

4 Remapping America

Continentalism, Globalism, and the Rise of the Atlantic Community, 1939–1949

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INTRODUCTION

The early months of 1941 were crucial both for the policies that led to the US intervention in World War II and for the discursive strategies that advocated such intervention among policy makers and the general public alike. Not only would Congress pass the Lend-Lease legislation in March, devised by President Roosevelt to support Britain's war effort, but one month later, Henry Luce's well-known "American Century" editorial in *Life* magazine would also provide American internationalism with a resounding call to arms.

Foreign Affairs, the quarterly journal of the Council on Foreign Relations, was an influential voice in this national conversation. In April 1941, it published "The Myth of Continents," a study by the economist Eugene Staley that tackled one of the questions underlying that conversation: What was the place of the US in a world threatened by the impact of the European war? Staley's was a pointed critique of the "continentalist" vision embraced by isolationists and a spirited case for US involvement in the Atlantic area as the best defense against Nazi expansion. In essence, Staley targeted the widespread notions of economic self-sufficiency and strategic invulnerability of the American hemisphere.

Geography was crucial in his argument against the Western Hemisphere as a "natural" political and economic unit. Assuming Madison, Wisconsin—home of isolationist leader Philip La Follette—as a vantage point, Staley informed readers that "no capital in Europe, including Moscow, is as far from Madison as is Buenos Aires, and only one capital (Athens) is as far as Rio de Janeiro."¹ Continental proximity was a myth rooted in the revered tradition of the Monroe Doctrine and a distorted teaching of geography; oceans were links more than barriers to communication, travel, and transport. Consequently, Staley argued that the Atlantic was vital to American prosperity and security.

Staley's indictment of hemispheric orthodoxy was part of a vibrant, unprecedented discussion of geography and its relation to American power and security. In the early 1940s, arguments over the place of the US in world affairs were ubiquitous among policy makers, both behind closed

doors and in the media. At crucial times during the war, Roosevelt took the lead in the geographic education of the American public. In a fireside chat in February 1942, he repeatedly asked his audience to “look at the map” in order to understand the Anglo-American war strategy.² In fact, I argue that this booming interest in and use of geography within the foreign policy establishment, as well as in the public sphere, was part of a deeper discussion about American identity at a time when the war prompted an effort “to redefine the nation’s relationship to the world and, in the process, to redefine America’s sense of itself.”³

My attempt is part of a growing body of literature that situates the ideology of American foreign relations in the context of constructing national identity and affirming nationalist hegemonic narratives. From this perspective, the role of the United States in world affairs is studied in relation to the effort to define America as an “imagined community,” especially at times of international crisis when a purely domestic definition of identity was made all the more difficult by the ubiquitous presence of the Other, a real or perceived threat.⁴

The early 1940s was a time of competing American outlooks on world affairs, which reflected competing notions of national identity. I argue that disputes over geography were relevant in the redefinition of American identity vis-à-vis the external challenge posed by World War II and, consequently, contributed to shaping the prevailing American perspectives on world affairs. Were American cities closer to the capitals of Latin America, as the hemispheric “myth of continents” implied, or to the capitals of Europe, as Staley’s Atlantic outlook suggested? The construction of a usable geography, as well as the narration of a usable past, was essential for locating the nation within the dynamic scenario of the early 1940s. Continentalist advocates of hemispherism, Atlanticist advocates of aid to Britain, and globalist advocates of free trade all subscribed to specific “metageographies,” understood as “the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world: the often unconscious frameworks that organize studies of history, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, or even natural history.”⁵

This essay discusses the emergence of the Atlantic community as an influential metageographic notion in 1940s America by framing it in its historical context. In fact, the late 1930s and early 1940s were marked by continentalism’s enduring hold and the legacy of the Monroe Doctrine, which reflected a distinctively different view of the *place* of the US in the world, as well as by the resurgent appeal of a globalist view of America’s role in world affairs, which by contrast stemmed from an a-geographical, or postgeographical, premise. The Atlantic community is studied here as a cultural and political construction meant to frame as “natural” what was in fact the consequence of a deliberate nationalist strategy: the rise of the US to political, military, economic, and cultural hegemony within “the West.”

A discussion of the role metageography played in this process highlights a paradox. On the one hand, the very reference to the “Atlantic” in the construction of a new Western identity reveals that arguments about space played a crucial role in making American hegemony seem natural. On the other hand, uses of geography have been largely neglected in studies of the cultural foundations of transatlantic relations. Geography often gets lost as an object of historical inquiry because of its effectiveness as an ideological tool and its ability to make what seems “political” seem “natural.” Recently, scholars have begun to address how geographical knowledge is constructed and communicated; the objectivity of cartography has been challenged by studies showing how maps are culturally constructed means of representing knowledge.⁶ However, diplomatic historians have been generally reluctant to incorporate such perspectives in their research.

