Nations. America's withdraw from the wider diplomatic world was only confirmed when Republican Warren Harding's election to the presidency in 1920 was on a ticket of normalcy." Normalcy, a retreat to the norm, a retreat to the default position. In other words, "Europe, you're on your own. We don't want to get involved with Europe." But it didn't mean they didn't want to maintain very strong links in Asia.

World War II comes and America finds itself again, drawn into this European war and this time drawn into a European war by an Asian power by the Japanese attacking the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour on December, 1941. Congress declared war on Japan almost immediately after Pearl Harbour. Congress did not declare, nor did FDR ask it to declare war on Germany, why? Because FDR fear that he might lose or not lose the vote, he knew he'd win a vote about war with Germany, but he didn't think it would be sufficient to carry the American people with him, there would be a divided nation rather like Brexit, has divided Britain. So a vote to warn Germany would divide America.

But anyhow, FDR didn't have to worry over much because Germany as an ally of Japan, declared war on America. So America is pulled into a European war because of an attack on it, which he did fear since the 1890s by Japan. And then Germany declares war on it and it's a rerun of World War I for the Americans all over again. It's also true that Britain, it's imperial troops and the free French could never have won the Second World War in Europe without American support. And indeed had America not entered the war, even if the British had not been defeated by then, they would've found themselves or at least Continental Europe would've found itself, including France under the control of the Red Army.

So let's be quite clear in Europe without American intervention in World War II, the whole history of Europe would've been different. Now this time, America does not retreat into isolationism because it can't, because now the threat of Marxist Leninism is not just a threat in Europe, but is

a threat to the world because we move, as I've said on an earlier occasion from the hot war World War II to the Cold War and so America has to deal with this situation, and that means it has to keep American troops in Europe and by 1949 it is the leading partner in terms of money as well as troops of NATO.

Now in 2020, Trump raised the issue of NATO. Now, whatever you think about Trump, the underlying position is America's isolationism from Europe to concentrate on the Pacific and Asia is underlined and Europe seems totally oblivious to the fact that it is totally dependent upon American arms and Britain's withdraw from the EU probably doesn't help that at all. So there needs to be a reconnection about Europe in terms of EU and British negotiations and arrangements with America.

We cannot go on with the Germans not paying their part or the French being difficult. It's interesting, I think in terms of American foreign policy that despite Britain's withdraw from the EU, despite Biden being Irish and all the rest of it, Biden's first visit in Europe is to Britain, why? Because the Americans see Britain as a natural ally, the French, okay? We know about the French and the American War of Independence, the Revolutionary War, but in truth, could you ever fully as an American trust the French, trust the British? Well, I think you can and I think the British feel better about the Americans.

And so we are in a funny situation at the moment, and it depends upon how America views its European policy and that's to emerge and it's not entirely clear where we are going. The history tells us that America may well withdraw and certainly withdraw troops and money from NATO and then there's Putin. Dear America, have another Putin aggression. We've already given in over East Ukraine and the Crimea, will we give in on the Baltic states? It doesn't seem conceivable, but who knows?

Let me move on. We're with America, the war has been fought in Europe and won the war has been fought against Japan in the East and won, and we've seen the Americans be the only nation in history as yet to drop the bomb and all those questions that were raised, but that's not my purpose today. Dropping of the bomb is to defeat Japan, the alternative of a amphibious landing in Japan by British and American forces would've been hugely costly in men, so it's a moral judgement you have to make. I'm never prepared really to talk about that, it's a moral question. Don't you drop the bomb or don't you drop the bomb.

I had a father who was in the British Army and was in India at the time and was being prepared for the amphibious landings on the main islands of Japan. I doubt I would ever have seen my father 'cause I was born while he was in India. I don't think I'd ever have seen him, had there been an amphibious landing because he was the royal artillery and they would've been right up in the front line. But what I want to emphasise is not the American victory over Japan, but the American success with Japan post-war.

I'm going back to George Herring's book again and George Herring writes this, "The former

Secretary of State Dean Acheson titled his memoir *Present at the Creation*. And in the introduction to his book, he called the Truman Administration, that in power in 1945 in America, the Truman Administration's task after World War II, "Just a bit less formal more than that described in the first chapter of Genesis." the challenge said Acheson, "Was to create from the chaos left by war, half a world a free half without blowing the whole to pieces in the process." Acheson took pride at how much was done.

