

The United States and the First World War

While President Wilson was trying to craft a foreign policy that looked to morality as a guiding principle, Europe was embracing age-old notions of narrowly defined self-interest and balance of power politics. By 1914, this path saw Europe descend into the catastrophe of the First World War. In the early days of August 1914, European powers committed to war and in the case of the British Empire this commitment stretched around the globe to all the British colonies. The United States did not feel the same gravitational pull of the war. In many ways, Wilson saw it as antithetical to his foreign policy.

The issues that drove Europe over the edge were not American issues. The rival alliance systems that had been developed in mutual fear over the preceding two decades did not include the United States. The nationalism that was hacking at the Austro-Hungarian Empire was of little concern to US interests. While imperialism was an important source of tension to European states, The Monroe Doctrine and Roosevelt's Big Stick combined with Taft's Dollar Diplomacy had kept European interests out of the western hemisphere and US interests in the far east did not significantly run afoul of European interests. Besides, the United States did not see itself as an imperialist power in the same way the Europeans did, especially under Wilson. The militarism that gripped Europe in the decades leading up to the war, was markedly absent from US culture. The United States army, although modernized under Roosevelt, was still a fraction the size of most European nations, with the exception of Great Britain. The United States navy, although gaining in size on European navies, did not pose a major threat to either Germany or Great Britain, its primary naval rivals in the world.

Any sort of official participation in the European convulsions seemed folly to most people in the United States and the case for neutrality strong:

- In 1914, over a quarter of the population of the United States were immigrants. British and Russian immigrants favored the Allies, while German and Austrian immigrants held with the Central powers. Irish Americans would not support any move to join the British. Choosing sides risked tearing the country apart.
- The monstrous appetite that modern war has for industrial goods promised to drag the country out of the depression of 1913, especially if US businesses could trade with both sides.
- The United States had traditionally remained out of European affairs in the same way it hoped that Europeans would stay out of the affairs of the Americas.
- Wilson despised the idea of war as a solution to international disputes and saw the war as an opportunity for the United States to illustrate the benefits of peace and emerge as a world leader.

But, as Belgium had so recently discovered, being neutral is far more complex than simply declaring neutrality. Neutrality, without the

ability to enforce it, is only neutrality so long as other states allow it to be so. Belgium was unable to maintain its neutrality even with the guarantee of Great Britain and so was dragged into the war by virtue of her geographic position. The United States would find neutrality difficult for different reasons.

The US had, as we have discovered above, emerged into world prominence in the decades preceding the German invasion of Belgium, Luxemburg, and France in 1914. Her economy was now tied more closely to a world economy than ever before and the disruptions caused by the war were sure to have ramifications in the US economy. US financial institutions caught a glimpse of these disastrous possibilities when the outbreak of the war caused a need for cash in belligerent nations. When these states began to sell off their US securities, Wilson suspended the sale of stocks to prevent a panic.

The Allied blockade

US neutrality was only as good as its ability to force other countries to respect it. Early in the war both sides indicated that they were not willing to do so. This situation laid bare the prejudices of Wilson and most US citizens in favor of the Allies at the same time that the commercial potential of staggering war demand began to dawn on American industry. Although international law prohibited the blockading of non-war material—non-contraband materials—such as food, these restrictions would make the blockade useless as a tool of war and both sides ignored it. The blockade was designed to prevent the importing of goods to enemy ports. Given the geography of the war, this was primarily directed at Atlantic shipping. The Allied blockade, enforced primarily by the surface fleet of the British Royal Navy, proved less deadly than the submarine warfare of the German navy. Regardless, war orders from the Allies were more than enough to keep the US economy producing at capacity especially when credit restrictions were eased and later lifted altogether.

The deadly nature of a blockade enforced by German submarines, without the provision required by international law that adequate measures be taken to ensure the safety of passengers and crew, was brought into sharp focus in May 1915. A single torpedo fired by a U-20 struck the passenger liner RMS *Lusitania* as she steamed off the Irish coast. The *Lusitania* carried passengers as well as US-made munitions destined for Britain. She went down with 1,195 of her passengers and crew, 123 of them US citizens. The Germans claimed that, as well as civilian passengers, the British ship was carrying munitions, which in part was true.

The sense of Allied outrage was partly due to the nature of the attack on a ship carrying civilian passengers. This, despite German warnings printed in US newspapers that such attacks were possible and warning US citizens that they traveled on British ships at their own risk. The outrage was also derived in part from the growing fear that Germany would ignore what the United States saw as its maritime rights as a neutral, regardless of the position of Great

Activity

The sinking of the *Lusitania*

Press coverage

After doing further research on the sinking of the RMS *Lusitania*, write a newspaper article or an editorial on the sinking from one of the following perspectives:

- Brazil
- Germany
- United Kingdom
- United States

Compare your article to those by other students who chose different perspectives. What elements of the event did you choose to emphasize? What elements did other students choose to emphasize? What effect did the sinking of the *Lusitania* have on US public opinion? What effect did it have on Wilson's views on the war? What does this exercise tell us about how historians use newspaper articles and editorials in studying history?

3 • The emergence of the Americas in global affairs, 1880–1929

Britain. Again, her neutrality meant nothing if she could not defend it. Having already acquiesced to the British blockade, Wilson felt he could not acquiesce to the German blockade. On the domestic front, Wilson began to feel pressure from Republicans who might use any weakness shown in the face of German aggression to political advantage. After strongly worded warnings from Wilson and after other sinkings the Germans called off unrestricted submarine warfare in May 1916.

