

From: The Modern World Global History since 1760 Course Team <noreply@coursera.org>

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Subject: Starting Week 14

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jeffrey epstein,

The latest information from [The Modern World: Global History since 1760](#) on Coursera.

We're now posting the last week of presentations for the course, covering the period from about 1990 to the present day.

This is not a farewell message, however. You are not done yet!

A few administrative notes before we dive into this week's presentations:

1) For those who are seeking a Statement of Accomplishment, the hard deadline to submit quizzes is May 7 (except for my UVA students on Grounds, who must wrap this by April 30). After that, no credit will be granted to quiz submissions, although quizzes will still be available as learning exercises. We will initiate the process of granting Statements of Accomplishment shortly after May 7.

2) For those students who may have just joined the course, or who are working along at their own pace, the course site will remain available for viewing until May 30.

Week 14 has been one of the most challenging sets of presentations to prepare. It may feel like a review of current events. True enough. Our job is to try to use what we've learned so far to gain a bit more historical perspective.

We start by setting the stage with the set of ideas that seemed dominant in the immediate post-Cold War world, a set of ideas that for a while during the 1990s seemed to represent a "Washington consensus." Even deeper, I invite you to remember the presentations in the first weeks of the course that presented the problem of a "great divergence" between 'the West and the rest.' Instead, the last twenty years sees the beginning of a 'great convergence.' What is it? And why?

This 'great convergence' does mean the close of an often-violent hundred years struggle among contending ideologies about how best to organize modern societies. However, it does not close with birds singing and curtains closing. Everyone is not living happily ever after, although by many measures more people are living longer lives with more disposable income and higher literacy than ever before. Nor have political arguments come to an end. There is a convergence, not a consensus.

From a world historical perspective, we are now living in a fascinating phase of history — especially because it feels so much in midstream. My contention is that over the last twenty years the people of the world have been entering a large new phase, one where the issues that have dominated most of this course are slowly being supplanted by new kinds of challenges. These seem less international — defined by the lines between states and organized blocs of states -- and more transnational — running across societies of a number of states. It is not evident that the political and economic and even social institutions that evolved during the last 150 years are especially well adapted for organizing action to address some of these challenges.

At one level then, the last twenty years are a bit reminiscent of the 1870s and 1880s. That was another period of transition and creation, including the creation of much that we associate with modern global capitalism. It is hard to tell, of course, as we are in the midst of it.

Although the problems are daunting, a historical perspective offers some reasons to be hopeful. There has never been a time when it is more possible to create coalitions among almost any set of powerful countries, depending on the problem. The vast imperial wars of the twentieth century seem more and more like an artifact of the past; the danger of a total World War III that so shadowed my youth has been receding. And there has never before been a time when more individuals — women and men — were being offered so many opportunities to understand and participate in their societies.

This course, and the conversations about it that have been going on for months in the discussion forums, has been a little illustration of that.

Best wishes,

Philip Zelikow

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