So we'd move from a hot war to the cold war. The world is divided in two as I say, that's the reason America cannot withdraw as it did in 1919 from Europe, it cannot withdraw in 1945, but the success story is Japan. Now, how did America decided to deal with Japan as it had dealt with the Philippines in 1898, I'm not sure where we would be today. There is one man who is very important to this story and controversial general MacArthur. MacArthur really acted like an American viceroy after the surrender of Japan in Japan itself. Sometimes he's shown as terribly gung ho in Korea, you remember he wanted to drop a bomb on China? Yes, in some ways he was, but in other ways he was extremely astute.

I'm not a lot of time for MacArthur and I think Herring has as well, 'cause Herring writes this about what MacArthur did and it's impressive, "Responsibility for the occupation of Japan fell upon General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander for Allied powers, who brought to the task." says herring "Of a combination of imperial majesty, political populism and missionary zeal. In the first years, this blue eyes shogun as the Japanese called him and his entourage ruled Japan as neo-colonial overlords looking little interference from Washington or civilians in Tokyo and issuing edicts with imperial panache."

MacArthur would've been well suited as viceroy of India for the British in the 19th century. He has so much credibility for winning the war that Washington really finds it difficult to control him and he has a vision, and his vision is a fascinating one. What does he do? Well let me read on, Herring says "MacArthur took advantage of a shattered and compliance society, to impose sweeping reforms designed to democratise Japan and therefore converted in his words, into a Switzerland of the Pacific, while retaining the emperor MacArthur modified his God-like status and allied him with the occupation.

Americans drafted a new constitution, creating a parliamentary democracy, established basic, civil and legal rights, permitted women to vote and own property, demobilised the military and renounce war." now that isn't a bad achievement. MacArthur managed to keep the infrastructure of traditional Japanese society firm, because of his refusal to prosecute the emperor, who was as guilty as hell to be honest. But MacArthur saw that it was better to keep him in position and to work through him than to have him made a martyr, there's no one I think today that could say that MacArthur did the wrong thing.

Democracy is established, but MacArthur was overbearing and in the end Washington said, "Hang on, hang on. You're not the viceroy of Japan, you're not this blue eyed shogun, Washington will make the decisions." And Washington saw the need for Japan to be

self-sufficient and to develop a modern economy, a modern capitalist economy. Now true the Americans have been involved in Japan for 50 odd years and had developed in a number of interesting ways the structures of Japan, but now they are committed to full-blooded Western capitalism.

Let me read what Herring says, "The United States removed limits on Japanese industrial growth and stopped reparations. To meet the growing dollar gap, American officials promoted the expansion of Japanese exports." so we've got two things happening in Japan. One, a democratic constitution and secondly a capitalist economy. Now, none of these things ever work out well in practise, they are okay in theory, but it wasn't easy to get Japanese economy up and moving and thus to underpin the democratic constitution of MacArthur had imposed. But a piece of luck came along, which was the Korean War and in the Korean War, Japan was able to supply a lot of war material and materials to the Americans and it was the coming of the war that boosted the economy.

Isn't that interesting 'cause that's exactly what had happened in America with World War II, that the appalling situation before the war was finally dealt with, not by FDR's whatever policies, but actually by war. And so it was here that the Korean War kick started the Japanese economy and younger generations of British or Canadian, or South African, or American, or whatever nationality is listening tonight, the view Japan not perhaps some of our generation, my father might have been killed, some of you may have had fathers killed and uncles killed in the war in the East. Some of you may even have had family members as prisoners of war of the Japanese, which was one of the most horrible, dreadful episodes in human history, but younger people view Japan as like us as a Western power.

Oh, an interesting one because its culture is different and many Americans, many British, young people, go to see Japan. My own son went on an archaeological dig in Japan when 20 years ago when he was reading archaeology at a British university, they had a Japanese friend and he went over and they participated in an archaeological dig in Japan, a fantastic experience. And he wouldn't have the hangups that I have about the Japanese and that some of you may have, it was an undoubted American success. Korea was something else. America led United Nations forces by 1951 who had established a division, a line between the communist North and the democratic South, a dividing line that remains in place 70 years on and also remains a potential global flash point, the most heavily armed international border in the world between North and South Korea.

