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Global Involvements
and World War I

1902–1920



JANE ADDAMS IN 1914 (© Bettmann/Corbis)

IT WAS APRIL 6, 1917, and Jane Addams was troubled. By overwhelming margins, Congress had just declared war on Germany. Deeply patriotic, Addams also believed in peace and deplored her nation's decision for war. As the founder of Hull House, a Chicago settlement house, Addams had worked to overcome tensions among different ethnic groups. In *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907), she had insisted that the multiethnic

“internationalism” of America’s immigrant neighborhoods proved that national and ethnic hostilities could be overcome. Addams had also observed how war spirit can inflame a people. During the Spanish-American War, she had watched Chicago children play at killing “Spaniards.”

When Europe went to war in 1914, Addams worked to end the conflict. A founder of the Woman’s Peace Party in 1915, she attended an International Congress of Women that urged the warring nations to submit their differences to arbitration. Addams met with President Wilson in a futile effort to enlist his support for arbitration.

Now America had entered the war, and Addams had to take a stand. Deepening her dilemma, many of her friends, including John Dewey, were lining up behind Wilson. Theodore Roosevelt, whose 1912 presidential campaign Addams had enthusiastically supported, was beating the drums for war.

Despite the pressures, Addams heeded her conscience and opposed the war. The reaction was swift. Editorial writers who had praised her settlement-house work now denounced her. For years after, the American Legion and other patriotic organizations attacked Addams for her “disloyalty” in 1917. She described her wartime isolation in *Peace and Bread in Time of War* (1922).

Addams did not sit out the war on the sidelines, however. She gave speeches across America urging increased food production to aid refugees and other war victims. In 1919, after the war ended, she was elected first president of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. In 1931, she won the Nobel Peace Prize. During the 1960s, some opponents of the Vietnam War found inspiration in her example.

Addams’s experience underscores how deeply World War I affected America. Whether they donned uniforms, worked on farms or in factories, or simply experienced U.S. life in wartime, the war touched all Americans. Beyond its immediate effects, the war had long-lasting social, economic, and political ramifications.

WORLD WAR I POSTER URGING FOOD CONSERVATION, BY THE ILLUSTRATOR JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG Home-front propaganda played a key role in mobilizing Americans in support of the war effort in 1917–1918. (*Ohio Historical Society*)

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Well before 1917, events abroad gripped the attention of Washington, the media, and ordinary Americans. From this perspective, World War I was one episode in a larger process of deepening U.S. global involvement. By 1900 America had become an industrial powerhouse seeking foreign markets and raw materials, and these widening economic interests brought a new level of international engagement. This expanded world role, with important home-front ramifications, has continued to shape American history to the present. These broader involvements around the world, culminating in World War I, are the focus of this chapter.

FOCUS Questions

- What goals underlay America's early-twentieth-century involvements in Asia and Latin America?
- Considering both immediate and long-term factors, why did the United States go to war in 1917?
- How did Washington mobilize the nation for war, and what role did U.S. troops play in the war?
- What was the war's economic, political, and social impact on the American home front?
- How did the League of Nations begin, and why did the Senate reject U.S. membership in the League?

Defining America's World Role, 1902–1914

The annexation of Hawaii, the Spanish-American War, the occupation of the Philippines, and other developments in the 1890s (see Chapter 20) signaled America's growing involvement abroad, especially in Asia and Latin America. These foreign engagements reflected a desire to assert American power as European nations built colonial empires, to protect and extend U.S. business investments abroad, and to impose American standards of good government beyond the nation's borders. This process of foreign engagement continued after 1900.

America's dealings with Asian and Latin American nations in these years were shaped by both economic

and ideological considerations. U.S. policy makers wanted to expand corporate America's access to foreign markets and raw materials. But they also believed that other societies would benefit by adopting the principles of democracy, individual freedom, and the rule of law. Sometimes economic motives predominated, sometimes ideological, and often both, as the United States exerted its power beyond its borders.

The "Open Door": Competing for the China Market

As the campaign to suppress the Philippines insurrection dragged on, American policy makers turned their attention farther west, to China. Their aim was not territorial but commercial. Proclaimed Indiana senator Albert J. Beveridge in 1898, "American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. . . . [T]he trade of the world must and shall be ours."

The China market beckoned. Textile producers dreamed of clothing China's millions; investors envisioned railroad construction. As China's 250-year-old Manchu Qing empire faltered, U.S. business people watched carefully. In 1896, a consortium of New York capitalists formed a company to promote trade and railroad investment in China.

But other nations were also eyeing the China market. Some pressured the weak Manchu rulers to give them exclusive trading and development rights in designated regions, or "spheres of influence." In 1896, Russia won both the right to build a railway across the Chinese province of Manchuria and a long-term lease on much of the region. In 1897, Germany secured a ninety-nine-year lease on a Chinese port as well as mining and railroad rights in the adjacent province. The British won concessions as well.

In 1899, U.S. Secretary of State John Hay asked the major European powers to assure American trading rights in China by opening the ports in their spheres of influence to all countries. The nations gave noncommittal answers, but Hay blithely announced their acceptance of the principle of an "Open Door" to American business in China.

Hay's Open Door note showed how commercial considerations were increasingly influencing American foreign policy. It reflected a form of economic expansionism historians have called "informal empire." The U.S. government did not seek Chinese territory, but it did want access to Chinese markets for American businesses.

As Hay pursued this effort, a more urgent threat emerged. For years, antiforeign feeling had

simmered in China, fanned by the aged Qing Dynasty empress, who hated the West's growing influence. In 1899, a fanatical antiforeign secret society known as the Harmonious Righteous Fists (called "Boxers" by Western journalists) killed thousands of foreigners and Chinese Christians. In June 1900, the Boxers occupied Beijing (Peking), the Chinese capital, and besieged the foreign legations. The United States contributed twenty-five hundred soldiers to an international army that marched on Beijing, quashed the **Boxer Rebellion**, and rescued the occupants of the threatened legations.

The Boxers' defeat further weakened China's government. Fearing that the regime's collapse would allow European powers to carve up China, Hay issued a second, more important, series of **Open Door notes** in 1900. He reaffirmed the principle of open trade in China for all nations and announced America's determination to preserve China's territorial and administrative integrity. In the 1930s, when Japanese expansionism menaced China, Hay's policy helped shape the American response.

Along with U.S. economic expansion in China came missionary activity. American Protestant missionaries had come to Hawaii as early as the 1820s, and by the late nineteenth century they had reached China. Indeed, by 1900 some five thousand U.S. missionaries were active in China, Africa, India, and elsewhere. While proclaiming their religious message, the missionaries also spread American influence globally and blazed the way for U.S. economic expansion. As a U.S. diplomat in China wrote in 1895: "Missionaries are the pioneers for American trade and commerce. . . . The missionary, inspired by holy zeal, goes everywhere, and by degrees foreign trade and commerce follow."

The Panama Canal: Hardball Diplomacy

Traders had long dreamed of a canal across the forty-mile-wide ribbon of land joining North and South America, to eliminate the hazardous voyage around South America. In 1879 a French company secured permission from Colombia to build a canal across Panama, then part of Colombia (see Map 22.1). But mismanagement and yellow fever doomed the project, and by 1888 it was bankrupt. Seeking to recoup its losses, the French company offered its assets, including the concession from Colombia, to the United States for \$109 million.

America was in an expansionist mood. In 1902, after the French lowered their price to \$40 million, Congress authorized President Theodore Roosevelt to accept

the offer. The following year, Secretary of State Hay signed an agreement with a Colombian diplomat granting the United States a ninety-nine-year lease on the proposed canal for a down payment of \$10 million and an annual fee of \$250,000. But the Colombian senate, seeking a better deal, rejected the agreement. An outraged Roosevelt privately denounced the Colombians as "greedy little anthropoids."

Determined to have his canal, Roosevelt found a willing collaborator in Philippe Bunau-Varilla, an official of the bankrupt French company. Dismayed that his company might lose its \$40 million, Bunau-Varilla organized a "revolution" in Panama from a New York hotel room. While his wife stitched a flag, he wrote a declaration of independence and a constitution for the new nation. When the "revolution" occurred as scheduled on November 3, 1903, a U.S.

"Missionaries are the pioneers for American trade and commerce."



TR VISITS THE PANAMA CANAL CONSTRUCTION SITE, 1906 President Theodore Roosevelt played a key role in securing the strip of land on which the canal was built. Here he proudly poses in a steam shovel used in the construction project. (*Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library*)

warship hovered offshore. Proclaiming Panama's independence, Bunau-Varilla appointed himself its first ambassador to the United States. John Hay quickly recognized the newly hatched nation and signed a treaty with Bunau-Varilla granting the United States a ten-mile-wide strip of land across Panama "in perpetuity" (that is, forever) on the terms earlier rejected by Colombia. Theodore Roosevelt later summed up the episode: "I took the Canal Zone, and let Congress debate, and while the debate goes on, the canal does also."

The U.S. canal builders' first challenge was the yellow fever that had haunted the French. Dr. Walter Reed of the Army Medical Corps led this effort. Earlier, in Cuba, Reed and his research team had used themselves and army volunteers as experimental subjects to prove that mosquitoes breeding in stagnant water spread the yellow fever virus. In Panama, Reed's large-scale drainage project eradicated the disease-bearing mosquito—a remarkable public-health achievement. Construction began in 1906, and in 1914 the first ship sailed through the **Panama Canal**. In 1921, implicitly conceding the

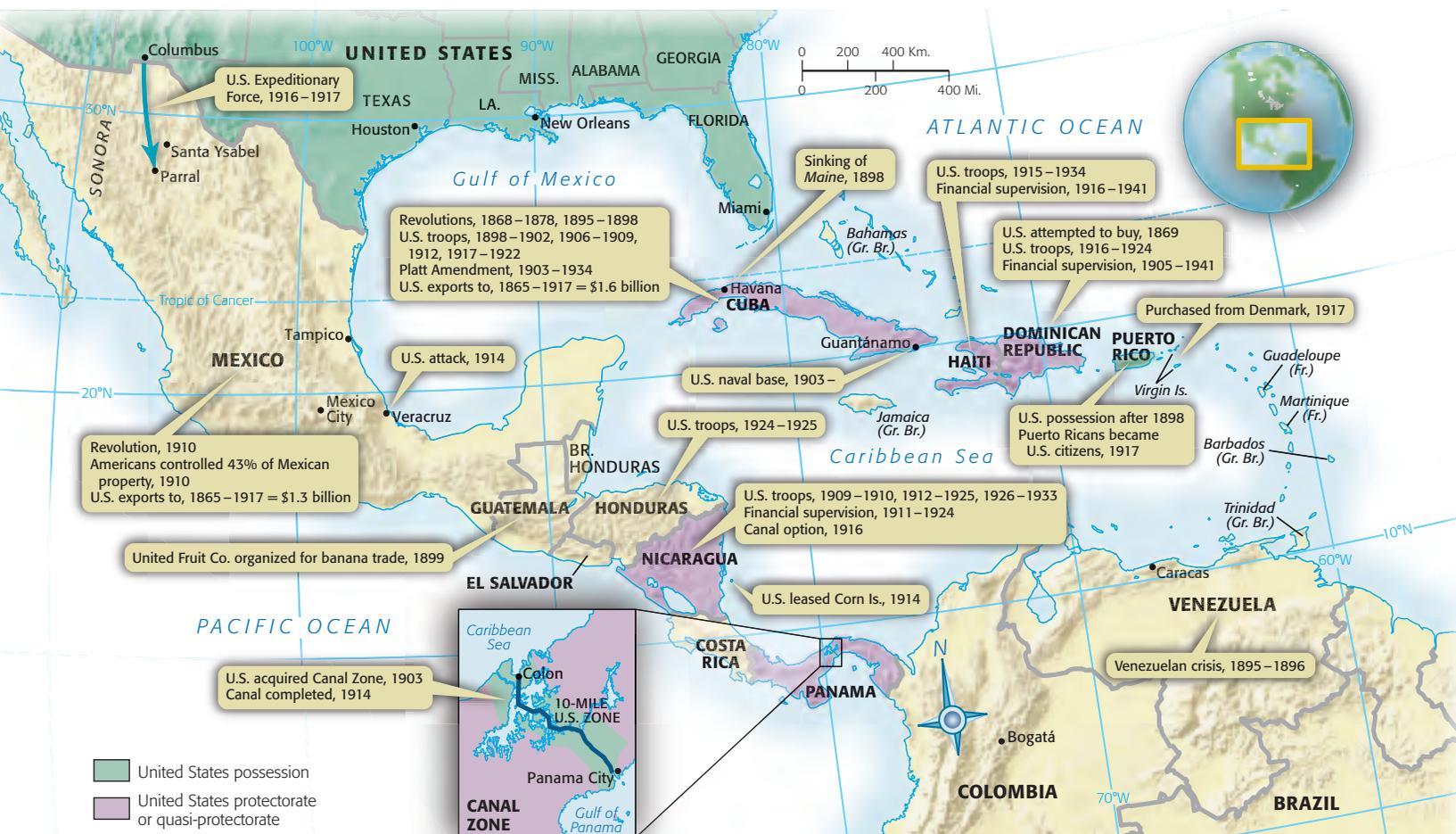
dubious methods used to acquire the Canal Zone, the U.S. Senate voted a payment of \$25 million to Colombia. But the ill feeling generated by Theodore Roosevelt's actions, combined with other instances of U.S. interventionism, would long shadow U.S.-Latin American relations.

