

# PLATO TO NATO

## A TRANS-ATLANTIC INTRODUCTION

compiled for the seminar  
"The Transatlantic Relationship in Practice,"  
Winter 2009/10  
images:  
Wikimedia Commons or otherwise indicated

Philipp Kneis, M.A. • [pjkx.com](http://pjkx.com) • 11/04/ 2009

# Overview

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## **Abstract:**

America, Europe and Africa share a long and complex history. This trans-Atlantic bond has created a community divided by an ocean, united oftentimes by common values and responsibilities. This presentations shall provide a brief overview of that history.

## **Contents:**

1. The Connecting Ocean
2. Euro-American History
3. Imperial Debris
4. The Postwar Situation
5. Transatlantic Approaches

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# 1. The Connecting Ocean

Conceptions of a World in Flux

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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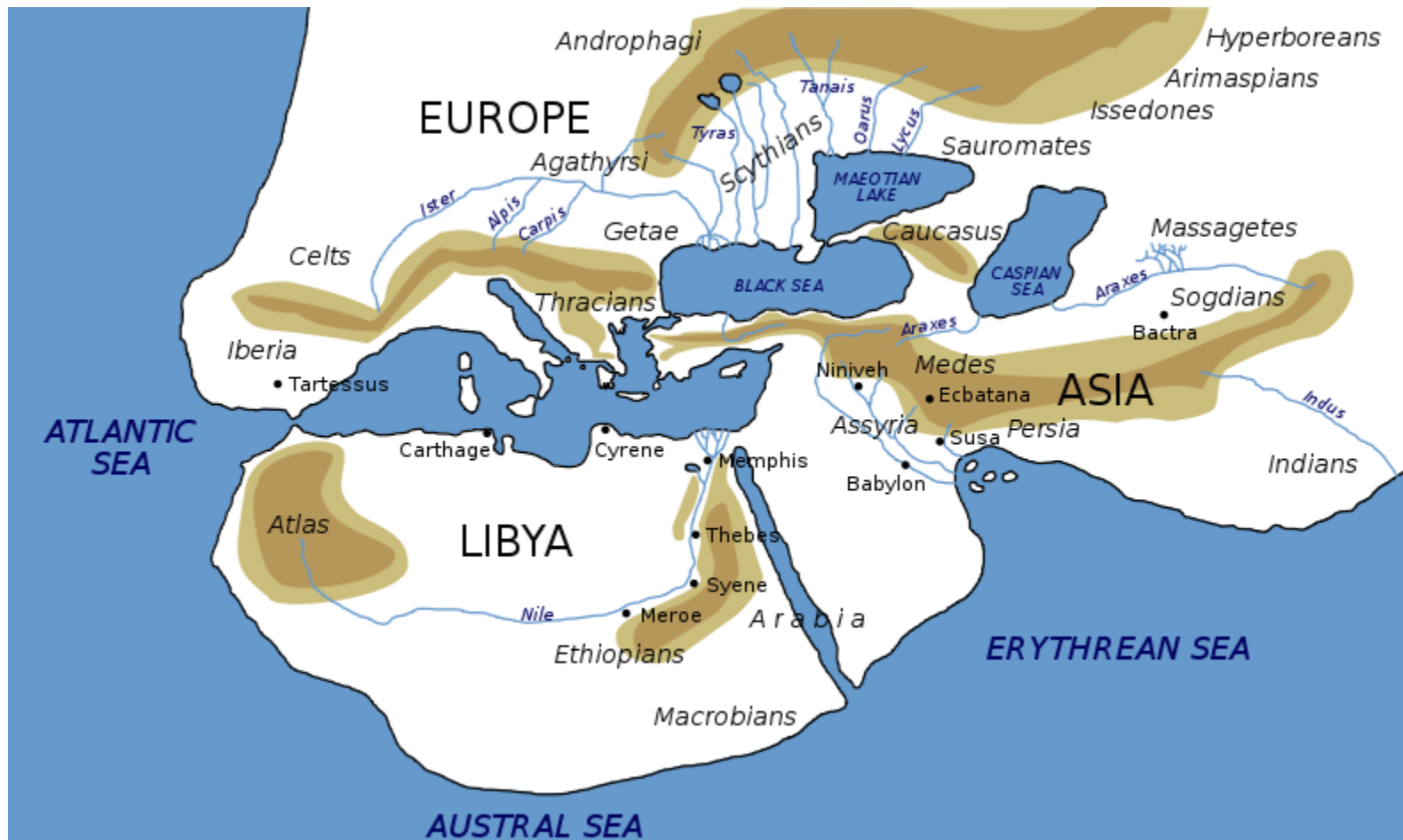
## □ The Atlantic



# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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## □ Herodotus (450 BCE)



# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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## □ Plato, *Timaeus* (360 BCE)

“ In front of the mouth which you Greeks call, as you say, ‘the pillars of Heracles,’ there lay an island which was larger than Libya and Asia together; and it was possible for the travellers of that time to cross from it to the other islands, and from the islands to the whole of the continent over against them which encompasses that veritable ocean. For all that we have here, lying within the mouth of which we speak, is evidently a haven [the Mediterranean] having a narrow entrance; **but that yonder is a real ocean, and the land surrounding it may most rightly be called, in the fullest and truest sense, a continent.** (24e-25a)

## □ Francis Bacon, *Nova Atlantis* (1628)

“ the great Atlantis (that you call America) /  
Atlantis magna, quam vos Americam vocatis (114)

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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## □ Henry Morley, *Ideal Commonwealths*

- “ This island, larger than Libya and Asia put together, was once in the sea westward beyond the Atlantic waves; thus America was dreamed of long before it was discovered (iv)

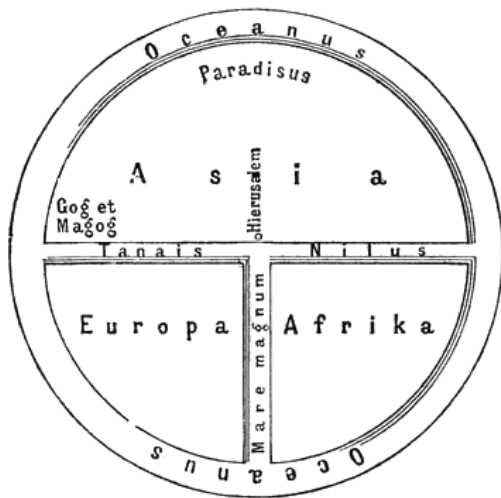
# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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## □ Medieval world map:

(Guntherus Ziner, 1472):

- circle: completeness
- „T“: ~ cross of Anthony
- center: Jerusalem



# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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- 1492: Indians discover White People  
(and Columbus „Indians“)



source: Wikimedia Commons

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

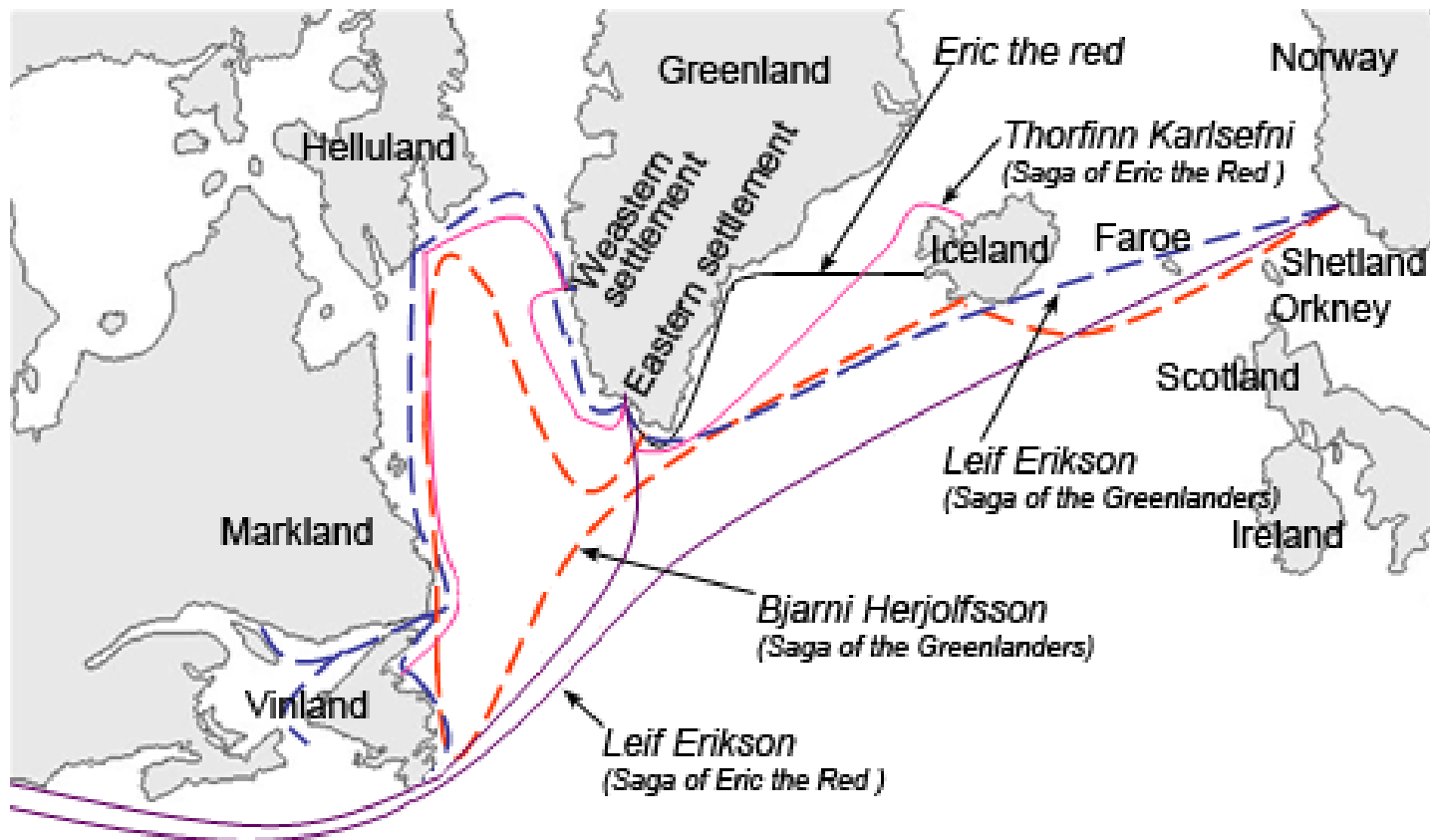
10

- However: First Discovery by Europeans by Vikings:  
Colonies in Greenland ~980-~1430
  - contact and trading with Vinland (New England / Nova Scotia area?)  
between late 10<sup>th</sup> century and 14<sup>th</sup> century
  - It is suspected that diseases did not play such a role as Scandinavians  
carried less pathogens (warmer climate).
  - Older contacts by Phoenecians, Romans, Africans, Hawai'ians are  
debated.

