



Read this Book
Online

Question Eleven, Part Two

Is the fight for FREEDOM WORTH THE COST?

EXPLORING AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH COMPELLING QUESTIONS

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- 1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?
- 2 ARE RESTRICTIONS ON BASIC FREEDOMS JUSTIFIED IN TIMES OF CRISIS?
- 3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

DEVELOPED AND COMPILED BY
JONATHAN LOOMIS

SOURCES FOR ORIGINAL TEXT INCLUDE
c n x . o r g
courses.lumenlearning.com
us history . o r g
sageamericanhistory.net
le ar n n c . o r g
w i k i m e d i a . o r g



CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION
4.0 INTERNATIONAL LICENSE

Question Eleven, Part Two

Is the fight for FREEDOM WORTH THE COST?

America's have a long history of fighting for freedom. During the Colonial Era, they developed a sense of liberty strong enough that in 1775 they were willing to fight and die on the battlefield to protect their freedom. In 1776, they declared independence and said that "all men are created equal" and that we are have the rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

As decades passed, the question of slavery became unavoidable and Americans fought other Americans about the freedom from African Americans. Clearly, freedom from slavery was worth the cost. In 1915 when the European powers went to war, Americans generally felt that the conflict was not their fight, and it was not until 1917 that the United States officially joined the war. By then, President Woodrow Wilson and most other Americans had concluded that preserving freedom in Europe was worth the cost.

Wars cost more than lives. Wars are an expensive financial investment, and they have a social cost as well. Patterns of life are changed, often irreversibly. Going to war is a momentous decision, and sometimes the United States, for all that we love freedom, had concluded that freedom is simply not worth the cost. For decades before the Civil War, we put off dealing with slavery because we had not decided that a fight of freedom for African Americans would be worth the cost. In 1915, Americans were not willing to pay the price of freedom. It took two years of bloodshed in Europe before Americans decided it was a war worth fighting. Even today, there are opportunities around the world for the United States to flex its military might and protect the freedom of others, but we do not, because we simply do not see the benefits as being worth the cost.

What do you think? Is the fight for freedom worth the cost?

1

F I R S T Q U E S T I O N IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

INTRODUCTION

When he took office in 1913, President Wilson promised that the United States under his leadership would be a different sort of neighbor to the nations of the rest of the world. Unlike Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft who were unashamed to cast America's weight around in the form of military or economic muscle, Wilson promised to use America's power for good. His Moral Diplomacy meant that the United States would fight for people to have a say in their own destiny. He disliked Europeans and their colonial empires. He wanted fairness.

Any student of history can easily see the hypocrisy in Moral Diplomacy. Wilson send the armed forces into Latin American nations multiple times, including General Pershing's futile attempt to chase down Pancho Villa in Mexico. He made no attempt to undo imperialist takeovers of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines or Hawaii. It would seem that Wilson's moral diplomacy was more about telling other countries what they should do than making the United States itself a model of those moral ideas.

The greatest test of Wilson's diplomatic talents were not regarding imperialist interventions in Latin America, however. His real test was related to World War I. As European nations set about slaughtering one another on the fields of France and Belgium, Wilson did his best to maintain American neutrality. Americans supported his efforts. One popular song of the day was "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be A Soldier."

Wilson's desire to keep America out of a terrible war that it didn't start conflicted, however, with his desire for the United States to be a leader in determining the future of world affairs and to be a force for good. Since he couldn't stop the war, how could he use the war to, as he would later say, "make the world safe for democracy?" Could moral diplomacy work in the real world? Could good come out of something so evil?

1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?

ALLIANCES IN EUROPE

1915 marked the end of a long period of peace between the world's most powerful nations. 100 years before, Europe had united to defeat French Emperor Napoleon. After Napoleon's defeat, the United Kingdom, France, Prussia, Russia, and Austria met in Vienna. These nations decided that if power in Europe was balanced, then no nation could pose a threat to the others.

However, in 1871, several small German nations combined into the German Empire and Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck began to construct a web of alliances to protect German dominance. Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Germany formed an alliance, and in 1887, the Reinsurance Treaty ensured that Russia would not interfere in a war between France and Germany. This upset the traditional balance of power. Most concerned was France, a traditional enemy of Germany. However, Germany and the Great Britain remained on good terms, as Germany had not built a navy that might challenge British sea power.

During this time, **Queen Victoria** of Britain built alliances in her own way. During years of relative peace, she had her children marry into many of the royal families of Europe, believing that this would solidify relations among the nations. In the first decade of the 1900s, the Kaiser of Germany and the King of England were cousins through Victoria, as were the Tsar and Tsarina of Russia.

In 1890, Kaiser **Wilhelm II** fired Bismarck and took over responsibility for Germany's foreign policy himself. He decided to build up the German navy, antagonizing the Great Britain, and did not renew German agreements with Russia and in 1894. As a result, Russia formed a new alliance with Germany's rival France.

 **Queen Victoria:** Queen of the United Kingdom from 1837-1901. The time period is often called the Victorian Era.

 **Wilhelm II:** King or Kaiser of Germany during World War I



Secondary Source: Map

Europe in 1914 was divided into two camps, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. The United States eventually entered the war on the side of the Entente.

1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

In 1904, France and the United Kingdom decided to end centuries of bitter enmity by signing the Entente Cordiale, an unusual agreement between former enemies that was signed specifically to counter the growing military power of Germany. Three years later, those two nations and Russia entered the **Triple Entente**. In response, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy confirmed their alliance forming the **Triple Alliance**, or **Central Powers**.

Each nation felt that developing alliances was essential for protection, but the alliances led everyone to fear that its neighbors were more powerful, and had more powerful friends. The result was that Europe's most powerful nations, Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary all began building up their militaries in preparation for war.

WAR BREAKS OUT

Austria-Hungary was a patchwork of several nations ruled by the Habsburg family. Several ethnic groups resented rule by the Habsburgs. In June, 1914, the heir to the throne, **Archduke Franz Ferdinand**, traveled to Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A Serbian nationalist named Gavrilo Princip, who hated Habsburg rule, **assassinated the Archduke** and his wife as they drove through the city in an open car. This assassination triggered the First World War.

The Austro-Hungarian government decided to retaliate by crushing Serbian nationalism. They threatened the Serbian government with war. Russia came to the aid of the Serbs. To oppose this alliance, Austria-Hungary called on Germany. Kaiser Wilhelm II said his country would give Austria-Hungary whatever it needed to win the war.

In July 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany began to mobilize their troops. The conflict in Austria-Hungary quickly spread over Europe. Germany's military leaders understood that war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, meant war between Austria-Hungary and Russia, which would in turn bring Germany into the conflict, and then France as well. They did not want to fight a defensive war with their most powerful enemy France, and convinced Kaiser Wilhelm II that their best chance for battlefield success was to strike first.

In August, Germany declared war on France. The Germans demanded that Belgium allow German troops to pass through the neutral nation. When King Albert of Belgium refused, Germany violated Belgian neutrality and invaded. Belgium appealed to the Great Britain for aid. The British House of Commons threatened that Great Britain would wage war against Germany unless it withdrew from Belgium. The Germans refused, and the Britain joined the battle. The Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary, were pitted against the Allies, the United Kingdom, Russia, and France.



Triple Entente: Alliance between the United Kingdom, France and Russia at the start of World War I



Triple Alliance / Central Powers: Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy at the start of World War I. When the war began, Italy left the alliance.



Archduke Franz Ferdinand: Son of the king of Austria-Hungary who was assassinated in 1914 along with his wife. Their deaths were the spark that started World War I.



Assassination of Franz Ferdinand: Killing of the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary in 1914 that served as the catalyst for World War I.

1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

THE TECHNOLOGIES OF WAR

The Great War, as it was called, was unlike any war that came before it. In previous European conflicts, troops typically faced each other on open battlefields. But these wars had occurred before the Industrial Revolution. World War I saw new military technologies that turned war into a conflict of prolonged **trench warfare** in which the enemies dug long lines of defense and faced each other across a decimated no man's land. Both sides used new artillery, tanks, airplanes, machine guns, barbed wire, and, eventually, poison gas. All of these weapons strengthened defenses and turned each military offense into barbarous sacrifices of tens of thousands of lives with minimal territorial advances in return. By the end of the war, the total military death toll was ten million, as well as another million civilian deaths attributed to military action, and another six million civilian deaths caused by famine, disease, or other catastrophes brought about by the conflict.