The US economy, with its prodigious loans and exports to the Allies, was increasingly dependent on Allied success. The size of the US economic support alone made any blockade attempt that excluded it weak. While the Germans backed down in 1916, they could conceivably get to the point when it would take more than threats to stop them from attacking US ships.

The British were not above aggravating US neutrality. In 1916, Britain banned a number of US firms from doing business in Great Britain on the grounds that they also did business with the enemy. Although this enraged Wilson and many in his administration the US continued to supply the Allied war effort.

Getting ready

Wilson ran for reelection in 1916, partly on his record of keeping the United States out of the war. The reality, however, was that US neutrality was rather one-sided. Further, the first years of the war illustrated that if the United States wanted to maintain what neutrality it had, a credible military threat was going to be necessary. These arguments, anchored by Republicans and industrial interests but also echoed by important members of Wilson's administration, fueled a vigorous debate in the US as to the extent to which a neutral country should militarize. On the other side of the question, pacifists, socialists and organized labor worried that expanding the military could provoke war and should the United States be able to maintain its neutral position would only serve to profit industrialists at the expense of the taxpayer. By the end of 1915, Wilson was coming around to the idea that the war, which was now revealing itself to be the long, bloody stalemate that it would remain until 1918, whether the US was neutral or belligerent, would require a larger and more modern military. Wilson took his argument to Congress and the people. By mid 1916, after difficult legislative wrangling, long debate, and some compromise, Wilson guided his bills through Congress and into law.

National Defense Act, 1916

- Increased the army from 80,000 to 223,000
- Brought state militias under federal control
- Gave the president power to mobilize the National Guard
- Expanded the National Guard to over 400,000
- Established Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps



British recruiting poster. Recruiters in all countries used emotional appeals to encourage men to enlist in the armed forces. Compare and contrast this poster with US recruiting posters you can find online.

Naval Expansion Act, 1916

- Multi-year building plan
- 10 Dreadnoughts
- 16 Cruisers
- 50 Destroyers

Merchant Marine Act, 1916

- Federal government could own ships
- Increased federal power to regulate shipping

The drift to war

The Democrats campaigned in 1916 on Wilson’s neutrality record. It is therefore

understandable that the Republicans would attack this record and in the process they began to be perceived as the party more likely to guide the country into the war. Wilson did his level best to encourage this perception. On a deeper level, this debate revealed the development of a foreign policy split that would continue for 40 years.

There was of course any number of variations on these two main themes. For example, some internationalists, represented generally by eastern industrial interests, advocated for a strong military to help “police” the world while other internationalists spoke more in terms of universal disarmament and the use of economic sanctions and collective security to enforce the peace. By 1916, Wilson was a committed internationalist. He attempted to bring the belligerents in the European war to the negotiation table to no avail. Early in 1917, he presented his vision for a post-war world, a world in which disputes between countries were negotiated, armaments were greatly reduced, ships plied the seas unmolested, and nations cooperated in a organization to ensure the stability of the international economic and political system.

The realities of the war were, however, conspiring against Wilson’s lofty intentions. While he was putting the final touches on this plan, the German Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, was meeting with his military commanders. Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff argued that if the German navy could unleash its fleet of 100 submarines on all shipping bound for her enemies, they could strangle Britain within six months. This timeline was important, because all present at the meeting understood that should Germany resume unrestricted submarine warfare it would entail sinking US

Activity

Debate

“To arm or not to arm?”

Divide the class into two groups, one opposing expanding the US military in 1916 and the other supporting the expansion of the army and navy. Research the arguments of those who supported each position and conduct a class debate on the question.

Against expansion:

- Farmers
- Socialists
- Organized labor
- Pacifists
- Others

In favour of expansion:

- Industrialists
- Military leaders

Internationalism	Isolationism
Collective security	Non-involvement
International law	Trade
International organizations	Protection of American interests
American participation/leadership	Uniqueness of American values
Negotiation/arbitration of disputes	
International disarmament	
Freedom of the seas	

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vessels and this would likely bring the US into the war against Germany. The German High Command reasoned, however, that it could take up to a year for any US soldiers to materialize on the western front and by this time Britain would have been brought to its knees. On January 31, 1917 the German ambassador in Washington announced that, starting the next day, all ships regardless of country of origin would become targets for their submarines.

While some of Wilson's administration urged an immediate declaration of war, the president could not bring himself to do it. He feared it would further divide his country and wreck prospects for a stable post-war settlement and his role in its construction. Apart from breaking diplomatic relations with Germany, Wilson did little. It would take a curious diplomatic episode to push him and the people of the United States over the edge to war.

Activity

The Zimmermann telegram

The following telegram was sent from the German foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, to the German minister in Mexico. It was intercepted by the British and turned over to the United States.

To the German Minister to Mexico

Berlin, January 19, 1917

On the first of February we intend to begin submarine warfare unrestricted. In spite of this, it is our intention to endeavour to keep neutral the United States of America.

If this attempt is not successful, we propose an alliance on the following basis with Mexico: That we shall make war together and together make peace. We shall give general financial support, and it is understood that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. The details are left to you for settlement...