This is not to say that geographical knowledge is nothing but a matter of cultural construction. As Edward Said has made clear in his discussion of geography’s role in the construction of identity, “there is no use in pretending that all we know about time and space, or rather history and geography, is more than anything else imaginative.” Here, I believe the challenge lies in uncovering “the political motivations behind metageographical conceptualizations, without implying that they are all reducible to strategic interests.”⁷

THE ORTHODOXY: CONTINENTALISM AND MONROEISM

The rise of the Atlantic community as a dominant metageographical concept in the US is best understood if we consider the pre–World War II orthodoxy. The prevailing assumption about the place of the US in the world was “continentalism,” or “hemispherism” as it came to be called in the discussion about US neutrality in the 1930s. It was based on self-evident facts: the Atlantic Ocean separated the New World from the Old World; the US, together with Central and South America, was part of the Western Hemisphere; the Americas shared one unified landmass, artificially broken into two parts by the Panama Canal. Based on these geographical foundations, continentalism had developed into a grand narrative about America’s place in the world with a relevant impact on both the conduct of and discourse about US foreign policy.

By the eve of World War II, the Monroe Doctrine had been providing the diplomatic dimension of continentalism’s metageography for more than a century. It is hard to overestimate the influence of the “diplomatic declaration of independence” announced in 1823 and continually adapted and negotiated in the following decades. The Monrovia sacred text offered not only a guideline for diplomacy at crucial times for American foreign relations, but also an ideology that was instrumental for defining the American exceptionalist identity by means of opposition, as against an Other, and for

merging the contradictory claims of unilateralism, nationalism, and anticolonialism into a single narrative. As David Ryan argues,

The “two spheres principle” asserted differences and affirmed US nationalism. It enhanced security and identified the US as a progressive force in history . . . The conceptual division of the world . . . enhanced the discourse centred on civilization and barbarism, or of “orientalism.” It reappeared at many subsequent junctures, setting the West aside from and above, at least on the ideological level, the rest.⁸

The cartographic foundation for such orthodoxy was provided by the sixteenth-century Mercator map, which rendered the separation between the Old World and the New by visualizing the earth as a cylinder rather than as a globe. It emphasized the size of the oceans and their function as defensive barriers and providers of “free security.” It also omitted the poles, most conspicuously the Arctic area, which would turn out to be crucial as a bridge between North America and North-Western Europe during World War II.⁹

The tenets of the Monroe Doctrine—first and foremost, the separation of the Americas and Europe as two distant spheres—reflected and reinforced this continental view of the location of the US in the world. There is no consensus over the influence of the Monroe Doctrine’s legacy on the ideology of American foreign policy in the twentieth century, partly because of Monroeism’s versatility, which throughout America’s history has been appropriated by advocates of a wide range of agendas from inward-looking isolation to assertive globalism. Among those who emphasize Monroeism’s enduring impact in the twentieth century, Walter LaFeber has stressed that the formulation of the “noninterference” principle in Monroe’s address sheds light on a long-term contradiction in American thinking on foreign affairs. The US required a total ban on European intervention in American affairs, with no exceptions. It also pledged not to interfere in European affairs, with President Monroe stating that “in the war of European powers *in matters relating to themselves* we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so.” This qualification, according to LaFeber, was meant to have it both ways: “Under certain circumstances—which the United States could define on its own—Americans could interfere in European affairs.”¹⁰

The ability of the Monroe Doctrine tradition to absorb the tension between the assertion of a spatially defined American sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere and the rejection of the very notion of sphere of influence elsewhere—which paved the way toward projecting American influence worldwide—accounts for its enduring influence during the first half of the twentieth century. The resilience of Monroeism as the foreign-policy dimension of the continentalist view of American identity is perhaps best appreciated through a comparison between Woodrow Wilson’s and Franklin Roosevelt’s attempts to cope with it in the context of global war.

On the eve of the US intervention in World War I, Wilson proposed in his characteristically emphatic style that “the nations should with one accord adopt the doctrine of President Monroe as the doctrine of the world: that no nation should seek to expand its polity over any other nation or people, but that every people should be free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the grand and the powerful.” However, his globalization of the Monroe Doctrine, which he tried to purge of geographic premises and sphere-of-influence implications, was unacceptable to American senators. A few months later, in the debate over the ratification of the Covenant of the League of Nations, many of its critics opposed Article X on collective security exactly because it did not explicitly guarantee the US unilateral, exclusive freedom of action in the Western Hemisphere, among other things.¹¹ Apparently, Wilson’s escape from both geography and history was out of touch with the prevailing climate of opinion.