Roosevelt and Taft Assert U.S. Power in Latin America and Asia

While the Panama Canal remains this era's best-known foreign-policy achievement, other episodes underscored Washington's growing readiness to assert U.S. power and protect U.S. business interests in Latin America (see Map 22.1) and Asia. In 1902, German, British, and Italian warships blockaded and bombarded the ports of Venezuela, which had defaulted on its debts to European investors. The standoff ended when President Theodore Roosevelt pressed all sides to settle the dispute through arbitration.

A second crisis flared in 1904 when several European nations threatened to invade the Dominican Republic, a Caribbean island nation that had also

MAP 22.1 U.S. HEGEMONY IN THE CARIBBEAN AND LATIN AMERICA, 1900–1941 Through many interventions, territorial acquisitions, and robust economic expansion, the United States became the predominant power in Latin America in the early twentieth century. Acting on Theodore Roosevelt's assertion of a U.S. right to combat "wrongdoing" in Latin America and the Caribbean, the United States dispatched troops to the region, where they met nationalist opposition.



defaulted on its debts. Roosevelt reacted swiftly. If any nation intervened, he believed, it should be the United States. While denying territorial ambitions in the region, Roosevelt in December 1904 declared that “chronic wrongdoing” by any Latin American nation would justify U.S. intervention.

This pronouncement has been called “the Roosevelt Corollary” to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, which had warned European powers against meddling in Latin America. Now Roosevelt asserted that “wrongdoing” (a word he left undefined) gave the United States the right to step in. Suiting actions to words, the Roosevelt administration took over the Dominican Republic’s customs service for two years and managed its foreign debt. Roosevelt once summed up his foreign-policy approach by quoting what he said was an African proverb, “Speak softly and carry a big stick.”

The foreign policy of the Taft administration (1909–1913) focused on advancing American commercial interests, a policy some called “dollar diplomacy.” A U.S.-backed revolution in Nicaragua in 1911 brought to power Adolfo Díaz, an officer of an American-owned mine. Washington, fearing growing British influence in Nicaragua, also worried that a foreign power might build a canal across Nicaragua to rival the Panama Canal. American bankers lent Díaz’s government \$1.5 million, in exchange for control of Nicaragua’s national bank, customs service, and railroad. When a revolt against Díaz broke out in 1912, Taft sent marines to protect the bankers’ investment. Except for one brief interval, they remained until 1933.

In Asia, too, Roosevelt and Taft sought to project U.S. power and advance American business interests. In 1900, exploiting the turmoil caused by the Boxer uprising, Russian troops occupied Manchuria, and Russia promoted its commercial interests by building railroads. This alarmed the Japanese, who also had designs on Manchuria and nearby Korea. Japan and Russia went to war in 1904 after a surprise Japanese attack destroyed Russian ships anchored in a Manchurian port. As Japan completely dominated Russia, an Asian power for the first time checked European imperialist expansion.

Roosevelt, while pleased to see Russian expansionism challenged, believed that a Japanese victory would disrupt the Asian balance of power and threaten America’s position in the Philippines. Accordingly, he invited Japan and Russia to a peace conference at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. In September 1905, the two rivals signed a peace treaty. Russia recognized Japan’s rule in Korea and made other territorial concessions. After this outcome, curbing Japanese expansionism—peacefully, if possible—became America’s major objective in

Asia. For his role in ending the war, Roosevelt received the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1906, U.S.-Japanese relations soured when the San Francisco school board, reflecting prejudice against Asian immigrants, assigned all Asian children to segregated schools. When Japan angrily protested, Roosevelt summoned the school board to Washington and persuaded them to reverse this discriminatory policy. In return, in 1908 the administration negotiated a “gentlemen’s agreement” with Japan by which Tokyo voluntarily halted Japanese emigration to America. Racist attitudes and discriminatory laws against Japanese in California continued to poison U.S.-Japanese relations, however.

While Californians warned of the “yellow peril,” Japanese journalists, eyeing America’s military strength and involvement in Asia, spoke of a “white peril.” In 1907, Roosevelt ordered sixteen gleaming U.S. battleships on a “training operation” to Japan. Although officially friendly in intent, this “Great White Fleet” underscored America’s naval might.

President Taft’s policies in Asia extended the focus on dollar diplomacy, which in this case meant promoting U.S. commercial interests in China—the goal Secretary of State Hay had sought with his Open Door notes. A plan for a U.S.-financed railroad in Manchuria failed, however. Not only did U.S. bankers find the project too risky, but Russia and Japan signed a treaty carving up Manchuria for commercial purposes, freezing out the Americans.

Wilson and Latin America

Taking office in 1913, Woodrow Wilson criticized his Republican predecessors’ expansionist policies. The United States, he pledged, would “never again seek one additional foot of territory by conquest.” But he, too, soon intervened in Latin America. In 1915, after upheavals in Haiti and the Dominican Republic (two small nations sharing the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo), Wilson sent in U.S. marines, who brutally suppressed Haitians who resisted. A Haitian constitution favorable to U.S. commercial interests was overwhelmingly ratified in a 1918 vote supervised by the marines. The marines occupied the Dominican Republic until 1924 and Haiti until 1934 (see Map 22.1).

Events in Mexico triggered Wilson’s most serious crisis in Latin America. Mexico had won independence from Spain in 1820, but the nation remained divided between a landowning elite and an impoverished peasantry. In 1911, rebels led by the democratic reformer Francisco Madero had

“Speak softly and carry a big stick.”

“I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men.”

ended the thirty-year rule of President Porfirio Díaz, a defender of the wealthy elite. Early in 1913, just as Wilson took office, Mexican troops loyal to General Victoriano Huerta, a full-blooded Indian, overthrew and murdered Madero.

Amid the chaos, Wilson tried to control events, protect U.S. investments, and safeguard U.S. citizens in Mexico and border towns. Forty thousand Americans had settled in Mexico under Díaz’s regime, and U.S. investors had poured some \$2 billion into Mexican oil wells and other ventures. Reversing long-standing U.S. practice of recognizing all governments, Wilson refused to recognize Huerta’s “government of butchers.” Authorizing arms sales to General Venustiano Carranza, Huerta’s rival, Wilson ordered the port of Veracruz blockaded to prevent a shipment of German arms from reaching Huerta (see Map 22.1). Announced Wilson: “I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men.” In April 1914 seven thousand U.S. troops occupied Veracruz and battled Huerta’s forces. Sixty-five Americans and approximately five

hundred Mexicans were killed or wounded. Bowing to U.S. might, Huerta abdicated; Carranza took power; and the troops withdrew.

But turmoil continued. In January 1916, a bandit chieftain in northern Mexico, Pancho Villa, murdered sixteen U.S. mining engineers. Soon after, Villa’s gang burned the town of Columbus, New Mexico, and killed nineteen inhabitants. Enraged Americans demanded action. Wilson dispatched a punitive expedition under General **John J. Pershing**. When Villa eluded Pershing and brazenly staged another cross-border raid into Texas, Wilson ordered 150,000 National Guardsmen to the border—a massive response that stirred anti-American feelings among Mexico’s poor, for whom Villa was a folk hero. Villa ended his raids in 1920 when the Mexican government gave him a large land grant, but he was soon assassinated.

These involvements in Asia and Latin America illuminate the basic U.S. foreign-policy goal: to achieve a global order that would embrace American political values and welcome American business. President Wilson summed up this view in a 1916 speech to a business group in Detroit: “[C]arry liberty and justice and the principles of humanity wherever you go... Sell goods that will make the world more comfortable and more happy, and convert them to the principles of America.”

These early-twentieth-century engagements reflected the underlying worldview of the old-stock, upper-class men who directed U.S. foreign policy. Convinced of their ethnic, gender, and social superiority, they confidently promoted America’s global economic and political interests while viewing with patronizing condescension the “backward” societies they sought to manipulate.

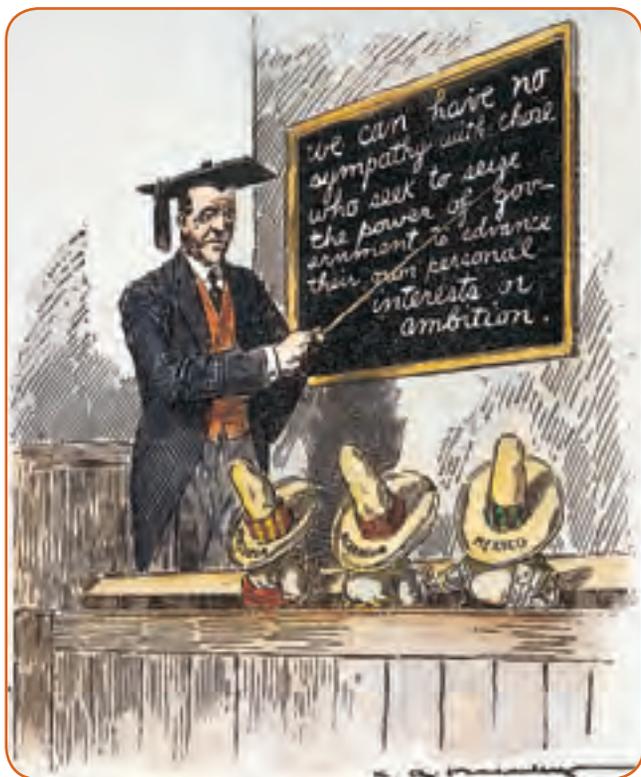
Meanwhile, a crisis unfolding in Europe challenged Wilson’s dream of an American-based world order.

War in Europe, 1914–1917

When war engulfed Europe in 1914, most Americans wished only to remain aloof, and President Wilson proclaimed U.S. neutrality. But by April 1917, economic considerations, cultural ties to England and France, visions of a world remade in America’s image, and German violations of Wilson’s definition of neutral rights all combined to suck America into the maelstrom.

The Coming of War

Although Western Europe was at peace through much of the nineteenth century, a series of ominous developments raised warning flags. In a short,



WOODROW WILSON, SCHOOLTEACHER This 1914 political cartoon captures the patronizing tone of Wilson’s approach to Latin America, which planted the seeds of long-term resentments. (Granger Collection)

sharp war in 1870–1871, an alliance of German states handed France a humiliating defeat. In the aftermath, Germany emerged as a powerful united nation ruled by Kaiser Wilhelm II. With many Germans convinced that Germany had lagged in the race for empire, Berlin's goal became modernization, expansion, and military power. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy signed a military-defense treaty in 1882. France, Great Britain, and Russia signed similar treaties in 1904 and 1907.

Meanwhile, the once-powerful Ottoman Empire, centered in Turkey, was weakening, leaving in its wake such newly independent nations as Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia. Serbian patriots dreamed of expanding their boundaries to include Serbs living in neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbia's ally Russia supported these ambitions. The Austro-Hungarian empire, based in Vienna, also dreamed of expansion as Ottoman power faded. In 1908, Austria-Hungary annexed (took over) Bosnia-Herzegovina, alarming Russia and Serbia.

In this volatile atmosphere, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria visited Bosnia in June 1914. As Ferdinand and his wife rode in an open car through Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo, a young Bosnian Serb gunned them down. This act pushed a continent already poised for war over the precipice. Austria declared war on Serbia. Russia, aligned with Serbia by a secret treaty, mobilized for war. Austria's ally Germany declared war on Russia and France. Great Britain, linked by treaty to the latter two powers, declared war on Germany.

Thus began what contemporaries called the Great War, now known as World War I. On one side were Great Britain, Russia, and France, called the Allies. On the other were the Central Powers: Germany and Austria-Hungary. (Italy, despite its alliance with the Central Powers, joined the Allies in 1915.)

The Perils of Neutrality

President Wilson urged Americans to remain neutral “in thought as well as in action.” Most citizens fervently agreed. A popular song summed up the mood: “I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier.” Carrie Chapman Catt and other feminists joined Jane Addams in forming the Woman's Peace Party. In New York City, fifteen hundred women marched to protest the war.

Neutrality proved difficult, however. Economic interests bound the United States and Britain. Many Americans had ancestral ties to England. Schoolbooks stressed the English origins of American institutions. The English language itself—the language of Shakespeare, Dickens, and

the King James Bible—deepened the bond. British propaganda subtly stressed such links.

Many German-Americans, by contrast, sympathized with Germany, as did some Scandinavian immigrants. Irish-Americans speculated that a German victory might free Ireland from British rule. But these cultural and ethnic cross-currents did not at first override Wilson's commitment to neutrality. Most Americans saw staying out of the conflict as the chief goal.

Yet in 1917, America went to war. What caused this turnabout? Fundamentally, Wilson's vision of a peaceful, democratic, and capitalist world order conflicted with his neutrality. Such an international system would be impossible, he believed, if Germany won the war. Even an Allied victory would not ensure a transformed world order, Wilson became convinced, without a U.S. role in the postwar settlement. To shape the peace, America must fight the war.

These underlying ideas influenced Wilson's handling of the war's most troubling immediate challenge: neutral nations' rights. When the war began, Britain intercepted U.S. merchant ships bound for Germany, insisting that their cargo might aid Germany's war effort. Wilson protested, especially when Britain, exploiting its naval advantage, declared the North Sea a war zone; planted it with explosive mines; and blockaded all German ports, choking off Germany's imports, including food.

But Germany, not England, ultimately pushed the United States into war. If Britannia ruled the waves, Germany controlled the ocean depths with its torpedo-equipped submarines, or U-boats. In February 1915, Berlin proclaimed the waters around Great Britain a war zone and warned off all ships. Wilson quickly responded: Germany would be held to “strict accountability” for any loss of U.S. vessels or lives.

On May 1, 1915, in a small ad in U.S. newspapers, the German embassy cautioned Americans against travel on British or French vessels. Six days later, a U-boat sank the British liner *Lusitania* off Ireland, killing 1,198 people, including 128 Americans. (The *Lusitania*, historians later discovered, was secretly carrying munitions destined for England.)