You are instructed to inform the President of Mexico of the above in the greatest confidence as soon as it is certain that there will be an outbreak of war with the United States and suggest that the President of Mexico, on his own initiative,



should communicate with Japan suggesting adherence at once to this plan; at the same time, offer to mediate between Germany and Japan.

Please call to the attention of the President of Mexico that the employment of ruthless submarine warfare now promises to compel England to make peace in a few months.

Zimmermann

Source: "Primary Documents: Zimmermann Telegram," January 19, 1917. <http://www.firstworldwar.com>.

Questions

- 1 How were the Germans "endeavoring to keep neutral the United States of America?"
- 2 Given the situation of Germany in January 1917, how realistic was its pledge of support to Mexico?
- 3 Why might Germany be interested in an alliance with Japan as well?
- 4 What relationship does this telegram have to the Monroe Doctrine?
- 5 To what extent do you believe this telegram was an important catalyst for the US entry in the war? Defend your answer.

The Zimmermann telegram

On February 25, 1917, the British turned over to the United States a telegram that they had intercepted. In it, the German foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, promised that Mexico might regain territory lost to the US in return for an alliance with Germany.

Regardless of how realistic such a prospect was or was not, it had a serious effect on public opinion. After the telegram was made public, people in the United States who had been ambiguous about the situation in Europe saw Germany as meddling and conniving. More serious than diplomatic intrigues, however, was the fact that German U-Boats were sending US merchant ships to the bottom of the sea throughout February and March. Wilson now believed that the United States would have to enter the war.

On April 2, 1917, Wilson gave a solemn address to Congress in which he outlined his case for war. He understood that it was a “fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war. ...” The extent to which it was a fearful thing that still deeply divided his people was evidenced by the pro-war and anti-war speeches, marches and demonstrations that seemed to appear daily in cities across the country. Four days later, the formal declaration of war was signed.



US Army recruits at Camp Wadsworth South Carolina, 1918. What challenges did the United States face in mobilizing an army to fight in Europe in the First World War? How did it meet these challenges? What were some of the motivations for young men to enlist in the US army in the First World War?

Activity

Declaration of war

Read President Wilson’s April 2, 1917, address to Congress in which he asks for a declaration of war. You can find a copy of the speech at <http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/usawardeclaration.htm>.

Use the following chart to analyze Wilson’s reasons for taking the United States into the war.

Immediate reasons for entering the war	Long-term reasons for entering the war

Questions

- 1 What evidence is there in the speech that Wilson was hesitant to go to war?
- 2 Why does Wilson say that “Neutrality is no longer feasible ...”?
- 3 What evidence is there that in asking for the declaration of war, Wilson is already looking to a postwar settlement?
- 4 What does Wilson mean when he says that “The world must be made safe for democracy?” What implications does this have for the postwar settlement?
- 5 Write a reply to Wilson’s speech from the perspective of the German government.

The Selective Service Act, 1917

In his address of April 2, Wilson had clearly stated that in his view the massive mobilization required by the war must be managed by a strong central government centered in the **executive branch**. It would require a financial commitment that would require higher taxes. Just as wealth would need to be conscripted, Wilson also argued for the draft to swell the ranks of the small US army.

The **executive branch** is the branch of government concerned with carrying out the laws passed by the legislative branch. The Executive branch of the United States government consists of the president, the cabinet, and the civil service.

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Although the National Defense Act of the previous year had provided for an expanded army, the declaration of war required that this be drastically expanded and expedited. Although Wilson's preference would certainly have been a massive volunteer army, he understood that time and sentiment would not permit one. He therefore urged the passing of the Selective Service Act, which would draft young men into the army. The debate that ensued proved that the divisions that had preceded Wilson's April 2 address had not evaporated with the declaration of war. Despite the rancor, the Act was passed in May and by June millions of Americans were registering for the draft.

Financing the war

Once the United States entered the war it became patently evident to Wilson and the US government how desperate the situation in Europe had become for the Allies who needed money, men and material. The U-boat campaign was biting deeply into Britain's food stores and all belligerents were close to bankruptcy. While Wilson wanted to finance the war with as little recourse to credit as possible, the dire need of his new Allies could not wait for new taxes to make money available for loans while, at the same time, mobilizing and expanding the armed forces. Congress authorized a loan of \$7 billion to get mobilization moving and shore up the finances of France and Britain.

The issue of taxation was another that divided the country Wilson was trying to unite behind a war effort. Both the extent of a new tax regime and the distribution of the tax burden were hotly debated. In the end, taxes provided for about 30 per cent of the cost of the war. As in other belligerent countries, to income tax was added a wide variety of duties on a wide variety of goods and services. An extensive Liberty Bond campaign raised money from all quarters of the United States.

The scale of the First World War led all participants to expand government management of national economies to an unprecedented extent. In the United States, this meant the creation of thousands of government agencies to shepherd the economy toward war production.

The Food Administration

Led by future president Herbert Hoover, this agency managed the production and distribution of food through largely voluntary measures. The Administration bought crops at a fixed price that proved profitable to farmers. Hoover encouraged food conservation, while food production increased dramatically under the supervision of the Food Administration.

The War Industries Board

The WIB led by Bernard Baruch coordinated the production and purchase of war materials. All industries involved in war production were subject to its direction in what would be produced and by whom. The Board worked to fix prices and set wages and hours. Factories that had supplied consumer and other peacetime goods were converted to production of war materials.

Discussion point

Apart from how they are constructed, how are conscript armies different from volunteer armies? What are the advantages of conscription? What are the disadvantages of conscription?