It was not an overwhelming United Nations triumph, it was not an overwhelming American triumph. British troops of course, were involved in Korea, Australian troops and so on. This was a United Nations force, but worse was to come to America's Asian policy when the Johnson administration sought in 1964 to bolster South Vietnam, because the Americans were caught in their belief in the domino system, you allow one of these countries to fall like a set of dominoes they will fall and we shall lose control of Asia to this Marxists Leninism or if you prefer, we shall lose control of Asia to the Chinese.

And so the Americans find themselves sucked in rather like being sucked into a quick sand and the more troops they send, the more they have to send again, the war cost over 58,000 young American lives. I was at University of Oxford at the time and most of the Americans there were draught dodgers. Well, that's how they were regarded, we had one very large beak bloke, American, a black American in my college doing a postgraduate degree who went berserk one night, with a knife and attacked the chaplain.

We all hoped that he, no I won't say much. And anyhow, we wonder what would happen and what happened, the CIA turned up and he was never heard off again. He was simply shipped out, but he had been dodging, he had been dodging the draught of Vietnam. Vietnam did not help the American image across the western world, campaigns against Vietnam. Britain refused to join the American forces and Vietnam was not a declared war and it certainly was not a United Nations war, Russia had veto that at the security council, it was very decidedly an American war.

Mass protests across Europe and protests in America and just to remind ourselves of that period in our joint history across the western world, "America's employment in the Vietnam War split the nation and radicalised youth who chanted, 'Hey, hey LBJ, how many kids you killed today?'" 1960s it's part of the youth revolution across the western world. You could argue, well there anyone looking for a PhD topic? Why don't you discuss how the Vietnam War radicalised a generation of European as well as American youth and changed our societies, one could argue forever. The war was dually lost and the world noted that this great giant of global power did in fact have feet of clay, don't think that went unnoticed in Beijing or in Moscow.

Now I want to turn to China itself. In the late 19th, early 20th century, there was what historians now call the scramble for China when European powers, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the Japanese all sought to carve out territory in this crumbling Manchu empire of China. And I said just now, America was engaged in 1898 in the Spanish American War and it came late on the scene. And the US Secretary John Hay sent notes in 1899 to the major powers to France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Japan and Russia basically saying, "Let us in, we want a slice of this action." because America was felt threatened, that it was losing a sphere of influence.

Sphere of influence is such an interesting concept, I've talked about the concept of frontiers, I've talked about the concept of manifest destiny, but there's a very interesting American concept as well, which is spheres of influence, Central America, South America, but also Asia. And at this point in 1899, John Hay, the Secretary of State is worried that America will be kept out. Well, America isn't kept out. And China descends into war with Japan well before it started against the Americans 10 years before, but as well as an international war in China, between China and the Japanese, there's a civil war between Mao's, Marxists, communists and Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists.

So there are two wars going on simultaneously and that now means America in terms of World

War II in Asia are backing Chiang Kai-shek. And when the war with Japan ends, the war in China does not end the Civil War continues. And in Philip Short's book, Mao Philip Short was a BBC journalist, I was at school with Philip. He's written a number of really good biographies including one on Mitterrand on the French president, but this one is an extremely good one on Mao.

And I just wanted to quote one thing from it if I may if I find the page, I will read it to you. "The United States poured in arms and equipment worth by state departments calculations some \$300 billion more by the communist account of the money Chiang Kai-shek himself declared in June, 1947 that his forces had absolute superiority over the People's Liberation Army." Mao's army "In battle techniques and experience were 10 times richer in terms of military supplies." America was pouring war material into Chiang Kai-shek.

That's been a recurring theme of American foreign policy, not only in Asia but in the Middle East too. The pouring in of weapons and it was to no avail. They backed the wrong horse because in 1949, Mao won the Civil War declaring the people's Republic of China in Tienanmen Square in Beijing. and Chiang Kai-shek takes refuge in Taiwan, still supported by American money and American arms and the American fleet. So supportive were they that when the United Nations replaces the League of Nations, Taiwan or Nationalist China, Chiang Kai-shek China is recognised as China for the purposes of having a seat on the security council what nonsense. It isn't replaced by China proper until 1971, 1971 China takes its seat on the security council and Taiwan doesn't.