By contrast, on the eve of World War II, Roosevelt, who was familiar with the metageography of continentalism, chose to adapt it to the dramatic changes underway in the world arena and eventually juggled his way between the assumptions of continentalism and the challenges of another world conflict. The resilience of hemispherism in his mental map was the consequence of deep personal convictions as well as his recognition of continentalism’s influence on the American public. In fact, Roosevelt was aware that, after the demise of Wilsonian internationalism, the 1920s had witnessed a resurgence of Monroeism in the domestic discourse of American foreign policy. In the Senate, a significant indicator of the domestic dimension of US foreign policy, this resurgence provided the foundation for a bipartisan reaffirmation of American unilateralism. In 1923, the higher chamber, led by Henry Cabot Lodge, opposed US membership in the Permanent Court of High Justice established in The Hague one year earlier on the grounds that it implied “a relinquishment by the United States of its traditional attitude toward purely American questions.”¹² The Senate Foreign Relations Committee put forward the same argument again in 1928 against the Kellogg-Briand Pact on disarmament, which was hardly a threat to US freedom of action in foreign affairs. The fact that even the prospect of a toothless international agreement like the Kellogg-Briand Pact triggered flag-waving assertions of unilateral Monroeism suggest that the latter was a reflection of profound sentiments and widespread orientations pertaining to America’s self-image and its relation to the world.

Notions concerning space, that is, the separation of the US from Europe and its proximity to South America—the “myth” that Staley and others debunked—grounded this continentalist discourse in nature. An atlas published in the US in 1937 still defined North and South America as one single continent, and the following year Roosevelt himself referred to “the continent in which we live” as stretching “from Canada to Tierra del Fuego.”¹³ This continentalist geography was conducive to continental determinism.

In the late 1930s, as Europe was on the verge of yet more bloodshed, the idea of the Americas as “the hemisphere of peace” was immensely popular in the US.¹⁴

CONTINENTAL METAGEOGRAPHY AND GLOBAL WAR

Beneath this apparent consensus, however, the orthodoxy of continentalism was being appropriated by actors with conflicting agendas. On the one hand, a hemispheric network including historians Charles Beard and Samuel Flegg Bemis, Senator Burton Wheeler, and Charles Lindberg, among others, advocated nonintervention on the grounds of US self-sufficiency and security due to the combined resources and geographic position of the Americas. On the other hand, Roosevelt, together with influential State Department officials like Assistant Secretary Adolf Berle and Undersecretary Sumner Welles, adapted his continentalist assumptions to the challenges of World War II. In October 1940, genuinely worried by Axis propaganda and infiltration in the Americas, the president publicly articulated his view on hemispheric defense:

There are those in the Old World who persist in believing that here in this new hemisphere the Americas can be torn by the hatred and fear (which) have drenched the battle grounds of Europe for so many centuries . . . ‘Divide and Conquer!’ That has been the battle-cry of the totalitarian powers in their war against the democracies. It has succeeded on their continent of Europe for the moment. On our continents it will fail.¹⁵

As he contrasted events in Europe and the Americas, he made reference to the exceptionalist binary opposition between the New World and the Old World—peace versus war, freedom versus tyranny, cooperation versus conflict, racial harmony versus racial hatred—which resonated with the metageography of continentalism.

In an address to the American Automobile Association one month later, Berle stressed how the construction of the Pan American highway then underway would facilitate travel, which “is always greatest in those countries which can be reached by automobile,” and strengthen ties among the American republics in the process. American tourists used to visiting the “shrines of history” in Europe “must now seek in this Hemisphere the broadening experiences which once they sought beyond the seas. It will be found, I know, that there is as much wealth of experience and wisdom to be found in the Americas as in Europe; different, but no less glorious.”¹⁶

Roosevelt, Berle, Welles, and others shared what John L. Harper has defined as a “Europhobic-hemispheric” outlook, which contrasted the selfishness of the declining European powers against the peaceful cooperation

among the democracies of the Western Hemisphere.¹⁷ As embittered Wilsonians, they were impatient with those whose thinking centered around the Old World; at the same time, they were aware that isolation would not provide security and prosperity to America in the age of aviation and economic interdependence. Their rhetoric was not just meant to appease the Monroe Doctrine stalwarts in the Senate, although political expediency also played a role. Rather, their “creeping hemispherism” played on the ambiguity of the Monroe Doctrine emphasized by Walter LaFeber in “sealing off the hemisphere into a de facto US sphere while insuring that other parts of the world remained open.”¹⁸

Before Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt wrapped his prointervention thrust in the old mantle of continentalism as he extended the Western Hemisphere’s eastern border farther east toward Europe. He did so both publicly, by justifying the shipping of US troops to Greenland and Iceland in terms of hemispheric defense, and privately, by redrawing the hemisphere’s eastern boundary with a pencil on a map so as to include the Azores as well as Iceland and Greenland; he sent his sketch to Winston Churchill to show him how far American action could range under the constraints of hemispherism.¹⁹

Geography was crucial in the controversy over the place of neutral America vis-à-vis World War II: Where was the boundary between Europe and the Americas? The Western Hemisphere was now a contested notion. While Roosevelt extended it eastward to include the Atlantic islands, isolationists held on to the dogma of hemispheric self-sufficiency, and Atlantacists dismissed it as an old, irrelevant “myth.”