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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## □ Vinland (~1000)



# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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## □ Waldseemüller's Map (1507)



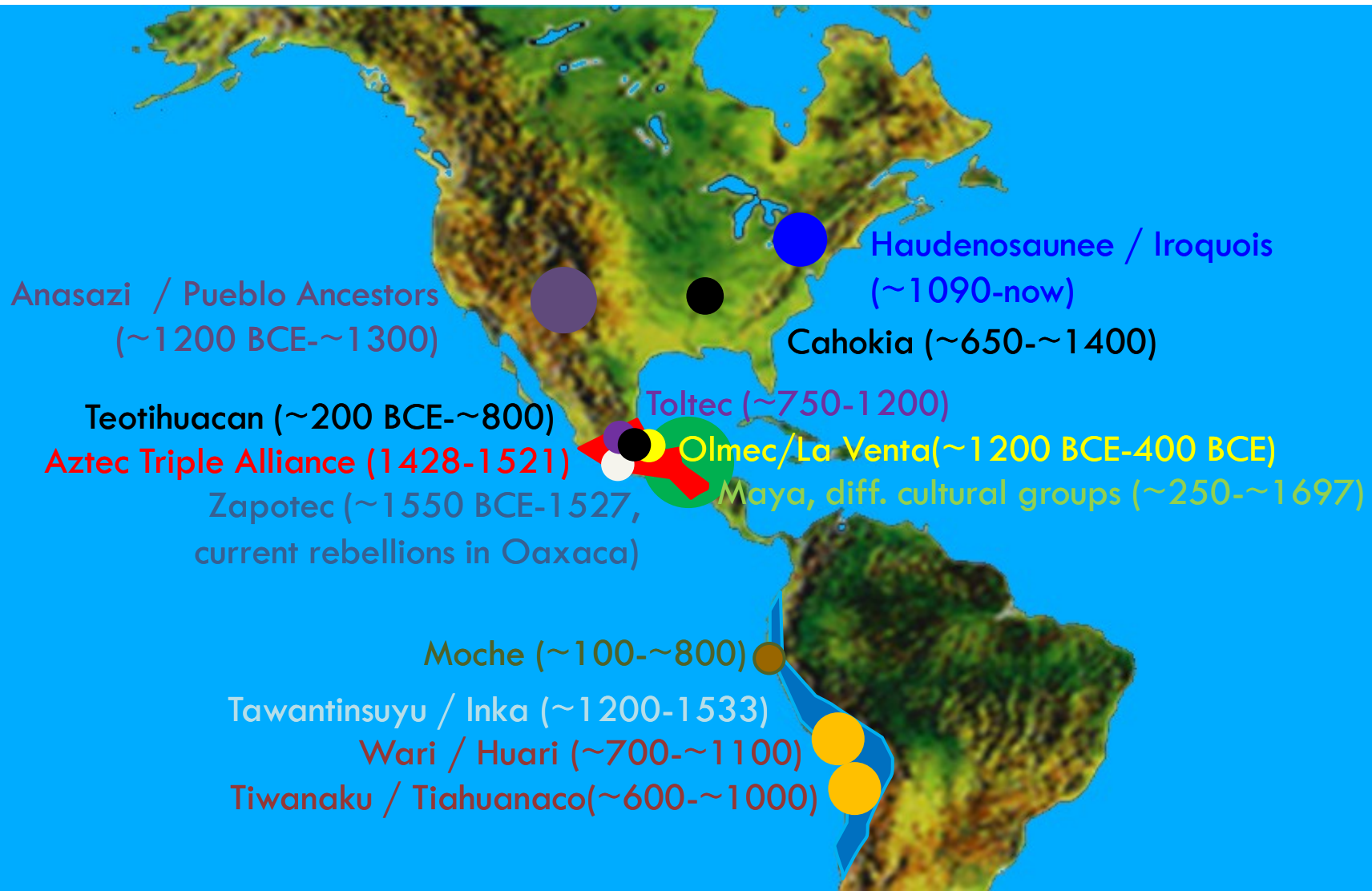
# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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- America was not empty
  - several waves of human migration (since probably 40'000 BCE)
  - Bering strait, but probably also boats
  - Polynesian connection?
  - African influence (Olmecs)?

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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## □ The World is Round – or Flat?

- Despite wide-spread belief, since Antiquity (3<sup>rd</sup> Cent. BCE) the world was believed to be round.
- Flat Earth thesis: people before Columbus believed the world was flat, especially Medieval Christians
- this thesis was **invented** in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century:  
Washington Irving, 1828  
*The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*

Antoine-Jean Letronne, 1834

*On the Cosmographical Ideas of the Church Fathers*

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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## □ Spanish Discovery and Conquest

- Columbus believed the circumference of the world to be smaller than it is; through his miscalculation he thought to be able to sail to Asia.
- arrived in Bahamas in 1492, later Cuba and Hispaniola
- Reconquista of Spain as prerequisite for conquest:  
January 2, 1492: Conquest of Granada
- Hernán Cortés: Triple Alliance / Aztecs:
  - 1519 occupation of Tenochtitlán (with Tlaxcalan allies), took the tlatoani Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin hostage , expelled in 1520 after his death
  - 1520 smallpox epidemic in Mexico
  - 1521 conquest of Tenochtitlán, ending Aztec rule
- Francisco Pizarro: Tawantinsuyu / Incas:
  - 1524 or 1525: smallpox epidemic
  - civil war amongst the Inka
  - 1532-1535: conquest of Tawantinsuyu

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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- Spain focused on creating ethnically mixed but Spanish-dominated vassal states, Indians were used as workforce, Indian slavery prohibited (nominally) 1537 (Bartolomé de Las Casas, Papal Bull *Sublimus Dei*, Pope Paul III).
- English colonies focused on settlement, pushed away other European powers, such as Netherlands, and later on the French and Spanish
- French colonies focused on building a trade network along the Great Lakes, the Ohio and Mississippi
- Slavery started with Indians, till Europeans brought Africans over.

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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- „Triangular Trade“



# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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## □ North America:

- 1585-1587 Roanoke colony, „lost“ (inhabitants were left alone, probably fled to surrounding Indian tribes)
- 1607 Jamestown, VA Settlement established
- 1618 Wahunsenacawh (Powhatan) dies of disease
- 1622 and 1644 resistance movement by Opchanacanough
- 1620 Plymouth, MA founded on site of Patuxet

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

- The epidemics claimed up to 95 % of the indigenous population. Several waves of diseases went through the Americas.
- Without the diseases claiming the majority of their population, Indian cities and states could have resisted, they were technological equals if not superiors in many respects.
- nevertheless, the land was neither „empty“ nor „virgin“: these descriptions of the „frontier“ are propagandistic
- alternating phases of conquest:
  - ▣ intermixing
  - ▣ peaceful coexistence
  - ▣ land-grabbing (settlers = squatters [Jenkins], seizers [Welch])
  - ▣ voluntary exile
  - ▣ forced removal
  - ▣ biological warfare („smallpox blankets“)
  - ▣ direct war

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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- This major transatlantic connection resulted in a massive loss of land and life for American Indians ...
- ... and slavery for Africans
- Europe would be changed by this as well

# 1. The Connecting Ocean

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- Period of Transformation:
  - ▣ Fall of Constantinople 1453
  - ▣ Reconquista finished 1492
  - ▣ Columbus 1492
  - ▣ Reformation 1517
  - ▣ England Breaks with Rome 1534
  - ▣ 30 years war 1618-1648
  - ▣ English Revolution 1640-1660
  
  - ▣ American Revolution 1775-1783
  - ▣ French Revolution 1789-1799; Napoleon 1799-1815

## 2. Euro-American History

American History is European History  
and vice versa

# 2. Euro-American History

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- Intersections between Europe and America
  - Thomas More's Utopia (1518) inspired by Inca empire
  - religious radicals leave Europe (thus pacifying it?) for the US
  
  - 7 Years war / French and Indian War (1754-1763)  
was really the first world war
  - taxation by English for the colonial war leads to American Revolution
  
  - approx. 30'000 Hessian soldiers sold as mercenaries to fight American revolutionaries in 1776 (cf. Schiller, *Kabale und Liebe*)
  - Baron von Steuben trains American revolutionary army

# 2. Euro-American History

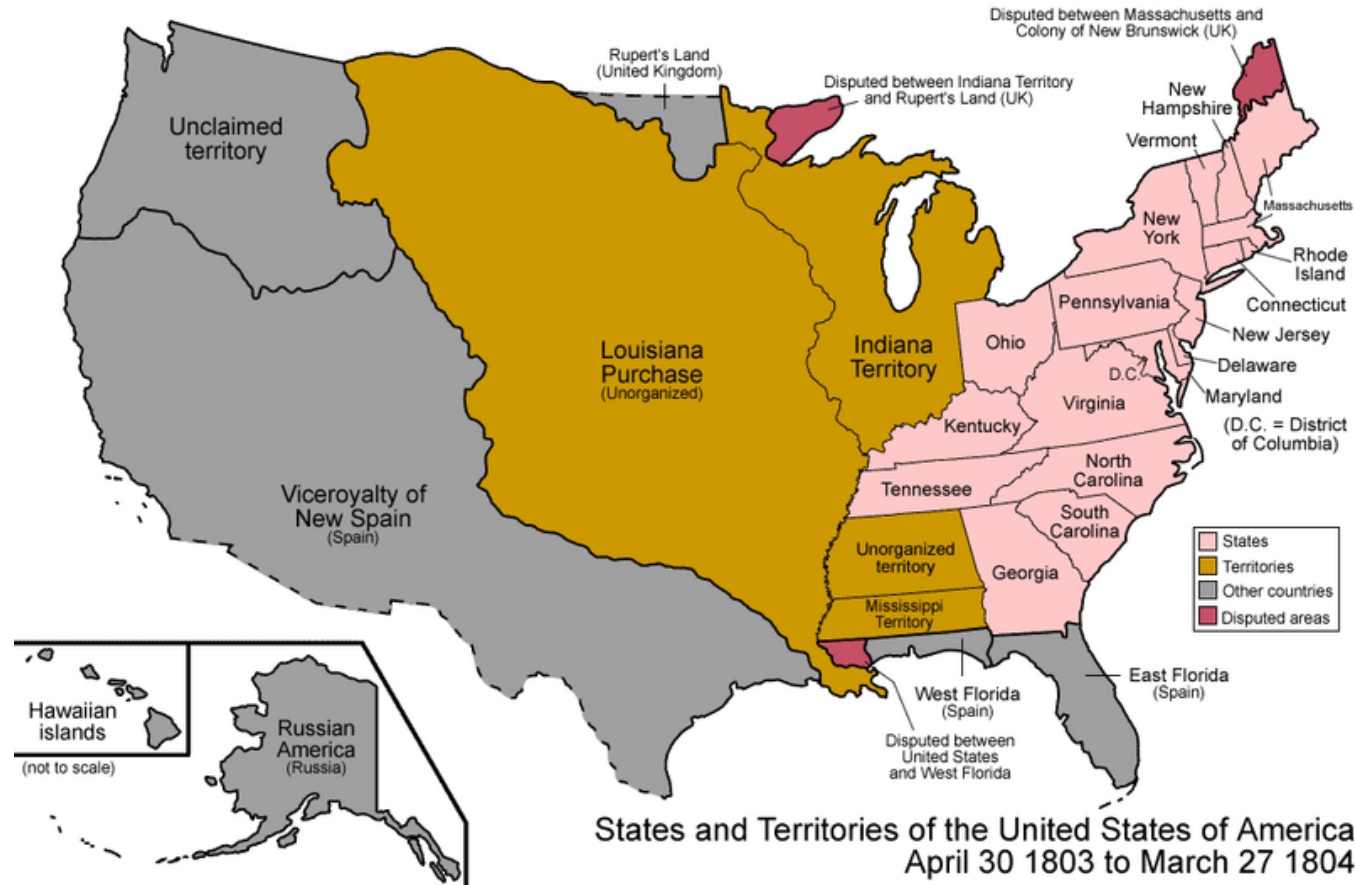
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## □ Intersections between Europe and America

- ▣ Benjamin Franklin: ambassador to France, 1776-1785
- ▣ Thomas Paine elected to French National Convention, 1792
- ▣ Enlightenment ideas truly international; American Rev. inspires French?
- ▣ Alexis de Toqueville, *De la democracie en Amérique* (1835, 1840)
  
- ▣ European immigration to America not only diversifies the US, but also leads to the continued dispossession of Indians
- “ You know, and it's not just the US. It's Western Civilization. France, England, Germany [...] They're the parents of the Americans; America is their child. So they cannot remove themselves from responsibilities for the behavior of their child. So it's not just the US; everyone wants to point at the US, and that's what makes the other countries so dangerous, because they want to pretend it's not them. (*Trudell*)

# 2. Euro-American History

- Intersections between Europe and America
  - ▣ French Revolution (1789-1799) – Louisiana Purchase (1803)



