

V. Islamic Culture and the World We Live In

A. Islamic Culture under the World Police Power

1. The key to the role of Islamic Culture in shaping the world as a cardinal culture today is its interaction with the world police power: the United States.
2. The interconnection between the two cultures takes the form of the so-called “*War on Terror*.”
3. In order to understand how American and Islamic history go together, we must learn the story of America as the world police power.

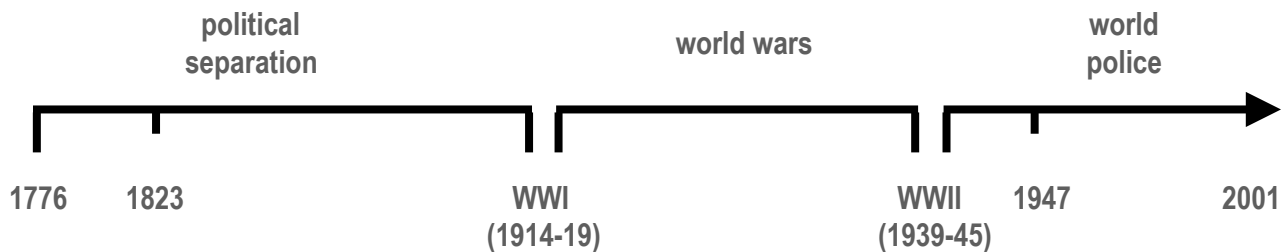
B. The Story of the World Police Power

1. When the United States was born in **1776**, by means of its *Declaration of Independence* from Great Britain, its founding fathers were committed to the idea of individual rights—namely the rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”
2. In order to protect the individual rights of Americans, the founders believed that the United States must remain apart from other nations’ politics and wars. This policy of “political separation” became the **Monroe Doctrine of 1823**, announced by president James Monroe. Monroe warned Europe that America was off limits to European empires and that America would stay out of other people’s wars in turn.
3. The Monroe Doctrine became the default position of America towards the world all the way until **World War I**.
4. During that essentially European war, the United States stayed apart, with president Woodrow Wilson obtaining re-election as president with the slogan “He kept us out of war!”
5. In 1917, however, Wilson proposed a new mission for Americans: to make the world “safe for democracy.” America then intervened in the war and help bring it to an end.
6. The cost to America—117,000 Americans dead—was so terrible that Americans resolved to “return to normalcy,” i.e. political separation again.
7. Despite their desire to return to political separation, the United States was attacked by Japan in **World War II** and thus dragged into the war.
8. Again making the decisive contribution, the United States found itself propelled to a new role in the world. Without America’s protection, Western Europe and much of Asia would have succumbed to imperial communism after the war, and Americans felt they could not permit such a perverse outcome. America’s president Harry Truman announced the **Truman Doctrine of 1947**, according to which America would now strive to make the world *safe from communism*.
9. In addition to entangling the United States in the politics of East Asia and Europe, an important consequence of America’s commitment to police the world was its entanglement in the politics of the Islamic Middle East.

10. In that region, people did not want communism, so America's offered protection was generally well received, but its control of the flow of oil, and especially its help to the newly formed democratic nation of Israel, all combined to generate a lot of resentment towards the world police power.
11. As we will explore in the Islamic history below, a renewal of the belief in a religious triumph over the world went unchecked by America, causing a rise in terrorism, and, since **9/11, 2001**, the "War on Terror."

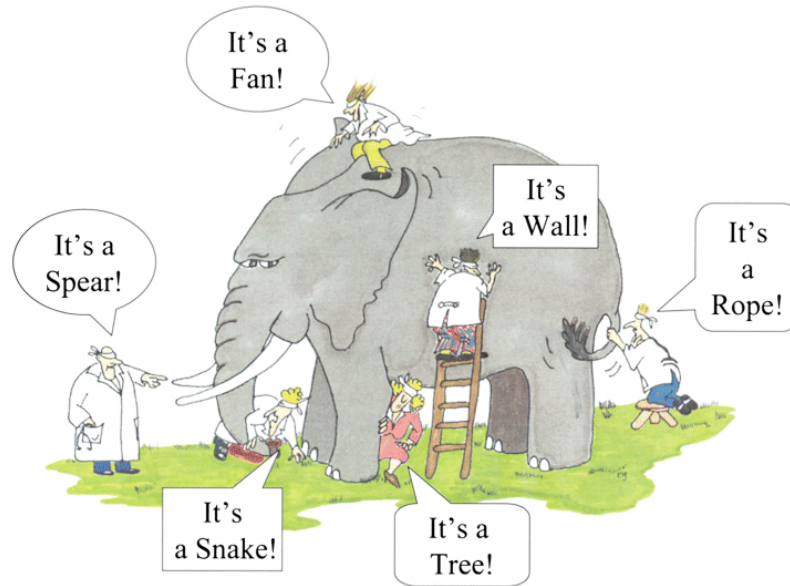
C. Summary Timeline of the Cardinal Anchor Facts of American History