Pearl Harbor forced Americans to face the end of an era of free security and to start thinking globally. However, the metageography of continentalism continued to play a role in US foreign policy throughout the war, as shown by negotiations leading to the foundation of the United Nations. Many inside and outside the Roosevelt administration believed that continentalism was worth preserving in the postwar order and had to be acknowledged in the UN Charter in some way. At the same time, they were not ready to recognize regional blocs around Britain or the USSR. This was another demonstration of the tension between globalist and regionalist outlooks, between an allegedly postgeographic universalism and an American nationalism very much based on geography. Far from being the result of proto-cold war tensions imposed on the US, such tension expressed the built-in, long-term contradiction rooted in the ambiguity of Monroeism.

What emerges throughout the negotiations that led to Dumbarton Oaks and later to the San Francisco Conference is the recurrent US attempt to play the regionalist card in the pursuit of what Neil Smith defines as “nationalist internationalism.” The US tried to reconcile continentalism and globalism with respect to two crucial issues: UN membership, for which the US even swallowed the admission of Peron’s Argentina in order to put together a faithful bloc of “Monroe Doctrine nations,” and the attempt to

seek recognition of the Act of Chapultepec on inter-American defense as a regional exception to the otherwise globalized Articles 51 and 52 of the UN Charter. Once again, the US tried to have it both ways. In the words of Senator Vandenberg, the most politically influential member of the US delegation in San Francisco, “Our great concern is to find a rule which protects existing regional groups (like Pan-Am) without opening up the opportunity for regional balance of power groups.”²⁰

AMERICA AS ATLANTIC NATION

By the time the United Nations was founded in 1945, four years of total war waged on a global scale had profoundly transformed not only America’s place in the world but also the home front and the very self-image of the nation. As Colonel Herman Beukema had presciently argued in 1939 in a Council on Foreign Relations study group on hemispheric defense, “to defend America it is necessary first of all to define America.”²¹ I argue that the rise of the notion of an Atlantic community as an alternative to the metageography of continentalism at once reflected and fueled this discussion regarding the redefinition of the nation. America, which had entered the war reluctantly as the leader of the Western Hemisphere, was the triumphant leader of the West at a time when clouds loomed over the horizon with regards to continuing the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union. The adoption of a Europe-first strategy to win a global war implied not only a transformation of transatlantic relations at the diplomatic, strategic, and economic levels but also a reconsideration of mental maps and metageographic assumptions. To the extent that the use of geography plays a role in the construction of a national identity, the rise of the idea of an Atlantic community marked a turning point in US history.

From 1940 onward, Roosevelt encouraged the American people to look beyond the Western Hemisphere as he adapted the protean legacy of the Monroe Doctrine to his prointervention agenda. In an address delivered in May 1940, he warned against “a false teaching of geography—the thought that a distance of several thousand miles from a war-torn Europe to a peaceful America gave to us some form of mystic immunity that could never be violated.”²² Misleading teaching and transmission of geographic knowledge was also a target of Staley’s argument against continentalism. He asked his readers to look at a “globe” rather than at the deceiving maps based on the Mercator projection: “Illusions persist in the minds of all of us from the old book-school devise of the flap maps which break the world into hemispheres that have no objective existence whatever in nature.”²³

A major contributor to this national conversation about geography and America’s place in the early 1940s was the influential public intellectual and foreign-policy commentator Walter Lippmann. He had developed a profound interest in geographic matters after working on the settlement

of post–World War I border issues with Isaiah Bowman. In a June 1940 article for *Life*, he made his case for US intervention by tearing down the hemispheric/isolationist assumption that geography had guaranteed American security and would continue to do so. Peace, he argued, had not been secured by the natural barriers provided by the oceans. The Monroe Doctrine had been effective because “though not an alliance with Great Britain, [it] was a joint parallel policy” based on Anglo-American “common interest.” World War II was now confirming that the two shores of the Atlantic were inextricably bound together:

It is manifest that in seeking to separate ourselves from the great wars of Europe, we cannot rely upon the Atlantic Ocean. It has never been a barrier to involvement in wars. Our geography books are as misleading as our history books. They show us maps of the Western Hemisphere in which North and South America lie isolated between two oceans that are as wide as the map itself. Because the maps do not show the land and the harbors on the other side of these two oceans, our people have been misled to think that oceans are an impregnable barrier. Oceans are not a barrier. They are a highway.²⁴

Lippmann was arguably the most influential advocate of the idea of an Atlantic community, which was meant to frame the US as the leader of a transatlantic space that included North America and Western Europe and shared political and economic principles and institutions (liberal democracy, individual rights and the rule of law, free market and free trade); cultural traditions (Christianity and the legacy of Western civilization); and, consequently, national interests. As Ronald Steel shows in this volume, Lippmann’s discussion of geography in countless columns, not to mention books and private letters, was crucial to the construction of the Atlantic community.