The Great War: Nickname for World War I.



Trench Warfare: Style of combat common on the Western Front during World War I marked by a distinct advantage for the defense.

Primary Source: Photograph

The machine gun was a new invention in World War I and was too large and heavy to be carried by one person. As a result, it and many other new technologies worked better as defensive weapons than offensive ones.

One terrifying new piece of technological warfare was the German unterseeboot, German for “undersea boat” or **U-boat**. To limit Germany’s industrial capability during the war, Britain had blockaded German ports with its superior navy. In 1915, in an effort to break the British blockade and turn the tide of the war, the Germans dispatched a fleet of these submarines around Great Britain to attack both merchant and military ships.



U-Boat: Germany submarine.

The U-boats acted in direct violation of international law, attacking without warning from beneath the water instead of surfacing and permitting the surrender of civilians or crew. By 1918, German U-boats had sunk nearly five thousand vessels. Of greatest historical note was the attack on the British passenger ship, **Lusitania**, on its way from New York to Liverpool on May 7,

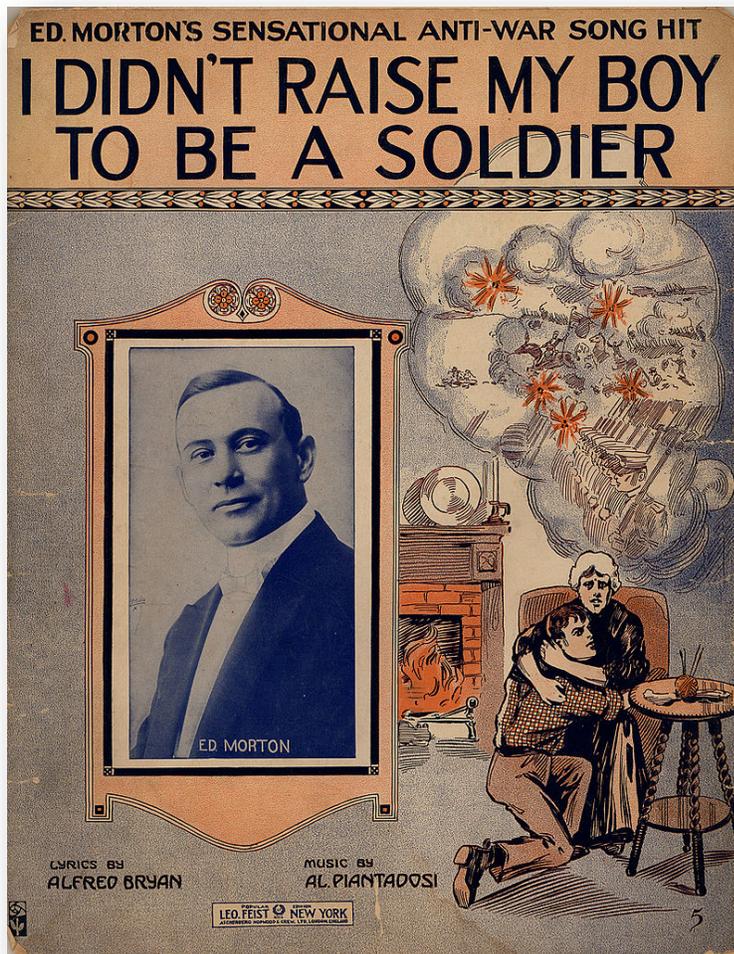


Lusitania: British cruise ship that was sunk by Germany U-Boats in 1918. The event pushed many Americans toward support for entering the war on the side of the Allies.

1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

1915. The German Embassy in the United States had announced that this ship would be subject to attack for its cargo of ammunition, an allegation that later proved accurate. Nonetheless, almost 1,200 civilians died in the attack, including 128 Americans. The attack horrified the world, galvanizing support in England and beyond for the war. This attack, more than any other event, tested President Wilson's desire to stay out of what had been a largely European conflict.



Primary Source: Sheet Music Cover

The war was a bonanza for publishers of sheet music. At a time before radio and record players were common, when most Americans purchased music to play themselves, certain songs were bestsellers. This particular song, was a hit before the United States joined the war. Afterward, "Over There" was the top choice of armature musicians.

AMERICAN NEUTRALITY

Despite the loss of American lives on the Lusitania, President Wilson stuck to his path of **neutrality** in Europe's escalating war, in part out of moral principle, in part as a matter of practical necessity, and in part for political reasons. Few Americans wished to participate in the devastating battles that ravaged Europe, and Wilson did not want to risk losing his reelection by ordering an unpopular military intervention. For Wilson, the conflict did not reach the



Neutrality: Refusing to join sides in a war.

1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

threshold of a moral imperative for American involvement. It was largely a European affair involving numerous countries with whom the United States wished to maintain working relations. In his message to Congress in 1914, the president noted, "Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned."

Wilson understood that he was already looking at a difficult reelection campaign in 1916. He had only won the 1912 election with 42% of the popular vote, and likely would not have been elected at all had Roosevelt not come back as a third-party candidate to run against his former protégée Taft. Wilson felt pressure from all different political constituents to take a position on the war, yet he knew that elections were seldom won with a campaign promise of "If elected, I will send your sons to war!" Facing pressure from some businessmen and other government officials who felt that the protection of America's best interests required a stronger position in defense of the Allied forces, Wilson agreed to a "preparedness campaign" in the year prior to the election. This campaign included the passage of the **National Defense Act** of 1916, which more than doubled the size of the army to nearly 225,000, and the **Naval Appropriations Act** of 1916, which called for the expansion of the navy, including battleships, destroyers, submarines, and other ships.

As the 1916 election approached, the Republican Party hoped to capitalize on the fact that Wilson was making promises that he would not be able to keep. They nominated Charles Evans Hughes, a former governor of New York and sitting Supreme Court justice at the time of his nomination. Hughes focused his campaign on what he considered Wilson's foreign policy failures, but even as he did so, he himself tried to walk a fine line between neutrality and belligerence.

In contrast, Wilson and the Democrats capitalized on neutrality and campaigned under the slogan "He kept us out of war." The election itself remained too close to call on election night. Only when a tight race in California was decided two days later could Wilson claim victory in his reelection bid, again with less than 50% of the popular vote. Despite his victory based upon a policy of neutrality, Wilson would find true neutrality a difficult challenge. Several different factors pushed Wilson, however reluctantly, toward the inevitability of American involvement.

GOING TO WAR

It is hard to point to one key factor that made President Wilson and the American people change their mind about joining the war.

One key factor driving American engagement was economics. Great Britain was the country's most important trading partner, and the Allies as a whole relied heavily on American imports from the earliest days of the war. Specifically, the value of all exports to the Allies quadrupled from \$750 million to \$3 billion in the first two years of the war. At the same time, the British

 **National Defense Act:** 1916 law that doubled the size of the army. It was passed to help prepare for the possibility of entering World War I.

 **Naval Appropriations Act:** 1916 law that funded construction of new ships in preparation for the possibility of entering World War I.

1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

naval blockade meant that exports to Germany all but ended, dropping from \$350 million to \$30 million. Likewise, numerous private banks in the United States made extensive loans – in excess of \$500 million – to England. J. P. Morgan's banking interests were among the largest lenders. Certainly, the war was good for business, and American bankers were eager to see the Allies win.

Another key factor in the decision to go to war were the deep ethnic divisions between native-born Americans and recent immigrants. For those of Anglo-Saxon descent, the nation's historic and ongoing relationship with Great Britain was paramount, but many Irish-Americans resented British rule over their place of birth and opposed support for the world's most expansive empire. Millions of Jewish immigrants had fled anti-Semitic pogroms in Tsarist Russia and would have supported any nation fighting that authoritarian state. German Americans saw their nation of origin as a victim of British and Russian aggression and a French desire to settle old scores, whereas emigrants from Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire were mixed in their sympathies for the old monarchies or ethnic communities that these empires suppressed. For interventionists, this lack of support for Great Britain and its allies among recent immigrants only strengthened their conviction.