In three stern notes to Germany, Wilson demanded that Berlin stop unrestricted submarine warfare and pay reparations for the U.S. deaths in the *Lusitania* sinking. Publicly, he insisted that the United States could persuade the belligerents to recognize the principle of neutral rights without going to war. “There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight,” he said.

Wilson urged Americans to remain neutral “in thought as well as in action.”



THE SINKING OF THE CUNARD LINER *LUSITANIA*, MAY 7, 1915, OFF THE IRISH COAST The destruction of the *Lusitania* by a German U-boat, portrayed here in an illustration from an English newspaper, took nearly 1,200 lives, including 128 Americans. This event outraged U.S. public opinion and led to build-up in military preparedness. But as President Wilson pursued diplomatic exchanges with Germany, nearly two more years would pass before the United States entered the war. (Granger Collection)

The *Lusitania* disaster exposed deep divisions in U.S. public opinion. Many Americans, now ready for war, ridiculed Wilson's "too proud to fight" speech. Theodore Roosevelt denounced the president's "abject cowardice." The National Security League, a lobby of bankers and industrialists, promoted stepped-up U.S. arms production and organized "preparedness" parades in major cities. By late 1915, Wilson himself called for a military buildup.

Lurid British propaganda (much of it false or exaggerated) screamed of atrocities committed by "the Huns" (a derogatory term for Germans). Intercepted German messages relating to espionage in U.S. factories further discredited the German cause.

Others, however, deplored the drift toward war. Some progressives warned that war fever was eroding support for reforms. The war, Jane Addams lamented, had destroyed the international movements to reduce infant mortality and improve care for the aged. Late in 1915, automaker Henry Ford chartered a vessel to take a group of pacifists to Scandinavia to persuade the belligerents to end the war by Christmas.

Divisions surfaced even within the Wilson administration. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, believing Wilson's *Lusitania* notes too hostile, resigned in June 1915. Under Bryan's weak successor, Robert Lansing, Wilson himself shaped U.S. policy.

Early in 1916, some Congressmen, seeking to avoid more *Lusitania*-type crises, introduced a bill to ban Americans from sailing on belligerents' ships. President Wilson successfully opposed it, however, insisting that the principle of neutral rights must be upheld.

For a time, Wilson's conciliatory approach seemed to work. Germany ordered its U-boats to spare passenger ships, and offered compensation for the Americans lost in the *Lusitania* sinking. In March 1916, however, a U-boat sank a French passenger ship in the English Channel, injuring several Americans. When Wilson threatened to break diplomatic relations—a step toward war—Berlin pledged not to attack merchant vessels without warning, provided that Great Britain, too, observed "the rules of international law." Ignoring this qualification, Wilson announced Germany's acceptance of American demands, and the crisis eased.

Meanwhile, U.S. banks' support for the Allies eroded the principle of neutrality. Early in the war, Secretary of State Bryan had rejected banker J. P. Morgan's request to extend loans to France. Such loans, said Bryan, would violate "the true spirit of neutrality." But economic considerations undermined this policy. In August 1915, Treasury Secretary William G. McAdoo warned Wilson that Allied purchases of American munitions and farm products were essential "[t]o maintain our prosperity." Only substantial loans to England, agreed Secretary of State Lansing, could prevent serious domestic economic problems, including "unrest...among the laboring classes." The neutrality principle must not "stand in the way of our national interests," warned Lansing.

Swayed by such arguments and personally sympathetic to the Allies, Wilson permitted Morgan's bank to lend \$500 million to the British and French governments. By April 1917, U.S. banks had lent the Allies \$2.3 billion, in contrast to \$27 million to Germany.

The land war, meanwhile, had settled into a grim stalemate. A September 1914 German drive into France bogged down along the Marne River. The two sides then dug in, constructing trenches across France from the English Channel to the Swiss border. For more than three years, this line scarcely changed. A German offensive in February 1916 began with the capture of two forts near the town of Verdun and ended that June when the French recaptured the same two forts, now nothing but rubble, at a horrendous cost in human life. Trench warfare became a nightmare of mud, rats, artillery bursts, and random death.

The war dominated the 1916 presidential election, which pitted Wilson against Republican Charles Evans Hughes, a former New York governor. Somewhat confusingly, Hughes criticized Wilson's lack of aggressiveness while rebuking him for policies that risked war. Theodore Roosevelt campaigned more for war than for the Republican ticket. The only difference between Wilson and the bearded Hughes, Roosevelt jeered, was a shave. While Hughes did well among Irish-Americans and German-Americans, Wilson eked out a narrow victory, aided by women voters in western states that had adopted woman suffrage. The Democrats' winning campaign slogan, "He kept us out of war," revealed the strength of popular peace sentiment as late as November 1916.

The United States Enters the War

In January 1917, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare. Even if the United States declared war as a result, German strategists believed,

the U-boat campaign could bring victory before American troops reached the front.

Events now rushed forward. Wilson broke diplomatic relations on February 3. During February and March, U-boats sank five American ships. A coded telegram from German foreign secretary Arthur Zimmermann to Germany's ambassador to Mexico, intercepted by the British, promised that if Mexico declared war on the United States, Germany would help restore Mexico's "lost territories" of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. The "Zimmermann telegram" further inflamed the war spirit in America.

Events in Russia also helped create favorable conditions for America's entry into the war. In March 1917, Russian peasants, industrial workers, intellectuals inspired by Western liberal values, and communist revolutionaries joined in an uprising that overthrew the country's repressive czarist government. A provisional government under the liberal Alexander Kerensky briefly seemed to promise a democratic Russia, making it easier for President Wilson to portray the war as a battle for democracy.

On April 2, before a joint session of Congress, Wilson called for a declaration of war. Applause rang out as Wilson described his vision of America's role in creating a postwar international order to make the world "safe for democracy." As the speech ended, Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, a staunch political foe, rushed forward to shake the president's hand.

After a short debate, the Senate voted 82 to 6 for war. The House agreed, 373 to 50. German violation of U.S. neutrality, reinforced by American ideological commitments, cultural affinities, and economic considerations had propelled the nation into the war. British propaganda and the "preparedness" campaign mounted by U.S. financial and corporate interests had played a role as well.

Mobilizing at Home, Fighting in France, 1917–1918

Compared to its effects on Europe, the war only grazed America. Russia suffered heavily. France, Great Britain, and Germany fought for more than four years; the United States, for nineteen months. Their armies suffered casualties of 70 percent or more; the U.S. casualty rate was 8 percent. The fighting left parts of France and Belgium brutally scarred; North America was physically untouched. Nevertheless, the war profoundly affected America. It changed not only those who participated in it directly, but also the home front and the nation's government and economy.

"He kept us out of war."

Raising, Training, and Testing an Army

April 1917 found America's military woefully unprepared. The regular army consisted of 120,000 men, few with combat experience, and an aging officer corps, plus eighty thousand National Guard members. Ammunition reserves were paltry. The War Department was a jungle of jealous bureaucrats, one of whom hoarded thousands of typewriters as the war approached.

While army chief-of-staff Peyton C. March brought order to the bureaucracy, Wilson's secretary of war, Newton D. Baker, a former mayor of Cleveland, concentrated on raising an army. Baker lacked administrative talent but was a public-relations genius. The **Selective Service Act** of May 1917 required all men between twenty-one and thirty (later expanded to eighteen through forty-five) to register with local draft boards. Mindful of the Civil War draft riots, Baker planned the draft-registration day, June 5, 1917, as a "festive and patriotic occasion."

By the war's end, more than 24 million men had registered, of whom nearly 3 million were drafted. Volunteers and National Guardsmen swelled the total to 4.3 million. Training camps gave combat instruction and introduced recruits to military discipline. Volunteer organizations built morale through shows, games, and recreational activities. The American Library Association contributed books. YMCA volunteers offered classes in literacy, French slang, and Bible study. In Plattsburgh, New York, local women opened a "Hostess House" to give homesick recruits a touch of domesticity. The idea soon spread to other communities near military camps.

The War Department closely monitored recruits' off-duty behavior. The **Commission on Training Camp Activities** presented films, lectures, and posters on the dangers of alcohol and prostitution. Any soldier disabled by venereal (sexually transmitted) disease, one poster warned, "is a Traitor!" Officers confined trainees to camp until nearby towns closed brothels and saloons.

Beginning in December 1917, recruits also underwent intelligence testing. Psychologists eager



WAR ENTHUSIASM IN THE HEARTLAND In Denver, automobiles carrying young army recruits parade through the city. (Denver Public Library, Western History Division)

to demonstrate the usefulness of their new field claimed that measuring recruits' "intelligence quotient" (IQ) could help win the war by identifying potential officers and those best suited to handle more specialized assignments.

When many recruits received very low scores, editorial writers reacted with alarm. In fact, the results mostly revealed recruits' lack of formal education and the tests' cultural biases. One question asked whether *mauve* was a drink, a color, a fabric, or a food. Another asked in which city a particular automobile was built. The testing also reinforced racial and ethnic stereotypes: native-born recruits of northern European origins scored highest; African-Americans and recent immigrants lowest.

In short, the training camps not only turned civilians into soldiers, but also reinforced the Progressive Era's moral-control campaigns (see Chapter 21) and signaled changes ahead, including a vogue for standardized testing.

Some twelve thousand Native Americans served in the **American Expeditionary Force** (AEF). While some reformers eager to preserve Indian culture argued for all-Indian units, military officials integrated Native Americans into the general army. Some observers predicted that the wartime experience would hasten Indians' assimilation into mainstream American life, considered a desirable goal at the time.

Some blacks resisted the draft, especially in the South (as discussed later in this chapter), but most followed W. E. B. Du Bois's advice urging African-Americans to "close ranks" and support the war. More than 260,000 blacks volunteered or were drafted, and some 50,000 went to France. Racism pervaded the military, as it did American society. The navy assigned blacks only to menial positions, and the marines excluded them altogether.

Black troops in some camps endured abuse. One racist senator from Mississippi warned that the sight of "arrogant, strutting" black soldiers would trigger race riots. Tensions exploded in Houston in August 1917 when black soldiers stationed at nearby Camp Logan, goaded by abuse from local whites, including police officers, seized weapons, marched into town, and fatally shot sixteen whites, including four policemen. After court-martial trials, nineteen black soldiers were hanged and sixty-one sentenced to life imprisonment.

Organizing the Economy for War

World War I helped shape modern America. The war furthered such key later developments as an expanded government role in the economy; the growth of new professional and managerial elites;

and the spread of mass production, corporate consolidation, and product standardization.

The war led to unprecedented government economic oversight and corporate regulation, long advocated by Populists and progressives. In 1916, Congress created an advisory body, the Council of National Defense, to oversee the government's military preparedness program. After war was declared, this council set up the **War Industries Board** (WIB) to coordinate military purchasing and ensure production efficiency. President Wilson reorganized the WIB in March 1918 and put the Wall Street financier Bernard Baruch in charge. Under Baruch, the WIB allocated raw materials, established production priorities, and induced competing companies to standardize and coordinate their products and processes to save scarce commodities.

With congressional authorization, Wilson set up two more new agencies, the Fuel Administration and the Food Administration. The Fuel Administration controlled coal output, regulated fuel prices and consumption, and introduced daylight-saving time—an idea first proposed by Benjamin Franklin. The Food Administration, headed by Herbert Hoover, oversaw the production and allocation of wheat, meat, and sugar to ensure supplies for the army as well as for the desperately food-short Allies. Born in poverty in Iowa, Hoover had prospered as a mining engineer in Asia. He was organizing food relief in Belgium when Wilson brought him back to Washington.

These agencies relied on voluntary cooperation, reinforced by government propaganda. Food Administration posters and ads urged Americans to conserve food. Housewives signed pledges to observe "Meatless Monday" and "Wheatless Wednesday." Slogans such as "Serve Beans by All Means" promoted substitutes for scarce commodities.

Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of woman's-rights pioneer Elizabeth Cady Stanton, headed the Food Administration's Speakers' Bureau, which spread the administration's conservation message. Blatch also organized the Woman's Land Army, which recruited women to replace male farm workers.

In all, nearly five thousand government boards supervised home-front activities. These included the National War Labor Board, which resolved labor-management disputes that jeopardized production, and the Railroad Administration, headed by Treasury Secretary William McAdoo. When a railroad tie-up during the winter of 1917–1918

Housewives signed pledges to observe "Meatless Monday" and "Wheatless Wednesday."

“Instead of punishing companies for acting in concert,” one magazine observed, “the government is now in some cases forcing them to unite.”

threatened the flow of supplies to Europe, the Railroad Administration stepped in and soon transformed the thousands of miles of track operated by competing companies into an efficient national system.

American business, much criticized by progressive reformers, utilized the war emergency to improve its image. Corporate executives ran regulatory agencies. Factory owners distributed

prowar propaganda to workers. Trade associations coordinated war production.

The war hastened the process of corporate consolidation and economic integration. In place of trust-busting, the government now encouraged cooperation and mergers among businesses. “Instead of punishing companies for acting in concert,” one

magazine observed, “the government is now in some cases forcing them to unite.”

Overall, the war was good for business. Despite wartime tax increases, profits soared. After-tax profits in the copper industry, for example, jumped from 12 percent in 1913 to 24 percent in 1917.

The old laissez-faire suspicion of government, already weakened, eroded further in 1917–1918. The wartime regulatory agencies disappeared quickly after the war, but their influence lingered. In the 1930s, when the nation faced a different crisis, the government activism of World War I would be remembered (as discussed in Chapter 24).