Fuel Administration

Just as the Hoover had guaranteed a profitable price for grain to encourage increased production, the Fuel Administration did the same thing for coal with a similar effect on production.

National War Labour Front

This organization, with representatives from government, owners and labor sought to regulate labor relations without recourse to lockouts and strikes so as to keep wartime industries producing without interruptions.

Railroad Administration

This board coordinated the transportation of goods from mines, factories and fields by operating the various lines and spurs of US railways as one system. Again, money greased the wheels of coordination. The government provided funds for upgrading existing lines.

The Shipping Board

This body oversaw the expansion of shipbuilding to maintain the merchant fleet in the face of the U-boat campaign. Over the course of the war, US shipping tonnage increased by a factor of ten.

Committee on Public Information

Just as war production was to be coordinated, the Wilson administration also attempted to coordinate public opinion. The CPI published pamphlets, posters and newspapers articles to garner support for the US war effort. Tens of thousands of its speakers trooped around the country presenting the government's case for patriotic support for the war. The propaganda effort extolled the virtues of the Allies and their cause while demonizing the enemy.

Women and the war

As in other Allied countries such as Great Britain and Canada, the jobs vacated by soldiers were filled by an increasing number of women. While women had always played an important role in the industrial production of the United States, the war saw them enter occupations traditionally dominated by men and in numbers never seen before. These jobs were in the industrial sector such as munitions factories and in white-collar positions such as clerks. Women also flocked to more traditionally female occupations such as nursing, many thousands of them serving overseas.

Partially because of the independent income that accompanied these new economic roles, women found themselves with a greater degree of social freedom. While many of these jobs disappeared when the war ended, with the reduction in economic demand and soldiers returning to fill their old jobs, the contribution women had made to the war effort was significant and their social position altered permanently. Women's suffrage activists wished to capitalize on this importance and accelerated their demand for the vote. By 1920, they were successful with the passing and ratification of the **19th Amendment**.

The **19th Amendment** to the United States constitution guarantees the right to vote regardless of gender.

Opposition and repression

Opposition to the war continued after Wilson's April 2 address. This resistance could be issue-specific while remaining pro-war, for example there was widespread resistance to the imposition of the draft by many who were generally in favor of the US entering the war. Critics could also be broad and deep in their resistance to the war as a whole. The Socialist Party maintained its opposition to any US participation in the war.

The Espionage Act, passed in June of 1917, provided a powerful club with which to keep dissent in check. The Act allowed for prison sentences of up to 20 years for anyone who, in times of war, willfully caused or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal to serve in the military. The Act also stipulated that it could not be used to limit discussion, comment or criticism of the government's policies or actions.

In 1918, the Espionage Act was amended (called the Sedition Act) to include:

... whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully utter, print, write or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States or the Constitution of the United States, or the military or naval forces of the United States, or the flag of the United States, or the uniform of the Army or Navy of the United States ... or by word or act [to] oppose the cause of the United States.

Such an ambiguous, and some would say contradictory, Act was sure to be applied inconsistently and selectively, but the Supreme Court upheld its legality in the face of First Amendment challenges. Those who spoke out against the war, generally, and the draft specifically found themselves in court and often in jail on the force of the Espionage Act. Over 1,500 people were arrested under these acts. Socialist Leader Eugene Debs and hundreds of others were found guilty under the Espionage Act and Sedition Act and went to jail for speaking out against the war.

Other Acts further expanded the government's reach and power over the spread of ideas during the war. The Trading With The Enemy Act of 1917 gave the government the power to censor any communications leaving the country. The Sabotage Act was used to suppress industrial action by organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

By the end of the war, there was also more mainstream opposition to Wilson's handling of the war. There was dissent within his Democratic Party. Eastern Democrats disagreed with measures proposed and occasionally passed by western Progressives in the party. Republicans who had put aside party animosity in the cause of a united war effort emerged from their truce as the end of the war neared. The end result of this inter- and intra-party wrangling was

Activity

Political platforms

Research the platforms of each of the following US political parties active in the First World War period. Be sure to include each party's view on US participation in the war.

Party	Platform
The Democratic Party	
The Republican Party	
The Progressive Party	
The Socialist Party	

that the Republicans took control of both houses of Congress in the 1918 elections. This did not bode well for Wilson as he left for the Peace Conference at the end of the war.

US armed forces overseas

British and French hopes that the United States should be rushed as soon as possible to shore up the existing Allied positions became more acute when the Bolshevik revolution and subsequent **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk** took Russia out of the war and made scores of additional German divisions available for action in France. The near collapse of the Italian army and the French mutinies of 1917 made this situation even more desperate. The US government and army resisted this impulse. General Pershing wanted to enter the war with a US army distinct, intact, and strong enough to fight on its own terms alongside, not mixed in with, her new Allies. In the face of allied pleas, Pershing softened his position somewhat, but it would not be until early 1918 that US troops would move to the front in significant numbers—at about the same time that the German High Command would make one last attempt at breaking the stalemate.

Discussion point

To what extent should the government have the right to restrict personal liberties in times of war? Does war justify this action? Why or why not?

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed between the new Bolshevik government of Russia and Germany and Austria. It was finalized on March 1, 1918. The treaty provided that Russia would lose parts of Ukraine, the Baltic States and Finland in exchange for an end to hostilities with the Central powers. The treaty allowed the Germans to send troops that had been fighting on the eastern front to the western front.