Germany's use of submarine warfare also played a role in challenging American neutrality. After the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and the subsequent August 30 sinking of another British liner, the *Arabic*, Germany had promised to restrict their use of submarine warfare. Specifically, they promised to surface and visually identify any ship before they fired, as well as permit civilians to evacuate targeted ships. Instead, in February 1917, Germany intensified their use of submarines in an effort to end the war quickly before Great Britain's naval blockade starved them out of food and supplies. The German high command wanted to continue unrestricted warfare on all Atlantic traffic, including unarmed American freighters, in order to cripple the British economy and secure a quick and decisive victory. Their goal was to bring an end to the war before the United States could intervene and tip the balance. In February 1917, a German U-boat sank the American merchant ship, the *Laconia*, killing two passengers, and, in late March, sunk four more American ships. These attacks increased pressure on Wilson from all sides, as government officials, the general public, and both Democrats and Republicans urged him to declare war.

The final element that led to American involvement in World War I was the so-called **Zimmermann telegram**. British intelligence intercepted and decoded a top-secret telegram from German foreign minister Arthur Zimmermann to the German ambassador to Mexico, instructing him to invite Mexico to join the war effort on the German side, should the United States declare war on Germany. It went on to encourage Mexico to invade the United States, as Mexico's invasion would create a diversion and permit Germany a clear path to victory. In exchange, Zimmermann offered to return



Zimmermann Telegram: Message from the Germany foreign minister to the German ambassador in Mexico encouraging Mexico to enter World War I on the side of the Central Powers. In return, Germany would help Mexico regain lost territory in the American Southwest. The publication of the message angered many Americans.

1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

to Mexico land that was previously lost to the United States in the Mexican-American War, including Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.



Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

In this cartoon, Germany is seen as the devil tempting poor Mexico with the American Southwest. The publication of the Zimmermann Telegram infuriated Americans.

The likelihood that Mexico, weakened and torn by its own revolution and civil war, could wage war against the United States and recover territory lost in the Mexican-American war, especially since Germany would have no way to help the Mexicans, was remote at best. However, combined with Germany's unrestricted use of submarine warfare and the sinking of American ships, the Zimmermann telegram made a powerful argument for a declaration of war. The outbreak of a **communist revolution in Russia** in February and abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March raised the prospect of democracy in Russia and removed an important moral objection to entering the war on the side of the Allies. On April 2, 1917, **Wilson asked Congress to declare war** on Germany.

Congress debated for four days, and several senators and congressmen expressed their concerns that the war was being fought over economic interests more than strategic need or democratic ideals. When Congress voted on April 6, fifty-six voted against the resolution, including the first woman ever elected to Congress, Representative Jeannette Rankin. This was the largest "no" vote against a war resolution in American history. All the same, the United States had entered the Great War on the side of the Allies.

 **Russian Revolution:** Overthrow of the Czar of Russia during World War I. Communists under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin eventually took control, founded the Soviet Union, and made peace with Germany.

 **Wilson's War Message:** Speech by President Woodrow Wilson to Congress in 1917 asking for a declaration of War.

1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?



Primary Source: Newspaper

The headlines on the day Wilson delivered his war message to congress.

CONCLUSION

Wilson wanted to the United States to lead the world toward a path of honest international friendship. He believed that both nations and people were inherently good and could live peacefully if they chose to. However, again and again during 1915, 1916 and 1917 he was proven wrong. European powers were sending their finest young men to be slaughtered on the battlefield and Germany's high command ignored American claims of neutrality and sank passenger ships without warning.

Maybe Wilson's dream of moral diplomacy was just a dream, something that sounded good in a diplomat's imagination but was never going to be possible when he opened his eyes and looked around at the real world.

What do you think? Is Wilson's idea of moral diplomacy possible?

1 IS WILSON'S IDEA OF MORAL DIPLOMACY POSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD?



SUMMARY

World War I was not originally a war that involved the United States. It started in Europe between the major European powers. Over the few decades before the war began, the Europeans had settled themselves into two groups. The Central Powers included Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. The Triple Entente was made up of the United Kingdom, France and Russia. The alliances were intended to provide support in case of attack, but they also had disastrous consequences.

The war began because the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was murdered. Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia, which asked for help from Russia. Austria-Hungary asked for help from Germany, and then Russia turned to its friends France and the United Kingdom. By August of 1914, the major powers found themselves going to war. Most historians see it as a terrible mistake – a time when politicians failed to think calmly and take the time necessary to avoid doing things they couldn't later undo.

All wars are terrible, but World War I was especially bad. Modern technology meant that armies could bring machine guns, gigantic cannons, land mines, barbed wire and poison gas to the battlefield. Humans were no match for these potent defensive weapons and inventors had not yet found ways to counter them. The result was a slaughter. Millions of men climbed out of their trenches and marched into a wall of bullets. Also deadly were submarines called U-Boats, which the Germans had mastered.

For the first few years of the war, the United States remained neutral. Although most Americans supported the British, French and Russians, they did not want to join the fighting.

Eventually, however, President Wilson asked Congress to declare war because of a combination of factors. The Germans began attacking American ships that were carrying supplies to trade with the United Kingdom and France. Probably the final straw was that Americans learned of a plot to convince Mexico to attack the United States. The idea probably had no chance of success, but it made Americans angry enough to join the war.



KEY CONCEPTS

Trench Warfare: Style of combat common on the Western Front during World War I marked by a distinct advantage for the defense.

Neutrality: Refusing to join sides in a war.



LOCATIONS

Triple Entente: Alliance between the United Kingdom, France and Russia at the start of World War I

Triple Alliance / Central Powers: Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy at the start of World War I. When the war began, Italy left the alliance.



LAWS

National Defense Act: 1916 law that doubled the size of the army. It was passed to help prepare for the possibility of entering World War I.

Naval Appropriations Act: 1916 law that funded construction of new ships in preparation for the possibility of entering World War I.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Queen Victoria: Queen of the United Kingdom from 1837-1901. The time period is often called the Victorian Era.

Wilhelm II: King or Kaiser of Germany during World War I

Archduke Franz Ferdinand: Son of the king of Austria-Hungary who was assassinated in 1914 along with his wife. Their deaths were the spark that started World War I.



EVENTS

Assassination of Franz Ferdinand: Killing of the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary in 1914 that served as the catalyst for World War I.

The Great War: Nickname for World War I.

Russian Revolution: Overthrow of the Czar of Russia during World War I. Communists under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin eventually took control, founded the Soviet Union, and made peace with Germany.



TEXTS

Zimmermann Telegram: Message from the Germany foreign minister to the German ambassador in Mexico encouraging Mexico to enter World War I on the side of the Central Powers. In return, Germany would help Mexico regain lost territory in the American Southwest. The publication of the message angered many Americans.



SPEECHES

Wilson's War Message: Speech by President Woodrow Wilson to Congress in 1917 asking for a declaration of War.



SHIPS

U-Boat: Germany submarine.

Lusitania: British cruise ship that was sunk by Germany U-Boats in 1918. The event pushed many Americans toward support for entering the war on the side of the Allies.

2

S E C O N D Q U E S T I O N ARE RESTRICTIONS ON BASIC FREEDOMS JUSTIFIED IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

INTRODUCTION

The First World War was a total war. In previous wars, expectations were placed on civilians for food and clothing, but modern communication and technology brought about by the industrial revolution required an all-out effort from the entire population. Without the support of civilians, failure was certain. Governments used every form means of communication imaginable to spread pro-war propaganda. American efforts geared to winning World War I amounted to nothing less than a national machine.

During peacetime, businesses buy and sell, invest, succeed and fail on their own, with little or no interference from the government. That is what has made America's economy so powerful for so long. However, during wartime, the wheels of commerce needed to be tuned toward production of military equipment, and the nation's food supply, as well as the means of transportation and communication all needed to be coordinated to ensure maximum support for the war effort. Victory depended on total support for the war.

The result was a tremendous increase in federal power as the government took over the job of managing the food supply, the railroad systems, the communications networks, industry, labor relations, and even took on the role of advertiser in order to promote pro-war attitudes among the public. Never before in American history had the government been so powerful.

Was this a good idea? Government control of the economy seemed like a way to increase the nation's chances of winning the war, but it also limited the ability of individuals to make economic decisions for themselves. The government even passed laws limiting what people could say or write in their effort to promote 100% support for the war.

What do you think? Are restrictions on basic freedoms justified in times of crisis?

MOBILIZING THE NATION

Wilson knew that the key to America's success in war lay largely in its preparation. With both the Allied and enemy forces entrenched in battles of attrition in thousands of miles of trenches, and supplies running low on both sides, the United States needed, first and foremost, to secure enough men, money, food, and supplies to be successful.