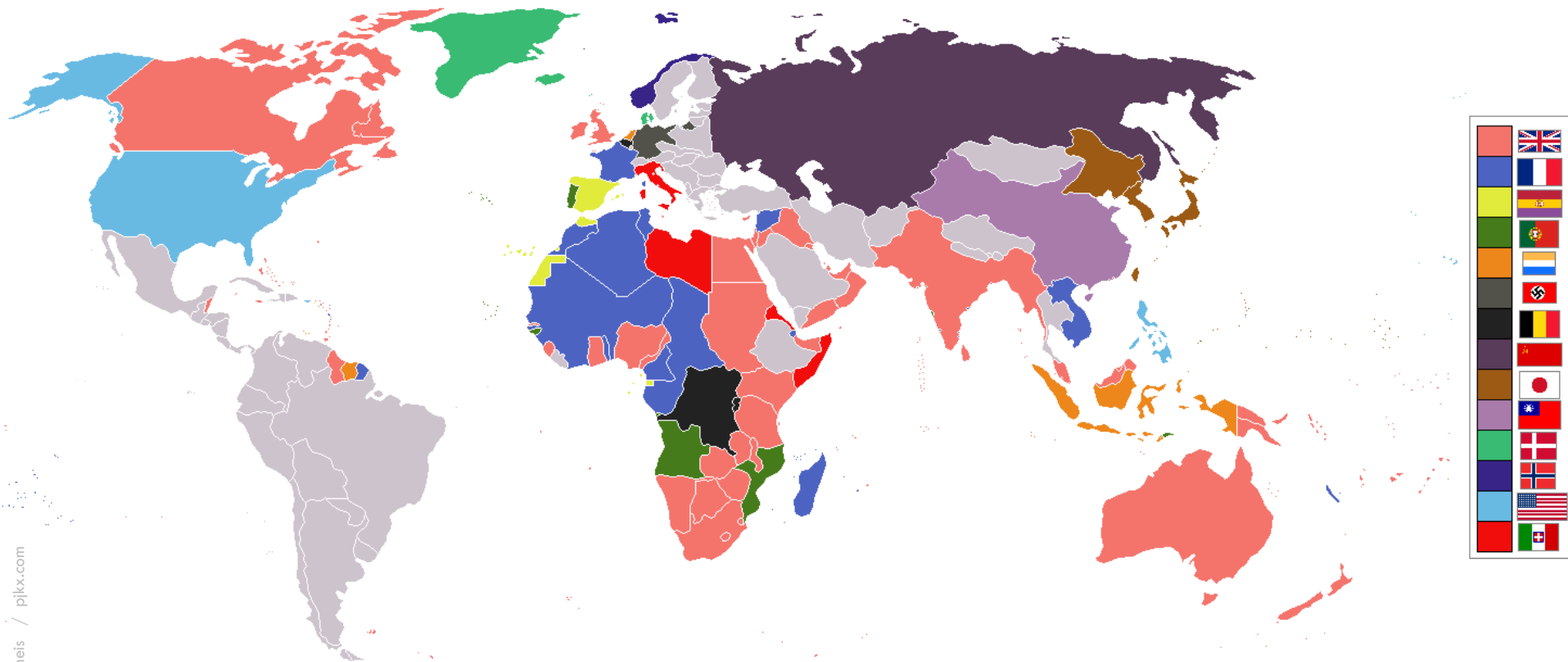
## 3. Imperial Debris

The end of World War I and – even more so – World War II brought lasting change to the imperial structures in the entire world.

# 3. Imperial Debris

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## □ Colonial Empires 1936



# 3. Imperial Debris

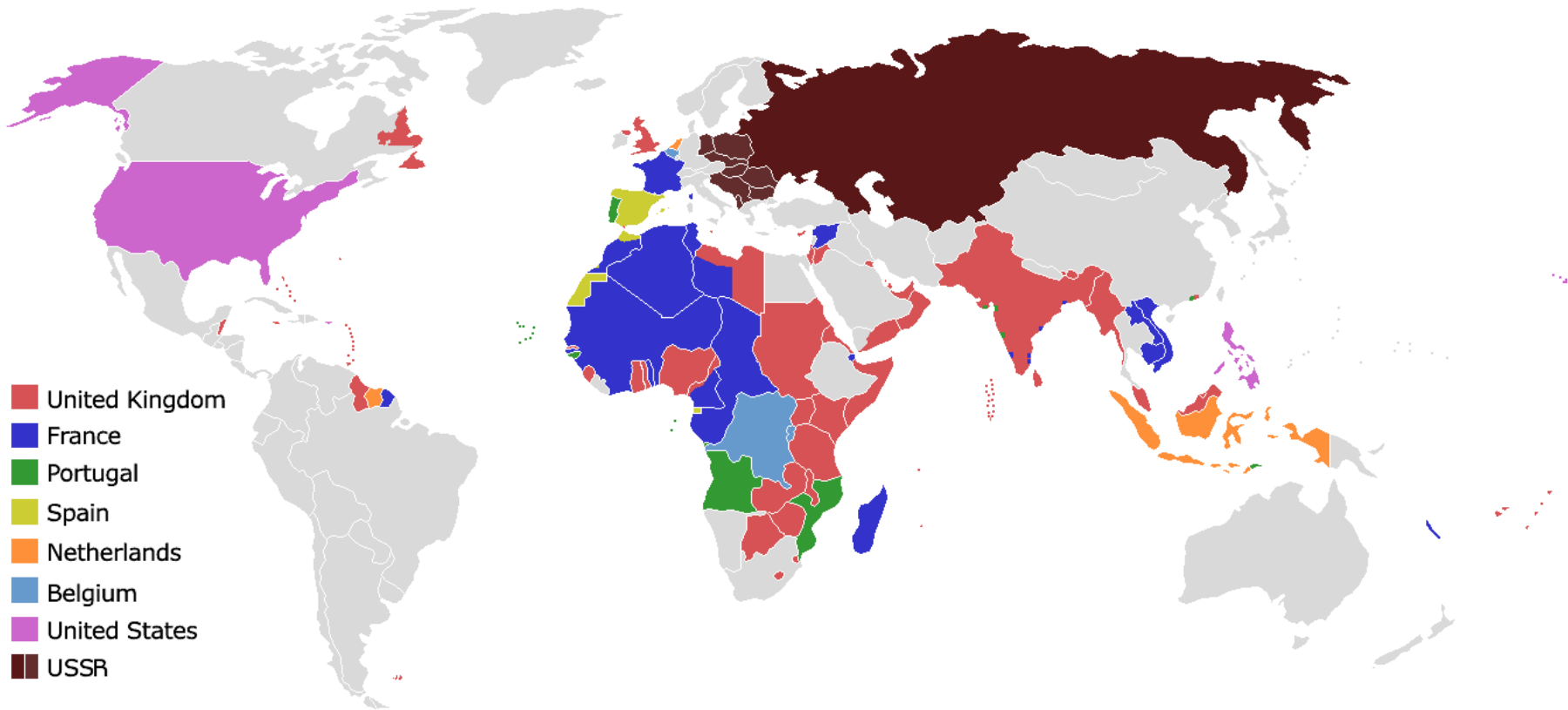
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## □ America as Global Power

- ▣ after World War I, and even more so World War II
- ▣ American military engagement in Europe makes America the protector of freedom
- ▣ disillusionment about the West by e.g. soldiers from India quickens independence movements
- ▣ Gandhi inspired by Thoreau and Tolstoy
- ▣ America sometimes sides against the UK and France (Suez Crisis 1956)

# 3. Imperial Debris

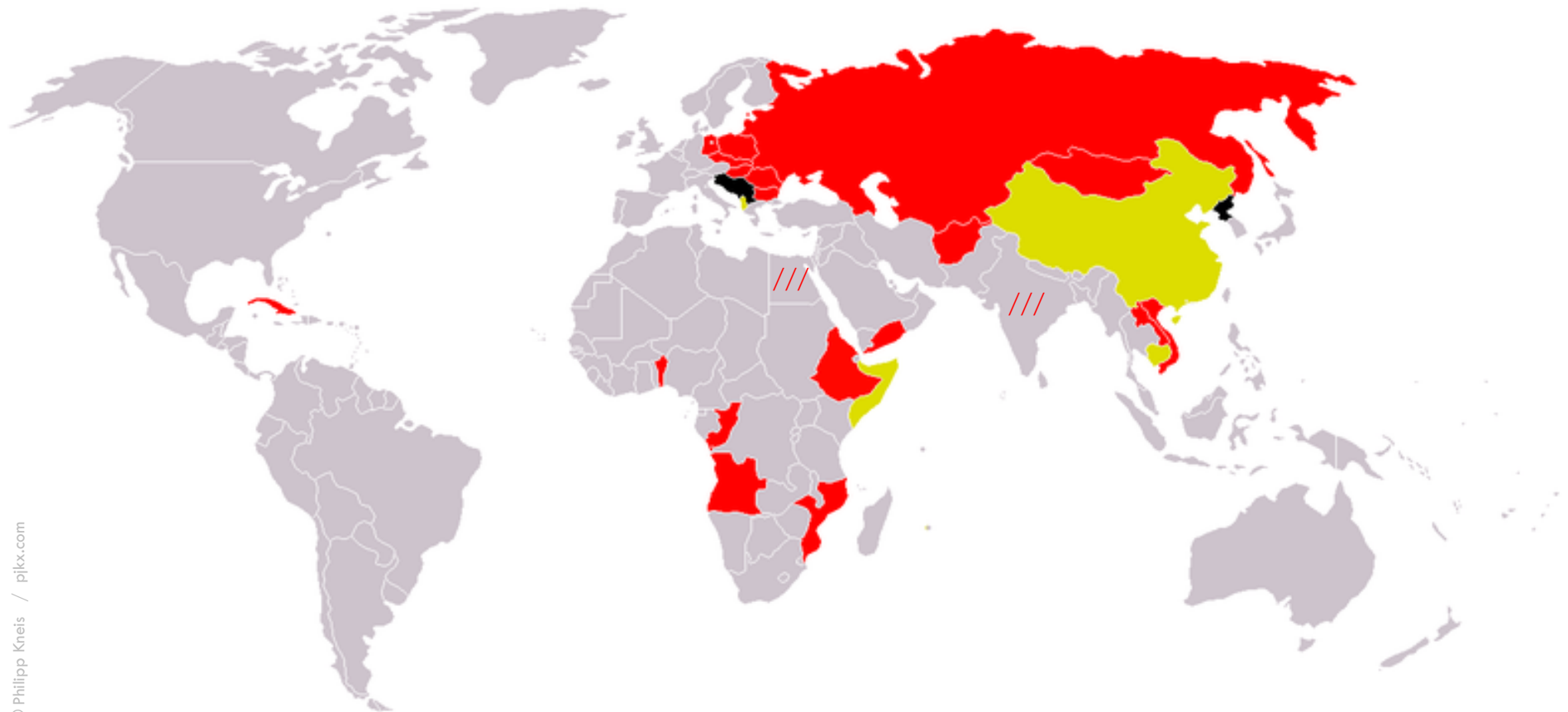
## □ Colonial Empires 1945



# 3. Imperial Debris

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- Soviet Empire (maximum extent):