Activity

The United States in battle

From early 1918, until the end of the war, the American Expeditionary Force contributed to Allied defensive and offensive operations. Research the following battles to complete the following chart.

Battle	Dates	Commanders	Description	Significance
Battle of Cantigny				
Battle of Chateau-Thierry				
Battle of Belleau Wood				
Second Battle of the Marne				
Battle of St Mihiel				
Meuse-Argonne Offensive				

President Wilson and the Peace of Paris

Wilson had advocated for a “peace without victory” before the United States had entered the war. In many ways, Wilson’s decision to enter the war was taken with a keen eye to the postwar world system as much as it was to the protection of US shipping. Wilson’s notion of internationalism based on liberal democratic ideals, capitalism, freer trade and the dissolution of colonial empires, he believed, required US leadership and to have a guiding hand in the peace required a contribution on the battlefield. Regardless, for these principles to prevail, Wilson believed that Germany had to be defeated. While Wilson had floated a number of these ideas in public since 1917, they were crystallized as the 14 Points in a January 1918 speech.

Activity

The 14 Points

Synopsis of the 14 Points:

- 1 Open treaties
- 2 Freedom of the seas
- 3 Free Trade
- 4 Universal disarmament
- 5 Impartial adjustment of colonial claims with consideration of the wishes of the inhabitant and the governments in question
- 6 Evacuation of all Russian territory
- 7 Evacuation of Belgium
- 8 Restoration of all French territory including Alsace-Lorraine
- 9 Italian border readjusted according to nationality
- 10 Autonomous development to be offered to the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire
- 11 Evacuation of Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania; Serbia to be given sea access
- 12 Autonomous development for the nationalities of the Turkish Empire; the Dardanelles Straits to remain permanently open

- 13 Establishment of a independent and free Poland with access to the sea
- 14 A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

Questions

- 1 On what points would the British have agreed? Which would they have opposed and why? What about the French?
- 2 What evidence is there of idealism and moral diplomacy in the 14 Points?
- 3 Analyze the 14 Points in terms of continuity and change in American foreign policy before and after the war.
- 4 To what degree do these points reflect the principle of collective security?
- 5 Draft a letter of response from the German government and the French government.

By October 1918, the Germans believed that the 14 Points were the best deal that they could hope for from what increasingly appeared to be an inevitable defeat. They appealed directly to Wilson with a proposition for an armistice based on his peace plan. Wilson found himself in the difficult position of potentially mediating between his enemy and his Allies. Nevertheless, he spent the better part of October 1918 selling the British and French on his 14 Points with some limited success.

As the world limped toward the end of the war on November 11, 1918, it seemed that all parties had taken the 14 Points to be at least the basis for a peace settlement. But there was incredible resentment toward Germany on the part of the Allies and the grudging acceptance of the principles in the 14 Points could not overcome that. After the armistice, Germany evacuated its conquered territory in the west and surrendered her fleet while the Allies maintained the naval blockade. Most significantly, the Allies denied to Germany any role in crafting the peace settlement. If Wilson had envisioned a “peace without victory” the reality certainly appeared as though it would be a victor’s peace.

As personally involved as he was in the decision to take the United States into the war, and as closely linked as that decision was to the post-war settlement, Wilson felt the need to negotiate on behalf of the United States personally. He arrived in Europe in late 1918 and would stay for six months with only a brief return to the United States in that time. He left a Congress in the control of the Republicans, a Congress whose approval he would need for any settlement he achieved at the Paris Peace Conference. Aggravating Republican politicians with him to Paris, leaving them to fume at the distant president and the treaty he was crafting without them.

The First World War: Armies mobilized and casualties						
Countries	Total mobilized forces	Killed and died	Wounded casualties	Prisoners and missing	Total casualties	Casualties as % of mobilized forces
Allies and Associated Powers:						
Russia	12,000,000	1,700,000	4,950,000	2,500,000	9,150,000	76.3
France	8,410,000	1,357,800	4,266,000	537,000	6,160,800	73.3
British Empire	8,904,467	908,371	2,090,212	191,652	3,190,235	35.8
Italy	5,615,000	650,000	947,000	600,000	2,197,000	39.1
United States	4,355,000	126,000	234,300	4,500	364,800	8.2
Japan	800,000	300	907	3	1,210	0.2
Romania	750,000	335,706	120,000	80,000	535,706	71.4
Serbia	707,343	45,000	133,148	152,958	331,106	46.8
Belgium	267,000	13,716	44,686	34,659	93,061	34.9
Greece	230,000	5,000	21,000	1,000	27,000	11.7
Portugal	100,000	7,222	13,751	12,318	33,291	33.3
Montenegro	50,000	3,000	10,000	7,000	20,000	40.0
Total	42,188,810	5,152,115	12,831,004	4,121,090	22,104,209	52.3
Central Powers:						
Germany	11,000,000	1,773,700	4,216,058	1,152,800	7,142,558	64.9
Austria-Hungary	7,800,000	1,200,000	3,620,000	2,200,000	7,020,000	90.0
Turkey	2,850,000	325,000	400,000	250,000	975,000	34.2
Bulgaria	1,200,000	87,500	152,390	27,029	266,919	22.2
Total	22,850,000	3,386,200	8,388,448	3,629,829	15,404,477	67.4
Overall total	65,038,810	8,538,315	21,219,452	7,750,919	37,508,686	57.6

Data supplied by the United States War Department, February 1924

Source: Trueman, John et al. 1979. *Modern Perspectives*. 2nd edn. Toronto: McGraw, Hill, Ryerson. p. 411.