In 1917, when the United States declared war on Germany, the army ranked seventh in the world in terms of size, with an estimated 200,000 enlisted men. In contrast, at the outset of the war in 1914, the German force included 4.5 million men, and the country ultimately mobilized over eleven million soldiers over the course of the entire war.

To compose a fighting force, Congress passed the **Selective Service Act** in 1917, which required all men aged 21 through 30 to register for the **draft**. In 1918, the act was expanded to include all men between 18 and 45. By way of the draft, the government could enlist men into the military whether they volunteered or not.



Selective Service Act: 1917 law that established the draft.



Draft: System in which the government legally compels citizens to join the armed forces.

Primary Source: Photograph

Men lined up to register for the draft early in the war.

Through a campaign of patriotic appeals, as well as an administrative system that allowed men to register at their local draft boards rather than directly with the federal government, over ten million men registered for the draft on the very first day. By the war's end, twenty-two million men had registered for the draft. Five million of these men were actually drafted, another 1.5 million volunteered, and over 500,000 additional men signed up for the navy or marines. In all, two million men participated in combat operations

overseas. Among the volunteers were also twenty thousand women, a quarter of whom went to France to serve as nurses or in clerical positions.

Certainly, many Americans were enthusiastic about supporting their country. Some of the most eager were recent immigrants from Europe and their children, since serving in the army was a way to demonstrate patriotism and love for their new country. However, the draft also provoked opposition, and almost 350,000 eligible Americans refused to register for military service. About 65,000 of these defied the conscription law as **conscientious objectors**, mostly on the grounds of their deeply held religious beliefs. Such opposition was not without risks, and whereas most objectors were never prosecuted, those who were found guilty at military hearings received stiff punishments. Courts handed down over two hundred prison sentences of twenty years or more, and seventeen death sentences for Americans who refused to join the military.

There was a sinister side to the war hysteria. Wars seem to bring out the worst prejudices in people, and since many Americans could not discern between enemies abroad and enemies at home, German-Americans became targets for countless hate crimes. On a local level, schoolchildren were pummeled on schoolyards, and yellow paint was splashed on front doors. One German-American was lynched by a mob in Collinsville, Illinois.

Anti-German sentiment was so extreme in some places that the stories of what happened strike modern students of history as silly. Colleges and high schools stopped teaching the German language. The city of Cincinnati banned pretzels, and esteemed city orchestras refused to play music by German composers. Hamburgers, sauerkraut, and frankfurters became known as liberty meat, liberty cabbage, and hot dogs. Even the temperance movement received a boost by linking beer drinking with support for Germany.

THE POWER OF GOVERNMENT

World War I led to important changes in the federal government's relationship with business. Notably, the government gave itself enormous power to direct and regulate private enterprise.

With the size of the army growing, the government needed to ensure that there were adequate supplies, in particular food and fuel, for both the soldiers and the home front. Concerns over shortages led to the passage of the **Lever Act**, also called the **Food and Fuel Control Act**, which empowered the president to control the production, distribution, and price of all food products during the war effort. Using this law, Wilson created both a Fuel Administration and a Food Administration. The **Fuel Administration**, run by Harry Garfield, created the concept of fuel holidays, encouraging civilian Americans to do their part for the war effort by rationing fuel on certain days. Garfield also implemented **daylight savings time** for the first time in American history, shifting the clocks to allow more productive daylight hours. **Herbert Hoover** coordinated the **Food Administration**, and he too encouraged



Conscientious Objectors: People who refuse to join the military for personal, moral reasons, such as because of religious beliefs.



Lever Act / Food and Fuel Control Act: Law passed during World War I granting the president power to control production, distribution and price of food.



Fuel Administration: Government agency during World War I that managed rationing of gasoline and oil.



Daylight Savings Time: System in which clocks are moved forward one hour in the spring, thus allowing for more daylight hours during summer evenings.

2 ARE RESTRICTIONS ON BASIC FREEDOMS JUSTIFIED IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

volunteer rationing by invoking patriotism. With the slogan “food will win the war,” Hoover encouraged “Meatless Mondays,” “Wheatless Wednesdays,” and other similar reductions, with the hope of rationing food for military use.



Wilson also created the **War Industries Board**, run by **Bernard Baruch**, to ensure adequate military supplies. The War Industries Board had the power to direct shipments of raw materials, as well as to control government contracts with private producers. Baruch used lucrative contracts with guaranteed profits to encourage several private firms to shift their production



Herbert Hoover: Director of the Food Administration during World War I, and later president.



Food Administration: Government agency during World War I run by Herbert Hoover that managed rationing of food supplies.

Primary Source: Propaganda Poster

While British, French, German and other European farmers were fighting, American farmers provided the food that save the lives of much of the population of Europe.



War Industries Board: Government agency during World War I run by Bernard Baruch which directed production, distribution and wages. It is an example of significant government involvement in private industry.

2 ARE RESTRICTIONS ON BASIC FREEDOMS JUSTIFIED IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

over to wartime materials. For those firms that refused to cooperate, Baruch's government control over raw materials provided him with the necessary leverage to convince them to join the war effort, willingly or not.

As a way to move all the personnel and supplies around the country efficiently, Congress created the **U.S. Railroad Administration**. Wilson appointed William McAdoo, the Secretary of the Treasury, to lead this agency, which had extraordinary war powers to control the entire railroad industry, including traffic, terminals, rates, and wages.

Almost all the practical steps were in place for the United States to fight a successful war. The only step remaining was to figure out how to pay for it. The war effort was costly, with an eventual price tag in excess of \$32 billion by 1920, and the government needed to finance it. The **Liberty Loan Act** allowed the federal government to sell liberty bonds to the American public, extolling citizens to "do their part" to help the war effort and bring the troops home. The government ultimately raised \$23 billion through liberty bonds. Additional funding came from the government's use of federal income tax revenue, which was made possible by the passage of the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1913. With the financing, transportation, equipment, food, and men in place, the United States was ready to enter the war. The next piece the country needed was public support.

LIMITING FREEDOMS

Although all the physical pieces required to fight a war fell quickly into place, the question of national unity was another concern. The American public was divided on the subject of entering the war. While many felt it was the only choice, others protested strongly, feeling it was not America's war to fight.

Wilson needed to ensure that a nation of diverse immigrants, with ties to both sides of the conflict, thought of themselves as American first, and their home country's nationality second. Wilson created the **Committee on Public Information** under the direction of **George Creel** to create and disseminate **propaganda**. Creel used every possible medium imaginable to raise American consciousness. He organized rallies and parades. He commissioned popular musicians to write patriotic songs intended to stoke the fires of American nationalism. One song, **Over There** became an overnight standard. Artists illustrated dozens of posters urging Americans to do everything from preserving coal to enlisting in the service. The famous image of Uncle Sam staring at young American men declaring "I Want You for the U.S. Army" was a creation of the World War I propaganda campaign. An army of Four-Minute Men swept the nation making short, but poignant, powerful speeches. Films and plays added to the fervor. The Creel Committee effectively raised national spirit and engaged millions of Americans in the business of winning the war.



Bernard Baruch: Director of the War Industries Board during World War I.



U.S. Railway Administration: Government agency during World War I that managed the nation's railway networks in order to support the war effort.



Liberty Loan Act: Law passed during World War I empowering the government to borrow billions of dollars by issuing war bonds.



Committee on Public Information: Government agency created during World War I and run by George Creel to produce pro-war, pro-government propaganda.