Using a three-part template for dividing up American history similar to the one we have used for Japan, we can illustrate the basic progression of America's relationship to the world in the following way:

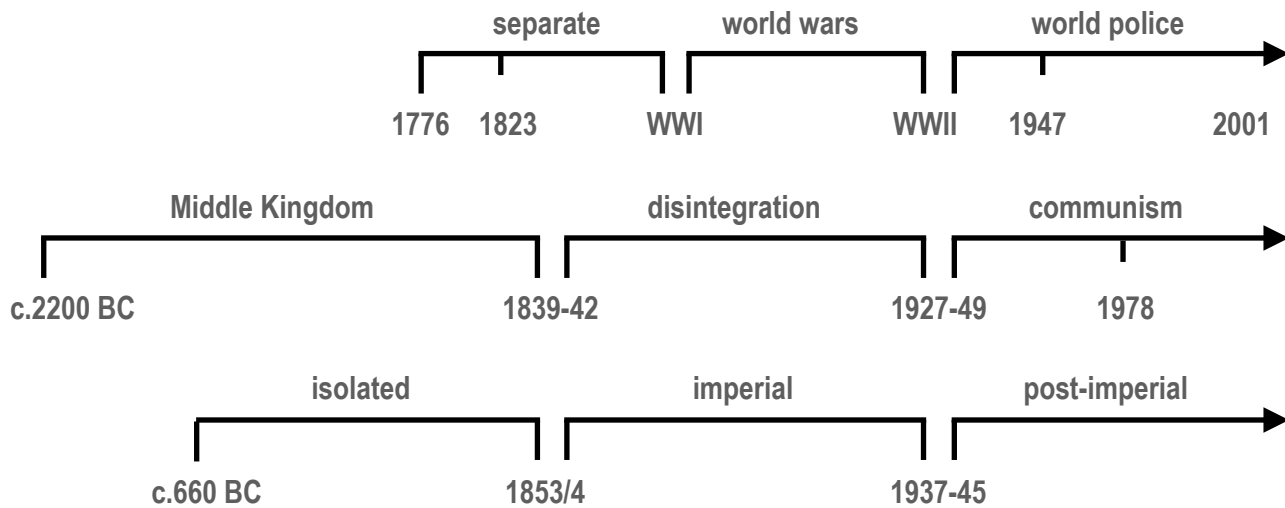


D. Organizing *World* History

1. A famous and amusing fable that originated in India is known as "The Blind Men and the Elephant." It captures the predicament that emerges as one tries to study something as big and complex as world history using conventional means.
2. As the story goes, a group of blind "wise men," never having witnessed an elephant before, resolved to encounter one. As each of them grabbed a part of it, they came to very different assessments of what an elephant is.
3. By touch alone, each was able to grasp only part of what an elephant is. Unwilling or unable to appreciate the need to *integrate* their separate experiences, none of them could understand what an elephant actually is.
4. The fable is an apt description of how people experience the complexity of history. They study one part — usually a part that matters to them on some emotional level — and insist on the truth of what they know about that *part*, without being able to incorporate the partial truths of others into their understanding. Consequently, no one can see the "elephant" when it comes to history. We are stuck with an unintegrated jumble, i.e. a "spear-snake-fan-tree-wall-rope" (see the illustration on the next page).



5. The following diagram summarizes the *cardinal anchor facts* of each of the three main histories we have studied so far: America, China, and Japan.



6. To most people the histories of America, China, and Japan, are the “spear,” the “snake,” and the “fan” of their personal point of view. What we must do is learn to integrate them, and the coming Islamic history, into a complete understanding—*an elephant!*
7. The way to do that is to grasp that the various histories fit together because every culture experiences the *primacy of the United States*.
8. Symbolizing American history in blue as a timeline, and symbolizing America’s primacy by blue lines reaching out and running parallel to the other cultures (including the additional history of Islamic culture now added second from the top), we can link all the histories into one.