The Peace Conference seemed to amplify Wilson's previous tendency toward autocratic decision-making. At various times, he found himself at serious odds with the British prime minister, Lloyd George, and the "Tiger of France", Georges Clemenceau, who at one point threatening to pull out of the negotiations. He did not feel bound by secret treaties concluded by the other Allies such as the Treaty of London with Italy nor to any promises made to Japan. Most of his objections to these agreements, apart from their largely secret nature, were that they amounted to a division of the spoils of war violating his concept of national self-determination. The staggering number of national submissions by countries, territories, national groups complicated matters immeasurably and exposed Wilson's ignorance with regards to European politics—the byproduct of 150 years of US isolationist policies.

As Wilson gradually gave way on some elements of the 14 Points, he seemed to place more and more confidence in his proposed League of Nations to mitigate what he saw as deficiencies in the broader treaty. Rather than creating the League under a separate treaty, Wilson sought to bind the participants more closely to it by insisting the Covenant of the League be included in the actual Treaty of Versailles.

Discussion point

To what extent was the League of Nations a reflection of Wilson's Moral Diplomacy? To what extent does the League mark a departure from US foreign policy?

How do the principles of the League compare to the principles of:

- The Monroe Doctrine?
- Big Stick Diplomacy?
- Dollar Diplomacy?

3 • The emergence of the Americas in global affairs, 1880–1929

Back in the United States, the Republican-controlled Senate saw aspects of the League to which they could not agree and political advantage in opposing it. While Wilson acquiesced on some Republican sentiments, such as allowing for the withdrawal of a member nation with two years notice, and the maintenance of the domestic sovereignty of member nations, he stubbornly pressed on.

US support for the League of Nations

A tired and ill Wilson returned from Paris to lay the League, and by association the entire Treaty of Versailles, before the people of the United States. He returned to a country having difficulty adjusting to the new conditions of peace. **The Red Scare** and the impending 1920 presidential election compounded labor strife, unemployment and decreasing economic demand.

Opposition to the Treaty and the League came from a number of quarters. To the pettiness of partisan politics was added the voices of intellectuals worried that the League would serve only to entrench the status quo of balance of power diplomacy in Europe. Some isolationists honestly believed that the interests of the US were best served by disengaging from European matters. Other pragmatists thought the lofty goals of the League unrealistic and the best way to safeguard US interests was a strong military—not disarmament. Many were concerned that a strict reading of Article X of the Covenant of the League would violate US sovereignty and compel her to intervene when other nations' integrity was threatened. Italian Americans were upset at Wilson's stance on the Treaty of London. Irish Americans wondered angrily why "self-determination" did not apply to their homeland. German Americans railed against Germany's humiliation.

A number of Republican Senators—the Reservationists—saw the Covenant as more or less workable with revisions. Most of these agreed that Article X would need some alterations so as to protect what they saw as US freedom of action in the world following its foreign policy traditions.

Those Senators who opposed any form of the treaty with the included League were known as the Irreconcilables and a number of them sat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chaired by Senator Lodge. He held weeks of hearings, allowing all manner of dissenters to air their issues with the treaty and the League—all duly reported in the press. For his part, Wilson rapidly became intransigent with regards to the League and especially Article X. His increasingly stubborn defense of the treaty gave ammunition to his opponents who saw him as autocratic and arrogant. Perhaps it was this arrogance that led him to believe that if he could persuade the US public of the righteousness of his cause the recalcitrant Senators would have to yield. To this end, and despite his frail health, Wilson embarked on an exhausting cross-country speaking tour to put his case for the League before the people. The strain proved too much for his health and, after cutting the tour short, Wilson suffered a stroke in early October 1919.

Discussion point



The fate of the 14 Points

What happened to each of the 14 Points in the final peace settlement? Discuss the reason why some of the points were not included in the settlement.

The Red Scare In the aftermath of the First World War and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, a fear of radical left wing politics gripped the United States. Socialists, Communists, Anarchists and labor organizers were harassed and arrested during this period.

Discussion point

To what extent is foreign policy related to domestic policy? Have there been times in US policy when foreign policy has taken priority over domestic concerns?

Activity**Lodge vs. Wilson on the League****Source A**

The following is an excerpt of a speech given by Henry Cabot Lodge in August 1919 addressing the issue of the League of Nations.

National I must remain, and in that way I like all other Americans can render the amplest service to the world. The United States is the world's best hope, but if you fetter her in the interests and quarrels of other nations, if you tangle her in the intrigues of Europe, you will destroy her power for good and endanger her very existence. Leave her to march freely through the centuries to come as in the years that have gone.

Strong, generous, and confident, she has nobly served mankind. Beware how you trifle with your marvellous inheritance, this great land of ordered liberty, for if we stumble and fall freedom and civilization everywhere will go down in ruin.

We are told that we shall "break the heart of the world" if we do not take this league just as it stands. I fear that the hearts of the vast majority of mankind would beat on strongly and steadily and without any quickening if the league were to perish altogether. If it should be effectively and beneficently changed the people who would lie awake in sorrow for a single night could be easily gathered in one not very large room but those who would draw a long breath of relief would reach to millions.