The Chinese of course say that Taiwan is an integral part of China and one of the policies of China, foreign in policies or internal policies they would say would be recovering China, recovering Taiwan for China. And today in 2021, the Americans are heavily engaged in the new Cold War in the South China Sea. There are three American aircraft carrier squadrons, two amphibious squadrons, countless other ships and indeed Allied ships. Britain only this week is sending its latest most modern aircraft carrier, Queen Elizabeth II to the South China Sea, along with the other new aircraft carrier, the Prince of Wales, the French have already sent an aircraft carrier.

This is America gathering allies in the South China Sea, why? Because it frightened the Chinese expansionism of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, a Chinese occupation of islands came by pretty well every nation in the China Seas the creation of military air strips on little atolls, which the Chinese have expanded into bigger islands, there is a real threat and what is the final threat? The final threat is of course to Japan and America is engaged in this new Cold War.

In March of this year a Chinese government news agency writing in English said, "An unprecedented moves that aim to deter China, the US military repeatedly deployed ships including aircraft carriers strike groups to the South China Sea in 2020, it is likely that it will continue to rally regional allies and partners to interfere in regional affairs and enhance its frontier military presence, as well as the intensity of its activity in the region in an effort to

achieve maritime containment of China." will it work? It's a flash point.

If when we finish this talk, you put on the news in whichever country you are and the headline is "Earlier today, the Pentagon has acknowledged that a Chinese air attack in the South China Sea has sunk USS, whatever. America has retaliated by sending 200 aircraft to hit the Chinese mainland." would I be surprised? No, I would not. No, I would not. Is there any diplomacy? Well, it seems difficult to have diplomacy with the current Chinese government. Would they risk, would they risk an outright hot war with the Americans now supported by allies, European allies, let alone Japanese? Would they? Might they?

Some internal power structure within the Communist Party of China itself, some man or woman wishing to be the big guy says, "Okay, we're sink an American warship. They won't do anything about it, but we will get a lot of prestige and I may well become president of China." I dunno, an American Admiral now retired called James Stavridis, who was the 16th supreme Allied commander of NATO, is part of a think tank. And in the think tank report about US and China, it says this, "The Americans will need to set a series of red lines, these include any nuclear, chemical or biological weapons action by China against the US or its allies or by North Korea. Any Chinese military attack against Taiwan or its offshore islands, including an economic blockade or major cyber attack against Taiwanese public infrastructure and institutions.

Any Chinese attack against Japanese forces in the defence of Japanese sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, which China claims and they're surrounding exclusive economic zone in East China Sea. Any major Chinese hostile action in the South China Sea to further reclaim a militarised islands to deploy force against other claimant states or to prevent full freedom of navigation operations by the US and Allied maritime forces and any Chinese attack against a sovereign territory or military assets of US treaty allies." largely meaning Japan and South Korea.

Wow, I guess everyone listening here this evening, it's evening for me, whatever time, everyone listening to this talk knows about the potential for a disaster in the South China Seas. But I wonder how many people out there, wherever you live, men and women walking down the street today, have any idea of this flashpoint. It's worrying because North Korea in particular, but also China are unpredictable in their behaviour and coming to an end.

But I wanted to come to an end with an American author whom everyone knows and adores. Now, earlier in my talk, I quoted from George Herring's book, "The American Century and Beyond" where he says "That the Spanish American War was a pivotal turning point, but argued that America acquired territory not by accident, but by design." And I'll read that just once more to you so you've got it clear what I'm talking about. "It was less a case of the United States coming upon greatness almost inadvertently, now pursuing its destiny deliberately and purposefully." becoming an imperial power.

At the same time, specifically in 1901, the great author Mark Twain published an essay in the

North American Review called "To the Person Sitting in Darkness." Now, "The Person Sitting in Darkness" was the way that many Christian missionaries, both American and British, described indigenous peoples, to whom they were bringing the light of Christ to the person sitting in darkness.

Now, Mark Twain you know, was a strong anti-imperialist and he felt such statements as that were entirely wrong and he thought the attitude of church missionaries British and American was particularly wrong. He had an in for the American Baptist Church in particular, and he criticised each empire in turn British the French, the German, Dutch and so on. And then at towards the end of his essay, he turns to his own country to America and this is Twain. "And by and by I come to America and our master of the game that is President McKinley, who plays the game badly, it was a mistake to do that. Also it was one which was quite unlooked for in a president who was playing it so well in Cuba. In Cuba, he was playing the usual and regular American game and it was winning, for there's no way to beat the American game. The President said of Cuba, 'Here is an oppressed and friendless little nation, which is willing to fight to be free.'" the Cubans fighting the Spanish, "'We go partners and put up the strength of 70 million sympathisers and the resources of the United States and say play and they left Cuba independent.'"

