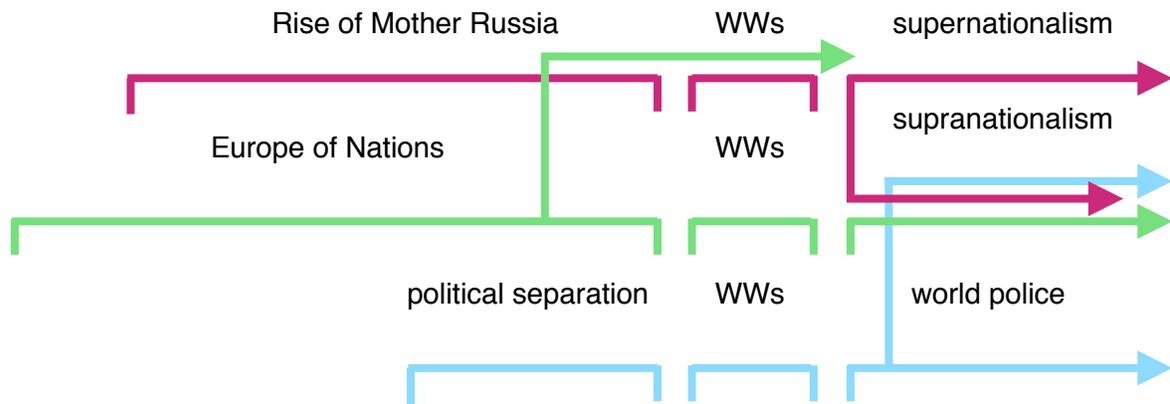


## **VI. The World Wars**

### A. The Pivot of History

1. The History of the world, and especially the history of Europe, Russia, and America (three of the five cardinal cultures) pivots on the world wars.
2. In other words, from a present-centric perspective, there is fundamentally one story in each culture leading to the world wars, and then that culture changes direction—it “pivots”—and becomes something else.



3. Evidently, it’s time to look more closely at the chapter of the world wars, so we can better understand its impact on each of these cultures.

### B. World War I (1914-19)

1. World War I (1914-19) is the first of the two wars caused mainly by supernationalist Germany, which became supernationalist essentially because it had been conquered by Napoleon.
2. The goal of German leaders after the Napoleonic Wars was to create a powerful, unified German Empire, and they had achieved that goal by the outset of the war (see map on next page).
3. The strange thing about it was that it did not include the German-speaking people of Austria, who had wanted to the leaders of Germany, but found themselves overpowered and excluded by the northern parts of Germany, and who had decided as a result to create a more southerly empire.
4. To do that, they had partnered with their neighbors, the Hungarians, and created a strange hybrid that no longer exists, “Austria-Hungary,” or the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
5. Even more strange was the fact that by the beginning of World War I, Austria and

Germany had become allies. This was certainly not because they were friends. It was because they both viewed France as an enemy, and, more importantly for Austria, they both viewed Russia as an enemy too.

6. Austria was particularly afraid of Russia, because both Austria and Russia wanted to conquer southeastern Europe. That part of Europe was populated by Slavs, like much of Russia, so Russia wanted to rule them, and was competing for control of that land also because it wanted access to the Mediterranean Sea.
7. The Slavs wanted their own countries, and in June of 1914, a Slav murdered the Archduke of Austria, Franz Ferdinand—the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. This was the “spark” that set off the “powder keg” that was a Europe of increasingly supernationalist countries.
8. Austria-Hungary intended to invade Serbia, but Russia warned Austria that it would defend the Slavs.
9. When Austria checked with Germany about their alliance, Germany told Austria that it would support Austria in a war against Russia, and when Russia “mobilized” its army, Germany declared war on Russia.



The German Empire established in response to Napoleon’s conquest of Germany, was the driving force behind the “Triple Alliance” in the center of Europe, which is responsible for initiating **World War I (1914-19)**. The war was triggered by the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo.

10. Germany then invaded Belgium, Luxembourg, and declared war on Russia’s ally, France.
11. Great Britain declared war on Germany, bringing the world-wide British Empire into the conflict.