With the American Expeditionary Force in France

As the U.S. military mobilized for combat, Allied prospects looked bleak. German U-boats were battering Allied shipping. French troops mutinied in the spring of 1917 after suffering ghastly casualties. Later that year, the Italian army suffered a disastrous defeat at Caporetto near the Austrian border and a British offensive along the French-Belgian border gained only four miles at a cost of many thousands killed and wounded. A breakthrough in military technology came in November 1917 when the British mobilized three hundred tanks along a six-mile section of the front near Cambrai, France, shattering the German defenses. Still the stalemate continued.

Russia, ill-prepared for war, had suffered devastating setbacks as well, contributing to the revolutionary upheaval. The communist faction of the revolution, the Bolsheviks (Russian for “majority”), gained strength when its top leaders, including Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, returned from exile abroad. On November 6, 1917 (October 24 by the Russian calendar), a Bolshevik coup overthrew Alexander Kerensky’s provisional government and effectively removed Russia from the war. Early in 1918, the Bolsheviks signed an armistice with Germany, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, freeing thousands of German troops on the Russian front for fighting in France.

In these desperate circumstances, U.S. aid to the Allies initially consisted of munitions and convoys to protect Allied ships. The first U.S. troops, designated as the Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF), reached France in October 1917. Eventually about 2 million American soldiers served in France under General John J. Pershing. A West Point graduate and commander of the 1916 expedition against Pancho Villa, Pershing was an iron-willed officer with a ramrod bearing, steely eyes, and trim mustache. The death of his wife and three of their children in



A RECRUITMENT POSTER TARGETING AFRICAN AMERICANS In this poster, Abraham Lincoln looks down approvingly as black soldiers battle the German foe. In reality, most black troops were restricted to non-combat roles. (*Library of Congress*)

a fire in 1915 had further hardened him. (Ironically, Pershing was of German origin; his family name had been Pfoersching.)

Most men of the AEF at first found the war a great adventure. Plucked from towns and farms, they sailed for Europe on crowded freighters or, for a lucky few, captured German passenger liners. Once in France, railroad freight cars marked “HOMMES 40, CHEVAUX 8” (forty men, eight horses) took them to the front. Then began the routine of marching, training—and waiting.

The African-Americans with the AEF worked mainly as mess-boys (mealtime aides), laborers, and stevedores (ship-cargo handlers). Although discriminatory, the latter assignments vitally aided the war effort. Sometimes working twenty-four hours nonstop, black stevedores efficiently unloaded supply ships. Some whites of the AEF pressed the French to treat African-Americans as inferiors, but most ignored this advice and related to blacks without prejudice. This eye-opening experience would remain with black veterans after the war.

While most African-American troops served behind the front lines, regiments of the all-black 92nd and 93rd infantry divisions saw action under French command in the Second Battle of the Marne and the Meuse-Argonne campaign near the war’s end. France awarded the Croix de Guerre, a military honor, to the entire 369th infantry regiment, nicknamed the “Harlem Hellfighters,” and gave several hundred black U.S. soldiers individual decorations for bravery. German propaganda leaflets described U.S. racism and urged African-American soldiers to defect, but none did. Only in death was the AEF integrated, however: graves in military cemeteries were not racially segregated.

In the air, a scant fifteen years after the Wright brothers’ first flight, German and Allied planes dropped bombs, reported on troop movements, and engaged in deadly aerial dogfights (see *Going to the Source*). Germany’s legendary “Red Baron,” Manfred von Richthofen, downed eighty Allied planes before his luck ran out in April 1918. As early as 1916, American volunteers joined a French air unit known as the Lafayette Escadrille (squadron). The U.S. Army’s air corps was established early in 1918. America’s output of planes lagged, however, despite pressure from Secretary of War Baker—a rare war-production failure.

Continuing the military’s policy of close moral oversight, AEF officials warned troops of the danger of venereal disease. “A German bullet is cleaner than a whore” declared one poster. When the French government offered to provide prostitutes for the AEF (as was the French practice), Newton Baker exclaimed, “For God’s sake, don’t show this to the President, or he’ll stop the war.”



THE WAR IN THE AIR This recruitment poster evoked the romance and excitement of air combat in World War I, the first in which airplanes played a role. (Picture Research Consultants & Archives)

The YMCA, Red Cross, and Salvation Army, including many female volunteers, provided a touch of home. Some 16,500 U.S. women served directly in the AEF as nurses, telephone operators, canteen workers, and secretaries.

In March 1918, when Germany launched a major offensive, the Allies created a unified command under French general Ferdinand Foch. Some Americans participated in the fighting around Amiens and Armentières that slowed the German advance.

The French and British wanted to continue this pattern of absorbing the Americans into existing units. But for both military and political reasons (including assuring a strong U.S. voice at the peace table), Pershing and his superiors in Washington insisted that the AEF fight in

“A German bullet is cleaner than a whore.”

World War I in the Air

Though World War I was mainly a ground and sea conflict, it also saw the beginnings of air combat by small planes that engaged in reconnaissance and some bombing missions. This memoir by Lieutenant E. C. Leonard describes a

September 1918 bombing raid on German positions during the Meuse-Argonne offensive, in which he was the gunner and bombardier on a two-person aircraft in an eight-plane squadron.

Our wheels left the ground at nine o'clock and we rose into the fog, straining our eyes for the sight of another plane... The ground faded out of sight and we were swallowed up in the mist. It was like another world. It lasted but for a minute, thank goodness. The sun began to grow brighter and suddenly we burst into daylight and blue sky...

We were nearing the objective now and... getting ready to drop the bombs... I leaned over the side with my hand on the release, watching for the bombs to drop from the plane ahead. In a few moments I saw them fall from the next plane and pulled the lever and marked up 448 pounds more of TNT for the Germans. At the release of weight, our plane gave a jump forward as if glad of the chance to hit the Hun...

[As the planes turn homeward, two waves of yellow-and-black German Fokker aircraft attack them.] They slid around our heavier machines like yellow jackets, swerving up for an instant to let a stream of bullets go at us and then taking a new position... [Like a] nest of angry hornets, they came diving right through the middle of our formation, shooting a steady stream of fire... [Leonard shoots down two Fokkers, but is knocked out of action when a bullet hits him in the neck.]

Suddenly our plane dropped into a nose spin. My first thought was that "Coop" [the pilot] had been shot and that in a very few seconds we would hit the ground and be through with everything. I slipped down on the seat unconscious, but only for an instant. When I regained my senses, we were still falling in a spin but "Coop" had unfastened his safety belt

and was standing up with one foot over the sides in the act of jumping overboard. And no wonder, for his cockpit was a mass of flames from the motor which was on fire. It was a question of dying an easy death by jumping overboard, or of burning to death... He did not know whether I was dead or alive, but when he saw me open my eyes, he did not hesitate. Rather than desert a wounded and helpless comrade, he stepped back into what seemed, at the time, the certainty of burning to death.

We came out of the spin upside down and went into a side slip in a fruitless endeavor to extinguish the flames. By this time his hands were so badly burned that the stick slipped from his fingers and he had to use knees and elbows to work the controls. Finally by diving straight down with the motor turned on as much as it would go, the almost impossible was accomplished, and the flames put out...

We landed in a large field, barely missing some telephone wires... "Coop" landed the machine with the control stick between his knees and elbows. Although we hit the ground with force enough to send the plane up on its nose and break the wings, neither of us was thrown out. The machine was pretty well shot up. The motor was a wreck. There were bullet holes all over the plane... and long gashes in the fabric. Surely a Divine providence must have guided the bullets from the vital parts.

Source: *Martin M. Evans, editor, American Voices of World War I: Primary Source Documents, 1917–1920 (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), 129–131.*

QUESTIONS

1. What led Coop to change his mind about jumping from the burning plane?
2. On the basis of this account, how did World War I aerial combat compare to trench warfare, as described elsewhere in this chapter.



Go to the website at www.cengage.com/history/boyerenduring7e for additional primary sources on this period.

“distinct and separate” units. Pershing, favoring aggressive combat, abhorred the defensive mentality ingrained by three years of trench warfare.

The Germans’ spring offensive resumed in May along the Aisne River, where they broke through to the Marne and faced a nearly open route to Paris, fifty miles away. On June 4, as the French government prepared to evacuate, American forces arrived in strength. Parts of three U.S. divisions and a marine brigade helped stop the Germans at the town of Château-Thierry and nearby Belleau Wood. (An AEF division at full strength consisted of twenty-seven thousand men and one thousand officers, plus twelve thousand support troops.)

The German offensive had punched several deep holes (called salients) in the Allied line. With the help of some eighty-five thousand American troops, the Allies at enormous cost halted a German attack on the cathedral city of Rheims between two of these salients (see Map 22.2). This battle proved to be the war’s turning point.

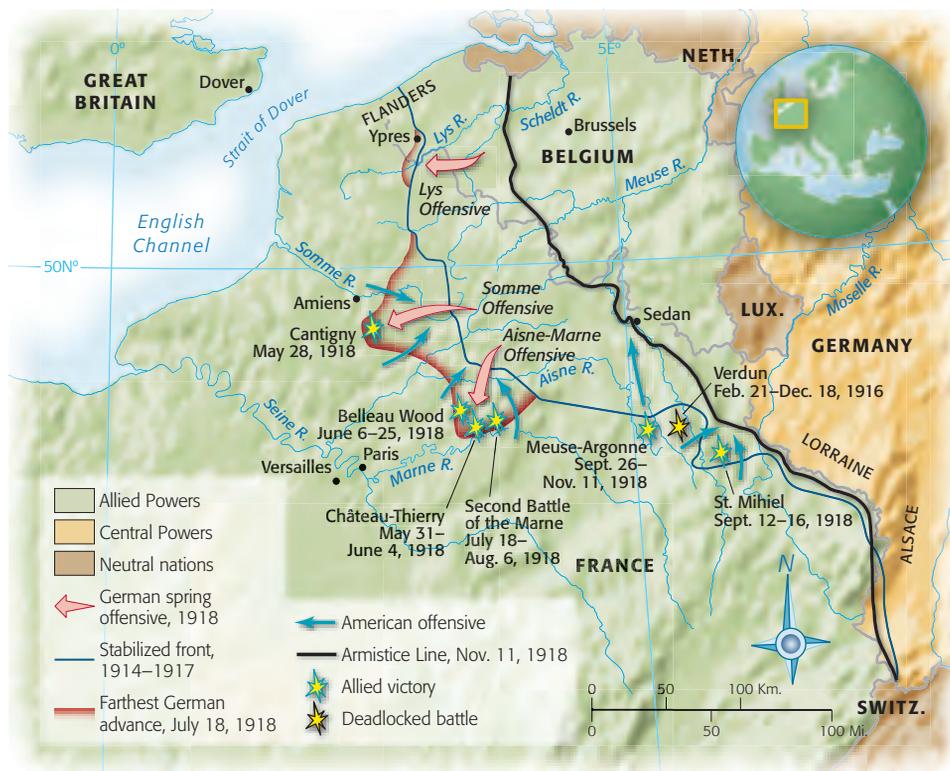
American soldiers now endured the filth, vermin, and dysentery familiar to veterans of the trenches. Many would never forget the terror of combat. As shells streaked overhead, one recalled, “We simply lay and trembled from sheer nervous tension.” Some collapsed emotionally and were hospitalized for “shell shock.”

Deadly poison gas (first used by the Germans in 1915) often hung in the air, and rats scurried in the mud. “We are not men anymore, just savage beasts,” wrote a young American. Death came in many forms, and without ceremony. Bodies, packs, rifles, photos of loved ones, and letters from home sank indiscriminately into the all-consuming mud. Worsening the horror, thousands of men on both sides died of influenza, in a pandemic that began in the war zone and quickly spread (as discussed later in this chapter).

Religious and ethical principles faded as men struggled to survive. “Love of thy neighbor is forgotten,” recalled one, with “all the falsities of a sheltered civilization.” The war’s brutality would shape the literature of the 1920s as writers such as Ernest Hemingway stripped away the illusions obscuring the reality of mass slaughter.

Turning the Tide

The Allied counteroffensive began in July 1918. About 270,000 U.S. soldiers joined the drive to push the Germans back from the Marne. Rain pelted down as the AEF moved into position. One wrote in his diary, “Trucks, artillery, infantry columns, cavalry, wagons, caissons, mud, MUD, utter confusion.” Another 100,000 AEF troops joined a parallel British counterattack in the Somme region.



MAP 22.2 THE UNITED STATES ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1918 American troops first saw action in the campaign to throw back Germany’s spring 1918 offensive in the Somme and Aisne-Marne sectors. The next heavy American engagement came that autumn as part of the Allies’ Meuse-Argonne offensive, which ended the war.



THE FOG OF WAR. U.S. TROOPS ON THE WESTERN FRONT, JUNE 26, 1918 The reality of combat differed from the idealized images offered in home front propaganda. As the war's final stage began, these American soldiers attacked entrenched German positions in Alsace, a disputed region along the French-German border near Switzerland (see Map 22.2). They are firing a 37mm. machine gun, a weapon of deadly accuracy with a maximum range of a mile and a half. (*National Archives*)

In early September, as fighting continued on all fronts, Foch authorized an AEF campaign to close a German salient around the town of St. Mihiel on the Meuse River, 150 miles east of Paris (see Map 22.2). Pershing assembled nearly five hundred thousand American and one hundred thousand French soldiers. Shelling of German positions began at 1:00 A.M. on September 11. Recorded an American in his diary, “[I]n one instant the entire front... was a sheet of flame, while the heavy artillery made the earth quake.” Within four days, the salient was closed. Although some German units had already withdrawn, St. Mihiel still cost seven thousand U.S. casualties.