As a metageographical notion, the Atlantic community can be seen as just another episode in the fluctuation of the border separating the West from the rest. For centuries, the East versus West opposition had provided a spatial configuration that reproduced a fundamental conflict over values: Christianity versus Islam, and later, reason and progress versus despotism and stagnation. What was new in the 1940s construction of the Atlantic community vis-à-vis previous configurations of the West was the crucial role played by the US. As the *primus inter pares*, the US had the power to articulate a hegemonic narrative based on the powerful ideological construct of the West.²⁵

Such a construction, which is often dismissed as a by-product of the cold war, is actually rooted in the Anglo-American rapprochement of the early twentieth century and was precipitated by World War II. It fully displayed its hegemonic power as the media, especially the middlebrow press, popularized the notion of an Atlantic community being forged by commentators,

scholars, businessmen, and policy makers. The case of Henry Luce, the Time Inc. media mogul and influential advocate of intervention with close ties to the foreign-policy establishment, is a telling example of the workings of this ideological construction.

In July 1941, *Foreign Affairs* carried an article by Rhodes scholar Francis Pickens Miller—the organizational director of the Council on Foreign Relations and later an agent of the Office of Strategic Services and a State Department official—calling for the rejection of hemispherism and a new approach centered on the control of the “Atlantic area.” Geography was essential to his argument:

A glance at the map will show the location of control points in this area . . . the controlling forces must be in possession of Greenland, Iceland, the British Isles, Gibraltar, the Azores, Cape Verde Islands, and either Dakar or some nearby point on the West Coast of Africa . . . Most important of them all, of course, are the British Isles.

It is safe to assume this outlook reflected that of Roosevelt, who was fascinated with geography, considered the Atlantic basin as crucial for the final outcome of the war, and strongly believed in the strategic importance of islands. Unlike Roosevelt, however, Miller charged the geographic and strategic notion of an Atlantic community with the cultural and historical implications of the notion of Western civilization:

The North Atlantic area is the cradle of our civilization, and the survival of the American way of life depends upon the survival of this civilization. For more than a thousand years our fathers have been building a common society around the shores of the North Atlantic. They built it by labor, by faith, and, when necessary, by arms. It is a civilization based upon a belief in the essential dignity of man, as expressed through representative government, limited by a Bill of Rights. The Atlantic Ocean has become the ocean of freedom.

Finally, a map provided by the American Geographical Society complemented Miller’s article by visualizing this Atlantic space. The Editor’s Note informed readers that it was different from the “more familiar” maps based on the classic Equator-based Mercator map. The emphasis on the North Pole illustrated the proximity between North America and Eurasia, and the correction of the Mercator projection emphasized the physical proximity between the two shores of the Atlantic.

The discussion of the “Atlantic area” as pivotal to American security was part of a wider discussion about the Atlantic world as crucial to American identity. If every nation is to some extent an “imagined community,” then the US is the quintessential imagined community, that is, a nation whose identity heavily depends on practices of cultural representation. In the 1940s, the printed media were major producers of such practices. As Wendy Kozol points out in her study of popular magazines as a vehicle of

patriotism in postwar America, “visual media have even greater capacities to visualize social norms and ideals that form national identities . . . They construct an imagined community of the ‘free’ and ‘Western’ world.”²⁶ In fact, the press did much to undermine the old continentalist metageography and to construct America as an Atlantic nation, with cartography, geopolitics, and geography also playing a major role in this effort.

After war broke out in Europe, the debate in the foreign-policy establishment was paralleled by an unprecedented circulation of and popular interest in maps: Americans had entered a new era of cartographic craze. Map sales skyrocketed. Rand McNally, the major American publisher of maps, atlases, and globes, sold more atlases and maps of Europe in the first two weeks of the war in September 1939 than it had from 1918 until then. Hammond, another important publisher, sold 300,000 maps of Europe during the same period. The Pearl Harbor attack naturally had similar effects on the sales of maps of the Pacific.²⁷

These traditional maps by specialized publishers were challenged by a massive flood of journalistic cartography in newspapers and magazines, which experimented with perspective, color, and projections to offer their readers an easily understandable, visual description of the war. They deliberately sought to distance themselves from the aura of objectivity of academic and official cartography. “I try to dramatize the news of the week, not just produce a reference map like those in an atlas,” said a map maker for Time Inc.²⁸ While such dramatization responded to the publishers’ need to captivate readers and the advertisers’ need for simplification, it also allowed magazines to convey specific visions of the United States’ place in the world war and to shape a new metageography among the American public. Map makers for newspapers and magazines joined in exposing how the traditional Mercator projection was inadequate to describe what Alan Henrikson defined as “air-age globalism.” “Maps are Liars” was the title of a *New York Times Magazine* feature article in October 1942. Maps based on polar projections now illustrated how the Arctic area, Greenland, and Iceland provided a North Atlantic bridge between America and Europe. In September 1940, *Fortune*, a Time Inc. magazine catering to the business community, published a map featuring the “Strategic Frontiers of the US” that outlined “the invisible ring of the strategic frontier” as including the Arctic in the north, Greenland, Iceland and Western Europe to the east, and West Africa to the southeast.²⁹