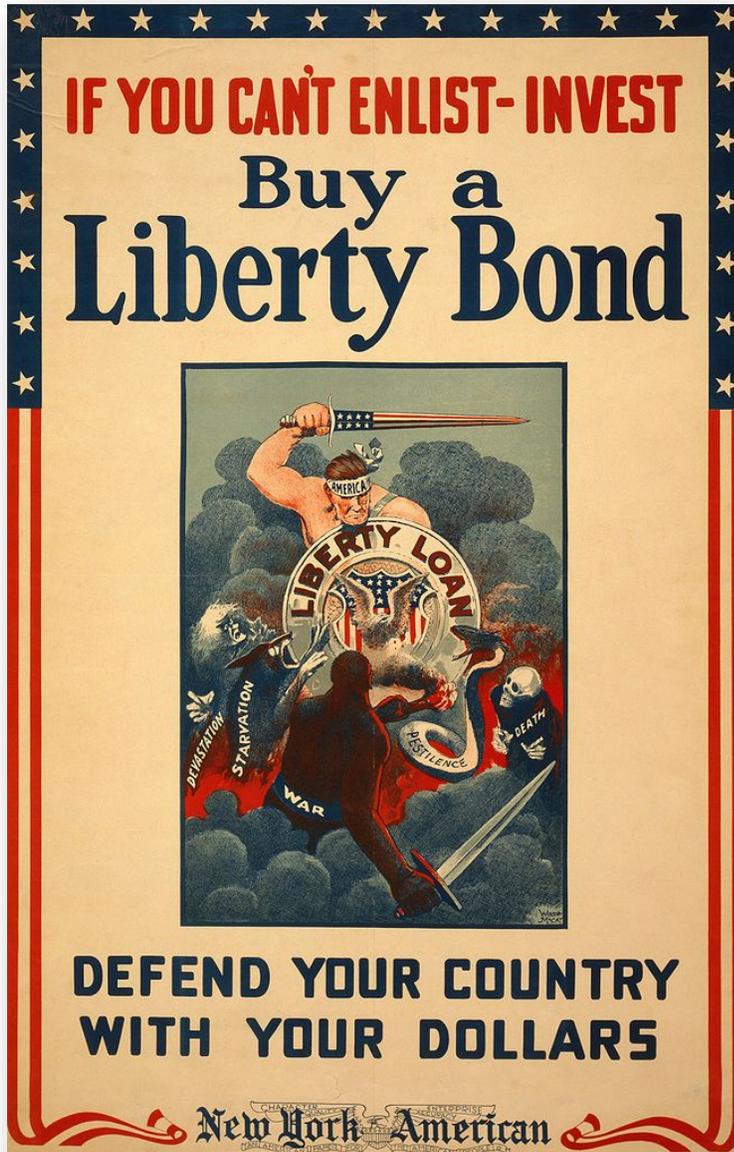
George Creel: Director of the Committee on Public Information during World War I.



Propaganda: Advertising created by the government to encourage citizens to think and act in ways the government wants.



Over There: Most popular song during World War I.



Primary Source: Propaganda Poster

Images like these were important elements of the government's propaganda campaign to convince Americans to support the war effort.

Still there were dissenters. The American Socialist Party condemned the war effort. Many Irish-Americans displayed contempt for Britain, who they saw as an enemy rather than an ally. Millions of immigrants from Germany and Austria-Hungary were forced to support initiatives that could destroy their homelands. Although all of this dissent was rather small, the government stifled wartime opposition by law with the passing of the **Espionage and Sedition Acts** of 1917. Anyone found guilty of criticizing the government war policy or hindering wartime directives could be sent to jail. Many cried that this was a flagrant violation of precious civil liberties, including the right to free speech. The Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision on this

 **Espionage and Sedition Acts:** A pair of laws passed during World War I significantly restricting freedom of speech by making anti-war or anti-government speech illegal.

 **Schenck v. United States:** Supreme Court ruling during World War I upholding the Espionage and Sedition Acts. It introduced the "clean and present danger" doctrine but is not widely considered to be a failure of the Court to preserve individual liberties.

issue in the **Schenck v. United States** verdict. The majority court opinion ruled that should an individual's free speech present a "clear and present danger" to others, the government could impose restrictions or penalties. Schenck was arrested for sabotaging the draft. The Court ruled that his behavior endangered thousands of American lives and upheld his jail sentence. Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs was imprisoned and ran for President from his jail cell in 1920. He polled nearly a million votes.

ORGANIZED LABOR SUPPORTS THE WAR

After decades of limited involvement in the challenges between management and organized labor, the need for peaceful and productive industrial relations prompted the federal government during wartime to invite organized labor to the negotiating table. Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), sought to capitalize on these circumstances to better organize workers and secure for them better wages and working conditions. His efforts also solidified his own base of power. The increase in production that the war required exposed severe labor shortages in many states, a condition that was further exacerbated by the draft, which pulled millions of young men from the active labor force.

Wilson only briefly investigated the longstanding animosity between labor and management before ordering the creation of the **National Labor War Board** in April 1918. Quick negotiations with Gompers and the AFL resulted in a promise. Labor unions pledged not to strike for the duration of the war in exchange for the government's protection of workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively. The federal government kept its promise and promoted the adoption of an **eight-hour workday** (which had first been adopted by government employees in 1868), a living wage for all workers, and union membership. As a result, union membership skyrocketed during the war, from 2.6 million members in 1916 to 4.1 million in 1919. In short, American workers received better working conditions and wages as a result of the country's participation in the war. However, their economic gains were limited. While prosperity overall went up during the war, it was enjoyed more by business owners and corporations than by the workers themselves. Even though wages increased, inflation offset most of the gains. Prices in the United States increased an average of 15% to 20% annually between 1917 and 1920. Individual purchasing power actually declined during the war due to the substantially higher cost of living. Business profits, in contrast, increased by nearly a third during the war.

WOMEN IN WARTIME

For women, the economic situation was complicated by the war, with the departure of wage-earning men and the higher cost of living pushing many toward less comfortable lives. At the same time, however, wartime presented new opportunities for women in the workplace. More than one million women entered the workforce for the first time as a result of the war, while



National Labor War Board: Government agency created during World War I to negotiate with labor unions and prevent strikes.



Eight-Hour Day: Traditional workday that was established during World War I.

2 ARE RESTRICTIONS ON BASIC FREEDOMS JUSTIFIED IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

more than eight million working women found higher paying jobs, often in industry. Many women also found employment in what were typically considered male occupations, such as on the railroads, where the number of women tripled, and on assembly lines.

After the war ended and men returned home and searched for work, women were fired from their jobs, and expected to return home and care for their families. Furthermore, even when they were doing men's jobs, women were typically paid lower wages than male workers, and unions were ambivalent at best, and hostile at worst, to women workers. Even under these circumstances, wartime employment familiarized women with an alternative to a life in domesticity and dependency, making a life of employment, even a career, plausible for women. When, a generation later, World War II arrived, this trend would increase dramatically.



Primary Source: Photograph

Women found jobs open to them during wartime that had never been open before.

One notable group of women who exploited these new opportunities was the **Women's Land Army**. First during World War I, then again in World War II, these women stepped up to run farms and other agricultural enterprises, as men left for the armed forces. Known as Farmerettes, some twenty thousand women, mostly college educated and from larger urban areas, served in this capacity. Their reasons for joining were manifold. For some, it was a way to serve their country during a time of war. Others hoped to capitalize on the efforts to further the fight for women's suffrage.

 **Women's Land Army:** Government agency which employed women on farms to replace men who had joined the army.

Also of special note were the approximately thirty thousand American women who served in the military, as well as a variety of humanitarian organizations, such as the Red Cross and YMCA, during the war. In addition to serving as military nurses, American women also served as telephone operators in

2 ARE RESTRICTIONS ON BASIC FREEDOMS JUSTIFIED IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

France. Of this latter group, 230 of them, known as “Hello Girls,” were bilingual and stationed in combat areas. Over eighteen thousand American women served as Red Cross nurses, providing much of the medical support available to American troops in France. Close to three hundred nurses died during service. Many of those who returned home continued to work in hospitals and home healthcare, helping wounded veterans heal both emotionally and physically from the scars of war.

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE DOUBLE V CAMPAIGN

African Americans also found that the war brought upheaval and opportunity. African Americans composed 13% of the enlisted military, with 350,000 men serving. Colonel Charles Young of the Tenth Cavalry division served as the highest-ranking African American officer. African Americans served in segregated units and suffered from widespread racism in the military hierarchy, often serving in menial or support roles.

Some troops saw combat, however, and were commended for serving with valor. The 369th Infantry, for example, known as the **Harlem Hellfighters**, served on the frontline of France for six months, longer than any other American unit. One hundred seventy-one men from that regiment received the Legion of Merit for meritorious service in combat. The regiment marched in a homecoming parade in New York City, was remembered in paintings, and was celebrated for bravery and leadership. The accolades given to them, however, in no way extended to the bulk of African Americans fighting in the war.



Harlem Hellfighters: Nickname for the 369th Infantry, a segregated unit of African-American soldiers during World War I.

