HIST 121: Introduction to Part VI

Slide #1

HIST 121

Introduction to part VI: An age of revolution, industry, and empire, 1750-1914

Audio:
Welcome to the introduction to part six.

Slide #2

Features and themes of the Period 1750-1914

1. Rapid pace of interconnections between the world’s people accelerated dramatically from the earlier period.

Audio:
In part five you say how the period 1500 through 1800 was characterized by the dramatic consequences of the American exchange and the increasing interconnections between the world’s peoples. You also saw how European states were fairly minor players on the world’s stage, while states in most parts of Asia and Africa maintained their strength and autonomy. In this next era, which begins in approximately 1750 and ends at the start of the first world war in 1914 we see two major features and themes that mark it off as different from the past. First, the increasing interconnections that we already explored in the earlier period become even more accelerated then before. Second, we see the balance of global power shift decisively toward European states.

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Explanation

- Revolutions in the Atlantic World led to the creation of national identities, which encouraged increased competition between states.
- Industrialization allowed states who went through it early an enormous advantage over non-industrialized states.
- Industrialized states combined their industrial power with the ideology of nationalist competition, and embarked on a massive program of imperial expansion.

Audio:
There are three main explanations for why these interconnections accelerated in this period, and why the balance of power shifted toward Europeans. First, revolutions in the Atlantic World led to the creation of national identities, which encouraged increased competition between states. Second, industrialization allowed states who went through it early an enormous advantage over non-industrialized states. Third, industrialized states combined their industrial power with the ideology of nationalist competition, and embarked on a massive program of imperial expansion.
If you keep these three factors in mind as you read through the details of chapter 25-28, this will help you to make sense of the mean events, people, and processes being discussed. I’ll say a few things about each of these explanations to help you get a sense of the big picture.

Slide #4

“Liberty” Leading the French in Revolution, Eugene Delacroix

(Picture)

Audio:
The revolutions of the Atlantic world that occurred during 1775 and 1825 had an enormous impact of each other and on the rest of the world. In terms of global impact though one of the most important outcomes of these revolutions was the development of a new kind of identity focused on the nation state. This new kind of identity, which became to be known as nationalism, was different then other kinds of identities that focused on locality or monarch or family group. With nationalism people from many localities and families and backgrounds forged a common identity with others who shared their language their values and customs and their historical experiences, and sought to make states made up of those peoples. Historical experiences can often be critical in the development of nationalism because people often begin to identify with one another most strongly when they fight in opposition to something else. In this print, you can see the famous depiction of Lady Liberty in the role of a woman leading the French Revolutionaries to victory. During the Atlantic revolutions, revolutionaries found that fighting against what they thought of as tyranny in the name liberty, also galvanized their ideas about what their values where as a people and how they saw a common past as well as their future as a state. And once the people of the Atlantic world began to speak in terms of nationalism the idea spread quickly throughout much of Europe, and eventually to much of the world. One of the problems with nationalism though, is that even while it can be inclusive by insisting who belongs in the nation it can also foster conflict and competition with those who are considered outside the nation, particularly with those who identify with other nations. This kind of conflict in competition became very pronounced by the end of this era.

Slide #5

Industrialization: British Industrial Landscape, Railway, Steam Engine

(Pictures of industrialized nation)

Audio:
The second explanation for accelerated interconnections between peoples and for the shift in balance of power toward Europe has to do with industrialization. Industrialization occurred first in Britain in the late 18th century. Spread to the United States and western Europe in the first half of the 19th century, and then spread to Russia and Japan at the end of the 19th century. Industrialization involved the creation of factories based on mass production. And also resulted in the wide spread use of new inventions like steam ships, railroads and improved mass produced weaponry. As a result, those states that industrialized first found that they could travel farther and faster to get the raw materials they needed to feed their factories. They also found that these tools, especially when aided by improved weapons, gave them a new ability to impose their will
on even the most powerful non-industrialized states. So in the period from about 1750 to 1914 industrialized states found that they had gained huge new advantages over non-industrialized states. And they used those advantages to get what they wanted from the rest of the world.

Slide #6

The Division of the World by the Industrial Powers, 1900

(Map of the world)

Audio:
The advantages gained from industrialization combined with the nationalist atmosphere of conflict and competition generated between industrial national states leads to our third explanation for increasing interconnections and the shift in the balance of power in this period, imperial expansion. Armed with new technologies that allowed for easier travel over long distance, easier extraction of resources needed to feed industrial production, and the ability to take those resources by force if necessary, industrial states who were already nervous about competition from their rivals, began a process of imperial expansion and conquest in the 19th century that ended in the division of most of the worlds territories between them by 1914. Taken together then, then three phenomena of the creation of national identities, industrialization and imperial expansion help explain how the pace of inter human connections is accelerated in this period, but also why the balance of power shifted so decisively toward the states who industrialized first.