Of course, cartography continued to be selective rather than objective, since it now reflected the primacy of the Atlantic/European theater of war. Maps of China, India, and Australia produced by Rand McNally during the war years utilized a scale of 1 inch to 252 miles, while maps of Britain, France, and Germany were much more detailed with their scale of 1 inch to 63 miles. Rand McNally’s *Cosmopolitan Atlas* devoted about 50 percent of its maps to the US, 13 percent to Europe, only 7 percent to Asia and Latin America, and 4 percent to Africa and Oceania. At times, maps for the general public appealed to familiar historical narratives. A National

Geographic Society map issued in September 1941, for instance, showed the places and dates of German submarine seizures together with the voyages of seventeenth-century explorers across the Atlantic.³⁰

Popular geography, like cartography, helped locate the US in the Atlantic basin as a fact of nature. Throughout the war years, newspapers and magazines—especially Henry Luce’s *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*—were especially active in portraying Britain as close to the US in terms of space as well as culture; so-called family ties between the “English-speaking democracies” were emphasized by means of family metaphors that in previous decades had mostly designated, usually with patronizing overtones, the relations between the US and the “sister republics” of Latin America. Before and after Pearl Harbor, the historical analogy of Britain acting as Greeks to America’s Romans often came with a geographic twist: the Atlantic was the modern Mediterranean. In the aftermath of the liberation of Rome in June 1944, a *Life* article played on these parallels, only to conclude that after the war, “the ‘Atlantic Community’ may be similarly united under the sway of Great Britain and the U.S., which are at least as akin as Greece and Rome.”³¹ In fact, Walter Lippmann had contributed to this specific remapping of American geography and history in one of his *Life* articles from 1939, when he wrote: “What Rome was to the ancient world, what Great Britain has been to the modern world, America is to be to the world of tomorrow . . . the geographic and the economic and the political center of the Occident.”³²

The construction of a sense of geographical and historical proximity to nations across the Atlantic involved continental Europe as well. In May 1940, as France was about to fall under German control, a *Life* photo-essay offered a view of different French landscapes and stressed that in the Alpine region, “the stupendous ice masses flow into the golden valleys of the Riviera and make a land surprisingly like the coast of California”; while along the Atlantic seaboard, “the ocean fogs roll across Brittany from the Atlantic, producing a land and a people much like Maine, where the language and cooking are harsh and Celtic.” A few months later, the focus was on Portugal, strategically located along the Atlantic rim and valued by Roosevelt as a key outpost for the control of the Atlantic. The first-page photo-essay ran a picture of a fishing village facing the ocean, which the caption described as “3,400 miles East of Atlantic City”; the text explained that “the war, cutting the lines of intercourse to Northern Europe, has made Portugal what geography intended—not a faraway corner of Europe but its front door.” Finally, amidst sketches of Portuguese history and everyday life, Antonio Salazar was emphatically described as “The dictator [who] has built the nation.”³³

GLOBALISM AND THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY

The construction of the Atlantic community was crucial in the context of the campaign for US intervention, during which time the cultural and

historical implications of American aid to Britain fully came to light. However, its significance did not vanish with the end of American neutrality.

In December 1941, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor forced American policy makers and the public alike to consider the war's global dimension, which somewhat counterbalanced the Atlantic theater's early primacy after the opening of the Pacific front. Globalism, which had emerged in the early twentieth century with the rise of the US as an economic world power, reemerged as a framework with which to understand the scope of the American mission against the challenge posed by the Axis powers worldwide. Its influence increased after the German invasion of the Soviet Union turned the Anglo-American partnership between the "English-speaking peoples" into a tripartite, East-West alliance. Finally, the encouraging progress of the war after 1943 led the US to focus on planning for the postwar years. The war came to be seen as a "second chance" to secure peace by building an international organization based on democratic principles, in addition to an open economic order based on free trade that would ensure prosperity. Free traders, business internationalists, and Wilsonian advocates of a "world government" gained influence in Cordell Hull's State Department, especially after the ousting of Welles.³⁴