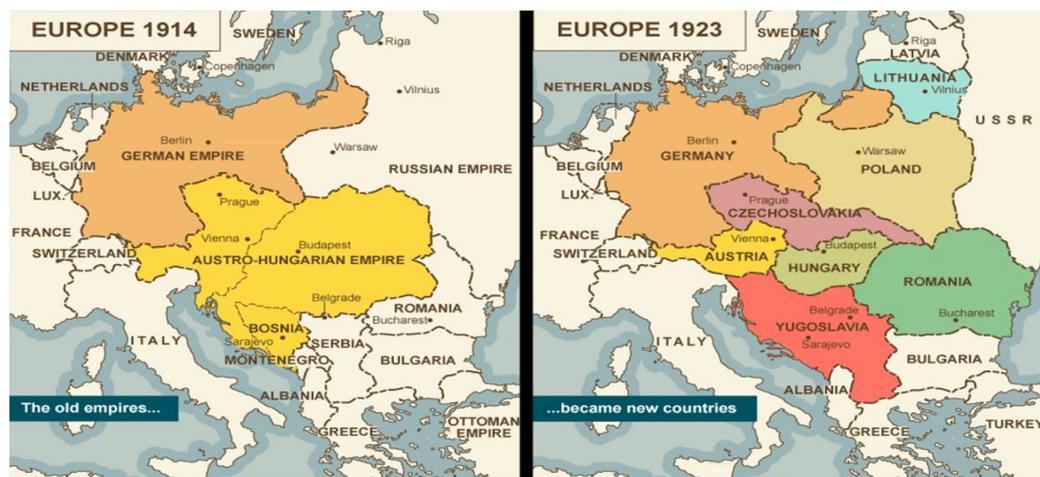
12. Soon most of the world was at war, because the alliance system demanded it!

### C. American Intervention

1. A number of provocations have been cited by historians as to why the United States entered World War I, ranging from submarine attacks on neutral ships to a proposed alliance between Germany and Mexico. None of them justifies the breaking of the long-cherished policy of political separation that America held to ever since its founding. Ultimately only an entirely new concept of American-European relations is the explanation.
2. Americans greatly valued their political separation. They were so relieved not to be involved in the war that they re-elected the popular president Woodrow Wilson on a platform entitled “He kept us out of war!”
3. But then a new concept of political *interconnection* was put forward. It was the idea that America could use its strength to make the world a better place. As expressed by Woodrow Wilson, American could make the world “safe for democracy.”
4. Although Americans were not all convinced that was a good idea, Woodrow Wilson was the president, and he was able to win approval for the idea. Starting in 1917, over two *million* American men were sent to fight in a European war.
5. The positive outcome of this intervention was that Germany and Austria were defeated and the war was brought to an end.

### D. A New Concept for Peace

1. Following World War I, Europe’s leaders examined the history that had brought them to such a calamity, and they concluded that “imperialism” was to blame. If one looks at a map of Europe before WWI, it’s easy to see how they might think that:



The German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Russian Empire were the three empires most responsible for starting the war. Not surprisingly, “imperialism” was blamed for the war, with Germany receiving the bulk of the blame.

2. These same leaders still believed in nationalism, so they tried to reject empires while embracing nations as the proper building blocks of Europe. This meant redrawing the map to make nations, and then, to help them maintain peace, fostering their integration through institutions (such as a parliament of nations) where they could discuss their disputes in a civilized way and wars could be avoided.
3. This idea of political *interconnection*, paired with nationalism is known as “internationalism.”
4. To encourage political interconnection, a “League of Nations” was created in **1920** (the prototype of the United Nations of today).

#### E. Russia Between The Wars: The Russian Revolution (1917) and Rise of Communism

While World War I was shattering the civilization of Europe, yet another momentous change was occurring. The terrible effect of the war on Russia contributed to the fall of the monarchy there and its replacement by a form of government new to Europe, known as communism.

1. Ever since Peter the Great, Russia had been trying to become more of a European country, and to match its neighbors’ level of development. By World War I, it still had not achieved that aim.
2. In 1853, Russia had tried to take over more of Eastern Europe, but it was defeated easily by France and Britain in the Crimean War (1853-4).
3. In 1904 Russia was also drawn into a war with Japan in Asia, known as the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), which to everyone's surprise Russia lost, reinforcing Russia’s ongoing failure to modernize.
4. Despite the creation of a constitutional monarchy in 1905, with a parliament called a “Duma,” Russia remained behind the times.
5. A group of revolutionaries led by a man named Vladimir Lenin, however, believed they had the answer. They would create a form of government where the leaders commanded the necessary industrial progress of the nation from the top down, catapulting past Europe. This particular type of dictatorship is known as “communism.”
  - a) Communism is based on Marxism, which is the most famous version of many different similar views that promote socialism.
  - b) The first thing to understand is *socialism*, which as the name suggests is a theory about how to organize a society that places “social” considerations, or “society as a whole,” above the individual (who is prioritized under “individualism.”)
  - c) All socialists believe that the individual does not have a fundamental and inalienable right to his own life (the “right to the pursuit of happiness”) but rather that the individual must contribute to the good of society according to the rule “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.”)
  - d) Modern-day American socialists tend to be “democratic socialists,” which means that they believe that the best or most practical way to achieve socialism is democratically.