And Twain says, "That is the way that we play the great game." The the British phrase, the great game. He calls it the game and he says, "The American game is not like the British game, it's not like the French or German, we go in and free people." But says Twain, "Then came a temptation in the Philippines it was strong, it was too strong and McKinley made a bad mistake, he played the European game. It was a pity, it was a great pity that error, that one grievance error, that irrevocable error for its a very place and time to play the American game again and at no cost, rich winnings to be gathered in too, rich and permanent, indestructible or fortune transmissible forever to the children of the flag, not land, not money, not dominion.

No something worth many times more than that cross our share the spectacle of a nation of long harassed and persecuted slaves set free to our influence, our posterity share, the golden memory of a fair deed, the game was in our hands. If it had been played according to American rules, Admiral Dewey would've sailed away from Manila as soon as he destroyed the Spanish fleet. But we played the European game and lost the chance to earn another Cuba and another honourable deed to our good record."

Then he finishes by saying, "To the person sitting in darkness, it's almost sure to say there is something curious about this, curious and unaccountable. There must be two Americas, one that sets the captive free and one that takes a once captive's new freedom away from him and picks a quarrel with him with nothing they founded on then kills him to get his land." Now with that thought about American foreign policy from Twain, I leave all of you to ponder, is that actually American policy through and through switching from one position to another, playing the American game, but then playing the European game?

You must come to your own decision about whether you agree with Twain or you disagree with Twain. My final thought is that I'd love to take a class or postgraduates in an American University History Department and discuss this. Does America always have two games to play the European game or the American game? And then I would ask the Americans a second question and I would quote the Scottish poet, Robbie Burns, "O wad some Power the giftie gie us To see ourselves as others see us?" and that's the problem all empires face. How do others see the imperial power?

In Britain we're obsessed by that question because our empire is gone. The American empire has not gone, America is still the leading power of the Democratic West. To see ourselves as others see us, to play the American game or to play the European game. I think Twain would have a lot to say today, was he alive about American foreign policy? Gosh, I've probably offended everyone listening, I'll stop there before I dig a bigger hole for myself and we have some questions and we'll see what people want to say. Is that all right, Judy?

- Thanks, William. That's great. I'm jumping in just to say, "Yes please if you take questions."

- Yes, okay.

- That was excellent, thank you.

Q&A and Comments

- Somebody's put "The American gun culture derived from the frontier." absolutely. Turner would absolutely agree with all of that.

Q: "What about the engagement with Japan in the 1860s?"

A: Yeah, I could have gone back, but as I said, America was involved quite a long before that and I didn't on another occasion if I had more time, I would go back, I'm sorry if I didn't do that for you.

Q: "What benefit did the US gain from the Philippines?"

A: Frankly, not an awful lot.

"Perhaps McKinley hasn't been given enough credit overshadowed by Roosevelt." Oh, well that's an interesting question. Answering no less than 5,000 words by this time next week, I think. Oh, and who's asked that? I said Brian, that's at Brian Conway, that's a difficult question. He's asked difficult questions were always, well, I've lost it now, hang on, where have I lost it, Mike? Brian?

Q: "Do we not see the late 19th century colonial expansion of the USA being mirrored in China's current actions?"

A: Well, that's more difficult. China's actions in the South China Sea is not colonisation, but it is

building up bases for military operation they may seek and that is the fear they may seek to expand China. If you are asking about Taiwan or Tibet, or Chinese Turkmenistan, whether Uyghurs are, that's a problem of empire. China is not one people, but many people, not one language, but many languages, not one culture, but many cultures. The outcome in the end, like all empires, it will dissolve in exactly the same way that it's going to be very difficult to hold Russia together post Putin. And I don't think China can hold together, but it could do a lot of damage in the meantime and you might say, "Well, what about America itself?" Well, some of you will have read the great Jewish humorous novel, "The Education of Hyman Kaplan" where Kaplan attempts to be more American than any American and always makes mistakes. But what happened of course in America is that they made sure that people who entered America became American cease to be British, Polish, French, whatever and in the 19th century and became American and so America as a country is not quite the same as an imperial central power as China and Russia. On the other hand, anyone with eyes to see, can see that there are significant splits in America, which can be interpreted geographically West, East rather than North, Southwest, East.