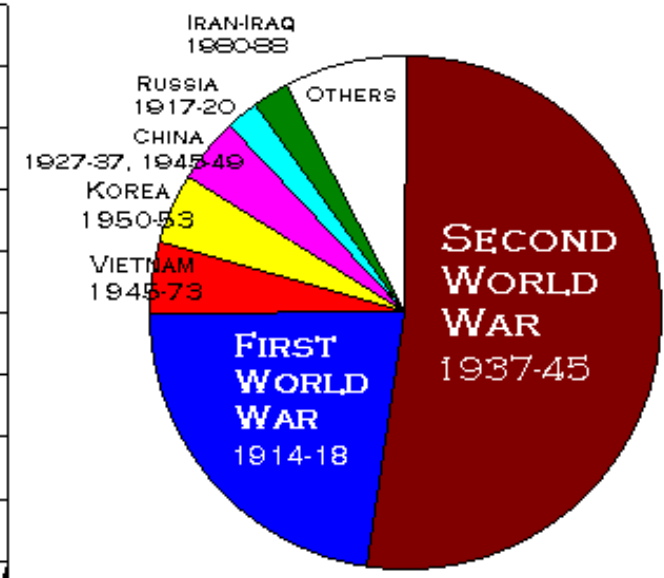
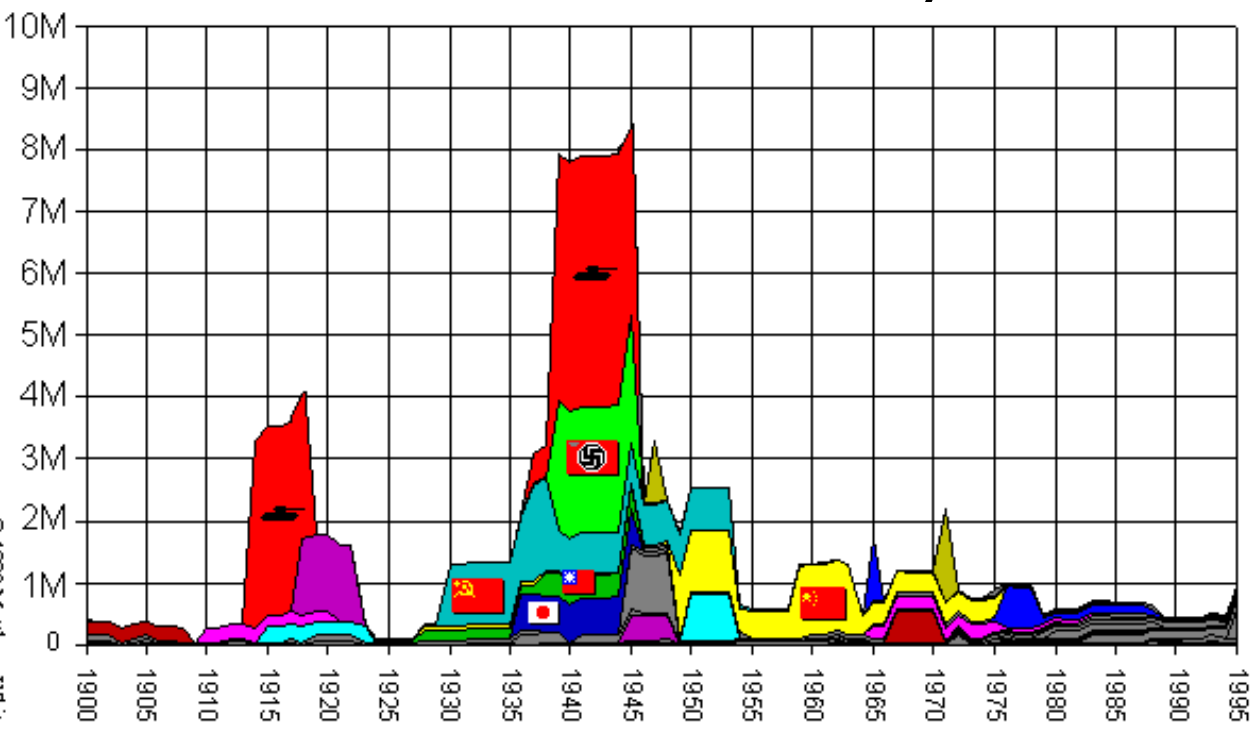


## 4. The Postwar Situation

America and Europe after World War II:  
Occupation of Germany, Rebuilding Europe,  
European Integration, Cold War

# 4. The Postwar Situation

## Wars in the 20th Century:

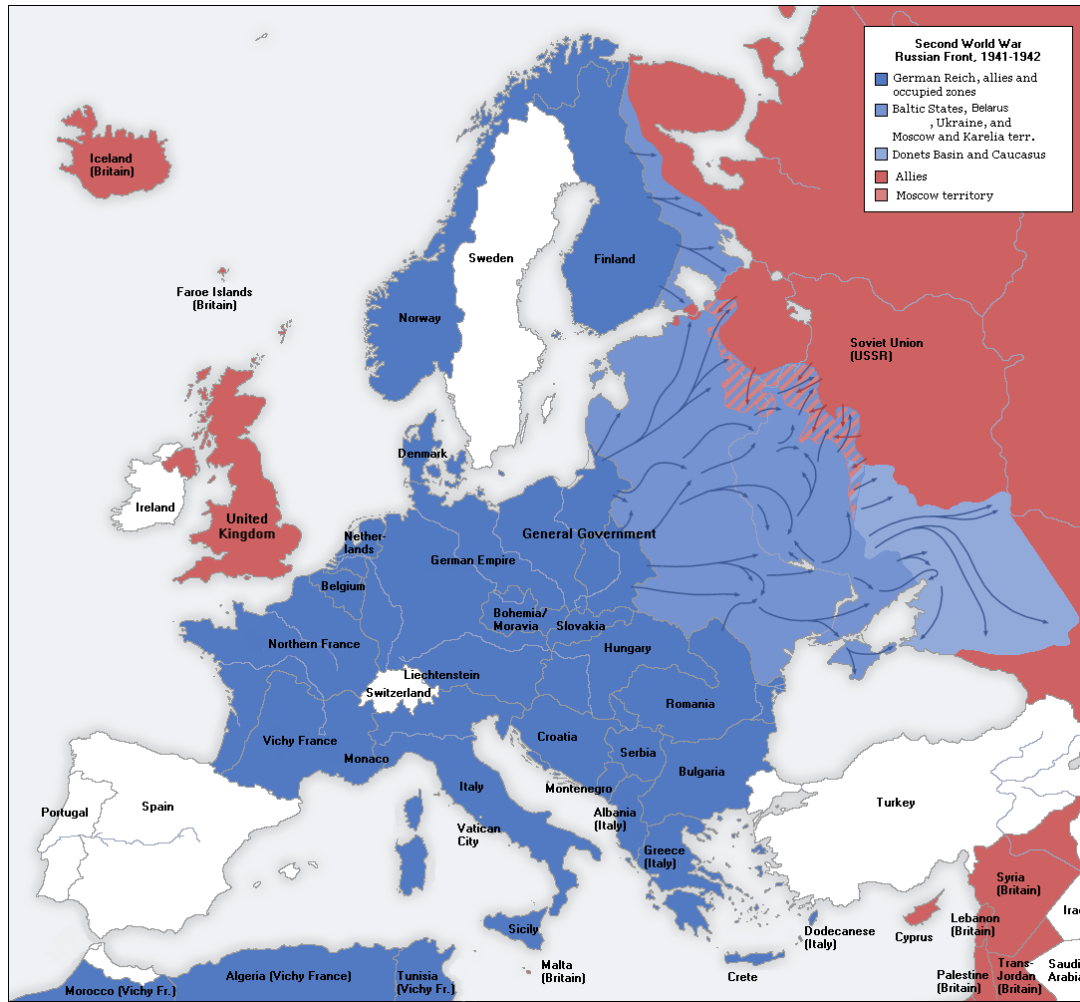


- |                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1st & 2nd World Wars | Congo and Nigeria            |
| Hitler               | Cambodia & Indonesia         |
| Communist China      | Russian & Chinese Civil Wars |
| Soviet Union         | Armenia & Korea              |
| Nationalist China    | India, Pakistan & Bangladesh |
| Japanese genocides   | Mexico & Vietnam             |

# 4. The Postwar Situation

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## □ Third Reich (maximum extent)