On the home front, African Americans, like American women, saw economic opportunities increase during the war. Nearly 350,000 African Americans found work in the steel, mining, shipbuilding, and automotive industries. African American women also sought better employment opportunities beyond their traditional roles as domestic servants. By 1920, over 100,000 women had found work in diverse manufacturing industries, up from 70,000 in 1910. Despite such opportunities, racism continued to be a major force in both the North and South. Worried about the large influx of African Americans into their cities, several municipalities passed residential codes designed to prohibit African Americans from settling in certain neighborhoods. Race riots also increased in frequency: In 1917 alone, there were race riots in twenty-five cities, including East Saint Louis, where thirty-nine blacks were killed. In the South, White business and plantation owners feared that their cheap workforce was fleeing the region, and used violence to intimidate blacks into staying. According to NAACP statistics, recorded incidences of lynching increased from thirty-eight in 1917 to eighty-three in 1919. These numbers did not start to decrease until 1923, when the number of annual lynchings dropped below thirty-five for the first time since the Civil War.

2 ARE RESTRICTIONS ON BASIC FREEDOMS JUSTIFIED IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?



Primary Source: Photograph

Members of the 369th Infantry, better known as the Harlem Hellfighters. Like many African American men during the war they were fighting both against the Kaiser's army on the field in Europe and against prejudice at home.

CONCLUSION

Wars are instigators for tremendous change, and although World War I was not fought on American soil, it did bring about enormous change for many Americans. Women and African Americans saw new opportunities, and labor unions found an unexpected boost from the need to keep factories open during the war.

By far, however, the most significant change was relationship Americans had with their government. Before the war, the only connection most people had with the federal government was when they went to the post office, or every other year on election day when they went to vote. World War I changed that forever. Because of the war, government took on the power to regulate such everyday things as the price of milk, and what you could or could not say to your friends.

Undoubtedly, the nation needed to take appropriate steps to win once having committed itself to the fight, but was such deep involvement in everyday life appropriate? Were laws such as the Espionage and Sedition Acts or regulations on food prices and railroad schedules acceptable, or is there nothing, not even war, that warrants such direct involvement in private life and private business?

What do you think? Are restrictions on basic freedoms justified in times of crisis?

2 ARE RESTRICTIONS ON BASIC FREEDOMS JUSTIFIED IN TIMES OF CRISIS?



SUMMARY

Americans were enthusiastic about joining the army. For many recent immigrants and their children, joining the fight was a way to demonstrate their love for their new country. A draft was implemented. There were a few conscientious objectors.

Anti-German feelings were common. There were many German immigrants and they faced discrimination. Schools stopped teaching German and German foods were renamed at restaurants.

The federal government gained in both size and power during the war. Business leaders and government officials collaborated to set prices and organize railroad schedules in support of the war effort. Future president Herbert Hoover organized the food industry and the United States fed both its own people and the people of Europe during the war.

To pay for the war, the government raised money by selling liberty bonds.

One of the dark sides to World War I were laws passed to limit First Amendment freedoms. The Espionage and Sedition Acts made criticizing the government and the war effort illegal. In the case of *Schenck v. United States*, the Supreme Court upheld these restrictions.

The war effort was good for organized labor. Labor unions worked closely with government officials who wanted to avoid strikes. It was during the war that the 8-hour workday was implemented. Pay went up as well.

Women took some jobs in factories and supported the war effort as nurses and secretaries.

For African Americans, the war was a chance to demonstrate their bravery in battle. Although they served in segregated units, African Americans were fighting against both Germany and discrimination back home. During the war, the need for factory workers in the North increased and thousands of African American families moved out of the rural South to the cities of the North to find work. This Great Migration significantly changed the racial makeup for the country.



KEY CONCEPTS

Draft: System in which the government legally compels citizens to join the armed forces.

Daylight Savings Time: System in which clocks are moved forward one hour in the spring, thus allowing for more daylight hours during summer evenings.

Propaganda: Advertising created by the government to encourage citizens to think and act in ways the government wants.

Eight-Hour Day: Traditional work-day that was established during World War I.



LAWS

Selective Service Act: 1917 law that established the draft.

Lever Act / Food and Fuel Control Act: Law passed during World War I granting the president power to control production, distribution and price of food.

Liberty Loan Act: Law passed during World War I empowering the government to borrow billions of dollars by issuing war bonds.

Espionage and Sedition Acts: A pair of laws passed during World War I significantly restricting freedom of speech by making anti-war or anti-government speech illegal.



COURT CASES

Schenck v. United States: Supreme Court ruling during World War I upholding the Espionage and Sedition Acts. It introduced the “clean and present danger” doctrine but is not widely considered to be a failure of the Court to preserve individual liberties.



SONGS

Over There: Most popular song during World War I.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Conscientious Objectors: People who refuse to join the military for personal, moral reasons, such as because of religious beliefs.

Herbert Hoover: Director of the Food Administration during World War I, and later president.

Bernard Baruch: Director of the War Industries Board during World War I.

George Creel: Director of the Committee on Public Information during World War I.

Harlem Hellfighters: Nickname for the 369th Infantry, a segregated unit of African-American soldiers during World War I.



GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Fuel Administration: Government agency during World War I that managed rationing of gasoline and oil.

Food Administration: Government agency during World War I run by Herbert Hoover that managed rationing of food supplies.

War Industries Board: Government agency during World War I run by Bernard Baruch which directed production, distribution and wages. It is an example of significant government involvement in private industry.

U.S. Railway Administration: Government agency during World War I that managed the nation’s railway networks in order to support the war effort.

Committee on Public Information: Government agency created during World War I and run by George Creel to produce pro-war, pro-government propaganda.

National Labor War Board: Government agency created during World War I to negotiate with labor unions and prevent strikes.

Women’s Land Army: Government agency which employed women on farms to replace men who had joined the army.

3

T H I R D Q U E S T I O N SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

INTRODUCTION

As the war drew to a close, Woodrow Wilson set forth his plan for peace. In his mind, fundamental flaws in international relations created an unhealthy climate that led to the World War and he wanted the United States to lead the way to creating a new world order. Wilson proposed an international organization comprising representatives of all the world's nations that would serve as a forum where disputes could be solved peacefully.

Unfortunately for Wilson, leaders in Congress had other ideas about what role America should play in the world. They viewed the Wilson's plan as a new form of supranational government that would limit the power of the American government and might drag the United States into foreign conflicts it didn't want. Since the days of George Washington, America had tried to avoid just such entanglements.

Wilson decried his opponents as letting a great chance to ensure peace for future generations slip by. If not at the conclusion of the Great War, when would the United States have another chance to lead the world toward such a worthy cause? Did America and the world's children have to live through another, perhaps even more deadly conflict before leaders in Congress would recognize the importance of being a part of the global community of nations?

On the other hand, Wilson's critics argued, what was stopping the rest of the world from dragging the United States into another conflict. If America promised to be a part of the great community of nations, it might just be promising to be a part of that great hypothetical conflict before it even began.

What do you think? Should America be involved in the world or isolationist?

3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

WINNING THE WAR

When the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, both the Allied forces and the Central Powers were close to exhaustion. Great Britain and France had indebted themselves heavily in the procurement of vital American military supplies and Germany was struggling to maintain its ability to fight because of the crushing blockade. While the 200,000 American troops that arrived in France composed a tiny fraction of the entire Allied effort, the influx of new troops, and the promise of many more who would come over the coming years proved decisive.



Primary Source: Photograph

General Pershing led the American Expeditionary Force in Europe.

By March 1918, the Germans had won the war on the eastern front. The Russian Revolution of the previous year had not only toppled the hated regime of Tsar Nicholas II but also ushered in a civil war from which the Communist revolutionaries under the leadership of **Vladimir Lenin** emerged victorious. Weakened by war and internal strife, and eager to build a new Soviet Union, Russian delegates agreed to a generous peace treaty with Germany. Emboldened, Germany moved the troops that had been fighting Russia to the

 **Vladimir Lenin:** Leader of the Bolsheviks in Russia during the Russian Revolution. He became the first leader of the communist Soviet Union.

 **American Expeditionary Force (AEF):** American army units who fought in Europe during World War I.

3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

west. The **American Expeditionary Force (AEF)**, General John “Blackjack” Pershing, entered combat in May 1918, just in time to counter the increased force on the German side.