Q: "Why do we force ourselves into Japan in the 1850s?"

A: For trade, for money and to make sure that, my God can you just imagine the British console there say, "My God Sir, we must send more British here, that bloody Americans have arrived." And it was all competitive, it was to get economic advantage, the economy grow the British empire. It drove the America, all this stuff in Europe, all this duff about bringing democracy and Christianity, it's about money, that's what it's about. And the same with America and of course all empires dress it up and Europe had so much dressing up with its empires of how we were bringing civilization to the uncivilised. The very thing that that Twain objected to the people that sit in darkness. Did anyone ever ask them whether they preferred to sit in darkness? Of course they didn't.

Q: "The origin of the Spanish American War?"

A: That's a long story in itself. Yeah, this is Teddy Roosevelt in Korea and Japan. Yeah. There was a view that Japan in 1905 after its victory over Russia was splendid. The Western democracies including America disapprove of Russia and of course there are many Russian Jews, Poland of course it was Russian and many Russian Jews in America influencing American opinion, but right across there was support for Japan. You remember that when the Japanese sank the Russian Pacific feet in port at Port Arthur, they gave no warning. They'd simply sank it without declaring war and what did American and Britain say?

"Splendid these Japanese know what to do. They didn't declare war, they just sank the fleet splendid." The Americans weren't quite saying that about Pearl Harbour in December, 1941. Only 30 odd years later, the tune has changed, "How dare these Japanese go to war without even declaring it's jolly unsporting we said in Britain and in America." So the question is, how you view other people changes over time? The Japanese were good chaps, then they were barbarians of the worst sort and then they became good chaps again. It's a strange business is international relations.

Oh, Martin's asked the I know Martin, this will be a question I can't answer. Yeah, well that's the question.

Q: "If Hitler hadn't declared war in December, 1941 on the US would the US have declared war in Germany?"

A: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. You see FDR was very worried about American public opinion, I'm not sure FDR would've declared war long before in 1940 had he had full control. But he doesn't, he can't do that. I don't know is the answer, I really don't know whether FDR, it's not question of risking it. He would've got a majority through Congress to declare war in Germany, but it was the minority and for Roosevelt, it was a question of how large would that minority be? And it could be sizable, in which case that would cause mayhem in the States. It was just fortunate as history turned out that Hitler declared war on America and so the issue doesn't arise.

Q: "Do you think Trump was right to pressure Europe shoulder more on the cost of European defence?"

A: Yes, of course he was right. But I'm British and we have supported it over the years, but you understand why Germany hasn't, and then now there's talk of an EU army, which Britain now wouldn't be part of because of Brexit, it's a mess. It's a mess. And although there are European countries on the borders constantly, like Estonian border, Polish border and so on, if push comes to shove, it's only the Americans that have the fire power and the money. It's not mainland Europe that I think the focus should be on, any Canadian listening to this talk tonight knows that one of the big issues is the Arctic and the expansion of Russian forces in the Arctic, now that is where there could be real trouble. I'm marking up flashpoints, I've marked up the South and East China Seas, but you could also mark up the Arctic as the ice retreat and why are people interested? It's the same story, it's money, it's economy. They're stuck under that ice and everyone wants a share of it and Putin has large numbers of forces, much more than the Americans or Canadians combined, or British or whoever you like to put it, in terms of Arctic warfare. He's put a lot of money into it, and we may be being blind to what he's doing.

Q: "What is your idea about Russia developing Antarctica?"

A: No, I think you meant Arctic, I've just answered. Yeah, sorry.

Q: "What about Chinese African expansion?"

A: Yeah, this is neocolonialism by the Chinese in Africa and it's seriously worrying. It's seriously worrying the influence that China has in terms of Britain, we need somehow to breathe life into the commonwealth countries and perhaps Americans don't know, but Mozambique which was never British of course but Portuguese is now part of the British commonwealth because it asked to join. Okay, you can be cynical and say it won't be British money, but there is opportunities there. But Britain is too poor financially, too divided politically to see any way through the commonwealth and I suppose you could say it's only been held together by the presence of a Queen. When she dies I dunno, I've always thought that the Commonwealth should be headed by a black African. I've always thought that we should have had Nelson

Mandela heading the Commonwealth, that would've been fantastic.

