

The concept of total war



The period between 1914-1918, or most commonly known as World War I, is historically significant. Aside from its unforgettable aftermath wherein a number of casualties and various war damages were recorded, World War I also paved the way for the emergence of the concept of total war. It is through this total war that the series of wars that followed within the international system based their strategies and learning experiences making the subsequent conflicts a lot worse. Total War, according to Stephen Badsey, is considered as the “ organization of entire societies for war in social, economic, and even spiritual sense” (Badsey n.). It is a war strategy wherein combatants forcibly involved properties, lands, and attenuate the vulnerable civilians or non-combatants in their struggle against the enemies instead of just focusing on conquering their military targets. Basically, it is an armed force waged using all national power, human strength and material goods, considering that the traditional presence of big battalions are insufficient without the “ Home Front” support (Kiraly 15). This movement showed tremendous effects in the country's populace and showed social changes.

The economy of states involved in total war is strictly controlled to monitor and regulate the flow of money and where finances are utilized. Moreover, through the influence of media and nationalistic propaganda, the citizens are moved to strengthen their support for the total war (Schmiechen 459). As stated earlier, the First World War gauged the intensity of the wars after it. Because of the tragedy caused by World War I, many citizens became very suspicious and fearful of their surroundings and the eventualities around them.

The American public is no exemption to this escalating fear and apprehension with the actions and decisions done by their country either domestically or internationally. Post – World War I As eventful as the World War I, the Great Depression of 1929 – 1933 soon took place. It was also known as the Global Economic Slump wherein the Wall Street stock market crash affected the American financial system (Baylis & Smith 57). Because of this economic depression, many Americans feared a massive social consequence manifested in a surge of unemployment.

Unemployment was perceived as USA's primary enemy because it resulted to a number of impoverished families suffering because of the collapse in the market (Baylis & Smith 59). Different reactions emerged during this period including the government's economic response by pursuing protectionism and avoid importing products from other countries. The period of depression ended with the emergence of World War II. Supposedly, the years 1939-1945 should relieve the American society from the economic slump it previously experienced, however, circumstances worsen as conflict escalates among the involved factions in the war.

One of the domestic enemies America experienced during this period was the massive influx of immigrants from different parts of Europe. This is a manifestation of the escalating civil war among the different Western countries. As a response to this, US modified its migration quota system to filter out desirable citizens to enter their land. Immigrants from Great Britain and Ireland were awarded generous quotas as compared to Russians and Italians as they were affiliated with the emerging powerful satellite group,

the Soviet Union, threatening the American democratic system (“Immigration Through Time”).

After World War II, the Cold War era, from 1945-1990 followed. It was a war between two “ Superpowers,” the United States of America and the Soviet Union (Baylis & Smith 72). Many proxy wars in the Third World took place during this period, dragging countries all over the world in the war and dividing them between the two superpowers. The emerging power of USSR threatened the American society as the manifestation of communism is felt world wide and even domestically.

The eventualities during the Cuban missile crisis triggered greater military threat in the country as the Soviet Union is believed to be keeping weapons of mass destruction. America reacted in this situation by entering the global battlefield with the USSR and pursued an arms race (Baylis & Smith 81). By the end of the cold war period, USA emerged as the most powerful country and helped some European countries rehabilitate the damages of war. The country continued to emerge as a powerful country wherein they are perceived as primary trade partners world wide.

However, in the post 9/11 period, American society placed the blame to the Twin Tower tragedy to the terrorists who were considered as “ the axis of evil” which includes some rogue states in West Asia (Chenoy 13). As a preemptive response by the present administration, they pursued counter-terrorism campaign and established the “ coalition of the willing” to overcome acts of terrorism world wide (Schifferes n. p). The periods of conflict that

America experienced over the years showed how the public is very much affected.

From the Great Depression and the fear of unemployment, World War II and the problem on undesirable immigrants, the Cold War era and the emergence of communism, and post 9/11 period with the threats of terrorism, the American public is imparted with so much problems and enemies both domestically and internationally which greatly affects the country's internal affairs and national interest to pursue. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the government to ensure that the public interest is taken into consideration in their policy-making to assure the security and safety of their citizens.