- This includes prominent politicians like former president Barack Obama, and current Democratic candidates for president such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.
- e) Karl Marx, on the other hand, had no particular interest in what particular procedure was followed to achieve socialism. He simply believed it was historically inevitable, and that it would arise some day in the most advanced societies, which would gravitated in that direction according to the laws of history that he believed he understood better than anyone before him.
  - f) The problem for Lenin was that although he was a Marxists (a follower of Marx), he was impatient to bring progress to Russia. He didn't want to wait for history to bring socialism to Russia. He wanted to make Russia socialist right away. That's why he advocated "communism," a dictatorship of socialist leaders that would impose a proper way of life on everyone, and thus supposedly guarantee progress and prosperity.
7. In 1917, when Russia had suffered terrible losses in World War I, and different groups in Russia were working to overturn the rule of the Tsar, Lenin and his supporters took charge and directed the event known as the Russian Revolution.
  8. Although many people in Europe were upset about the Russian Revolution and "Red Terror" its leaders enacted against everyone that resisted a violently imposed form of socialism, the Soviet Union (as it now called itself) seemed to behave like a good, modern country.
    - a) It accepted the existence of neighboring nations of Poland, Latvia, etc.
    - b) It also seemed to accept internationalism by joining the League of Nations.

#### F. Germany after WWI

1. When it became obvious that Germany would lose the war, the German Emperor and his generals fled from Germany. In their place a democratic government was created.
2. It was this new government that was forced to accept the blame for starting WWI and the punishments selected by the winners by the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 that officially ended the war.
3. Germany was not allowed to become a "nation" by joining with Austria (where the people all spoke German).
4. Although the Germans were upset with these punishments, the United States helped Germany to pay the fines it was punished with (called "reparations") by providing loans through a program called the Dawes Plan. With this help, Germany recovered from the heavy fines and it seemed like peace might be possible.
5. Germany agreed to the Treaty of Locarno in 1925 with France and Britain, which "guaranteed" the borders of Western Europe, and proposed a negotiation concerning Germany's eastern borders. Everyone believed this was a success for internationalism.
6. Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926.
7. Inside Germany, however, the people refused to accept responsibility for having started WWI and they resented the Treaty of Versailles.

### E. Rise of Hitler and the Nazis

1. In 1923, the leader of the Nazi (which is short for “National Socialist”) party of Germany, Adolph Hitler tried to take over the government of Germany by a revolution. The Nazis were angry about the Treaty of Versailles.
2. Hitler's attempt failed, and he was jailed for a year.
3. The German people shared many of Hitler's views, however. In particular, they believed that not only were they not guilty of doing anything wrong by starting World War I, but they believed that they had not really lost. Instead, it was common for Germans believe a conspiracy theory that the German army had been betrayed, thus bringing about defeat. (This is known as the “back stab legend” in German history.)
4. While in jail, Hitler wrote a book entitled *Mein Kampf* in which he claimed that it was a people known as the Jews, who were living inside Germany, who were responsible for Germany's defeat and its continuing weakness. (The Jews are people from ancient Israel, but who, because of repeated invasions of their homeland, were scattered throughout Europe. *To be clear: Hitler's blame upon the Jews is one of the greatest falsehoods and injustices ever perpetrated in history—if not the greatest.*)
5. When Hitler was released from prison, he rejoined German politics, and he became very popular.
6. When the Germans also suffered from the “Great Depression” (6 million Germans were without work) they were willing to listen to Hitler, who promised them that he could make the changes necessary to make Germany a great country again.
7. He became the Chancellor of Germany (the leader of the government) in 1933.

### G. Meanwhile in America

1. 117,000 Americans died in World War I. It was profound shock, and Americans recoiled from the role that had been thrust upon them by president Wilson.
2. In the **1920** presidential election, Americans repudiated Wilson's concept of giving up their lives to a global cause. They opted instead to elect Warring Harding, who offered them a “return to normalcy”—which, at that time, meant a return to the “normal” policy of political separation.
3. As Hitler rose to power in Germany, and countries like Italy and Japan (both eventual allies of Nazi Germany) began to attack their neighbors and others, Americans were worried about the advent of a new war, so they passed a series of “Neutrality Acts” starting in 1935, hoping not to get dragged into another terrible war.