In late September, 1.2 million Americans joined the struggle to drive the Germans from the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest north of Verdun. The AEF was assigned to cut the Sedan-Mezières Railroad, a vital German supply route protected by three long, heavily fortified trenches, called *Stellungen*. The fighting was long and fierce but the AEF at last overran the dreaded *Stellungen*. In early November the Sedan-Mezières Railroad was cut. The AEF had fulfilled its assignment, at a cost of 26,277 dead.

The successful Meuse-Argonne offensive ended the war. On November 11, 1918, Germany surrendered.

Promoting the War and Suppressing Dissent

In their own way, the war's domestic effects matched the battlefield in importance. Spurred by government propaganda, patriotic fervor gripped America. The war fever, in turn, encouraged ideological conformity and smothered dissent. Fueling the repressive spirit, government authorities and private vigilante groups hounded socialists, pacifists, and other dissidents, trampling citizens' constitutional rights.

Advertising the War

President Wilson viewed home front support as crucial to military success. “It is not an army we must shape and train for war, it is a nation,” he declared. The administration drew on the new professions of advertising and public relations to pursue this goal. Treasury Secretary William McAdoo orchestrated government bond drives, called Liberty Loans, that financed about two-thirds of the war's \$35.5 billion cost.

Posters exhorted citizens to “Fight or Buy Bonds.” Liberty Loan parades featured flags, banners, and

marching bands. Charlie Chaplin and other movie stars promoted the cause. Schoolchildren purchased “thrif stamps” convertible into war bonds.

Patriotic war songs reached millions through phonograph recordings (see Culture and Technology). Beneath the ballyhoo ran a note of coercion. Only “a friend of Germany,” McAdoo warned, would refuse to buy bonds.

The balance of the government’s war costs came from taxes. Under authority granted by the recently ratified Sixteenth Amendment, Congress imposed wartime income taxes that reached 70 percent at the top level. War-profits taxes, excise taxes on liquor and luxuries, and increased estate taxes also helped finance the war.

Journalist George Creel headed the government’s wartime propaganda agency, the **Committee on Public Information** (CPI). While claiming merely to report facts, Creel’s committee in reality publicized the government’s version of events and discredited all who questioned that version. One CPI division distributed posters drawn by leading illustrators. Another wrote propaganda releases that appeared in the press as “news” with no indication of their source. Popular magazines published CPI ads warning of spies, saboteurs, and anyone who “spreads pessimistic stories” or “cries for peace.” Theaters screened CPI films bearing such titles as *The Kaiser: The Beast of Berlin*.

The CPI poured foreign-language pamphlets into immigrant neighborhoods and supplied prowar editorials to the foreign-language press. At a CPI event at Mount Vernon on July 4, 1918, an Irish-born tenor sang “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” while immigrants from thirty-three nations filed reverently past George Washington’s tomb. CPI posters in factories attacked the socialists’ charge that this was a capitalists’ war. Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor headed a prowar “Alliance for Labor and Democracy” with CPI funding. CPI volunteers called “Four-Minute Men” gave prowar pep talks to movie audiences.

Teachers, writers, editors, and religious leaders overwhelmingly supported the war. These custodians of culture saw the conflict as a struggle to defend threatened values. Historians wrote essays contrasting German brutality with the Allies’ ideals. In *The Marne* (1918), expatriate American writer Edith Wharton expressed her love for France. The popular war poems of Alan Seeger, who volunteered to fight for France and died in action in 1916, portrayed the conflict as a noble crusade. An artillery barrage was for him “the magnificent orchestra of war.”

Progressive reformers who had applauded Wilson’s domestic program now cheered his war. Herbert Croly, Walter Lippmann, and others associated with the *New Republic* magazine zealously

backed the war. In gratitude, administration officials regularly briefed them on the government’s war policies.

The educator John Dewey endorsed the war in a series of *New Republic* essays. Progressive intellectuals must accept reality and shape it toward positive social goals, he wrote, not withdraw in self-righteous isolation. The war, he went on, presented exciting “social possibilities.” The government’s wartime activism could be channeled to reform purposes when peace returned. Internationally, America’s participation in the war would transform an imperialistic struggle into a global democratic crusade.

For poet Seeger, an artillery barrage was “the magnificent orchestra of war.”

Wartime Intolerance and Dissent

Responding to the propaganda, some Americans lashed out at all things German. Reports of sabotage by German agents, including mysterious fires



“A GERMAN IN AMERICA; AN AMERICAN IN NO MAN’S LAND” This March 1918 cartoon in the *New York Herald* attacked Karl Muck, the German conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, when the orchestra performed in New York. Muck was arrested soon after and imprisoned for the rest of the war. Propaganda like this helped whip up anti-German hysteria on the home front. (W. A. Rogers, *New York Herald*, 1918)



The Phonograph, Popular Music, and Home-Front Morale in World War I

Today's iPods, compact discs, MTV videos, and Internet music websites all trace their ancestry to technologies developed in the late nineteenth century. Along with the movies and national magazines, recorded music laid the groundwork for an American mass culture in the early twentieth century, and helped build support for the U.S. war effort in 1917–1918.

As early as 1859, the Frenchman Leon Scott had developed the “vibrograph,” which captured the variations of the human voice on a rotating wax-covered drum. But it was Thomas Edison who in 1877 developed a machine that could reproduce recorded sound. (Historians differ over whether the first recorded words were “Halloo” in July or “Mary had a little lamb” in December.) The following year, Edison patented a “phonograph” utilizing cylinders wrapped in tin foil. (Wax-coated cylinders soon proved superior.) The first known recorded musical performance was by an eleven-year-old pianist, Josef Hoffmann, in Edison's laboratory in New Jersey in 1887.

Unlike today's digital sound reproduction, phonographic recording is a mechanical process. The sound is first converted to electrical impulses, which in turn create slight variations in circular grooves on a rotating master disk, from which records are manufactured. When a record is played,

a stylus, or needle, attached to a tone arm senses the variations and changes them back into electrical signals that are converted into sound and amplified by a loudspeaker.

The new technology became commercially available in 1890 when the Columbia Phonograph Company published a catalog of cylinder recordings. By 1894, Emile Berliner's U.S. Gramophone Company was selling around a thousand phonographs and some twenty-five thousand records a year, including hymns, classical works, and popular songs. The United States Marine Band conducted by John Philip Sousa was an early favorite. The first commercial jazz record, “Livery Stable Blues,” appeared in 1917, recorded by a white New Orleans group called the Original Dixieland Jass [sic] Band. The Sears Roebuck catalog, widely distributed across America in the early twentieth century, offered “talking machines” on which buyers could play commercially produced records or make their own recordings.

In 1900, Eldridge Johnson bought Emile Berliner's company and formed the Victor Talking Machine Company. Johnson's Victrola, a handsome cabinet-style phonograph, proved so popular that “Victrola” became a generic name for all record players. Sales were boosted by Victor's trademark, a fox terrier named “Nipper” sitting in rapt attention



THOMAS A. EDISON CONTEMPLATES AN EARLY CYLINDER PHONOGRAPH

Emile Berliner patented a new technique of recording on disks in 1887, and disks quickly replaced cylinders. Berliner also developed a technique for mass-producing hard-rubber records from a zinc master disk. (*U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Edison National Historic Site*)

before a Victrola beneath the caption “His Master’s Voice.” The earliest phonographs had amplified the sound by a large and unsightly external speaker horn. The Victrola concealed the horn inside the cabinet, making the unit more attractive for the living room or parlor. The “volume control” had two settings: open the cabinet doors to increase the volume, close them to reduce it.

Early Victrolas were expensive, ranging from \$75 for the basic table model to luxury floor models. Despite the prices, annual sales reached 573,000 by 1917. Although electric-powered Victrolas became available in 1913, most buyers preferred the hand-cranked model well into the 1920s.

The American home front during World War I resonated to the sound of patriotic music blaring from thousands of Victrolas and phonographs produced by rival companies. War songs ranged from the sentimental, such as the waltz “Till We Meet Again,” to novelty numbers, including “Oo-La-La Wee, Wee”; the tongue-twister “Sister Susie’s Sewing Shirts for Soldiers”; and Irving Berlin’s comic soldier’s lament “Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning.”

Other songs were rousing patriotic, such as “America, I Love You” and George M. Cohan’s 1917 hit “Over There,” which became the war’s unofficial anthem. The famed Italian tenor Enrico Caruso recorded it and in September 1918 performed it live before a huge audience in New York’s Central

Park. With many Americans opposed to U.S. intervention, prowar songs like “Over There” played an important propaganda role.

In the nineteenth century, new songs had been introduced by music-hall performers and then sold in sheet-music form, allowing families and social groups to sing them at home around the piano. Sheet music remained popular, but by 1917–1918, the mechanical reproduction of popular music was spreading through the culture.

By the war’s end, American popular music was firmly linked to the recording technology pioneered by Edison, Berliner, Johnson, and others. With the coming of radio in the 1920s, recordings of classical music and popular songs could reach a mass audience simultaneously.

By the middle of the twentieth century, phonographs and phonograph records, incorporating many technological advances, played a huge role in American popular culture, accounting for millions of dollars in annual sales.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

- What key technical developments made it possible for the phonograph to evolve from a laboratory novelty into a major commercial product?
- How did popular songs spread by phonograph recordings help build support for American participation in World War I?



A FAN ADVERTISING VICTROLA RECORDS AND PHONOGRAPHS

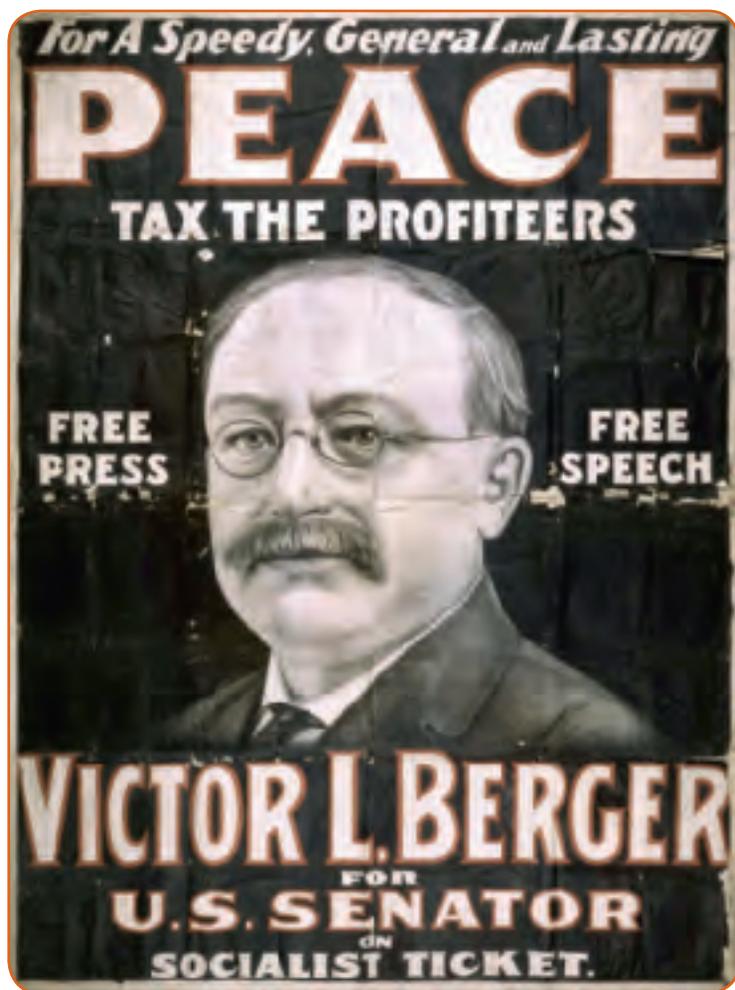
(Collection of Paul Boyer)



WORLD WAR I SOLDIERS LISTEN TO A SPECIAL “ARMY AND NAVY MODEL” EDISON PHONOGRAPH “Since the beginning of the war,” declared the Edison Company, “there has welled up from the trenches in Europe a great cry for music.” (Library of Congress)

A New York newspaper advised direct action against war opponents: “You do not require any official authority. . . . [T]he only badge you need is your patriotic fervor.”

at munitions plants in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, fanned the flames of fear. Libraries banished German books; towns with German names changed them. An Iowa politician charged that “90 percent of all the men and women who teach the German language are traitors.” Some restaurant menus replaced hamburgers with “liberty sandwiches.” The Boston Symphony Orchestra dismissed its German-born conductor. The Philadelphia Orchestra banned all German music since Brahms. A popular evangelist, Billy Sunday, proclaimed, “If you turn hell upside down you will find ‘Made in Germany’ stamped on the bottom.”



MILWAUKEE SOCIALIST LEADER VICTOR BERGER OPPOSES WAR PROFITEERS AND THE SUPPRESSION OF FREE SPEECH Elected to Congress in 1918, Berger was denied a seat because of his conviction under the wartime Espionage Act. The Supreme Court later reversed the conviction, and Berger served in Congress from 1923 to 1929. (*Wisconsin Historical Society (WHI-1901)*)

The zealots also targeted American citizens suspected of pro-German or antiwar sentiments. Some were forced to kiss the flag or recite the Pledge of Allegiance. An Ohio woman accused of disloyalty was wrapped in a flag, marched to a bank, and compelled to buy a war bond. A Cincinnati mob horse-whipped a pacifist minister. Theodore Roosevelt branded antiwar Senator Robert La Follette “an unhung traitor.” Columbia University fired two antiwar professors.

In Bisbee, Arizona, in July 1917, two thousand armed vigilantes calling themselves the Citizens Protective League forced twelve hundred striking copper miners, some of whom belonged to the antiwar Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), onto a freight train that dumped them in the New Mexico desert without food, water, or shelter. Without doubt, declared Theodore Roosevelt, “the men deported from Bisbee were bent on destruction and murder.”