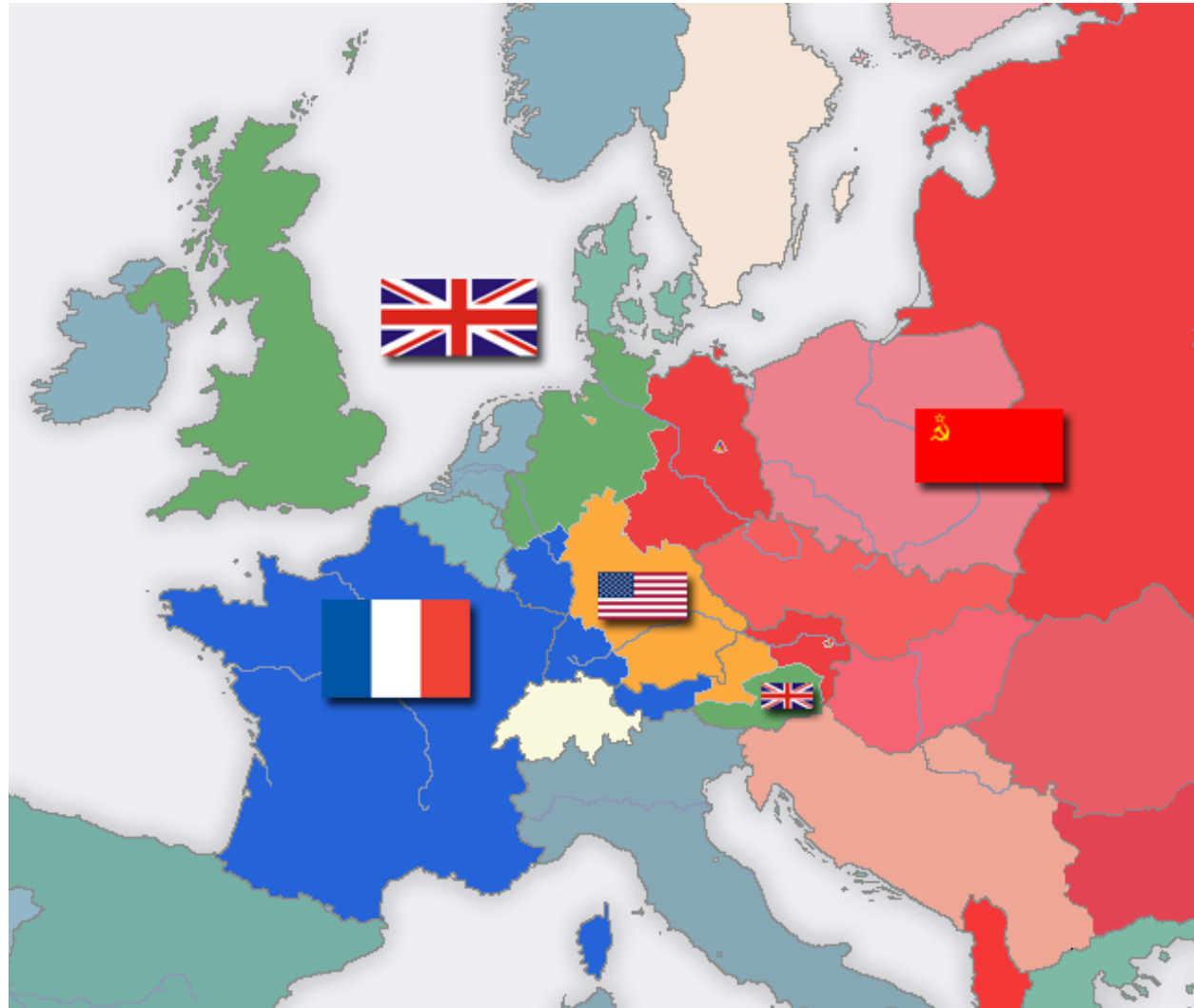




# 4. The Postwar Situation

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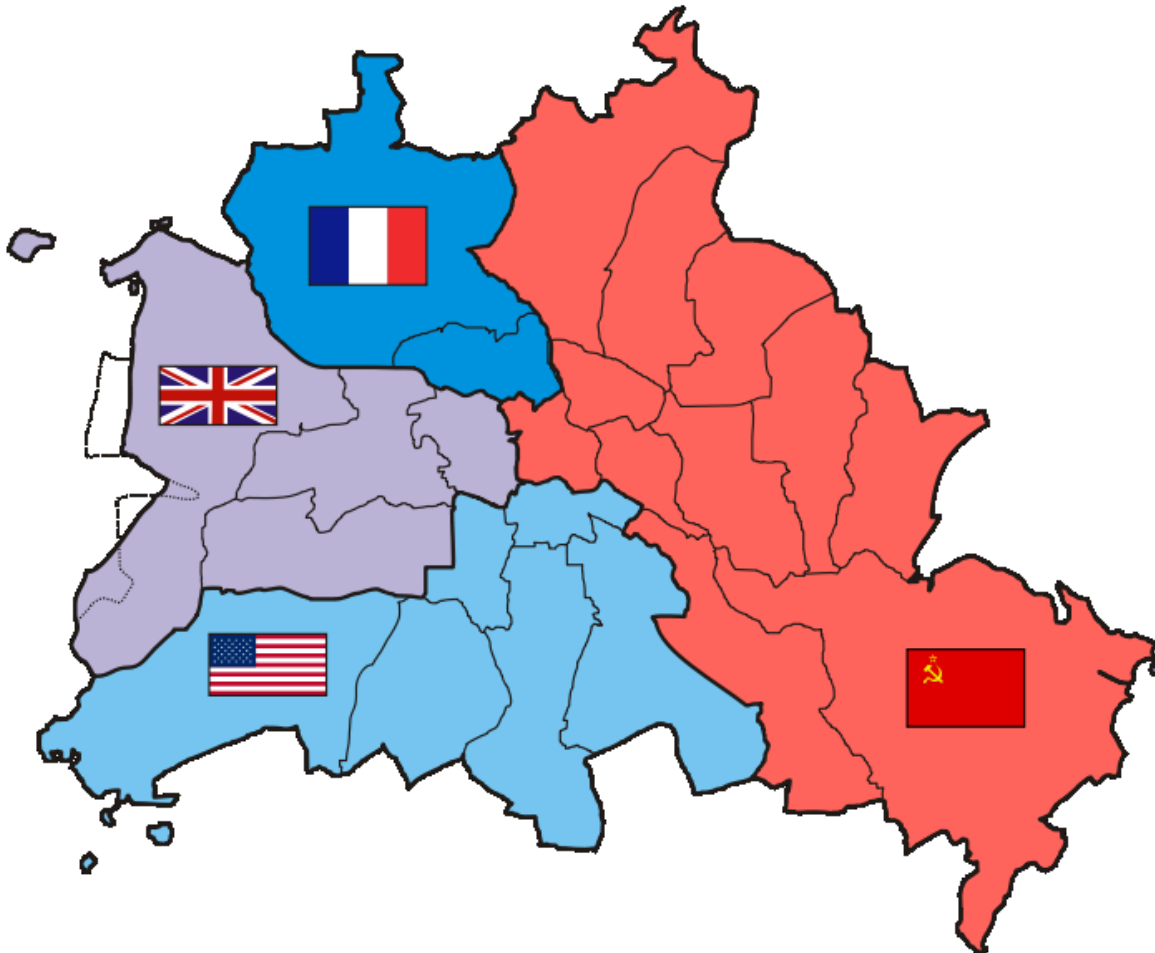
- Occupation of Germany and Austria:



# 4. The Postwar Situation

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## □ Occupation of Berlin:

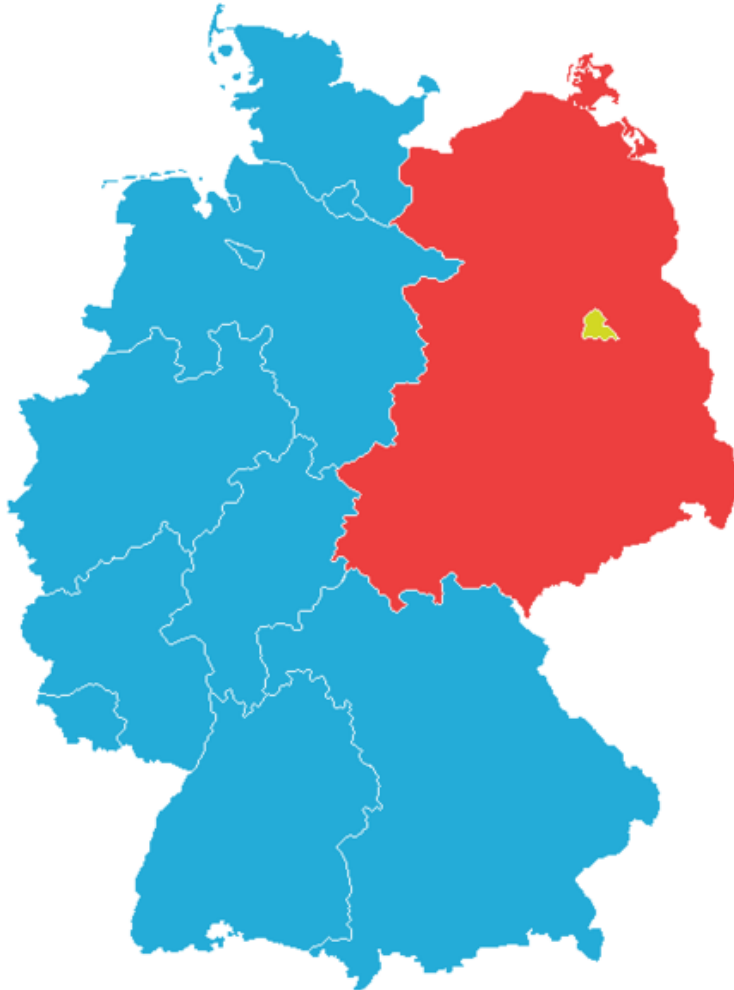




# 4. The Postwar Situation

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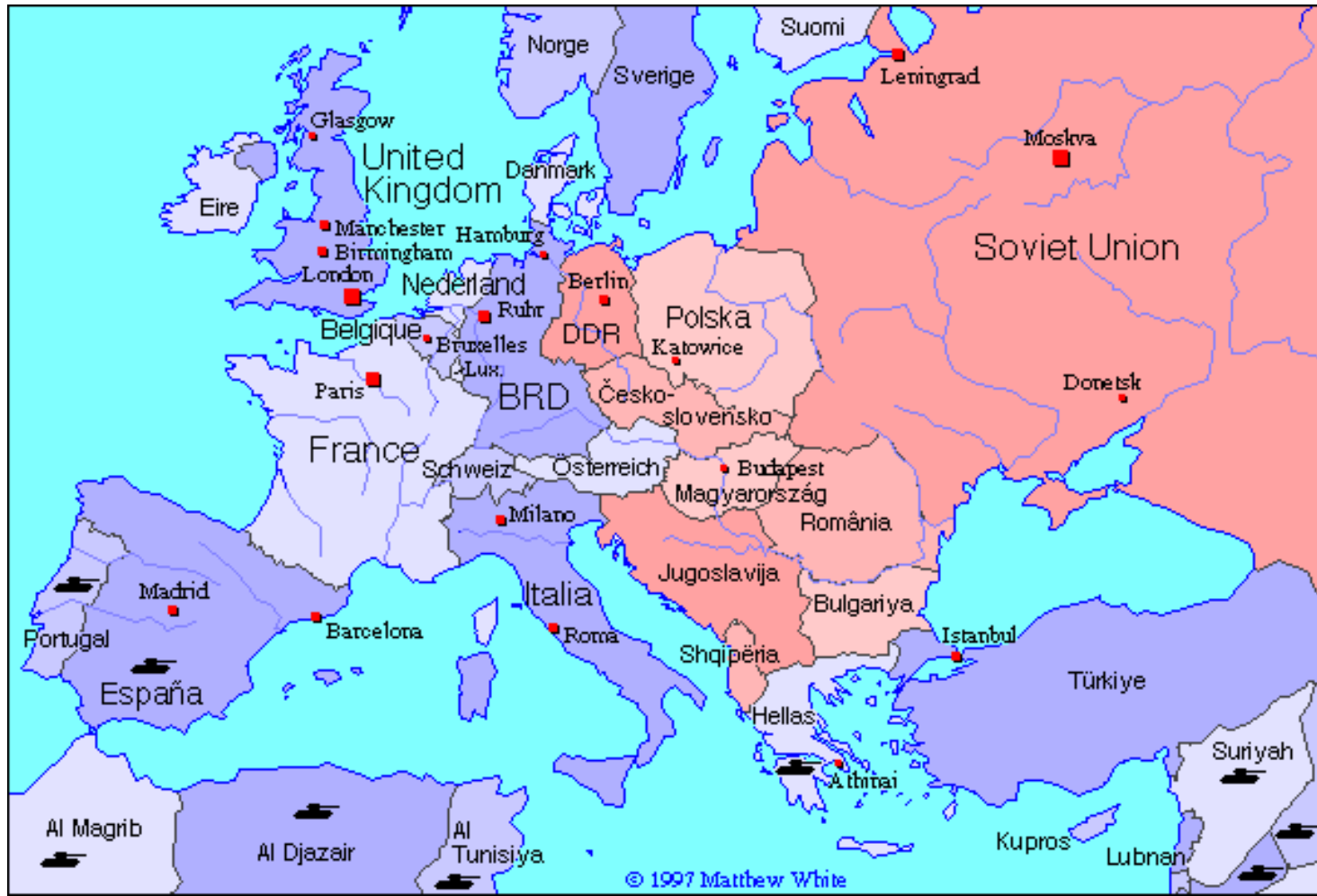
## □ Divided Germany (1949-1990)



# 4. The Postwar Situation

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## □ Divided Europe 1970:



# 4. The Postwar Situation

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- Fraternization of American soldiers with the Germans was originally forbidden, yet hard to control



source: Wikimedia Commons

# 4. The Postwar Situation

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- **Fraternization happened nevertheless**
  - ▣ friendships and relationships between Americans and Germans resulting from occupation times are still important



source: Wikimedia Commons

# 4. The Postwar Situation

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- **Berlin Blockade**  
(24 June 1948 –  
12 May 1949)
  - the Americans keep West Berlin alive in the face of the Soviet blockade
  - the Air Lift is still the most iconic example of American aid



# 4. The Postwar Situation

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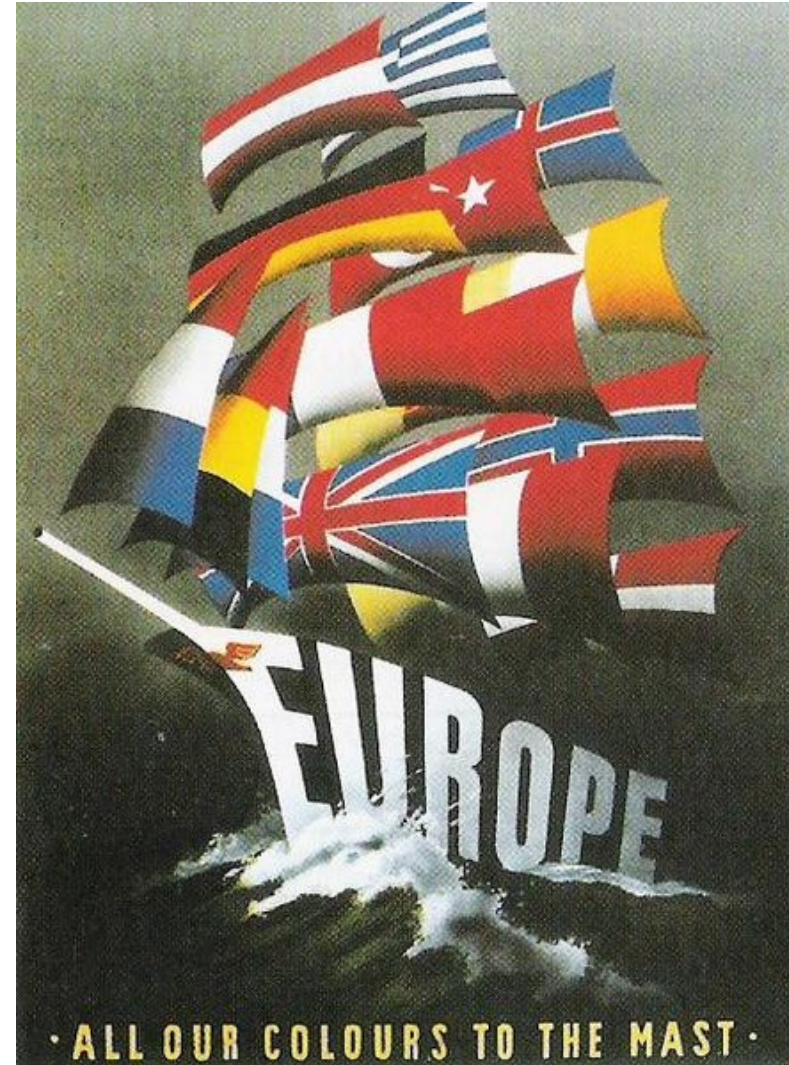
- American popular Culture in Germany



# 4. The Postwar Situation

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- apart from economic aid, the Marshall Plan helped unite Europe with American help and constitutes a truly transatlantic endeavor



source: Wikimedia Commons

# 4. The Postwar Situation

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- **European Unification: Interlocking Institutions**
  - ▣ Historical Developments are almost never based upon singular occurrences
  - ▣ usually, several events, people, institutions contribute to a paradigm shift
    - E.g. Roman Revolution, Fall of Rome, End of the Middle Ages, American Revolution, American Civil War
  - ▣ it is the multiplicity of institutions and initiatives which has created the European framework as it is today
  - ▣ America has always played a part (Marshall Plan, pushing Britain into the EEC, fostering NATO, etc.)

