Chapter 25: Isolationism and Internationalism
We will examine American foreign policy in Europe and the doctrine of isolationism.

We will examine the attempts at appeasement of Germany and its failure to prevent war.

We will examine how America slowly shifted from isolationism to involvement.
(Php 2:4) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- During Roosevelt’s first years, the hope that world peace through treaties and disarming failed as Germany, Italy, and Japan swept in the tide of fascism withdrew from the London Naval Conference.

- The London Naval Conference was attempting to draw up an agreement to continue the limitations on naval armaments negotiated at the Washington Conference of 1921.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- Faced with a choice between more active efforts to stabilize the world and more energetic attempts to isolate the nation from it, most Americans unhesitatingly chose the latter.
- Support for isolationism emerged from many quarters.
- Old Wilsonian internationalists have grown disillusioned with the League of nations and its inability to stop Japanese aggression in Asia.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- Other Americans were listening to the argument (popular among populist-minded politicians in the Midwest and West).

- That powerful business interests Wall Street, munition makers, and others have tricked the U.S. into participating in World War I.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- As Mussolini’s Italy prepared to invade Ethiopia in 1935, a fear that a general European war would result was real.

- American legislators began to design legal safeguards to prevent the United States from being drafted into the conflict.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- The result was the Neutrality Act of 1935.
- The 1935 Act and the Neutrality Acts of 1936 and 1937 that followed was designed to prevent a recurrence of the events that many Americans now believed had pressured the U.S. into World War I.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- The 1935 law established mandatory arms embargo against both victim and aggressor in any military conflict.
- Empowered the president to warn American citizens that they might travel on ships of warring nations only at their own risk.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- In 1937, with world conditions growing even more unstable, congress passed a new Neutrality Act that established the so-called cash-and-carry policy.
- By which belligerents could purchase only nonmilitary goods from the United States and had to pay cash and carry the goods away on their own vessels.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- Invasion of Ethiopia by Italy and the Spanish Civil War where Spanish Fascists led by General Francisco Franco was seeking to overthrow the republican government was met with no movement in the U.S. to get involved.

- But the belligerent actions of Japan and its invasion of China’s five northern provinces was met with concern from Roosevelt.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- The United States, Roosevelt believed, could not allow the Japanese aggression to be unremarked or unpunished.
- In a speech in Chicago in October 1937, therefore the president warned forcefully the dangers that Japanese aggression posed to world peace.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- Aggressors should be “quarantined” by the international community to prevent the contagion of war from spreading.
- Nevertheless public response to the speech was disturbingly hostile.
- As a result Roosevelt drew back.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- On December 12, 1937, Japanese aviators bombed and sank the U.S. gunboat *Panay* as it sailed the Yangtze River in China.
- The attack was almost undoubtedly deliberate.
- It occurred in broad daylight, with clear visibility.
- A large American flag been painted clearly on the deck of the ship.
The Rise of Isolationism:

- Even so, isolationists seized eagerly on Japanese protestations that the bombing had been an accident and pressured the administration to accept Japan’s apologies.
The Failure of Munich.

- Hitler’s determination to expand German power became fully visible in 1936 when he moved the revived German army into the Rhineland, violating the Versailles Treaty and rearming an area that France had controlled since World War I.
The Failure of Munich.

- In March 1938, German forces marched into Austria, and Hitler proclaimed a union (or Anschluss) between Austria, his native land and Germany, his adopted one.
- Thus fulfilling his longtime dream of uniting the German-speaking peoples in one great nation.
The Failure of Munich.

- Hitler set sights in a part of Czechoslovakia called the Sudetenland, an area of the Austro-Germany border in which many ethnic Germans lived.
- Czechoslovakia thought it would get support from other European nations but it received none.
- Anxiety that another war in Europe could break out was real.
The Failure of Munich.

- On September 29 Hitler met with the leaders of France and Great Britain at Munich in an effort to resolve the crisis.
- The French and British agreed to accept the German demands for Czechoslovakia in return for Hitler’s promise to expand no farther.
The Failure of Munich.

- The Munich Agreement of 1938 was believed to preserve peace.
- Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned to Great Britain to a heroes welcome and President Roosevelt cabled his support and encouragement to Chamberlain at Munich.
The Failure of Munich.

- But Hitler went on to occupy the remaining parts of Czechoslovakia blatantly violating the Munich agreement.
- Hitler set his eyes on Poland.
- Hitler signed a nonaggression pact with Stalin who believed that the West would offer him no protection.
- In fact, Stalin was not invited to the Munich Conference.
The Failure of Munich.

- Accordingly Stalin signed a nonaggression pact with Hitler in August 1939, freeing the Germans for the moment from the danger of a two-front war.
- On September 1, 1939 he launched a full-scale invasion of Poland.
- Britain and France true to their pledges declared war on Germany two days later.
- World War II in Europe began.
Following the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, Roosevelt declared, “This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thoughts as well.”
FROM NEUTRALITY TO INTERVENTION

- Roosevelt believed that the U.S. should make armaments available to the Allied armies to help them counter the highly productive German munitions industry.
- In September 1939 he asked for a revision of the Neutrality Acts.
FROM NEUTRALITY TO INTERVENTION

- The original measures had forbidden the sale of American weapons to any nation engaged in war;
- Roosevelt wanted the arms embargo lifted.
FROM NEUTRALITY TO INTERVENTION

- But isolationists opposed and Congress passed a weaker provision where American ships were prohibited from entering the war zone.

- But it did permit belligerents to purchase arms on the same cash-and-carry basis of the earlier Neutrality Acts.
By the spring of 1940, Germany launched an invasion west, first attacking Denmark, and Norway, sweeping next across the Netherlands and Belgium and driving finally deep into the heart of France.

Allied efforts proved futile against the Nazi blitzkrieg and on June 22, France fell to the German onslaught.

Nazi troops marched into Paris.
On May 15, Winston Churchill the new British prime minister sent Roosevelt the first of many long lists of requests for ships, armaments, and other assistance without which he insisted England could no longer survive.
Many Americans including U.S. ambassador to London Joseph P. Kennedy argued that the British plight was already hopeless that any aid to the English was a wasted effort.
Roosevelt however made the politically dangerous decision to make war materials available to Churchill.

Roosevelt even circumvented the cash-and-carry provisions of the Neutrality Act by trading fifty American destroyers (most of them left over from World War I) to England in return for the right to build American bases on British territory in the Western Hemisphere.
Roosevelt returned to the factories a number of new airplanes purchased by the American government so that the British could buy them instead.
FROM NEUTRALITY TO INTERVENTION

- Roosevelt was able to take such steps in part because of a major shift in American public opinion.
- Before the invasion of France, most Americans had believed that a German victory in the war would not be a threat to the United States.
- By July with France defeated and Britain threatened, more than 66 percent of the public (according to opinion polls) believed that Germany posed a direct threat to the United States.
Congress was aware of the change and was becoming more willing to permit expanded American assistance to the allies.

It was also becoming more concerned about the need for internal preparations for war and in September it approved the Burke-Wadsworth Act inaugurating the first peacetime military draft in American history.
A powerful new lobby called America First Committee which attracted America’s most prominent leaders.

Its chairman was General Robert E. Wood until recently, president of Sears Roebuck and its membership included Charles Lindbergh.

It was a powerful lobby against U.S. involvement in the war.
FROM NEUTRALITY TO INTERVENTION

- Roosevelt in the election of 1940 broke with tradition and ran for a third term right before the Democratic Convention.
- He chose Henry Wallace as his new running mate.
- He would easily win a third term.