We hear much of visions and I trust we shall continue to have visions and dream dreams of a fairer future for the race. But visions are one thing and visionaries are another, and the mechanical appliances of the rhetorician designed to give a picture of a present which does not exist and of a future which no man can predict are as unreal and short-lived as the steam or canvas clouds, the angels suspended on wires and the artificial lights of the stage.

They pass with the moment of effect and are shabby and tawdry in the daylight. Let us at least be real. Washington's entire honesty of mind and his fearless look into the face of all facts are qualities which can never go out of fashion and which we should all do well to imitate.

Ideals have been thrust upon us as an argument for the league until the healthy mind which

rejects cant revolts from them. Are ideals confined to this deformed experiment upon a noble purpose, tainted, as it is, with bargains and tied to a peace treaty which might have been disposed of long ago to the great benefit of the world if it had not been compelled to carry this rider on its back? 'Post equitem sedet atra cura,' Horace tells us, but no blacker care ever sat behind any rider than we shall find in this covenant of doubtful and disputed interpretation as it now perches upon the treaty of peace.

No doubt many excellent and patriotic people see a coming fulfilment of noble ideals in the words 'league for peace.' We all respect and share these aspirations and desires, but some of us see no hope, but rather defeat, for them in this murky covenant. For we, too, have our ideals, even if we differ from those who have tried to establish a monopoly of idealism.

Our first ideal is our country, and we see her in the future, as in the past, giving service to all her people and to the world. Our ideal of the future is that she should continue to render that service of her own free will. She has great problems of her own to solve, very grim and perilous problems, and a right solution, if we can attain to it, would largely benefit mankind.

We would have our country strong to resist a peril from the West, as she has flung back the German menace from the East. We would not have our politics distracted and embittered by the dissensions of other lands. We would not have our country's vigour exhausted or her moral force abated, by everlasting meddling and muddling in every quarrel, great and small, which afflicts the world.

Our ideal is to make her ever stronger and better and finer, because in that way alone, as we believe, can she be of the greatest service to the world's peace and to the welfare of mankind.

Source: Henry Cabot Lodge on the League of Nations. 12 August 1919.
http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/lodge_leagueofnations.htm.

Source B

The following is an excerpt of the last speech given by President Wilson in his 1919 tour of the United States promoting the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations.

But the treaty is so much more than that. It is not merely a settlement with Germany; it is a readjustment of those great injustices which underlie the whole structure of European and Asiatic society. ...

It is a people's treaty, that accomplishes by a great sweep of practical justice the liberation of men who never could have liberated themselves, and the power of the most powerful nations has been devoted not to their aggrandizement but to the liberation of people whom they could have put under their control if they had chosen to do so. ...

At the front of this great treaty is put the Covenant of the League of Nations. ...

Unless you get the united, concerted purpose and power of the great Governments of the world behind this settlement, it will fall down like a house of cards. There is only one power to put behind the liberation of mankind, and that is the power of mankind. It is the power of the united moral forces of the world, and in the Covenant of the League of Nations the moral forces of the world are mobilized. For what purpose?

Reflect, my fellow citizens, that the membership of this great League is going to include all the great fighting nations of the world, as well as the weak ones. It is not for the present going to include Germany, but for the time being Germany is not a great fighting country. All the nations that have power that can be mobilized are going to be members of this League, including the United States.

And what do they unite for? They enter into a solemn promise to one another that they will never use their power against one another for aggression; that they never will impair the territorial integrity of a neighbour; that they never will interfere with the political independence of a neighbour; that they will abide by the principle that great populations are entitled to determine their own destiny and that they will not interfere with that destiny; and that no matter what differences arise amongst them they will never resort to war without first having done one or other of two things—either submitted the matter of controversy to arbitration, in which case they agree to abide by the result without question, or submitted it to the consideration of the council of the League of Nations, laying before that council all the documents, all the facts, agreeing that the council can publish the documents and the facts to the

whole world, agreeing that there shall be six months allowed for the mature consideration of those facts by the council, and agreeing that at the expiration of the six months, even if they are not then ready to accept the advice of the council with regard to the settlement of the dispute, they will still not go to war for another three months.

In other words, they consent, no matter what happens, to submit every matter of difference between them to the judgment of mankind, and just so certainly as they do that, my fellow citizens, war will be in the far background, war will be pushed out of that foreground of terror in which it has kept the world for generation after generation, and men will know that there will be a calm time of deliberate counsel.

The most dangerous thing for a bad cause is to expose it to the opinion of the world. The most certain way that you can prove that a man is mistaken is by letting all his neighbours know what he thinks, by letting all his neighbours discuss what he thinks, and if he is in the wrong you will notice that he will stay at home, he will not walk on the street.

He will be afraid of the eyes of his neighbours. He will be afraid of their judgment of his character. He will know that his cause is lost unless he can sustain it by the arguments of right and of justice. The same law that applies to individuals applies to nations. ...

Let us accept what America has always fought for, and accept it with pride that America showed the way and made the proposal. I do not mean that America made the proposal in this particular instance; I mean that the principle was an American principle, proposed by America. ...

Article ten is the heart of the whole matter. What is article ten? I never am certain that I can from memory give a literal repetition of its language, but I am sure that I can give an exact interpretation of its meaning. Article ten provides that every member of the league covenants to respect and preserve the territorial integrity and existing political independence of every other member of the league as against external aggression. . .