In a series of battles along the front that took place from May 28 through August 6, 1918, including the battles of Cantigny, Chateau Thierry, Belleau Wood, and the Second Battle of the Marne, American forces alongside the British and French armies succeeded in repelling German offensives. The Battle of Cantigny, on May 28, was the first American offensive in the war. In less than two hours that morning, American troops overran the German headquarters in the village, thus convincing the French commanders of their ability to fight against the German line advancing towards Paris. The subsequent battles of Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood proved to be the bloodiest of the war for American troops. At the latter, faced with a German onslaught of mustard gas, artillery fire, and mortar fire, U.S. Marines attacked German units in the woods on six occasions, at times meeting them in hand-to-hand and bayonet combat, before finally repelling the advance. The U.S. forces suffered 10,000 casualties in the three-week battle, with almost 2,000 killed in total and 1,087 on a single day. Brutal as they were, they amounted to small losses compared to the casualties suffered by France and Great Britain. Still, these summer battles turned the tide of the war, with the Germans in full retreat by the end of July 1918.



John “Blackjack” Pershing: General who led the American army in Europe during World War I.

Primary Source: Photograph

American soldiers celebrate the enunciation of the armistice on November 11, 2018

By the end of September 1918, over one million American soldiers staged a full offensive into the Argonne Forest. By November, after nearly forty days of intense fighting, the German lines were broken, and their military command reported to Kaiser Wilhelm II of the desperate need to end the war and enter into peace negotiations. Facing civil unrest from the German people in Berlin, as well as the loss of support from his military high command, Wilhelm abdicated his throne on November 9, 1918, and immediately fled by



Armistice Day: November 11, 1928 – the day fighting in World War I ended. Today it is remembered in the United States as Veteran’s Day.



Armistice: An agreement to stop fighting.

3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

train to the Netherlands. Two days later, on **November 11, 1918**, Germany and the Allies declared an immediate **armistice**, thus bring the fighting to a stop and signaling the beginning of the peace process. Armistice Day is still observed around the world as a day to remember the fallen. In the United States, it is called Veterans' Day.

When the armistice was declared, 117,000 American soldiers had been killed and 206,000 wounded. The Allies as a whole suffered over 5.7 million military deaths, primarily Russian, British, and French men. The Central powers suffered four million military deaths, with half of them German soldiers. Although the Americans arrived late in the war and suffered less than half of 1% of all the casualties, the involvement of the United States proved to be a tipping point.



Primary Source: Photograph

Police officers on a streetcar in Seattle check to make sure riders are wearing masks during the influenza outbreak in 1918.

Economically, emotionally, and geopolitically, the war had taken an enormous toll in the United States, but especially in Europe. Of the 60 million European

3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

men who were mobilized from 1914 to 1918, 8 million were killed, 7 million were permanently disabled, and 15 million were seriously injured. Germany lost 15.1% of its active male population, Austria-Hungary lost 17.1%, and France lost 10.5%.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians also died, in large part due to food shortages and malnutrition that weakened resistance to disease. In 1914 alone, louse-borne epidemic typhus killed 200,000 in Serbia. From 1918 to 1922, Russia had about 25 million infections and 3 million deaths from epidemic typhus. In 1923, 13 million Russians contracted malaria, a sharp increase from the pre-war years. Nothing, however, compared to the devastation of a major influenza epidemic that spread around the world during the war. Overall, the **1918 flu pandemic** killed at least 50 million people, accounting for 3-5% of the world's entire population.

THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

While Wilson had been loath to involve the United States in the war, he saw the country's eventual participation as justification for America's involvement in developing a moral foreign policy for the entire world. The United States emerged from the war as the predominant world power. Wilson sought to capitalize on that influence and impose his moral foreign policy on all the nations of the world.

As early as January 1918, a full five months before American military forces fired their first shot in the war, and eleven months before the actual armistice, Wilson announced his postwar peace plan before a joint session of Congress. Referring to what became known as the **Fourteen Points**, Wilson called for openness in all matters of diplomacy, an end to secret treaties, free trade, freedom of the seas, promotion of self-determination of all nations, and more. In addition, he called for the creation of a League of Nations to promote the new world order and preserve territorial integrity through open discussions in place of intimidation and war.

As the war concluded, Wilson announced, to the surprise of many, that he would attend the **Paris Peace Conference** himself, rather than ceding to the tradition of sending professional diplomats to represent the country. His decision influenced other nations to follow suit, and the Paris conference became the largest meeting of world leaders to date in history. For six months, beginning in December 1918, Wilson remained in Paris to personally conduct peace negotiations.

Although the French public greeted Wilson with overwhelming enthusiasm, other delegates at the conference had deep misgiving about the American president's plans for a "peace without victory." Specifically, Great Britain, France and Italy sought to obtain some measure of revenge against Germany for drawing them into the war, to secure themselves against possible future aggressions from that nation, and also to maintain or even strengthen their own colonial possessions. Great Britain and France in particular sought



1918 Influenza Pandemic: Major worldwide outbreak of the flu which killed 3-5% of the global population during World War I.



Fourteen Points: President Wilson's reasons for fighting in World War I. These were aspects of his Moral Diplomacy and became the basis of American negotiations at the end of the war. Some of the ideas were included in the Treaty of Versailles.



Paris Peace Conference: The meeting in 1918 and 1919 of world leaders to negotiate a treaty to conclude World War I.



Reparations: Payment by one nation to another as a form of apology or penalty.

3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

substantial monetary **reparations**, as well as territorial gains, at Germany's expense. Japan had officially supported the allies but not engaged in the war in Europe, but the too desired concessions in Asia, whereas Italy sought new territory in Europe. Finally, the threat posed by a Bolshevik Russia under Vladimir Lenin, and more importantly, the danger of revolutions elsewhere, further spurred on these allies to use the treaty negotiations to expand their territories and secure their strategic interests, rather than strive towards world peace.



Primary Source: Painting

The Paris Peace Conference met at the Palace of Versailles in the Hall of Mirrors. Amid this setting of opulence that was the work of kings, Wilson, who is seated in the center left of the painting, worked to find ways to enact his ideas of moral diplomacy and make the world safe for democracy.

In the end, the **Treaty of Versailles** that officially concluded World War I resembled little of Wilson's original Fourteen Points. The Japanese, French, and British succeeded in carving up many of Germany's colonial holdings in Africa and Asia. The dissolution of the old Ottoman Empire created new nations under the quasi-colonial rule of France and Great Britain, such as Iraq and Palestine. France gained much of the disputed territory along their border with Germany, as well as passage of a "war guilt clause" that demanded

 **Treaty of Versailles:** Peace treaty that concluded World War I and established the League of Nations. The United States Senate never ratified the treaty.

3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

Germany take public responsibility for starting and prosecuting the war that led to so much death and destruction. Great Britain led the charge that resulted in Germany agreeing to pay reparations in excess of \$33 billion to the Allies. As for Bolshevik Russia, Wilson had agreed to send American troops to their northern region to protect Allied supplies and holdings there, while also participating in an economic blockade designed to undermine Lenin's power. This move would ultimately have the opposite effect of galvanizing popular support for the Bolsheviks.

The sole piece of the original Fourteen Points that Wilson successfully fought to keep intact was the creation of a **League of Nations**. In the covenant of the new league, all member nations in the League agreed to defend any nation that was under attack. This was **Article X** of the covenant and Wilson intended for this provision of the covenant to prevent war, since no nation would be suicidal enough to start a war knowing that the entire rest of the world would come to the defense of the nation under attack. Ironically, this article would prove to be the undoing of Wilson's dream of a new world order.

THE RATIFICATION DEBATE

Although the other nations in Paris agreed to the final terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Wilson's greatest battle lay in the ratification debate that awaited him upon his return. While the Constitution gives presidents the authority to negotiate treaties, but the Senate must ratify any treaty before the United States is bound by its terms. This is an important check on the power of the president. Wilson knew that a yes vote would be difficult to achieve.

Central to the debate was Article X of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Even before Wilson's return to Washington, Senator **Henry Cabot Lodge**, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that oversaw ratification proceedings, issued a list of reservations he had regarding the treaty. An isolationist in foreign policy issues, Cabot feared that Article X would take away Congress's ability to decide when the United States would and would not enter wars. If the United States agreed to join the League of Nations, the country would be obligated to defend any other nation that came under attack, regardless of when or where. For Lodge and other Republicans in the Senate, this was unacceptable. The United States should remain entirely independent of the world and its problems.

On the other side of the political spectrum, interventionists such as Wilson argued that Article X would impede the United States from using her rightfully attained military power to secure and protect America's international interests. The United States had a moral obligation to the rest of the world to use its power as a deterrent to ensure peace. Without the United States at the table, they feared, the hard-won peace would crumble as petty problems pulled the world back into war.

