

IV. America and Europe

A. The Aftermath of World War I - 1920

1. As World War I (1914-19) raged in Europe, Woodrow Wilson redefined America's relationship to Europe and the wider world when he pronounced the words, "The world must be made safe for democracy."
2. America entered the war, and made the decisive contribution, bringing that conflict to an end by forcing the German Empire (the main aggressor) to stop fighting and withdraw from conquered lands.
3. In the aftermath of the war, Wilson and other world leaders believed that democratic nations could serve as a foundation for peace, if they were free from the threat of empires. This was a core belief in what is known as "internationalism." (As the name suggests, *internationalism* holds that diplomatic relationships *between* nations can bind them in the common purpose of maintaining peace.)
4. The formal embodiment of this ideal was to be an international organization, to which member nations would pledge themselves, known as the "League of Nations." This organization was formed in 1920, including a democratically elected German government.
5. But not including the United States. In 1920—indeed, the very same year as the League of Nations was created—the American people elected Warren Harding president on the platform of a "return to normalcy." This meant a desire to return to America's traditional political separation.



The emblem of the "League of Nations," the precursor to the modern-day United Nations. The United States did *not* join this organization.

B. The Failure of Internationalism

1. The League of Nations failed completely. Its goal was peace through internationalism. Its historical outcome was World War II (1939-45).
2. The failure stems from a problem that internationalism simply cannot solve. Internationalism is a system of nations working together for peace. What if some of the nations don't want peace? The only way to deal with this situation is, ironically, to embrace war to deal with such aggressors.
3. Internationalists throughout history have nonetheless clung to the belief that diplomacy by itself can prevent war. They tried it with imperial Japan, the Italian empire, and Hitler's Nazi Germany before World War II, and in all cases, it did *not* work. (The mechanism is surprisingly straightforward: the aggressor nation knows that internationalists don't want war. It makes demands of them, to which they acquiesce. They believe diplomacy has worked. Meanwhile, the aggressor nation is emboldened by

this appeasement. It can get what it wants by threats. It pushes further. The internationalists make further concessions. The aggressor perceives the cowardice of its opponents and calculates at some point that through war, it can get even more. If the internationalists do not have a demonstrable resolve to confront aggressors, which includes a willingness to use force, they simply cannot discourage war by giving in to aggressor's demands.)

4. The aggressive nations of Japan, Italy, and Nazi Germany took advantage of the internationalism of their enemies to prepare for war—a war that they almost won.
5. As we have seen, Japan made the mistake of attacking the United States at Pearl Harbor in 1941, dragging America into the war. Once again, the United States made the decisive contribution towards the defeat of all the aggressors.

C. Europe Made Safe: 1945-47-49

1. At the end of World War II, as we have already seen, the United States found itself in a stand-off with its former ally, communist Russia, a.k.a. the Soviet Union. This resulted in the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine of 1947 that proposed a policy of containing communism.
2. Already by that point, the United States had agreed to add its might to a new form internationalism, called the United Nations, formed after the war in 1945.
3. If internationalism had failed so miserably to prevent World War II, why did anyone think it would work after the war? The answer is simple. It would be backed up by a world police power: the United States of America.
4. The milestones of 1945 (United Nations) and 1947 (Truman Doctrine) together represent the combination of *internationalism* and *interventionism*. Interventionism is a commitment to intervene—in the conflicts of others, around the world. It is the technical term that describes the role of a world police power.
5. The final step in securing Europe from the threat of Russian communist expansion was a permanent military alliance formed in 1949 called the "North Atlantic Treaty Organization" (NATO). This mutual defense pact pledges America's military aid to defend Europe from Russia. (The reverse is also technically true, though largely symbolic, because very little in the way of European force exists that could materially determine any war America might become entangled in that America could not do by itself.)
6. Ever since the formation of NATO, America troops have been permanently stationed in Europe to protect it from Russia.



The emblems of the United Nations (top) and NATO (bottom) represent the new interconnected reality in which America is the world's police power.

C. Visualizing the American-European Interconnection

1. We already have learned to see modern American history as involving the two world wars and the subsequent Truman Doctrine. While this is true and fundamentally useful, America’s entanglement in world affairs goes much deeper and must be symbolized by further links to be adequately represented.
2. The following additions can now be made to the diagram of American and European history to represent the crucial progression of modern interconnected history.
 - a) After World War I, we will add *two* tick marks for 1920 — one for America and one for Europe. This is because the interconnection had yet to materialize. America returned to normalcy. Europe attempted the League of Nations. But the two are not one.
 - b) After World War II, by contrast, we will add a line for 1945 — the United Nations, which America did join in a commitment to internationalism.
 - c) And we will add a link for NATO (1949), which is the treaty commitment of America to implement the Truman Doctrine and protect Europe.