Irene another old friend of mine, not so old, but friend.

Q: "What, if anything do you see America doing about Belarus?"

A: Well, I think Irene we have to ask the America that and the answer will be very little. I mean, Belarus is a problem. Belarus is a problem because it's fully backed by Putin's Russia, so we cannot do anything as it was poke the Russian bear with a stick over Belarus. Belarus is a terrible problem as a European country and what it's done with this grounding this aircraft is horrendous by international law. The the only thing we can do is to go through the United Nations, impose economic sanctions and make life difficult for them, but whether that's enough? But what else, we can't send troops into Belarus that would threaten the entire Baltic states when we do that. So you asked me quite a lot come on, you asked me questions, which the entire state department and the British Foreign Office can't answer, so don't expect me to have an answer. I dunno about the British Foreign Office, perhaps I do have a better answer than they do, but I dunno about that. But these are not easy questions and you can imagine that they're being looked at as we speak. The important thing as we look at them, it seems to me particularly in the light for Brexit, is we talk to other European countries and we also talk to the Americans. And the Americans have to talk to Britain, which they will as well as the EU, that we have to keep some sort of common front when faced by Belarus, one would hope that there's a common front already prepared. I mean, we were absolutely caught short over the Crimea in East Ukraine, we cannot be caught short again.

Oh yes, Brian says, "Better that you state who trust the British." Well, yes.

God who says all that about the French, Oh, I don't know Tom, obviously you are Irish, I dunno whether you are American Irish, but sometimes American Irish have a very, like Europeans have a very different idea about relations between Ireland and Britain in the 21st century, I was on a Council of Europe visit to Ireland and a German was sat behind me on the coach. And we were told that we were now entering Northern Ireland, Ulster and a catholic part and he said to me, "Aren't you worried?" And an Irish friend of mine from the South said, "Oh no." he said, "William is quite alright." he said. "He's only got to worry when it gets dark." And the German had no idea that we were just playing this game, this sort of joking game between the British and the Irish. And later that same trip, it was very dark and suddenly the coach stopped for no reason and my German said, "Why we stopped." So the Irishman said, "Oh my God, I think it's the IRA. He said, "I think you better all get under your seat." So the German moves under his seat, at which point the driver gets out and the German said, "He's abandoning us." He went to the back of the coach, undid the boot at the back, brought out a crate of Guinness and came on back on the coach and handed a bottle of Guinness to everybody and then started driving again, one hand on the wheel, one hand drinking Guinness. Now, the British and Irish just thought that was hilarious. My German friend, I don't think ever quite recovered. No, no.

No, Carol, Carol Grover said, "A revisionist view is the Americans, you don't want the Soviets to

launch an attack against Japan in China." No, absolutely. No, no I wouldn't want to give the impression that was not so, you are absolutely right. One of the problems was with Russia entering World War II at a late stage, they did manage to take from the Japanese, the island to the north of the Japanese mainland islands of Sakhalin, which had been divided between Japan and Russia now becomes entirely Russian, who's bothered about Sakhalin? Well, I understand it has the most beautiful wild flowers in the world, and they cost a great deal. If you are a gardener, you might well have and pay a fortune for seeds from Sakhalin, but that isn't important, what there is is oil. What there is is oil and that's another flashpoint is Sakhalin.

- William.

- Yes. I want to thank you very, very much for fantastic presentation.

- I didn't look at the time. I'm sorry, yes.

- No, it's great, It's great. I was wanting to thank you very much. We need to jump off, so I really want to thank you so, so much for an outstanding presentation, thank you.

- I get so carried away.

- No, it's brilliant. Thank you and much, much appreciate.

- And thanks everyone for listening. Thank you so much for listening.

- Thank you, thank you everybody.

- And don't forget, I'm not right. You were one that has to make the decisions on all these things, think about it and come to your own decision. I'll put the books on the blog tomorrow. Bye, bye-Bye everyone.

- Much to think about and we will take up some of the questions and maybe, you know organise another presentation.

- We might be able to questions to do exactly that, yeah.

- Thank you very much.

- Bye for now, Bye-bye.

- Thank you everyone. Thanks Judy, take care. Bye-bye.