Some Republicans, known as **Irreconcilables**, opposed the treaty on all grounds, whereas others, called **Reservationists**, would support the treaty if



League of Nations: International organization created at the end of World War I. It was the brainchild of President Wilson and was designed to give nations a forum in which to resolve differences without war. It failed to prevent World War II.



Article X of the League of Nations Covenant: Key component of the League of Nations in which the nations of the world agreed to join together to repulse any aggressive military actions.



Henry Cabot Lodge: Republican senator who led opposition to the Treaty of Versailles fearing that it would force the United States to join wars that were not central to American interests.

3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

sufficient amendments were introduced that could eliminate Article X. In an effort to turn public support into a weapon against those in opposition, Wilson embarked on a cross-country railway speaking tour. He began travelling in September 1919, and the grueling pace, after the stress of the six months in Paris, proved too much. Wilson fainted following a public event on September 25, 1919, and immediately returned to Washington. There he suffered a debilitating stroke, leaving his second wife **Edith Wilson** in charge as de facto president for a period of about six months.

Frustrated that his dream of a new world order was slipping away, a frustration that was compounded by the fact that, now an invalid, he was unable to speak his own thoughts coherently, Wilson urged Democrats in the Senate to reject any effort to compromise on the treaty. With all sides unwilling to compromise, Congress voted and rejected the Treaty of Versailles and membership in the League of Nations.

As a result, the United States had to conclude its own separate peace treaty with Germany and never joined the League of Nations, which, as Wilson had feared shattered the international authority and significance of the organization. Although Wilson received the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1919 for his efforts to create a model of world peace, he remained personally embarrassed and angry at his country's refusal to be a part of that model.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately Wilson lost his campaign to make the United States a key player in world affairs. Senator Lodge and the isolationists in Congress won the political argument and America sat on the sidelines during the 1920s and 1930s and conflicts engulfed Europe and Asia. Hitler rose to power in Germany and Japan invaded China. By the time 1941 rolled around and the United States found itself in World War II, the question of isolationism or involvement had been answered.

Politicians on both sides of the argument about the Treaty of Versailles and League of Nations used the ensuing decades as evidence that they had been right all along. For isolationists, being able to stay out of World War II for as long as possible made it possible for the United States to be the deciding factor. Wilson's supporters, on the other hand, believed that if the United States had been part of the League of Nations from the beginning, it might have had a chance to stop Japan and Hitler from starting the war in the first place. Instead, the Americans were hidden away across the oceans while catastrophe was unfolding.

What do you think? Should America be involved in the world as Wilson hoped, or isolationist as Senator Lodge and the Republicans wanted?



Irreconcilables: Republican senators during the debate over the Treaty of Versailles who refused to vote to approve the treaty no matter what changes were made.



Reservationists: Republican senators during the debate over the Treaty of Versailles who would consider voting to ratify the treaty if changes were made.



Edith Wilson: First lady and wife of President Wilson. She acted as his caretaker and made many decisions for him during the last few months of his presidency.

3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

SUMMARY

The United States entered the fighting in the last year of World War I. Germany had been suffering under a terrible blockade and was short on food and supplies. Russia had already exited the war and was in the middle of a civil war. American commanders refused to let their troops be split up and insisted on fighting together as one large group. They were still a tiny fraction of all the men on the battlefields of Europe.

The end of the war came on November 11, 1918. The European powers had lost millions of men in battle, as well as civilians. A flu pandemic swept the world in 1918 killing millions more.

President Woodrow Wilson went to Europe after the war had finished to negotiate a peace deal. He believed it was an opportunity to forge an international system for a lasting peace. He described his vision for a peaceful world in a speech entitled the Fourteen Points. The most important of these was the creation of a League of Nations in which future conflicts could be resolved without war.

The result of the negotiations was the Treaty of Versailles. Wilson succeeded in getting the Europeans to create a League of Nations, although they also imposed a harsh punishment on Germany. Germany was forced to admit that the war had been their fault and pay enormous reparations. This punishing element of the treaty would be used later by Hitler to blame Germany's problems on its neighbors.

Wilson's efforts to join the new League of Nations faced a major challenge. The Constitution gives the Senate the authority to ratify all treaties signed by the president. One element of the League of Nations was a commitment by every nation to defend any nation under attack. In theory, this would deter nations from going to war since they risked punishment from the entire world. In reality, Republicans in the Senate feared that this would mean the United States would be forced to join wars that were not really its business.

When it looked like the Senate was going to reject the Treaty, Wilson travelled the nation giving speeches to build public support. This also failed and the Senate voted against the treaty. Without the United States, the League of Nations was seriously weakened. It is possible that if America had been at the table, World War II might have been avoided, but we can never know.

By rejecting the Treaty of Versailles and membership in the League of Nations, the United States also rejected Wilson's dream of internationalism. Instead, for the next twenty years the nation pursued a policy of isolationism.

In keeping with that new idea, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, cutting off almost all immigration from Europe and ending immigration entirely from Asia.

3 SHOULD AMERICA BE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OR ISOLATIONIST?

Is the fight for
FREEDOM
WORTH THE
COST?

A fear of foreigners and dangerous foreign ideas swept the nation. With the success of the communist revolution in Russia, a Red Scare started. Immigrant anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti were convicted in a deeply flawed trial that many saw as evidence of a national eagerness to root out dangerous ideas.



KEY CONCEPTS

Armistice: An agreement to stop fighting.

Fourteen Points: President Wilson's reasons for fighting in World War I. These were aspects of his Moral Diplomacy and became the basis of American negotiations at the end of the war. Some of the ideas were included in the Treaty of Versailles.

Reparations: Payment by one nation to another as a form of apology or penalty.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Vladimir Lenin: Leader of the Bolsheviks in Russia during the Russian Revolution. He became the first leader of the communist Soviet Union.

American Expeditionary Force (AEF): American army units who fought in Europe during World War I.

John "Blackjack" Pershing: General who led the American army in Europe during World War I.

League of Nations: International organization created at the end of World War I. It was the brainchild of President Wilson and was designed to give nations a forum in which to resolve differences without war. It failed to prevent World War II.

Henry Cabot Lodge: Republican senator who led opposition to the Treaty of Versailles fearing that it would force the United States to join wars that were not central to American interests.

Irreconcilables: Republican senators during the debate over the Treaty of Versailles who refused to vote to approve the treaty no matter what changes were made.

Reservationists: Republican senators during the debate over the Treaty of Versailles who would consider voting to ratify the treaty if changes were made.

Edith Wilson: First lady and wife of President Wilson. She acted as his caretaker and made many decisions for him during the last few months of his presidency.



EVENTS

Armistice Day: November 11, 1918 – the day fighting in World War I ended. Today it is remembered in the United States as Veteran's Day.

1918 Influenza Pandemic: Major worldwide outbreak of the flu which killed 3-5% of the global population during World War I.

Paris Peace Conference: The meeting in 1918 and 1919 of world leaders to negotiate a treaty to conclude World War I.



TREATIES

Treaty of Versailles: Peace treaty that concluded World War I and established the League of Nations. The United States Senate never ratified the treaty.

Article X of the League of Nations Covenant: Key component of the League of Nations in which the nations of the world agreed to join together to repulse any aggressive military actions.

Question Eleven, Part Two

Is the fight for FREEDOM WORTH THE COST?

Isolation was a long American tradition. Since the days of George Washington, Americans preferred to remain protected by the mighty oceans on its border than engage with other nations in treaties and alliances. When European conflicts erupted, as they frequently did, most Americans concluded that fighting wars to protect the freedom of people living far away, was simply too great a cost for the United States to pay.

When the Archduke of Austria-Hungary was killed in cold blood, igniting the First World War, Americans claimed neutrality. As a nation of immigrants, The United States would have difficulty picking a side. Despite the obvious ties to Britain based on history and language, there were many United States citizens who claimed Germany and Austria-Hungary as their parent lands. Whose freedom was worth fighting and dying for?

After two and a half years of isolationism, the choice had become clearer. Germany's violation of American neutrality on the high seas, combined with provocations such as the Zimmerman Note turned the United States into a friend of the Allies and America entered the Great War.

In the end, the war was won, but President Wilson's quest to have the Senate ratify the Treaty of Versailles failed. It seemed that America had been willing to pay the price of freedom in 1917, but was not ready to commit to defending freedom unconditionally in the future.

What do you think? When is the fight for freedom worth the cost?



Read this Book
Online