This moment was captured by the stunning success of *One World* (1943) by former Republican presidential candidate and Luce's protégé Wendell Willkie. His bestselling account of a highly publicized world tour including China and the Soviet Union was a plea for an inspirational internationalism crossing national and racial barriers and unifying "the people of the earth in the human quest for freedom and justice," and it popularized a sort of post-Wilsonian, feel-good universalism. Willkie's world was characteristically postgeographical. Flying from the US to the Caribbean, then on to Brazil, West Africa, Egypt, the Middle East, Russia, China, and finally over the Bering Strait back to the US led him to appreciate how the "air age" was increasing interdependence among different areas of the world:

There are no distant points in the world any longer . . . continents and oceans are plainly only parts of a whole, seen, as I have seen them, from the air . . . And it is inescapable that there can be no peace for any part of the world unless the foundations of peace are made secure throughout all parts of the world.³⁵

However, globalists in the State Department hardly monopolized the making of US foreign policy during wartime, and Willkie's one-worldism was not unequipped to deal with the issues posed by the coming postwar order, namely, the creation of a world organization and relations with the Soviet Union. His *One World* was almost instantly countered by Lippmann's influential pamphlet *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, which fully articulated his rejection of Wilsonianism and his quest for an Atlantic outlook. In 1944, while American plans for the postwar order came under

the increasing scrutiny of public opinion during the presidential campaign, negotiations in preparation for the Dumbarton Oaks conference revealed the contradictions of the US “nationalist internationalism” discussed earlier. As Anglo-American troops landed in Normandy and the final stage of the war in Europe was underway, Lippmann went so far in his *U.S. War Aims* as to accept a future Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. The realism that informed his Atlantic regionalism was well received across the political by Herbert Hoover, the conservative who scorned Wilsonian liberal idealism, as well as by Reinhold Niebuhr, the theologian who agreed that the Atlantic nations of North America and Europe were a “community” since they shared Christian values and democratic institutions. In this perspective, the West was a community, but there was no such thing as a “world community.” In fact, the globalization of the war did nothing to undermine the metageography of the Atlantic community. Rather, the approaching victory made it all the more instrumental for reshaping the American identity required by the future role of the US as the military, economic, and cultural leader of the West.

Locating the US at the core of Western civilization was quite a dramatic shift in historical as well as geographical terms, and it comes as no surprise that American historians were involved in the process. Carlton Hayes’s case for an Atlantic approach to American history, which Emiliano Alessandri discusses in this volume, was a significant step in the construction of an Atlantic community narrative that, as Peter Novick argues, came to be “the appropriate framework for both North American and Western European history” during the early years of the cold war.³⁶

At the same time, the metageography of the Atlantic community responded to anxieties about the future since it could make sense of what many saw as the imminent confrontation between the West and the rest. Again, Luce’s picture magazine provides interesting evidence. In September 1944, *Life* carried an article by William Bullitt, the former US ambassador to the Soviet Union and an early critic of cooperation with Moscow. “The World from Rome” attacked the alleged softness of Roosevelt on Stalin and emphasized the role of the Catholic church as a bulwark against communism. Appealing to deep-seated fears about the barbarian Orient, Bullitt wrote that “Today, when the moral unity of the Western civilization has been shattered by the crimes of the Germans . . . Rome sees again approaching from the East a wave of conquerors.”³⁷

In summary, the ideological appeal of the Atlantic metageography—its ability to present as natural what was in fact a political construct and to turn complex international issues into easily understandable terms—was manifold. First, it replaced the geographical and historical assumptions of continentalism with a new, consistent vision of the *place* of America, which was rooted in space and time. Second, it provided a rationale for internationalism to those who were unconvinced by the holistic outlook and visionary ambitions of Wilsonianism. Third, it made sense of the abrupt

transition from the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union to the cold-war confrontation.

Finally, the Atlantic community framework recast the old tension of American “internationalist nationalism” as something between a space-based identity and spaceless ambition, regionalism and globalism, nationalism and universalism. Luce famously illustrated the rise of 1940s “internationalist nationalism” in his essay on the “American century.” His quest for the projection of American power had a distinct globalist and antigeographic tinge: “Are we going to fight for dear old Danzig or dear old Dong Dang? . . . Are we going to decide the boundaries of Uritania?” It was a rhetorical question, of course. In his view, America’s potential global power was such that dealing with geography was no longer necessary. As Neil Smith argues, “the emerging American empire defined its power in the first place through the more abstract geography of the world market than through direct political control of territory.”³⁸ However, for all his exceptionalism, Luce also saw America as the leader, benefactor, prophet, and warrior of the West. “In addition to ideals and notions which are especially American,” he wrote in “The American Century,” “we are the inheritors of all the great principles of Western civilization.” This explains why, in the words of Nikhil Pal Singh, “despite the ostensible universalism of his global pronouncement any reader . . . would have understood Luce’s defense of the civilizing project of ‘the West’ as constituting a distinct political identity.”³⁹ Boundaries separating the West and the rest were implicit in his holistic view. A few years later, those boundaries would come to define the perimeter of the first peacetime alliance in American history.

