

What is NATO?

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Countries have alliances because no country is really an island all to itself. When our country was new, we were somewhat protected by two oceans, and shortly began having a navy to protect us from other sea-goers with undue ambition. We signed treaties with Canada and Mexico, who then became allies.

When air war became possible, we were still somewhat protected by sheer distance. But World War II ended that protection. And nuclear war with the Soviet Union was a horrible possibility. We needed allies, and our allies needed us too.

European historic wars were characterized by constantly shifting alliances. Catholic powers against Protestant powers, one empire against others, but ultimately Germanic, Slavic, and Western empires at war. As Turkey became a modernizing power, its enemies were Russia, France, and England. This was a case of Christian vs Islamic powers. Germany and Turkey ignored religion and became allies because of politics and geography.

The US managed to stay out of European wars throughout the 19th century. Instead, it was involved in its own western movement and eventually hegemony over the Western Hemisphere.

World War I ended America's isolationism. We had to get involved with an alliance with England, France, and Russia, against Germany and Turkey because Germany forced us to choose. That war drained Europe to a standstill, that ended only when America entered and forced an armistice.

Because World War I never really ended definitively, it resumed after a generation as World War II, forcing some very strange alliance indeed. The British Empire would have collapsed without an alliance with us. France as an ally was worthless, so Britain and the US had to ally with the new Russian communist empire. The villains here were a wannabe empire, Nazi Germany allied with pretend empire Italy and real empire Japan. This was truly a horrific world war, every country involved.

The US was the major winner of this war, unscathed because there was no conflict on our own soil. The Nazis were defeated, as were the Japanese. Russia fought heroically and helped defeat the Nazis and then absorbed the eastern part of Europe.

At the end of this horrific war, the only great powers were the Soviet Union, now a new empire, and the US, sponsor of a recovering democratic world. This was a standoff: Communism against Representative governments, and the potential horror was a global nuclear war.

Europe was saved: rebuilt by the US and thriving under two sets of alliances: NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) which was godfathered and protected by the US, and the Soviet Empire with its Communist captives, and the European Union. This was a time that no nation could really survive without friends and alliances. With NATO, an attack on one ally was confronted by all. The EU was an economic alliance, but it was NATO that protected it.

The Cold War was a half-century of clandestine struggle between two great imperial systems, the USSR and US and Europe. The US won when the USSR collapsed, outspent and out-governed.

Time to end NATO, said pacifists. Not yet, said realists. The Russian Empire was not dead. It was on another trajectory to rebuild empire, and NATO graduated from North Atlantic protections to all of Europe, particularly needed by countries bordering Russia, some former colonies of the USSR.

Ukraine was one of those former colonies, and Russia thought they could take it back into captivity. They did not belong to NATO, and without US protection, would have lost its independence. If they had been NATO members, Russia would not have been able to get away with their land grab and invasion.

The majority of Americans understand how important Ukraine is to world order. A handful of Republicans who have been seduced by Russian money and Donald Trump's love affair with Putin oppose support of Ukraine. They remind us of the Nazi sympathizers just before World War II. We always have some like that.

Ukraine matters. Russia knows this and is fighting us the only way they can: exploiting our internal contradictions and corruptible traitors. We can't let the

spoilers succeed. NATO matters.

686 words

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