It may be that that will impair somewhat the vigour of the League, but, nevertheless, the fact is so, that we are not obliged to take any advice except our own, which to any man who wants to go his own course is a very satisfactory state of affairs. Every man regards his own advice as

best, and I dare say every man mixes his own advice with some thought of his own interest.

Whether we use it wisely or unwisely, we can use the vote of the United States to make impossible drawing the United States into any enterprise that she does not care to be drawn into. ...

You will say, "Is the League an absolute guaranty against war?" No; I do not know any absolute guaranty against the errors of human judgment or the violence of human passions but I tell you this: With a cooling space of nine months for human passion, not much of it will keep hot. ...

Source: President Woodrow Wilson's Address in Favour of the League of Nations. 25 September 1919.
http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/wilsonspeech_league.htm

Questions

- 1 What evidence is there of Wilson's moral diplomacy in source B? What evidence is there of a pragmatic approach to foreign policy?
- 2 What does Lodge mean when he says "For we, too, have our ideals, even if we differ from those who have tried to establish a monopoly of idealism" in source A?
- 3 Evaluate Wilson's use of the "neighbor" analogy in making his argument.
- 4 On what points might have Lodge and Wilson agreed?
- 5 Evaluate the two arguments. Whose is more convincing? Why?

With Wilson incapacitated and unable to rally more support for the League, the Senate, in a series of votes from November 1919 to March 1920, voted against ratification of the treaty. The end result of this Senate defeat was that the major treaty that concluded the First World War, and was signed by her European wartime allies, was not recognized by the United States.

The impact of the war on the US economy

Wilson would be the last Democratic president for over a decade. The Republicans who won the 1920 election and those that followed, continued on the foreign policy course that had been charted by those who had defeated the Treaty of Versailles in 1920. They vigorously guarded US interests without becoming tangled in alliances and partnerships with other states. They relied on their apparent juggernaut of an economy and the private sector to speak for US interests on the world stage. A small group of Republicans—the Peace Progressives—modified a strictly isolationist stance adopted by others of their party: they opposed the role of business in both domestic and foreign policy while decrying imperialism and militarism. The war had made the United States the single biggest creditor nation on earth. This proved to be a mixed blessing. While, on the one hand, it gave the United States a great deal of influence in the world, it also meant that the US had a huge stake in the economic stability of the world. This ran counter to the growing isolationist sentiments in the country.

Nevertheless, the legacy of the First World War was that the relative strength of the US economy meant that it dominated exports and capital markets around the world. Even with the growing sentiment

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toward higher tariffs in the US through the 1920s, the United States was still an impressive importer as well. US capital, propping up the German economy and playing a substantial role in many others meant that as went the US economy, so went the world economy. There were elements of continuity with the prewar period. US companies continued to buy and lease huge amounts of foreign land in their voracious search for raw materials for the overheated US economy. The relative weakness of other economies meant that there was limited competition from overseas firms. But again, these “incursions” into foreign countries and markets were piloted by private enterprise, albeit with a helping hand from the US government. **The Washington Treaty** helped short-term relations with Japan—an important trading partner and the **Dawes Plan** helped rehabilitate the German economy such that it could resume payment of reparations to Britain and France, which would then find their way back to the Allies’ American creditors.

The Washington Treaty signed in 1922 by Great Britain, the United States, France, Italy, and Japan limited naval armaments including ship tonnage.

The Dawes Plan was an economic recovery plan engineered by Senator Charles Dawes designed to address hyperinflation in Germany. Through this plan, US loans would be used to back the revaluation of the German currency. The plan also facilitated the flow of US capital into the German economy. The recovery was intended to allow Germany to resume its reparation payments to the Allies.

Canada and the First World War

Having gained independence in domestic issues in 1867, Canada still labored under a confusing foreign policy structure in 1914. As a Dominion of the British Empire the British government essentially controlled Canada’s foreign policy, which meant she was bound by the course that the British would take in the July Crisis of 1914. Over the course of the preceding 12 years, the Canadian military had been gradually drawn into a more centralized command structure in terms of imperial operations and by 1912 Canadian forces were integrated into imperial defence plans. Despite this integration, there were hints that the issue of British command of Canadian soldiers would prove contentious and in fact would come to a head during the war. In 1904, Wilfred Laurier officially placed the countries militia under the command of a Dominion-born officer. From 1907, however, integration continued with advances in common training and standards among the imperial forces. On paper, Canada had a permanent force of about 4,000 soldiers and about 50,000 militia with some training. The navy consisted of two warships.

Mobilization

In the midst of a heated debate regarding the construction of the Canadian navy, Wilfred Laurier had declared that when Britain was at war, Canada was at war. Although Canada had been debating her place in the British Empire almost since the signing

Discussion point

What were the advantages of Canada integrating her military with British forces? What were the disadvantages? What effect might the position of the United States have played in this decision?

Activity

Canada’s economic context

Research the economic situation in Canada in the period 1912–14. Use the following topic headings to guide your research:

- Manufacturing
- Unemployment
- Agricultural production
- Trade

Questions

- 1 How was the economic context related to Canada’s ability to fight a war in 1914?
- 2 What effect might the unemployment situation have on recruiting efforts in the autumn of 1914?
- 3 What effect did this economic situation have on government revenues? How might this impact Canada’s ability to equip an army and navy? What might be some possible solutions for the government?