In Collinsville, Illinois, in April 1918, a mob lynched a German-American coal miner, Robert Prager. When a jury freed the ringleaders, a jury member shouted, “Nobody can say we aren’t loyal now.” The *Washington Post* condemned the lynching but saw it as evidence of a “wholesome awakening” in the American heartland. President Wilson criticized Prager’s murder when the German press publicized it, but the administration’s strident attacks on radicals and war critics created the climate that led to such actions. In a June 1917 speech urging home-front vigilance, Wilson declared ominously: “Woe be to the man or group of men that seeks to stand in our way.” A New York newspaper, advising direct action against war opponents, added: “You do not require any official authority. . . . [T]he only badge you need is your patriotic fervor.”

Despite the persecution, many Americans persisted in opposing the war. Some had sentimental or ancestral ties to Germany. Others were religious pacifists, including Quakers, Mennonites, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Montana Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin, a pacifist and the first woman elected to Congress, opposed the declaration of war. “I want to stand by my country,” she declared, “but I cannot vote for war.”

Of some sixty-five thousand men who registered as conscientious objectors (COs), twenty-one thousand were drafted. Assigned to noncombat duty on military bases, these COs often experienced harsh treatment. Those who rejected this alternative went to prison. Woodrow Wilson scorned the pacifists. “[M]y heart is with them, but my mind has contempt for them,” he declared; “I want peace, but I know how to get it, and they do not.”

Socialist leaders such as Eugene Debs and Victor Berger denounced the war as a capitalist struggle for markets, with the soldiers as cannon fodder.

The government's decision for war, they insisted, reflected Wall Street's desire to protect its loans to England and France. Other socialists supported the war, however, dividing the party.

The war split the women's movement as well. Some leaders joined Jane Addams in opposition, others endorsed the war while keeping their own goals in view. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), had helped start the Woman's Peace Party in 1915. But she supported U.S. entry into the war in 1917, sharing to some extent Wilson's vision of a more liberal postwar world order. Catt continued to fight for woman suffrage, however, as NAWSA's "number one war job." For this, some superpatriots accused her of disloyalty.

Draft resistance extended beyond the ranks of conscientious objectors. An estimated 2.4 to 3.6 million young men failed to register. Others who did register either did not appear when drafted or deserted from training camp. The rural South saw high levels of draft resistance. The urban elites who ran the draft boards were more inclined to excuse young men of their own class from service than poor farmers, white or black, fueling class resentment. In June 1918, a truck carrying soldiers pursuing draft evaders in rural Georgia crashed when a bridge collapsed, killing three. Investigators found that the bridge had been deliberately sabotaged.

African Americans had added reasons to oppose the draft. Of southern blacks who registered, one-third were drafted, in contrast to only one-quarter of whites. White draft boards justified this by arguing that black families could more easily spare a male breadwinner. As an Alabama board observed: "[I]t requires more for a white man and his wife to live than it does a negro man and his wife, due to their respective stations in life." But racial bias worked in complex ways: some southern whites, fearful of arming black men even for military service, favored drafting only whites.

One war critic, Randolph Bourne, a young journalist, rejected John Dewey's argument that reformers could direct the war to their own purposes. "If the war is too strong for you to prevent," he asked, "how is it going to be weak enough for you to... mould to your liberal purposes?" Many pro-war intellectuals eventually agreed. By 1919, Dewey conceded that the war, far from promoting reform, had encouraged reaction and intolerance. Bourne did not live to see his vindication, however. He died of influenza in 1918, aged thirty-two.

Suppressing Dissent by Law

Wartime intolerance surfaced in federal laws and official actions. The **Espionage Act** of June 1917

set fines and prison sentences for a variety of loosely defined antiwar activities. The **Sedition Amendment** (May 1918) imposed stiff penalties on anyone convicted of using "disloyal, profane... or abusive language" about the government, the Constitution, the flag, or the military.

Wilson's attorney general, Thomas W. Gregory, used these laws to suppress dissent. Opponents of the war, proclaimed Gregory, should expect no mercy "from an outraged people and an avenging government." Under the federal legislation and similar state laws, authorities arrested some fifteen hundred pacifists, socialists, IWW leaders, and other war critics. One socialist, Rose Pastor Stokes, received a ten-year prison sentence (later commuted) for telling an audience, "I am for the people, and the government is for the profiteers." Eugene Debs spent three years in prison for a speech discussing the economic causes of the war.

Under the Espionage Act, Postmaster General Albert S. Bursleson banned socialist periodicals, including *The Masses*. In January 1919 Congressman-elect Victor Berger was convicted for publishing antiwar articles in his socialist newspaper, the *Milwaukee Leader*. (The Supreme Court reversed Berger's conviction in 1921.) Socialist Norman Thomas complained that Bursleson "didn't know socialism from rheumatism," and Upton Sinclair protested to President Wilson that no one of Bursleson's "childish ignorance" should wield such power. Still, Wilson did little to restrain the Postmaster General's excesses.

A patriotic organization called the American Protective League and local "Councils of Defense" claiming vague governmental authority further enforced ideological conformity. A group called "Boy Spies of America" recruited young patriots. The 1917 takeover in Russia by Bolsheviks who believed in a one-party state and preached the overthrow of capitalism deepened suspicion of domestic radicals. Could the United States itself fall to communism, some fearful Americans wondered.

In three 1919 decisions, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Espionage Act convictions of war critics despite the First Amendment guarantee of free speech. In *Schenck v. United States*, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., writing for a unanimous court, justified such repression in cases where a person's speech posed a "clear and present danger" to the nation. When the war ended, Wilson vetoed a bill repealing the Espionage Act, increasing the likelihood that the miasma of conformity and suspicion would linger into the postwar era.

"If the war is too strong for you to prevent, how is it going to be weak enough for you to... mould to your liberal purposes?"

Economic and Social Trends in Wartime America

In many diverse ways, the war affected the lives of millions of Americans, including industrial workers, farmers, women, and blacks. Another of the war's byproducts, a deadly influenza pandemic, took a grievous toll. Some Progressive Era reforms advanced, but overall the war weakened the reform movement.

Boom Times in Industry and Agriculture

World War I benefited the U.S. economy. From 1914 to 1918, factory output grew by more than one-third. Even with many men in uniform, the civilian work force expanded by 1.3 million between 1916 and 1918, thanks to new jobs in shipbuilding, munitions, steel, and other war-related industries. Prices rose, but so did wages. Even unskilled workers enjoyed

wartime wage increases averaging nearly 20 percent. Samuel Gompers urged a moratorium on strikes. Some IWW members and maverick AFL locals ignored this advice, but with the economy booming, most workers observed the no-strike request.

The war's social impact took many forms. Job seekers pouring into industrial centers strained housing, schools, and municipal services. Consumption of cigarettes, which soldiers and workers could carry in their shirt pockets more easily than pipes or cigars, more than tripled. Reflecting wartime prosperity, automobile production jumped from 460,000 in 1914 to 1.8 million in 1917, then dipped briefly in 1918 as steel went for military production.

Farmers profited, too. With European farm production disrupted, U.S. agricultural prices, including cotton, corn, and other commodities, more than doubled between 1913 and 1918, and farmers' real income rose significantly. This agricultural boom proved a mixed blessing, however. Farmers who borrowed heavily to expand production faced a credit



AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILY ARRIVES IN CHICAGO, 1912 Seeking a better life, African-Americans moved North in great numbers in the early twentieth century. Among the newcomers was Fraser Robinson Jr., grandfather of Michelle Obama, the future first lady, who came to Chicago from South Carolina. (*Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations*)

squeeze when farm prices fell after the war. In the 1920s and 1930s, hard-pressed farmers would look back to the war years as a golden age of prosperity.

Blacks Migrate Northward

An estimated half-million African-Americans moved north during the war, and most settled in cities. Each day, fresh arrivals poured into Philadelphia, New York, Detroit, and Pittsburgh. Chicago's black population grew from forty-four thousand in 1910 to 110,000 in 1920, Cleveland's from eight thousand to thirty-four thousand.

With European immigration choked off by the war, booming industries hired more black workers. Some companies sent agents south to recruit black workers. African-American newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* spread the word, as did letters and word-of-mouth reports. One southern black, newly settled near Chicago, wrote home, "Nothing here but money, and it is not hard to get." A Pittsburgh newcomer presented a more balanced picture: "They give you big money for what you do, but they charge you big things for what you get." As economic opportunity beckoned, impoverished southern blacks welcomed the prospect of securing jobs in a region where racism seemed less oppressive. By 1920, 1.5 million African-Americans were working in northern factories and other urban-based jobs.

This vast population movement had profound social ramifications. Churches and storefront missions sprang up to serve deeply religious migrants from the South. As organizers for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People built a national network of local branches, membership surged from 9,000 before the war to nearly 100,000 by the early 1920s. NAACP leaders pointed to African-American support for the war to buttress their demand for equality. The struggle against racism faltered in the 1920s, but the population movements and heightened race consciousness of the war years laid the groundwork for the civil-rights movement that lay ahead. The concentration of blacks in New York City set the stage for the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural flowering of the 1920s (covered in Chapter 23).

Still, African-American newcomers in northern cities faced severe challenges. White workers resented the labor competition, and white homeowners lashed out as blacks moved into "their" neighborhoods. Tensions exploded on July 2, 1917, in East St. Louis, Illinois, home to thousands of recently arrived southern blacks. In a coordinated attack, a white mob torched black homes and shot the fleeing residents. At least thirty-nine blacks died, including a two-year-old who was shot and thrown into a burning house.

A few weeks later, an NAACP silent march down New York's Fifth Avenue protested racist violence. One bannerechoed Wilson's phrase justifying U.S. involvement in the war: "Mr. President, Why Not Make AMERICA Safe for Democracy?"

A banner in an NAACP march read, "Mr. President, Why Not Make AMERICA Safe for Democracy?"

Women in Wartime

From one perspective, World War I seems a uniquely male experience. Male politicians led their nations into war. Male officers ordered other men into battle. Yet war touches all of society, not just half of it. The war affected women differently, but still profoundly.

Feminist leaders like Carrie Chapman Catt hoped that the war would lead to full equality and greater opportunity for women. For a time, these goals seemed attainable. In addition to the women holding AEF clerical positions and in wartime volunteer agencies, about 1 million women worked in industry. Thousands more held other jobs, from streetcar conductors to bricklayers. "Out of...repression into opportunity is the meaning of the war to thousands of women," wrote Florence Thorne of the American Federation of Labor in 1917.

A key victory for the woman-suffrage movement came in November 1917 when New York voters amended the state constitution to permit women to vote. In Washington, members of Alice Paul's National Woman's Party (see Chapter 21) picketed the White House and posted banners criticizing President Wilson for opposing woman suffrage at home while championing democracy abroad. Several protesters were jailed and force-fed when they went on a hunger strike. Pressured by all wings of the suffrage movement, Wilson declared that women's war service had earned them the right to vote. In 1919, barraged by pro-suffrage petitions, the House and Senate overwhelmingly passed the **Nineteenth Amendment** granting women the vote. Ratification soon followed.

Beyond this victory, however, the war did little to better women's status permanently. Relatively few women entered the work force for the first time in 1917–1918; most simply moved to better-paying jobs. But even in these jobs, most earned less than the men they replaced. As for the women in the AEF, the War Department refused their requests for military rank and benefits.

At the war's end, many women lost their jobs to returning veterans. The New York labor federation advised, "The same patriotism which induced

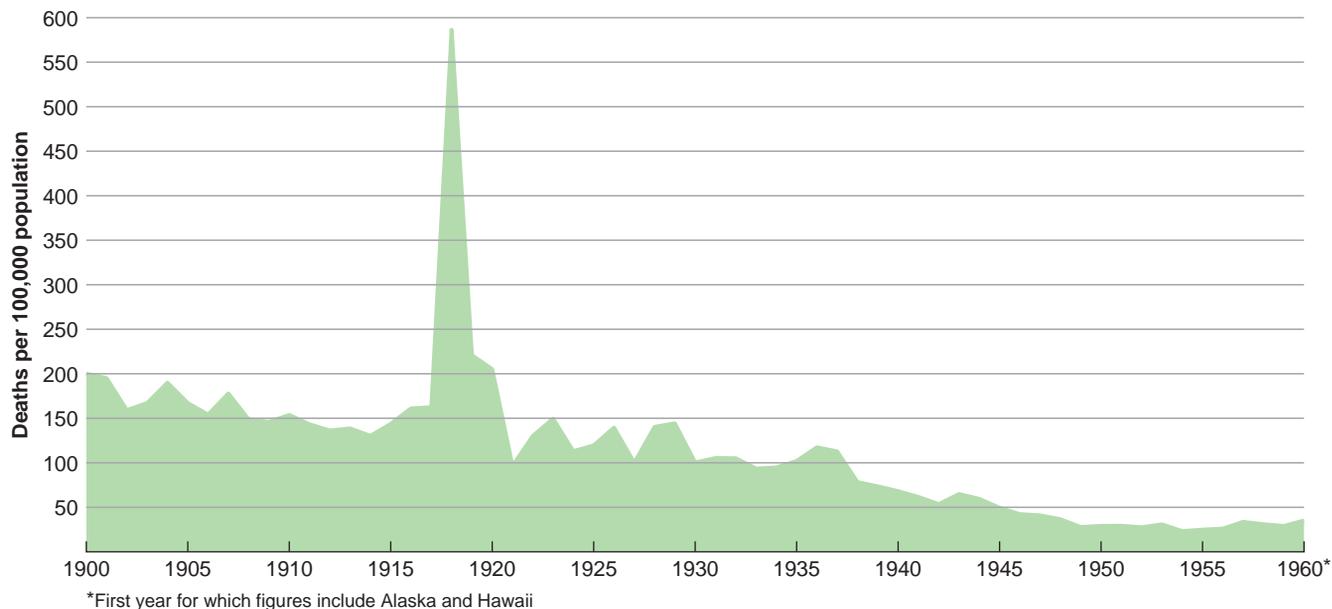


FIGURE 22.1 U.S. DEATH RATE FROM INFLUENZA AND PNEUMONIA, 1900–1960 This chart shows the devastating toll of the 1918 influenza epidemic, as well as the gradual decline of influenza mortality thanks to the discovery of antibiotics that combat the secondary infections that are often fatal.

Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970 (1975) vol. I, p. 58.* Note: Number of deaths per 100,000 population.

women to enter industry during the war should induce them to vacate their positions after the war.” Male streetcar workers in Cleveland went on strike to force women conductors off the job. In 1920, the percentage of U.S. women in the paid labor force was actually slightly lower than it had been in 1910.

Public-Health Crisis: The 1918 Influenza Pandemic

Along with the war’s other effects, the nation in 1918 reeled under an outbreak of influenza (or “flu”), a highly contagious viral infection. The **influenza pandemic**, spread by a particularly deadly strain of the virus, killed an estimated 50–100 million people worldwide. Despite public-health advances, medical science had few weapons against influenza in 1918 (see Figure 22.1).

Originating in Africa, the virus spread from battlefields in France to U.S. military camps, striking Fort Riley, Kansas, in March 1918 and quickly advancing to other bases and the urban population. In September, a health official visiting Camp Devens in Massachusetts wrote, “I saw hundreds of young stalwart men in uniform coming into... the hospital.... The faces wore a bluish cast, a cough brought up blood-stained sputum. In the morning, the dead bodies are stacked about the morgue like cord-wood.”

The flu hit the cities hard. After a September Liberty Loan rally in Philadelphia, doctors reported 635 new influenza cases. Many cities forbade public

gatherings. In the worst month, October, influenza killed 195,000 Americans. The total U.S. death toll reached about 550,000, over six times the number of AEF battle deaths in France.

The development of a flu vaccine in the 1940s and of antibiotics to control influenza’s secondary infections reduced the severity of later outbreaks, but flu pandemics remain a threat. In 2004, using tissue preserved from two U.S. soldiers who had died of influenza in 1918 and from the frozen corpse of another victim buried in the Alaska tundra, scientists successfully synthesized the 1918 virus for research purposes.

The War and Progressivism

The war had mixed effects on Progressive Era reform movements. It strengthened progressivism’s coercive, moral-control aspect, including the drive to prohibit alcohol consumption. Pointing out the German origins of large breweries such as Pabst, Schlitz, and Anheuser-Busch, prohibitionists hinted that beer was a German plot to undermine American fitness. With food conservation a high priority, they stressed the wastefulness of using grain to make liquor. The **Eighteenth Amendment** establishing national prohibition, which passed Congress in December 1917, was widely seen as a war measure. Ratified in 1919, it went into effect on January 1, 1920.

As we have seen, the war also strengthened the Progressive Era antiprostitution campaign. Congress



BATTLING INFLUENZA, 1918 Red Cross workers like these in Philadelphia and other public-health professionals mobilized to combat a deadly epidemic that claimed over half a million American lives. (Courtesy American Red Cross)

appropriated \$4 million to combat venereal disease among soldiers and war workers. The War Department closed red-light districts near military bases, including New Orleans's famed Storyville. (As Storyville's jazz musicians moved northward, jazz reached a national audience.) In San Antonio, a major military hub, an antiprostitution leader reflected the war mood when he declared, "We propose to fight vice... with the cold steel of the law, and to drive in the steel from the point to the hilt until the law's supremacy is acknowledged."

In the wartime climate of "vigilance," the anti-prostitution drive expanded to a broader policing of morals. Female lecturers for the Commission on Training Camp Activities urged unmarried young women to practice chastity. "Do Your Bit to Keep Him Fit" one pamphlet advised. Wartime "protective bureaus" in major cities monitored women's behavior. In Boston, female social workers hid in the Common after dark to apprehend young women dating soldiers from nearby bases.

All this moral-reform activity convinced some that traditional codes of sexual behavior, weakening before the war, had been restored. One antiprostitution crusader exulted, "Young men of today... are nearer perfection in conduct, morals, and ideals than any similar generation... Their minds have been raised to ideals that would never have been attained save by the heroism of... the World War."

Labor reforms advanced as well. The Railroad Administration and the **War Labor Board** (WLB),

spurred by progressives, encouraged workers to join unions and guaranteed unions' right to bargain with management. The WLB also pressured factory owners to introduce the eight-hour workday, end child labor, and open their plants to safety and sanitation inspectors. Under these favorable conditions, union membership rose from 2.7 million in 1916 to more than 5 million by 1920. Several state legislatures, eager to advance the war effort, passed wage-and-hour laws and other measures benefiting factory workers.

The **Bureau of War Risk Insurance** (BWRI), created in 1917 to aid soldiers' families, established a precedent of government help for families at risk. As Julia Lathrop, head of the Federal Children's Bureau, observed, "The least a democratic nation can do, which sends men into war, is to... [care for] the families." By the war's end, over two million families were receiving regular BWRI checks.

Overall, however, at least in the short run, the war weakened the Progressive Era's powerful social-justice impulse. While the war brought stricter regulation of the economy—a key progressive goal—business interests often dominated the regulatory agencies, and these agencies were quickly dismantled after the war. The government's repression of radicals and antiwar dissenters fractured the fragile coalition of left-leaning progressives, women's groups, trade unionists, socialists, and politicians that had supported the prewar reforms, and ushered in a decade of reaction. The 1918 midterm election signaled the shift, as the Democrats lost both houses

“Everything for which America has fought has been accomplished,” Wilson proclaimed.

of Congress to a deeply conservative Republican Party.

Nevertheless, taking a longer view, reform energies, after diminishing in the 1920s, would reemerge in the depression decade of the 1930s (covered in Chapter 24). As Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal took shape, the memory

of such World War I agencies as the War Industries Board, the War Labor Board, and the Bureau of War Risk Insurance provided ideas and inspiration.

Joyous Armistice, Bitter Aftermath, 1918–1920

The euphoria that greeted the November 1918 armistice proved short lived. Having defined America’s war aims in lofty terms, Woodrow Wilson dominated the 1919 peace conference but failed in his most cherished objective—American membership in the League of Nations. Amid a sour climate of racism and intolerance, the voters in 1920 repudiated Wilsonian idealism and internationalism and elected a conservative Republican as president.

Wilson’s Fourteen Points; The Armistice

President Wilson took America to war determined to put his personal stamp on the peace. He and his reform-minded supporters believed that U.S. participation could transform a sordid squabble for power and empire into a crusade for a transformed world order. Wilson recruited a group of advisers to translate his vision into specific war aims. The need for such a statement grew urgent after the Bolsheviks, having seized power in Russia, published the self-serving secret treaties negotiated by European powers before the war.

Addressing Congress in January 1918, Wilson summed up U.S. war aims in fourteen points. Eight of these promised the subject peoples of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires the right of self-determination—that is, the freedom to choose their own political futures. A ninth point insisted that imperial disputes should consider the interests of the colonized peoples. The remaining five points offered Wilson’s larger postwar vision: a world of free navigation, free trade, reduced armaments, openly negotiated treaties, and “a general association of nations” to resolve conflicts peacefully. The **Fourteen Points** solidified American support for the war, especially among liberals. They seemed proof that America was fighting for noble motives, not selfish aims.

In early October 1918, facing defeat, Germany proposed an armistice based on Wilson’s Fourteen Points.

The British and French hesitated, but when Wilson threatened to negotiate a separate peace, they agreed. Meanwhile, in Berlin, Kaiser Wilhelm II had abdicated and a German republic had been proclaimed.

In the early morning of November 11, 1918, the Allied commander Marshal Foch and his German counterparts signed an armistice ending hostilities at 11:00 A.M. Rockets burst over the front that night, not in anger but in relief and celebration. In America, cheering throngs (some wearing masks against the influenza epidemic) filled the streets. “Everything for which America has fought has been accomplished,” Wilson proclaimed.

As troop ships ferried the soldiers home, Captain Harry Truman of Missouri described his feelings in a letter to his fiancée:

I’ve never seen anything that looks so good as the Liberty Lady in New York Harbor... [T]he men... have been in so many hard places that it takes something real to give them a thrill, but when the band... played “Home Sweet Home” there were not many dry eyes. The hardest of hard-boiled cookies even had to blow his nose a time or two.

The Versailles Peace Conference, 1919

Unwisely, Wilson decided to lead the U.S. delegation to the peace conference himself. The strain of long bargaining sessions would take its toll on his frail nerves. Wilson compounded his mistake by naming only one Republican to the delegation, an elderly diplomat with little influence in the party. Selecting more prominent Republicans might have spared Wilson future grief. The Democrats’ loss of Congress in 1918 offered a further ill omen.

Nevertheless, crowds cheered and ships’ whistles blared on December 4, 1918, as the *George Washington*, a converted German liner, left New York, bearing Wilson to Europe—the first sitting U. S. president to go abroad. The giddy mood continued when Wilson reached Europe. Shouts of “Woodrow Veelson” rang out as he rode up the Champs-Élysées, Paris’s ceremonial boulevard. In England, children spread flowers in his path. In Italy, a local official compared him to Jesus Christ.

The euphoria faded once the peace conference began at the palace of Versailles near Paris, where, 136 years before, diplomats had signed the treaty ending the Revolutionary War. Joining Wilson were the other Allied heads of state: Italy’s Vittorio Orlando; France’s aged and cynical Georges Clemenceau; and England’s David Lloyd George, whom Wilson called “slippery as an eel.” Japan participated as well.

The French and British came to the **Versailles Peace Conference** determined to punish Germany

for their nations' wartime losses. Their vindictive agenda bore little relation to Wilson's liberal vision. As Clemenceau remarked, "God gave us the Ten Commandments and we broke them. Mr. Wilson has given us the Fourteen Points. We shall see."

Differences quickly surfaced. Italy demanded a port on the eastern Adriatic Sea. Japan insisted on the trading rights it had seized from Germany in the Chinese province of Shandong (Shantung). Clemenceau and Lloyd George were obsessed with revenge. At one point, an appalled Wilson threatened to leave the conference.

Reflecting this toxic climate, the peace treaty the sullen German delegation signed was harshly punitive. Germany was disarmed, stripped of its colonies, forced to admit sole blame for the war, and saddled with staggering reparation payments. France regained border provinces lost to Germany in 1871 and took control for fifteen years of Germany's coal-rich Saar Basin. The treaty demilitarized Germany's western border and transferred a slice of eastern Germany to Poland. These provisions cost Germany one-tenth of its population and one-eighth of its territory. The treaty granted Japan's Shandong claims and gave Italy a slice of Austria that contained two hundred thousand German-speaking inhabitants. These harsh terms, bitterly resented in Germany, planted the seeds of World War II.

Some provisions did reflect Wilson's themes of democracy and self-determination. Germany's former colonies went to the various Allies under a "mandate" or trusteeship system that in theory promised eventual independence. The treaty also recognized the independence of Poland and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (seized by Germany in its 1918 peace treaty with Bolshevik Russia). Separate treaties provided for the independence of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, new nations carved from the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires.

Palestine, a part of the Ottoman Empire, went to Great Britain under a mandate arrangement. In 1917, after gaining military control of Palestine, the British had issued the Balfour Declaration supporting a Jewish "national home" in the region while also acknowledging the rights of the non-Jewish Palestinians.

But the statesmen of Versailles ignored the aspirations of colonized peoples in Asia and Africa—people like Ho Chi Minh. A young Vietnamese nationalist who would later lead his nation, Ho tried unsuccessfully to secure Vietnamese independence from France.

Nor did the peacemakers come to terms with revolutionary Russia. Indeed, in August 1918 a fourteen-nation Allied army, including some seven thousand U.S. troops, had landed at Russian ports, ostensibly to protect Allied war equipment. In fact, the aim was to overthrow the new Bolshevik regime,

whose communist ideology terrified European and American leaders. President Wilson, having welcomed the liberal Russian revolution of March 1917, viewed the Bolshevik coup and Russia's withdrawal from the war as a betrayal of his hopes for a democratic Russia. The Versailles treaty reflected this hostility. Its territorial provisions for Eastern Europe were designed to weaken communist Russia. Not until 1933 would the United States recognize the Soviet Union.

The Fight over the League of Nations

Dismayed by the treaty's vindictive features, Wilson focused on his one shining achievement at Versailles—a treaty provision, or covenant, creating a new international organization, the **League of Nations**. The League covenant embodied Wilson's vision of a new world order of peace and justice.

But Wilson's League faced major hurdles. A warning shot came in February 1919 when thirty-nine Republican senators and senators-elect, including powerful Henry Cabot Lodge, signed a letter rejecting the League in its present form. To reject the League covenant, Wilson retorted defiantly, would destroy the Versailles treaty's "whole vital structure."

When Wilson sent the treaty to the Senate for ratification in July 1919, Lodge bottled it up in the Foreign Relations Committee. To rally popular opinion, Wilson left Washington in September for a national speaking tour. Covering more than nine thousand miles by train, Wilson defended the League before large and friendly audiences. People wept as he described his visits to American war cemeteries in France and sketched his vision of a new world order.