# 4. The Postwar Situation

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- Most important steps:
  - 1948: Brussels treaty, 1955 WEU (European Defense Institution -2001); ERP
  - 1949: Council of Europe, NATO
  - 1950: Schuman Plan
  - 1951: Treaty of Paris: ECSC signed / 1952 in effect (-2002), Pleven Plan for EDC, fails 1954 through French Parliament
  - 1955: FRG joins NATO 1955 after Paris Agreement; Warsaw Pact (-1991)
  - 1957: Treaty of Rome: EEC (Common Market), Euratom
  - 1967: European Communities: EC=EEC+ECSC+Euratom
  - 1968: Albania withdraws from Warsaw Pact
  - 1985: Single European Act / enacted 1987 (more power to Council, Parlm.); 1985: Schengen Agreement / enacted 1995
  - 1993: Treaty of Maastricht: EEC=EC, EU, monetary union prerequisites
  - 1999: Treaty of Amsterdam: EC jurisdiction over immigration & asylum
  - 2002: European Monetary Union: €

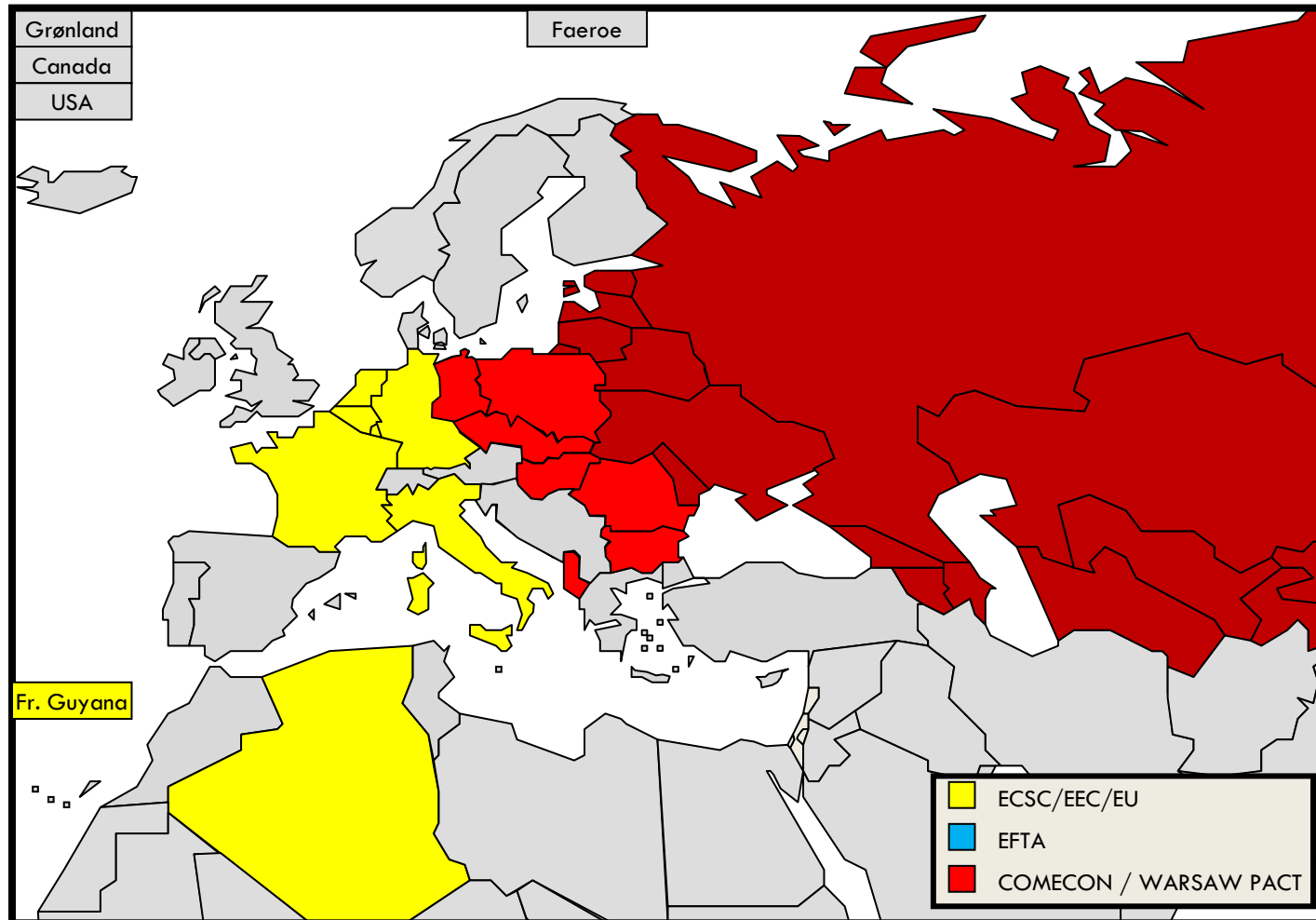
# 4. The Postwar Situation

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- European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC / Schuman Plan) as foundation: economy and security
  - ▣ European integration originally was seen as an effort to prevent another war by Germany. During the Cold War, the Soviet threat created an additional sense of urgency towards European integration.
  - ▣ After the fall of the Soviet Union, previously occupied nations in Central and Eastern Europe could finally become part of the EU.
  - ▣ political structures emerging as part of economic cooperation
- WEU/NATO: defense (after European Defense Union failed)
  - ▣ integration into Western alliance system, defense against Soviet Union
  - ▣ being freed from defense, energies able to shift elsewhere
- other organizations (Council of Europe, OSCE) provide further transatlantic ties

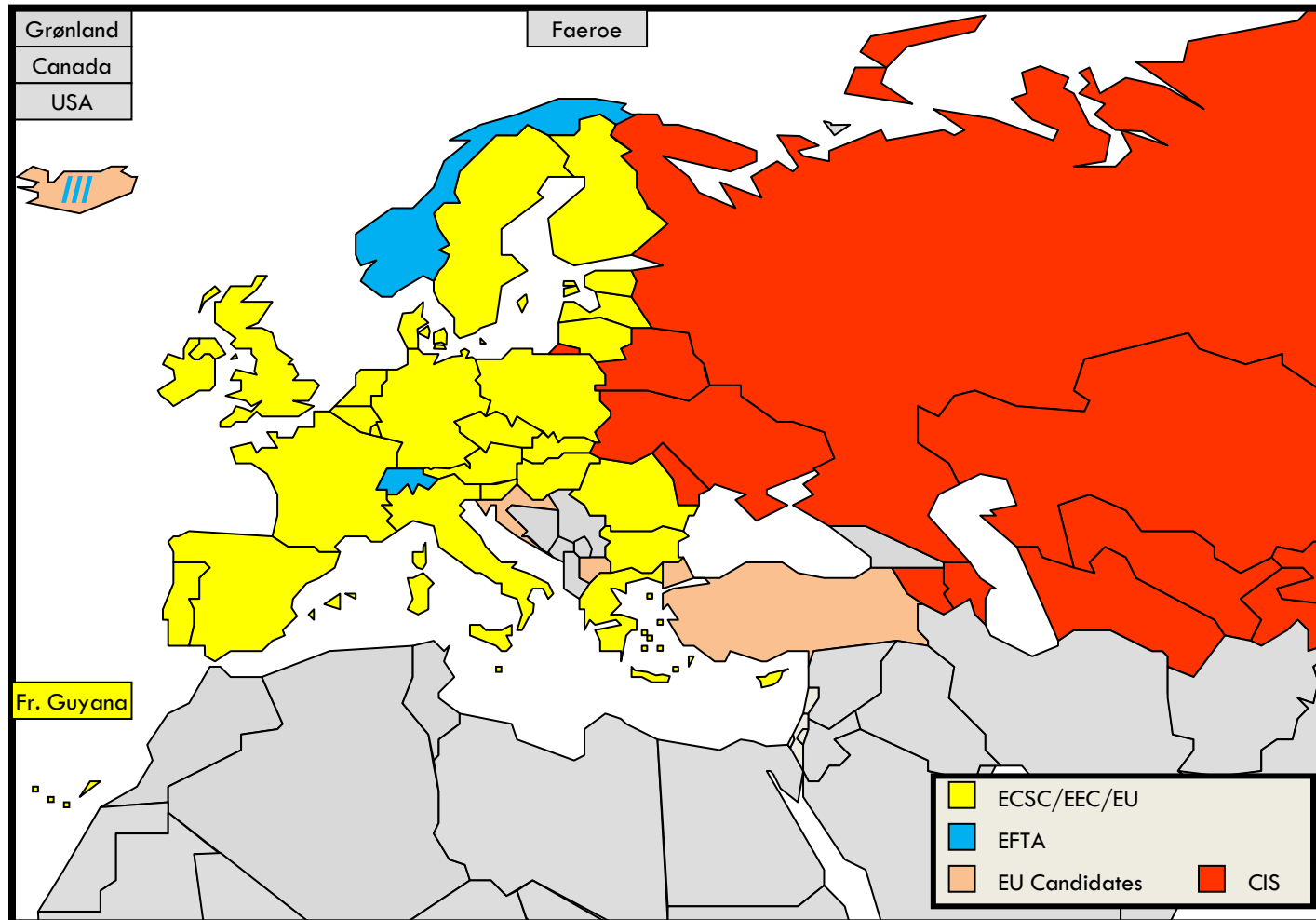
# 4. The Postwar Situation

1957: Schuman Plan / ECSC (F, D, I, B, NL, LUX)