NOTES

1. Eugene Staley, “The Myth of the Continents,” *Foreign Affairs* 19 (April 1941): 485–86.
2. Franklin D. Roosevelt, “On the Progress of the War,” 23 February 1942, available at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library Web site, www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/022342.html.
3. Alan Brinkley, “The Concept of an American Century,” in *The American Century in Europe*, ed. R. Laurence Moore and Maurizio Vaudagna (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 13.
4. Notable examples are David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Walter L. Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); and Andrew M. Johnston, *Hegemony and Culture in the Origins of NATO Nuclear First-Use, 1945–1955* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). A recent account of the impact of this literature is provided by Thomas W. Zeiler, “The Diplomatic History Bandwagon: A State of the Field,” *Journal of American History* 95 (March 2009): 1053–73.

5. Karen Wigen and Martin Lewis, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), ix.
6. Mark Polelle, *Raising Cartographic Consciousness: The Social and Foreign Policy Vision of Geopolitics in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999); Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America, 1880–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). For a pioneering, important effort by a diplomatic historian, see Alan K. Henrikson, "The Map as an 'Idea': The Role of Cartographic Imagery During the Second World War," *American Cartographer* 2 (1975): 19–53.
7. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 55; Wigen and Lewis, *Myth of Continents*, 17. For an interesting discussion on the lack of interest in Said among diplomatic historians, see Andrew J. Rotter, "Saidism without Said: Orientalism and US Diplomatic History," *American Historical Review* 105 (October 2000): 1205–17.
8. David Ryan, *US Foreign Policy in World History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).
9. Schulten, *Geographic Imagination*, chapter 9.
10. Walter LaFeber, "The Evolution of the Monroe Doctrine from Monroe to Reagan," in *Redefining the Past: Essays in Diplomatic History in Honor of William Appleman Williams*, ed. Lloyd C. Gardner (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1986), 125. Emphasis added.
11. Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945–1993* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1994), 29–31.
12. *Ibid.*, 32.
13. Peter Francis Coogan, "Geopolitics and the Intellectual Origins of Containment," (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1991), 283.
14. Arthur P. Whitaker, *The Western Hemisphere Idea: Its Rise and Decline* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1954), 132–33. On the long-term influence of continentalism on American identity, see also Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
15. Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Master Speech File, box 54, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (hereafter FDRL), Hyde Park, NY.
16. Adolph Berle Papers, Speech File, box 143, FDRL.
17. John L. Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean Acheson* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
18. LaFeber, "Evolution of the Monroe Doctrine," 134. On Roosevelt's hemispherism, see Henrikson, "Map as an 'Idea,'" 29.
19. Henrikson, "Map as an 'Idea,'" 29; Coogan, "Intellectual Origins of Containment," 131. A copy of the map sent by Roosevelt to Churchill is published in Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper, 1950), 310.
20. G. Smith, *The Last Years*, 52; N. Smith, *American Empire*, chapter 14. See also Thomas M. Campbell, *Masquerade Peace: America's UN Policy, 1944–1945* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1973).
21. Col. Herman Beukema, "The Defense of North America," 9 November 1939, Council on Foreign Relations Papers, Records of Groups, vol. 10, tab. C, Seeley Mudd Library, Princeton University.
22. Bureau of Public Affairs, *Department of State Bulletin*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Office of Public Communication), 494.

23. Staley, "Myth of the Continents," 485.
24. Walter Lippmann, "America in the World," *Life*, 3 June 1940.
25. On the long-term East-West divide, see Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995); and Wigen and Lewis, *Myth of Continents*, 49. On the importance of power and cultural constructions, see Said, *Orientalism*, 5–7; on hegemony and US foreign policy, see the insightful remarks by Johnston, *Hegemony and Culture*.
26. Campbell, *Writing Security*; Wendy Kozol, *Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 55.
27. Schulten, *Geographic Imagination*, 207.
28. Robert T. Elson, *The World of Time Inc.: The Intimate History of a Publishing Enterprise*, vol. 2, 1941–1960 (New York: Athenaeum, 1973), 51–52.
29. Coogan, "Intellectual Origins of Containment," 133.
30. Schulten, *Geographic Imagination*, 237, 210.
31. *Life*, "The Taking of Rome," 19 June 1944.
32. Walter Lippmann, "The American Destiny," *Life*, 5 June 1939.
33. *Life*, 6 May 1940 and 29 July 1940.
34. Patrick J. Hearden, *Architects of Globalism: Building a New World Order During World War II* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002).
35. Wendel L. Willkie, *One World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1943).
36. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 311.
37. *Life*, "The World from Rome," 4 September 1944.
38. Smith, *American Empire*, 19.
39. Nikhil Pal Singh, "Culture/Wars: Recoding Empire in an Age of Democracy," *American Quarterly* 50 (September 1998): 479–80.