

How did the world  
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How did World War 2 change the perceptions of America's role in the world?

Introduction:

World War 2 brought about a sea change in the perception of how America was perceived in the world and how it actually changed dramatically after its intervention. First and foremost, The United States was already something of a superpower well before the war started and it took a long time to actually intervene, it managed to drastically increase its influence all over the world's stage.

However due to the fact that half of Europe was run over by Communism, the United States began to enter into its shell after the war and became obsessed with terrorist threats and other similar issues with witch hunts against those who appeared to have leftist tendencies. The spectre of

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Senator Joe McCarthy, which dominated the debate on treason and traitors for several years threatened to ruin the fabric of society and made America into a much more insular nation.

One of the figures who grew in stature and importance after the Second World War and who vastly increased his sphere of influence was the Director of the FBI, J Edgar Hoover. Hoover was an important figure in practically every post War administration from the time of Truman to Richard Nixon and he dominated both local and foreign policy for a long time. He was instrumental in the curtailing of civil rights issues during John F Kennedy's time although he found his match in Lyndon Johnson who was very aggressive on these issues, particularly in imposing his view on world affairs. Hoover was also instrumental in mollifying public opinion on issues such as the Vietnam War which was a catastrophic failure and which severely lessened American standing in the world.

J Edgar Hoover was the FBI when it was founded in 1938 as he planned it. Conceived it and ruled it for almost 40 years until his death, a rule which defined the way investigations and monitoring were made and which are still actually prevalent to this day. However Hoover also harboured deep prejudices in an ingrained style of conservatism especially his ingrained racism and abhorrence of philandering. A closet homosexual, he was fiercely protective of his own privacy yet he never balked at exposing others and ruthlessly ruined other people's lives for his own gain as well as his reputation. He was also obsessed with what he called the ' Communist cancer' and went after several left wing individuals with a vengeance that was almost despicable in its intensity.

Hoover's impact was obviously something which cannot be denied as he was the FBI for many decades. Hoover's early beginnings in life began as a private investigator and a detective and this demonstrated his prowess at solving crimes and problems which eventually led him to rise highly in the Department of Homeland Security. The creation of the FBI which was his brainchild is obviously given a lot of importance and one could immediately observe the heavy handed methods which Hoover used when dealing with problems. The FBI developed several new interrogation techniques during his tenure and these included some rather violent ones which were obviously kept secret but which were approved by Presidents and other senior members of subsequent administrations.

The present day FBI is perhaps rather more subdued than it was in Hoover's day although there are several issues which are continually treated with importance. Civil Rights is something which crops up quite regularly in today's FBI docket although Hoover was secretly a racist and suspected Martin Luther King to be influenced by Communism.

Hoover had problems dealing with personal issues such as his homosexuality which was a taboo issue at the time and which also influenced other persons who were close to him such as Charles Colson. Perhaps it was this insecurity which created problems for the way he administered the FBI as his personal fiefdom for several decades and he brooked no interference from anyone in this regard.

The FBI was also used to dish out the dirt on several foreign figures in a subtle or not so subtle attempt to discredit them with the American public.

Hoover's brand of insularity was also intense when the Vietnam War

escalated and although he probably disagreed on a personal level with the war this did not interfere in his zealous efforts to influence the worldview of the American public.

His soul was consistently tormented as he could not come out on the issue of homosexuality which was obviously seriously taboo at the time. Add all that to his authoritarian style which also led him to fanatically bug most of President Kennedy's private rooms to put a spotlight on the President's notorious philandering, something which Hoover really abhorred and couldn't stand. This type of intrusion into private lives was really Hoover's specialty and he continued practising it even when his influence at the FBI was technically very much on the wane.

Hoover was also very much an autocrat on deciding which issues to investigate. He was particularly helpful when it came to scares about 'Red' or Communist people but on the issue of Civil Rights he was notoriously lukewarm. However to his credit he did not impede the investigation into the 1963 Philadelphia, Mississippi murders which eventually led to the federal convictions of five men on violation of civil rights charges. However by that time, Hoover's influence at the FBI was fading and this could seem to explain the fact that he was technically no longer very much in control.

J Edgar Hoover continued to reinforce several phobias which the Americans held dear. Amongst these, one must focus on the insularity which still continued to dominate US politics after the Second World War. Still, the intervention in Korea in the late 1940's as well as the Cuban Missile Crisis saw Hoover in his element as he attempted to continue his programme of spying and abusive intervention into the private lives of who he perceived to

be America's enemies

The film does an excellent job in depicting the descent from the top of Hoover who went into inevitable decline after the 1960's. His influence was still very much felt particularly amongst the younger executives but as time went by he became more relenting on his authority and also delegated a number of tasks. However his secret of homosexuality died with him although there were some who knew it, all the files which could have shed some light on the matter were destroyed after his death adding more mystery and fuelling further rumours on his situation.

The film does have its drawbacks as it is quite negative on Hoover although admittedly there is a lot to commend it as it offers a direct comparison of what used to happen in Hoover's life in the early part of his career. It is also good at examining the psychological issues which affected Hoover throughout his life and which made him the person that we know much more about today. autocratic style of Hoover but also reveals his many weaknesses as a person which tend to dominate our worldview of him. To round up, it is indeed an excellent film throughout with a lot to commend it and is extremely revealing of the FBI as an organization which was the brainchild of Hoover but which has also developed substantially over the years.

Conclusion: the role of the FBI in post war America

The FBI was an important part of the United States' social fabric both before and after the Second World War but the growth in power of J Edgar Hoover was of strategic importance to the American worldview. The exponential growth in influence of the Central Intelligence Agency was also very

important as here this agency continued to influence American worldview of foreign affairs. Perhaps US citizens had no real clue of what was actually going on in the echelons of the secret service with some secrets still unknown. The rise of the Cold War was also important and influential in the way that Americans perceived the world and correspondingly, the world perceived America as being extremely insular. Thus one can see that Hoover was a hugely important figure in post war America especially for his vast influence on foreign affairs.