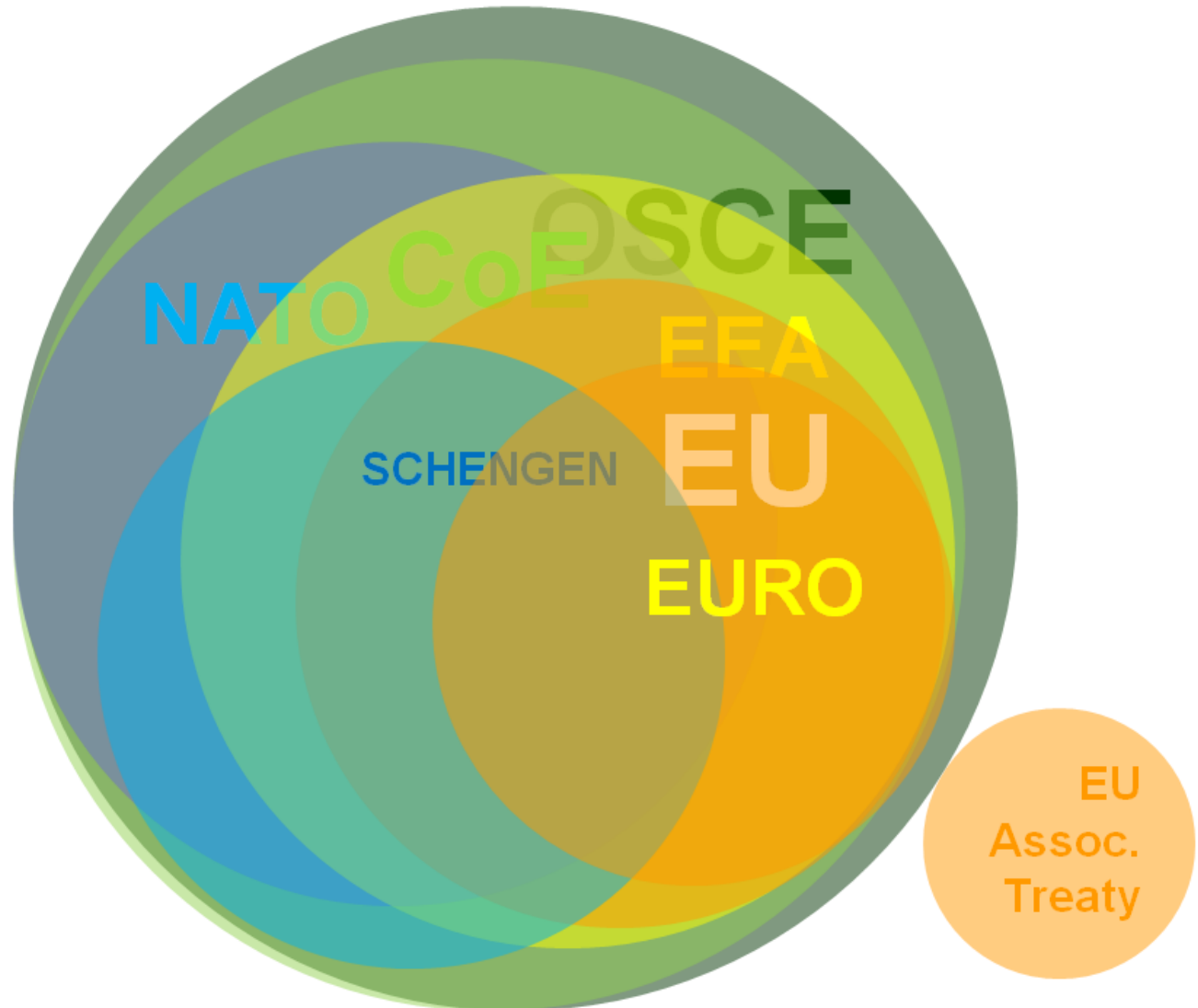
# 4. The Postwar Situation

## 2009: Europe Today



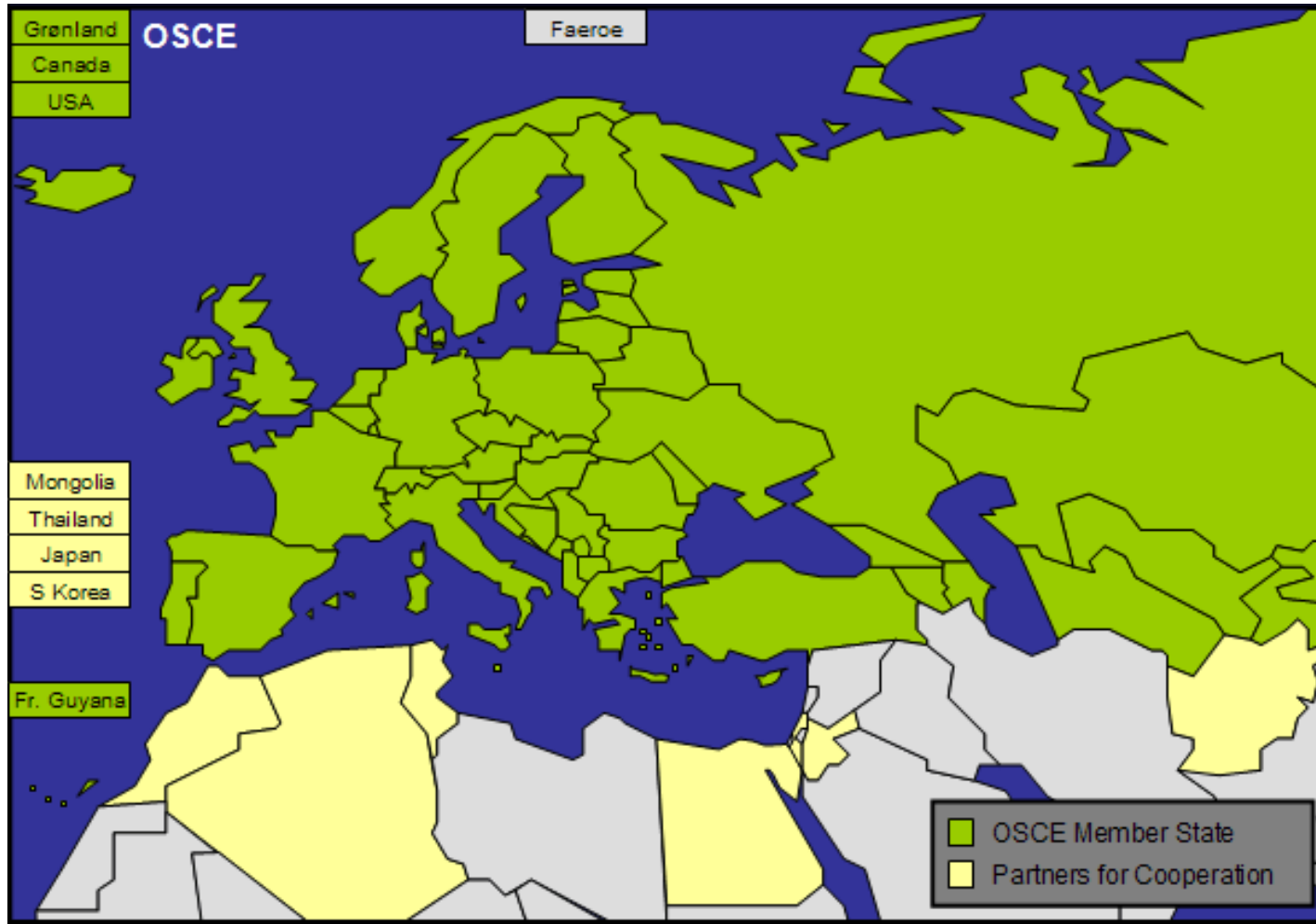
# 4. The Postwar Situation

Layers of  
European &  
Transatlantic  
Integration



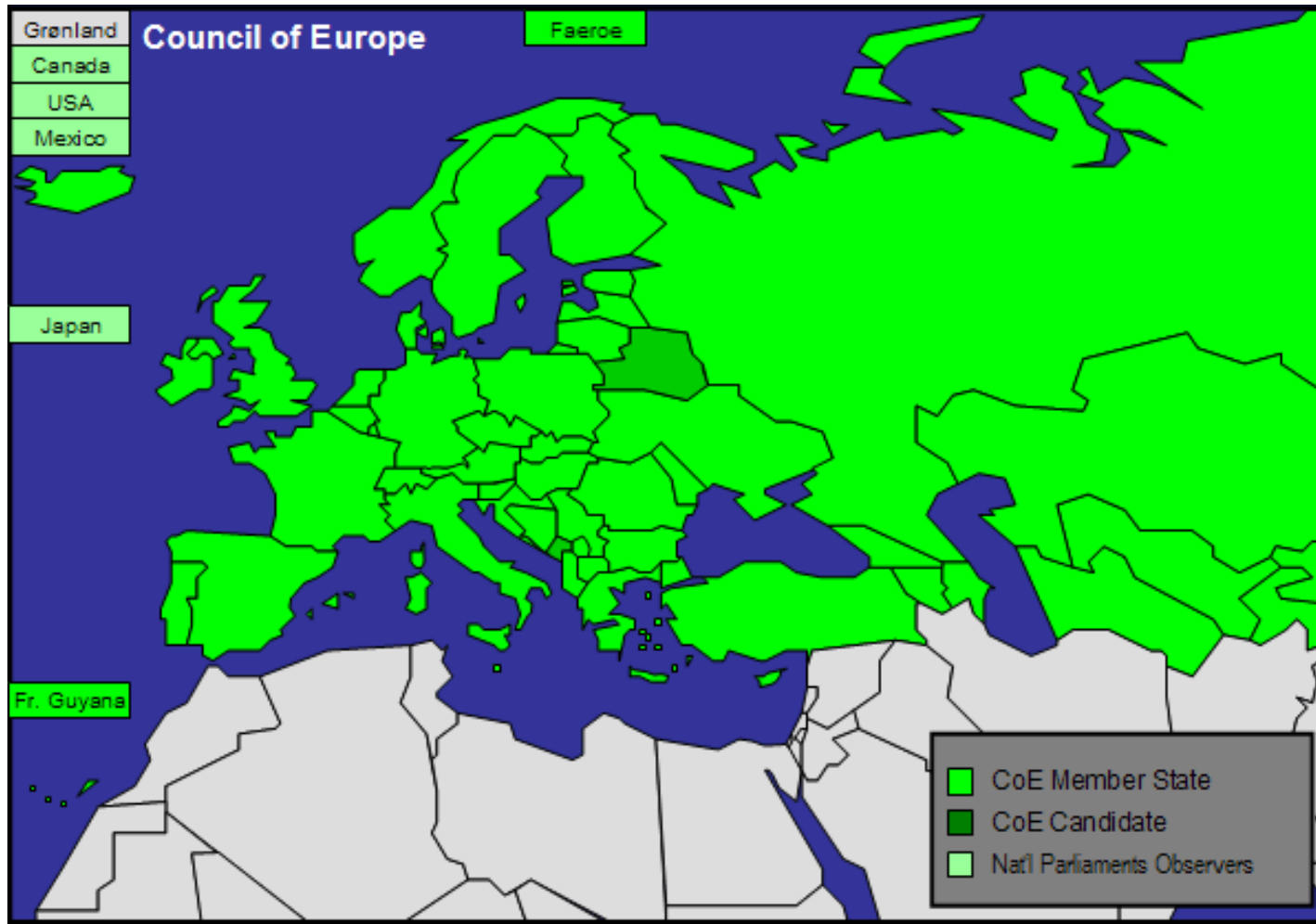
# 4. The Postwar Situation

## Transatlantic Organizations: OSCE



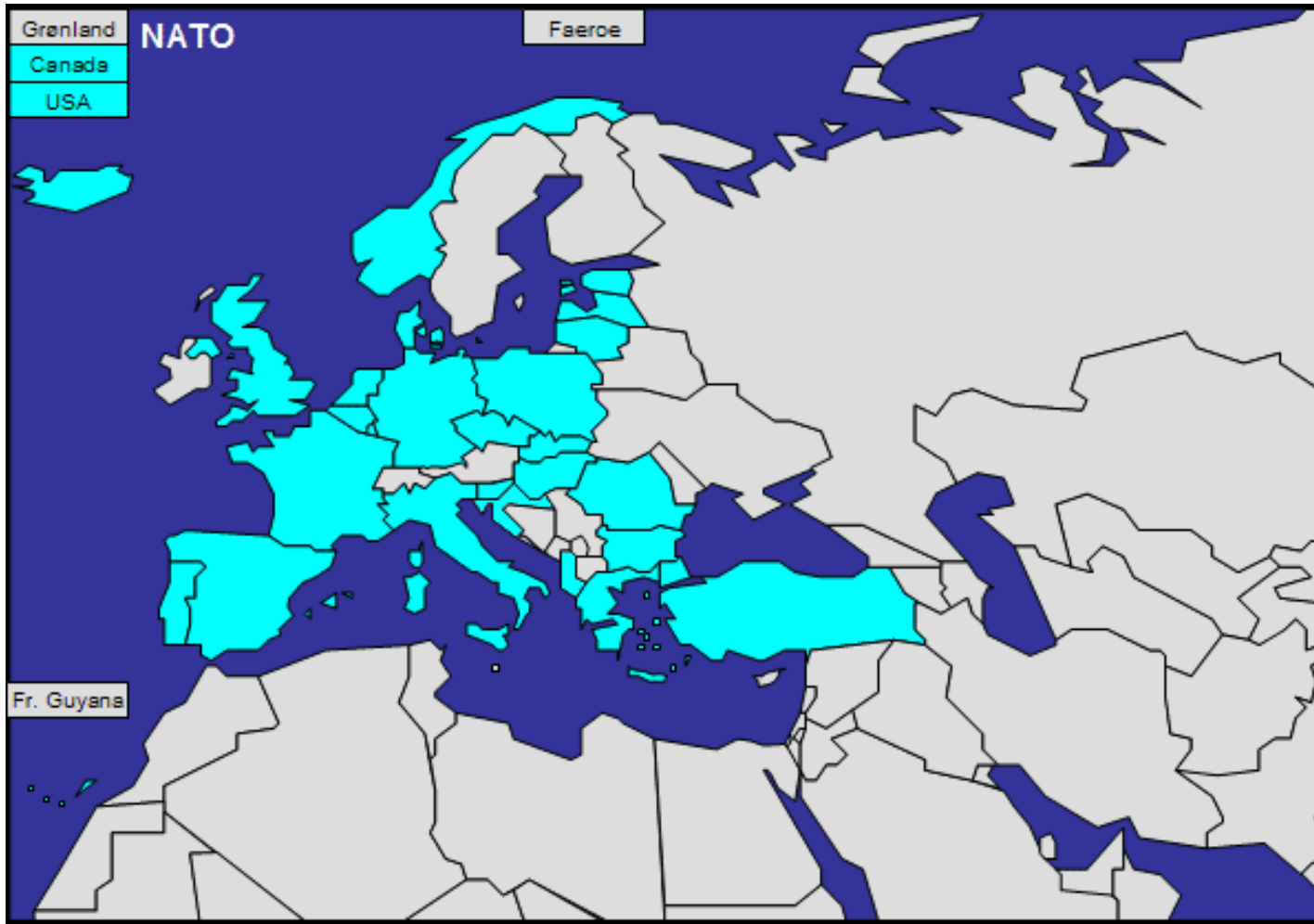
# 4. The Postwar Situation

## Transatlantic Organizations: Council of Europe



# 4. The Postwar Situation

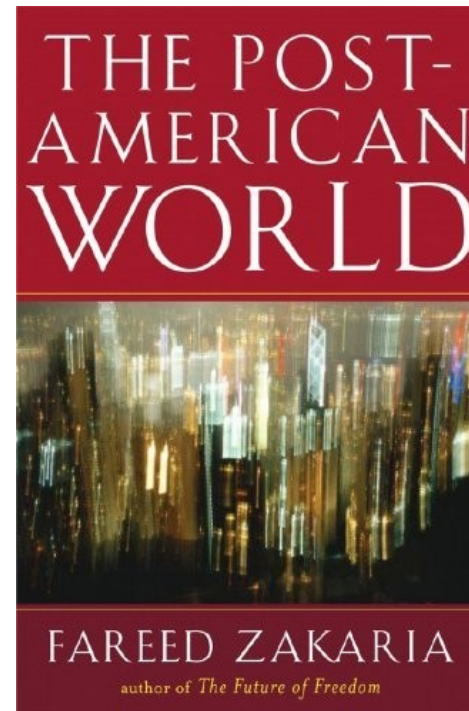
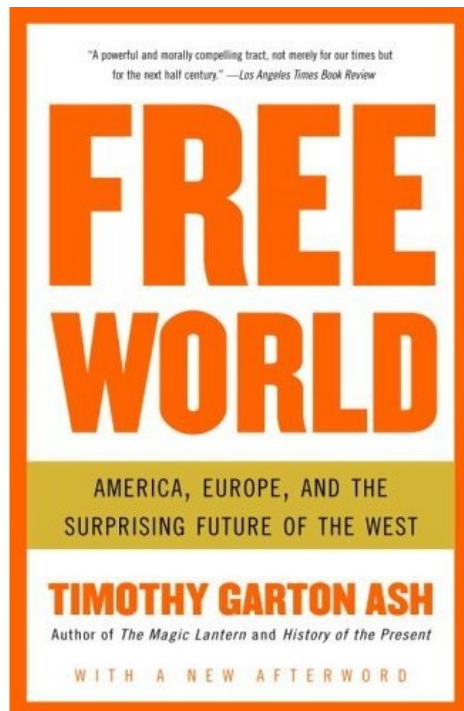
## Transatlantic Organizations: NATO



# 4. The Postwar Situation

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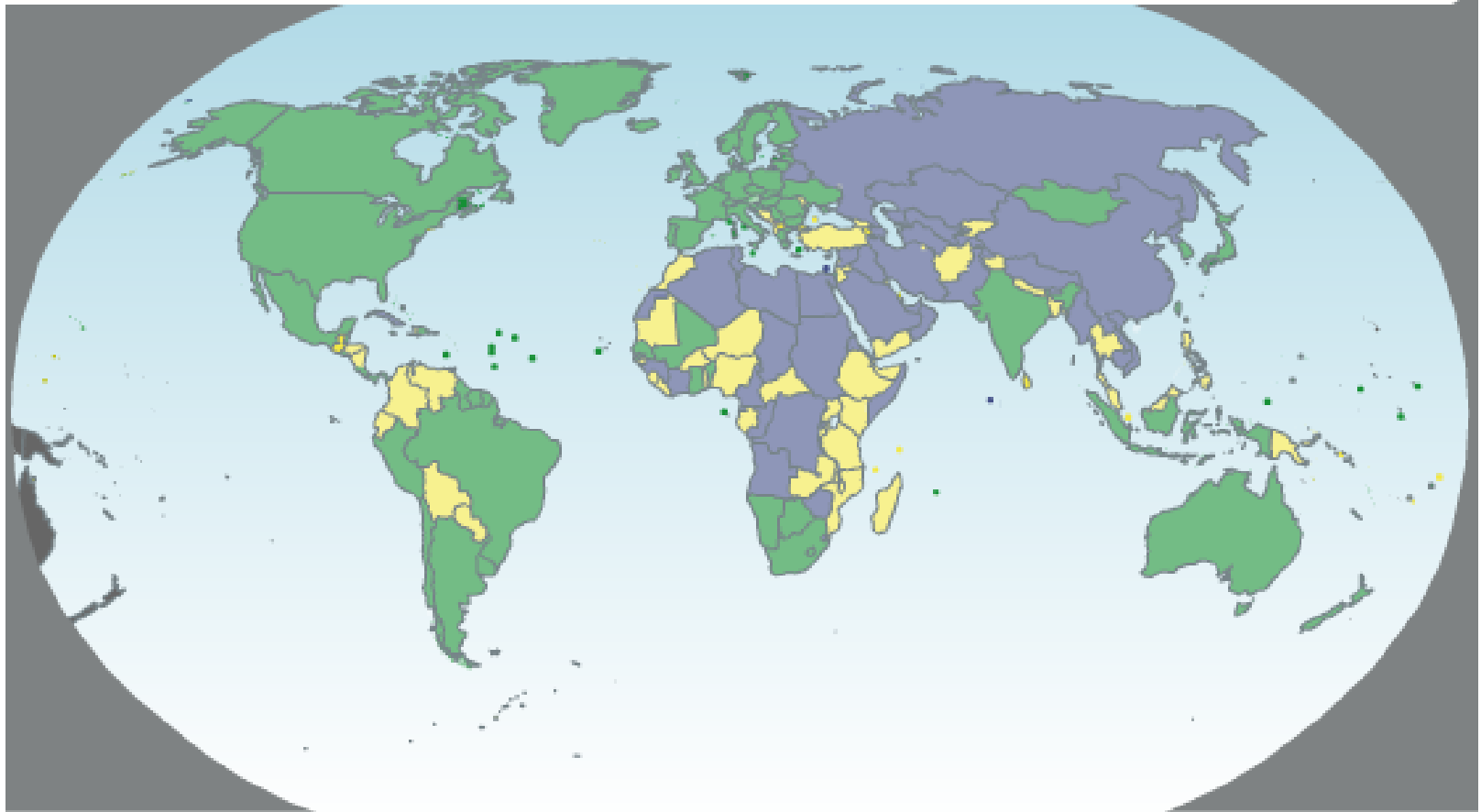
- Challenges to Identity in a Globalizing World
  - ▣ Transatlantic Community? West? Free World?



# 3. Imperial Debris

## Map of Freedom 2008

freedomhouse.org



Map Legend

Free

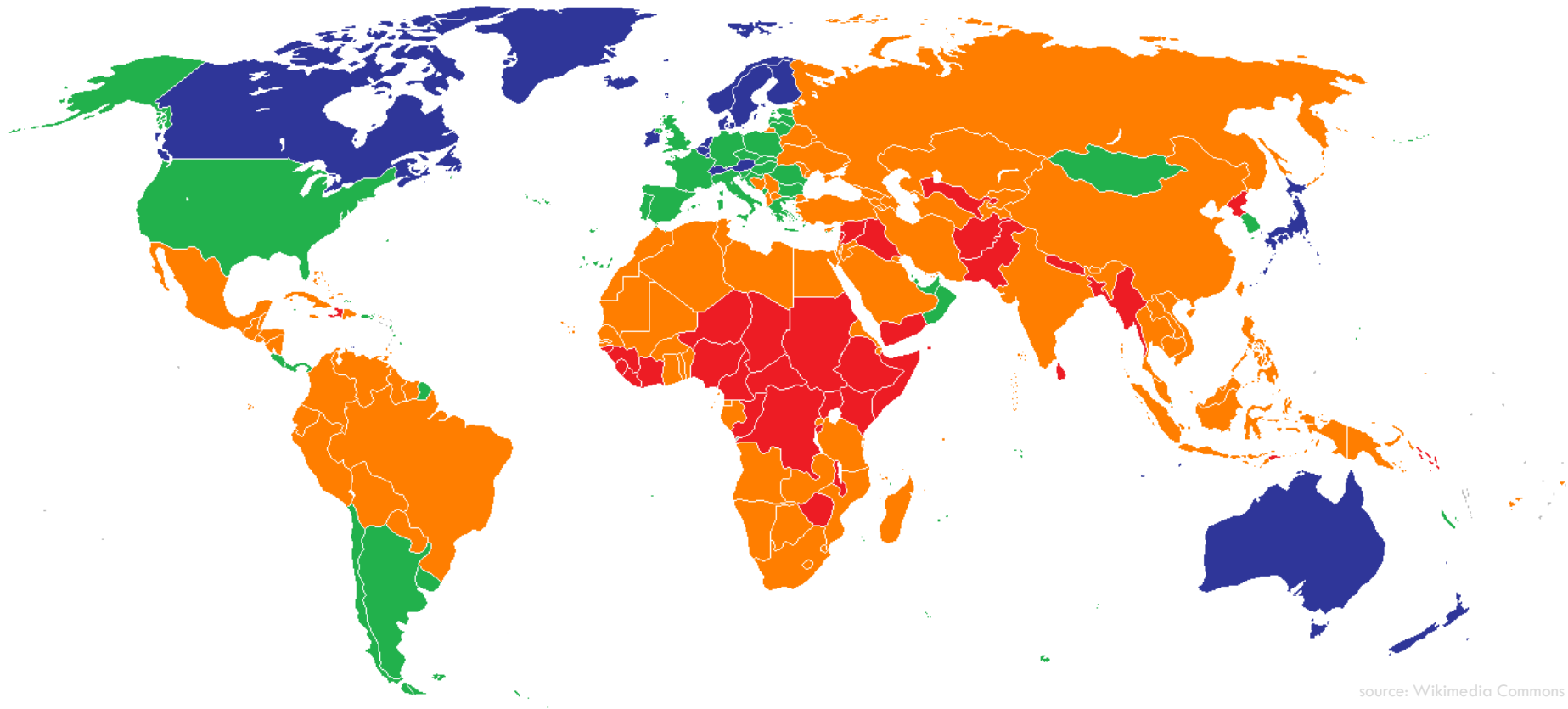
Partly Free

Not Free

# 3. Imperial Debris

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- ❑ Failed States Index  
(compiled by Fund for Peace):



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## 5. Approaches

How do Transatlantic Relations Work?

# 5. Transatlantic Approaches

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## □ Politics

- ▣ government to government
- ▣ military alliances and cooperations
- ▣ supranational institutions
- ▣ diplomacy
- ▣ ...

# 5. Transatlantic Approaches

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- Economics
  - ▣ international markets & banks
  - ▣ international companies
  - ▣ regulation, standards, globalization
  - ▣ ...

# 5. Transatlantic Approaches

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## □ Culture

- ▣ works of art
- ▣ cultural institutions
- ▣ collaborations (Arte, BBC/Discovery Channel)
- ▣ cultural diplomacy
- ▣ ...

# 5. Transatlantic Approaches

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- Individual
  - ▣ travel
  - ▣ study abroad
  - ▣ personal connections
  - ▣ ...

# 5. Transatlantic Approaches

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## □ Non-Conclusion:

- „transatlantic“ means forming connections between one side of the Atlantic and the other
- usually, this means Europe and the US, but increasingly also Latin America, Africa, Canada
- the importance of the transatlantic relationship(s) derives from its historical roots, and continued connections

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