But the trip exhausted Wilson, and on September 25 he collapsed in Colorado. His train sped back to Washington, where on October 2, he suffered a severe stroke. Wilson spent the rest of his term mostly in bed or in a wheelchair, a reclusive invalid, his fragile emotions betraying him into tearful outbursts and irrational, self-defeating actions. He broke with close advisers, refused to see the British ambassador, and dismissed Secretary of State Lansing, accusing him of disloyalty. In January 1920, he rejected his physician's advice to resign.

Wilson's first wife had died in 1914. His strong-willed second wife, Edith Galt, played a crucial behind-the-scenes role during this crisis. She concealed Wilson's condition from the public, controlled his access to information, and decided who could see him, barring cabinet members, diplomats, and congressional leaders. When one leader seeking a meeting urged Mrs. Wilson to consider "the welfare of the country," she snapped, "I am not thinking of the country now, I am thinking of my husband." (The Twenty-fifth Amendment, addressing issues of presidential disability, was not adopted until 1967.)



THE VICTORIOUS ALLIED LEADERS IN PARIS, DECEMBER 1918 Seated, left to right: Vittorio Orlando (Italy), David Lloyd George (Great Britain), Georges Clemenceau (France), and Woodrow Wilson. The peace conference revealed deep divisions among the Allies, as Wilson promoted his visionary new world order, including a League of Nations, and the European powers pursued their own interests and imposed harsh terms on defeated Germany. (*Granger Collection*)

Against this grim backdrop, the League drama unfolded. On September 10, 1919, the Foreign Relations Committee at last sent the treaty to the Senate, but with a series of amendments. The Senate split into three groups. First were Democrats who supported the treaty without changes, including U.S. membership in the League of Nations. Second were Republican “Irreconcilables,” led by Hiram Johnson of California, Wisconsin’s Robert La Follette, and Idaho’s William Borah, who opposed the League absolutely. Intensely nationalistic, they feared that League membership would restrict U.S. freedom of action and entangle America with corrupt foreign powers. Finally,

a group of Republican “Reservationists,” led by Lodge, demanded amendments as a condition of their support. The Reservationists especially objected to Article 10 of the League covenant, which pledged each member nation to defend the independence and territorial integrity of all other members. This provision, they believed, limited America’s sovereignty and infringed on Congress’s constitutional power to declare war.

Had Wilson compromised, the Senate would probably have ratified the Versailles treaty, including the League covenant, with amendments. But Wilson, ill and unyielding, instructed Senate Democrats to reject the Foreign Relations Committee’s version

of the treaty, which now included Lodge's reservations. Although international-law specialists argued that these reservations would not prevent U.S. participation in the League, Wilson stood firm.

Despite Wilson's speaking tour, the public did not rally behind the League, thanks in part to the reactionary mood his own administration had helped create. As the *Nation* magazine observed, "If [Wilson] loses his great fight for humanity, it will be because he was deliberately silent when freedom of speech and the right of conscience were struck down in America."

On November 19, 1919, pro-League Democrats, obeying Wilson's instructions, and anti-League Irreconcilables joined forces to defeat the proposed measure that included Lodge's reservations. A second vote in March 1920 produced the same result. The United States would not join the forty-four nations who in January 1920 launched the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations. What might have been Wilson's crowning achievement had turned to ashes.

Racism and Red Scare, 1919–1920

The war's strident patriotism left a bitter aftertaste. The years 1919–1920 brought new racial violence and anti-radical hysteria. Seventy-six blacks were lynched in 1919, the worst toll in fifteen years. The victims included ten veterans, several still in uniform. In Omaha, a mob inflamed by sensational newspaper stories seized a black prisoner from the courthouse, hanged him from a lamppost, dragged his body through the streets, and burned it. Henry Fonda, a future film actor, witnessed the lynching as a fourteen-year-old. "It was the most horrendous sight I'd ever seen," he later recalled.

The worst violence exploded in Chicago, where simmering racial tension erupted on a hot afternoon in July 1919. When a black youth swimming at a Lake Michigan beach drowned after whites had pelted him with stones, black neighborhoods erupted in fury. A thirteen-day reign of terror followed as white and black marauders engaged in random attacks and arson. Black gangs stabbed an Italian peddler; white gangs pulled blacks from streetcars and shot or whipped them. The outbreak left fifteen whites and twenty-three blacks dead, over five hundred injured, and more than a thousand families, mostly black, homeless.

Wartime antiradicalism crested in a postwar Red Scare. (Communists were called "reds" because of the red flag favored by revolutionary organizations.) A rash of strikes in 1919 deepened overwrought fears of a communist takeover in America. When the IWW and other unions called a general strike in Seattle, the panicky mayor accused

the strikers of seeking to "duplicate the anarchy of Russia" and called for federal troops to maintain order. Anxiety crackled again in April, when various public officials received packages containing bombs. One severely injured a senator's maid; another damaged the home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. When 350,000 steelworkers went on strike in September, mill owners ran newspaper ads denouncing the leaders as "Red agitators."

Antiradical paranoia also infected politics. In 1919, the House of Representatives refused to seat Milwaukee socialist Victor Berger, recently indicted under the Espionage Act. Milwaukee voters promptly reelected him, but the House stood firm. The New York legislature expelled several socialist members. The Justice Department set up an antiradical division under young J. Edgar Hoover, future head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who ordered the



"REFUSING TO GIVE THE LADY A SEAT" In this newspaper cartoon published during the Senate battle over U.S. membership in the League of Nations, three Republican opponents of the League—William Borah of Idaho, Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, and Hiram Johnson of California—stubbornly refuse to give a seat to an angelic female passenger symbolizing peace. (*Library of Congress*)



CHICAGO RACE RIOT, 1919 This graphic photo vividly conveys the horrifying reality of the racial violence that struck Chicago in July 1919. (*Chicago History Museum*)

arrest of hundreds of suspected communists and radicals. In December 1919, the government deported 249 Russian-born aliens, including Emma Goldman, a prominent lecturer and birth-control advocate.

On January 2, 1920, in a Justice Department dragnet coordinated by Wilson's politically ambitious Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer, federal marshals and local police raided the homes of suspected radicals and the headquarters of radical organizations in thirty-two cities. Without search warrants or arrest warrants, they arrested more than four thousand persons (some 550 were eventually deported) and seized a horde of papers. Boston police paraded arrested persons through the streets in handcuffs and chains and jammed them into unsanitary cells without formal charges or the opportunity to post bail.

Gripped by anticommunist hysteria, Palmer luridly described the menace he believed his raids had averted: "The blaze of revolution was sweeping over every American institution of law and order...eating its way into the homes of the American workman, its sharp tongues of revolutionary heat...licking at the altars of the churches,

leaping into the belfry of the school bell, crawling into the sacred corners of American homes...burning up the foundations of society."

The hysteria soon subsided. When a bomb exploded in New York City's financial district in September 1920, killing thirty-eight people, most Americans saw the deed as the work of an isolated fanatic, not evidence of approaching revolution.

The Election of 1920

As the 1920 election approached, the invalid Wilson, lost in fantasy, considered seeking a third term, but was dissuaded. Few heeded his call to make the election a "solemn referendum" on the League. "The bitterness toward Wilson is everywhere..." wrote a Democratic campaign worker; "he hasn't a friend."

The Democratic convention in San Francisco nominated James M. Cox, the mildly progressive governor of Ohio. As Cox's running mate they chose the young assistant secretary of the navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who possessed a potent political name.

The confident Republicans, meeting in Chicago, nominated Senator **Warren G. Harding** of Ohio, an amiable politician of little distinction. As one GOP leader observed, "There ain't any first raters this year... We got a lot of second raters, and Harding is the best of the second raters." For vice president, they chose Massachusetts governor Calvin Coolidge, who had won attention in 1919 with his denunciation of a Boston policemen's strike.

Harding's vacuous campaign speeches reminded one critic of "an army of pompous phrases moving over the landscape in search of an idea." But many voters welcomed his reassuring promise of a return to "normalcy," and he won in a landslide. Nearly a million citizens defiantly voted for socialist Eugene Debs, still imprisoned for his earlier antiwar speeches (see Table 22.1).

The election dashed all hope for American entry into the League of Nations. Senator Lodge expressed grim satisfaction that the voters had ripped "Wilsonism" up by the roots. The sense of high purpose Wilson had evoked in April 1917 seemed remote indeed as Americans turned to a new president and a new era.

TABLE 22.1 THE ELECTION OF 1920

Candidates	Parties	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote	Percentage Popular Votes
WARREN G. HARDING	Republican	404	16,143,407	60.4
James M. Cox	Democrat	127	9,130,328	34.2
Eugene V. Debs	Socialist		919,799	3.4
P. P. Christensen	Farmer-Labor		265,411	1.0

CHRONOLOGY

1899–1920

1899	First U.S. Open Door note seeking access to China market. Boxer Rebellion erupts in China.	1917 (Cont.)	War Risk Insurance Act authorizes payments to servicemen's dependents. NAACP march in New York City protests upsurge in lynchings. Bolsheviks seize power in Russia; Russia leaves the war. New York State passes woman-suffrage referendum. U.S. government operates the nation's railroads. Striking miners forcibly expelled from Bisbee, Arizona.
1900	Second U.S. Open Door note.	1918	Wilson outlines Fourteen Points. Sedition Amendment passed. Global influenza pandemic takes heavy toll in United States. National War Labor Board created. American forces see action at Château-Thierry, Belleau Wood, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne campaign. Republicans win control of both houses of Congress (November 5). Armistice signed (November 11).
1904	President Theodore Roosevelt proclaims "Roosevelt Corollary" to Monroe Doctrine.	1919	Eighteenth Amendment added to the Constitution (prohibition). Peace treaty, including League of Nations covenant, signed at Versailles. Supreme Court upholds silencing of war critics in <i>Schenck v. United States</i> . Upsurge of lynchings; racial violence in Chicago. Wilson suffers paralyzing stroke. Versailles treaty, with League covenant, rejected by Senate.
1905	Roosevelt mediates the end of the Russo-Japanese War.	1920	"Red raids" organized by Justice Department. Nineteenth Amendment added to the Constitution (woman suffrage). Warren G. Harding elected president.
1906	At the request of Roosevelt, San Francisco ends segregation of Asian schoolchildren. Panama Canal construction begins.		
1911	U.S.-backed revolution in Nicaragua.		
1912	U.S. Marines occupy Nicaragua.		
1914	U.S. troops occupy Veracruz, Mexico. Panama Canal opens. World War I begins. President Wilson proclaims American neutrality.		
1915	U.S. Marines occupy Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Woman's Peace Party organized. British liner <i>Lusitania</i> sunk by German U-boat. Wilson permits U.S. bank loans to Allies.		
1916	U.S. punitive expedition invades Mexico, seeking Pancho Villa. Germany pledges not to attack merchant ships without warning. Wilson reelected.		
1917	U.S. troops withdraw from Mexico. Germany resumes unrestricted U-boat warfare; United States declares war. Selective Service Act sets up national draft. War Industries Board, Committee on Public Information, and Food Administration created. Espionage Act passed.		

CONCLUSION

The early twentieth century saw intensifying U.S. involvement abroad. Focused initially on Latin America and Asia, this new globalism arose from a desire to export American values, promote U.S. business interests internationally, and extend the power of a newly confident, industrialized nation.

After initial neutrality, the nation's 1917 decision to enter the European war on the Allied side reflected a combination of cultural ties, economic interests, concern for neutral rights, and President

Wilson's dream of a transformed world order emerging from the carnage.

By conservative estimates, World War I cost 10 million dead. Included in this toll were 112,000 American soldiers—forty-nine thousand in battle and sixty-three thousand from disease, mostly influenza. The toll of dead and injured reflected new technologies of warfare, from U-boat torpedoes and primitive aerial bombs to tanks, poison gas, and deadlier machine guns. The Allies won, but Wilson's visionary hopes, including American membership in the new League of Nations, went unrealized.

The war had far-reaching social, political, and economic effects. It advanced some reforms, notably woman suffrage and the campaigns against prostitution and alcohol. As war measures, the government expanded its regulatory power over corporations and took steps to ensure workers' well-being and right to organize. These initiatives offered models that would prove influential in the future.

But in a larger sense, the war undermined progressivism's openness to new ideas, its larger commitment to social justice, and its humanitarian concern for society's most vulnerable members. As government propaganda encouraged ideological conformity and fear of radicalism, the reform impulse withered. The reactionary climate intensified in the early postwar era.

The war at least temporarily improved the economic prospects of many workers, farmers, blacks, and women, and enhanced the standing of the corporate executives, psychologists, public-relations specialists, and other professionals who contributed their expertise to the cause. Internationally, despite the wrangles that kept America out of the League of Nations, the conflict underscored America's new status as a world power, and left the nation's businesses and financial institutions poised for global expansion.

Some of these changes endured; others proved fleeting. Cumulatively, however, their effect was profound. The nation that celebrated the armistice in November 1918 was very different from the one that Woodrow Wilson had solemnly taken into battle only nineteen months earlier.

KEY TERMS

Boxer Rebellion (p. 665)

Open Door notes (p. 665)

Panama Canal (p. 666)

John J. Pershing (p. 668)

Selective Service Act (p. 672)

Commission on Training Camp

Activities (p. 672)

American Expeditionary

Force (p. 673)

War Industries Board (p. 673)

Committee on Public

Information (p. 679)

Espionage Act (p. 683)

Sedition Amendment (p. 683)

Nineteenth Amendment

(p. 685)

influenza pandemic (p. 686)

Eighteenth Amendment (p. 686)

War Labor Board (p. 687)

Bureau of War Risk

Insurance (p. 687)

Fourteen Points (p. 688)

Versailles Peace Conference

(p. 688)

League of Nations (p. 689)

Warren G. Harding (p. 692)

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