

C. The First Anchor Fact: 9-11

1. Among all the facts of American history that explain how the United States acts as the world police power, none stands out more dramatically than “9-11.”
2. Anyone who was of adult age that day will always remember where they were when they first learned what was happening. The reason the event is seared in our memory is that we knew *the world* we live in would never been the same. We literally woke up in one world, and because of the events that unfolded that day, we would from that point on live in another.
3. What happened? Terrorists, following a violent interpretation of the religion of Islam, hijacked four passenger liners and used them as bombs to destroy the twin towers in New York, strike at the Pentagon (America’s military headquarters) and one other unknown location (the last attack was foiled by American passengers on board, all of whom were killed when the plane they were fighting for control of crashed.) The attack was a form of “jihad” (“holy war” in Islam).
4. From that day forward, the United States became focussed on fighting what has come to be known as the “War on Terror.” It is a global initiative, that has caused American government to change radically—including by the adoption of widespread spying on American citizens themselves—and to invade first the country of Afghanistan (where the government was known to support terrorists, and where the mastermind of the “9-11” attack, Osama Bin Laden, was believed to be hiding), and second Iraq, which was alleged to be hiding weapons of “mass destruction” that could be placed in the hands of Jihadist terrorists.
5. Since 2001, other countries have suffered greatly in the conflict against terrorism, in part because of America’s actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, but also, as in Syria and Libya, where terrorists have initiated civil wars against the previous governments of those countries, causing further disruptions in the world, including a refugee crisis where the citizens of those countries have flocked to Europe.
6. *One* of the reasons Americans originally voted for Donald Trump as president was the perception that he would take more effective actions against terrorism than his predecessor, Barack Obama.
7. It is difficult to exaggerate how much the world has changed since 9-11. That is the kind of event that qualifies as a *cardinal* anchor fact.



September 11, 2001: the day the world changed from what it was before into what it is today — the first of the anchor facts in the story of America as the world police power.

D. Back to the Beginning Again: 1776

1. We have already explored the significance of the *Declaration of Independence* as a milestone in the history of the American social contract. Now we must learn to see it as a cardinal anchor fact of the story of America's relationship to the wider world.
2. Evidently, in the *Declaration* we find the reason for the creation of a new country—in words of Thomas Jefferson: the protection of the “unalienable” rights of Americans to “*life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*”
3. In it we also find the clearly stated intention for this new country to stand alone by severing its bonds with its mother country.
4. Independence, understood as a virtue, is the ability to think and act for oneself. It means not relying on others to support oneself and achieve one's own values.
5. Evidently, since America was proposing to uphold a revolutionary code of values, in defiance of its mother country, it would have to stand on its own.

E. Important Steps Forward

1. As soon as the revolutionary war was over and the United States had established its new constitution, a critical test arose for the country's leaders.
2. A revolution broke out in France, partly due to the inspiration provided by America, partly due to the outrageous bankruptcy of the French monarchy, which had been exacerbated by providing assistance to America against Britain.
3. When France's neighbors attacked that country to prevent its revolution from succeeding, many Americans felt obligated to help the French, while others believed the relationship with Britain should be mended by joining it against France.
4. George Washington issued a *Proclamation of Neutrality* in which he explained that the United States must pursue “as little political connection as possible” with Europe in order to secure its independence in the name of rights.
5. For the same reasons, when Napoleon became emperor over France because of the chaos and war of the French Revolution, then president Thomas Jefferson warned him that he should abandon France's territorial claims in North America, because it would make the two nations enemies. The result was the *Louisiana Purchase* of 1803, whereby the United States doubled in size.
6. When Britain, waging war against Napoleon, kidnapped American sailors to force them into the British Navy, the next president, James Madison, was forced to wage the *War of 1812* against the mother country to defend the rights of Americans again.
7. The consistent goal of the Founding Fathers as presidents was to conduct their affairs with the rest of the world in such a way as to permit America's continued independence in the name of protecting rights.

F. Political Separation: The Monroe Doctrine of 1823

1. The world we live in has a United States in it because it was created in 1776 when the country declared its independence and detached itself from the rest of world, but the world is also the way it is because that America has become a country entangled in many wars, especially the “War on Terror” in 9-11. What happened?
2. In order to make sense of where we are today, we need to understand how America changed from what it was originally into what it is.
3. The key lies in the acceptance of a set of principles in early American life, and its replacement by another set of ideas by modern Americans.
4. The original set of principles that America lived by is captured in part by the *Declaration of Independence*, but it remains incomplete until the enunciation of the “Monroe Doctrine,” announced by James Monroe (one of the youngest the Founding Fathers) as president in 1823.
5. Monroe identified that America’s “political system” (based on individual rights) was essentially different from that of Europe, and that consequently America should not merely be independent, but in addition strive for *political separation* from the rest of the world.
6. The first component of this doctrine (which is a set of ideas) is a warning to European empires to stay out of the Americas. This warning was issued because the Ibersphere had been formed as a distinct cultural block when the colonies of Spain and Portugal achieved their independence because their mother countries were swamped by the European wars against Napoleon.
7. The second component—which is especially significant today—is a commitment by America to stay out of the wars of others.
8. Monroe stated that the United States had no desire to fight in European wars or to take any territory away from any European empire, but that the Americas should be viewed as a sphere intimately connected to the protection of the rights of Americans, where wars by European powers would be viewed as a threat to America itself.
9. The Monroe Doctrine was followed consistently and successfully for nearly a century. How then did America become what it is today?



Early America’s relationship to the world was governed by a set of principles known as the “Monroe Doctrine.”

