



AMERICAN HORIZONS

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Since 1865

U.S. HISTORY IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

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America and the Great War

21

1914-1920

In January 1918, American military units in France pounded German positions with artillery shells and bombs from airplanes. On impact, they disbursed thousands of copies of President Woodrow Wilson's just announced 14-Point Peace Plan. The **Committee on Public Information**, a government agency created in 1917 to "sell the war" at home and abroad, had the document translated into dozens of languages and distributed over 60 million copies worldwide.

Wilson called for replacing secret military alliances with "open diplomacy," reducing armaments, expanding world trade, promoting self-rule for Eastern Europe's many nationalities, and carrying out an "impartial adjustment of all colonial claims" by taking into account the rights of local people. To induce surrender, he promised to treat a democratic Germany fairly. Finally, the president spoke of creating a global "association of nations" to guarantee peace.

The president had taken the nation into war in April 1917 with the goal of crushing German militarism and making the world "safe for democracy." By 1918, he expanded the aims of war by speaking of "self-determination" for all people as an "imperative principle of action" that must guide the future. These ideas excited not only Poles, Finns, and Slavs who hoped to reconstitute their nations, but also Indians, Arabs, Chinese, Koreans, Africans, and other subject peoples who hoped to press the European and Japanese empires to grant at least gradual, if not immediate, independence to their colonies.

At the Paris Peace Conference during 1919, the victors agreed to create an independent Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and several other eastern European states from the defeated German, Hapsburg, and Russian empires.

< **Pershing's Crusaders** Poster advertising the U.S. government's first propaganda film promoting World War I as a 20th-century crusade.

CHAPTER 21 OUTLINE

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- > National Security and the Push Toward Americanization
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Lenin, leader of the new Bolshevik, or communist, regime taking form in Russia. Only world revolution, Lenin proclaimed, could end colonial oppression.

The “Wilsonian moment” began in 1917 with a burst of global support for American aims in World War I and ended in mid-1919 with the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty. Instead of waiting for liberation as a “gift,” emerging leaders such as Mao Zedong, Nguyen Tat Than (better known as Ho Chi Minh), and Mohandas Gandhi were determined to seize it. The immense destruction caused by global war, along with rising aspirations for freedom partly inspired by the United States, set in motion a revolutionary century whose forces are still at play.

But none of the Asian, African, or Middle Eastern delegations in Paris succeeded in winning concessions. Great Britain and France made clear they intended to retain all their existing colonies while dividing among themselves the former Ottoman lands in the Middle East. In Asia, the Japanese held on to Korea and parts of China seized before or during the war.

Disillusioned nationalists cried foul. Wilson, they concluded, had never intended the principle of equality and self-rule to apply to Asians, Arabs, Africans, and other people of color. By the summer of 1919, anticolonial demonstrations and uprisings occurred in China, India, Korea and Egypt. Moderate nationalists lost faith in democratic promises and found inspiration in Vladimir

MUCKRAKER John Reed—
Muckraking journalist and
American radical who reported
on and participated in the
Mexican and Russian revolutions.



THE SHOCK OF WAR

During the Great War of 1914–1918, combatants harnessed technology and science, along with millions of factory workers and peasants, to fight on a scale never before seen. Generals launched offensives to kill troops and seize territory and to bleed the enemy into surrendering by crippling the economy and starving civilians. Among the 65 million men mobilized to fight, the war killed between 8 and 10 million soldiers, disabled millions more, and led to the deaths of about seven million civilians who perished from persecution, disease, or starvation. The war caused the overthrow of monarchies in Germany and Austria-Hungary, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, and the replacement of the Russian czar by a revolutionary Communist government. The United States and Japan emerged from the carnage as major world powers.

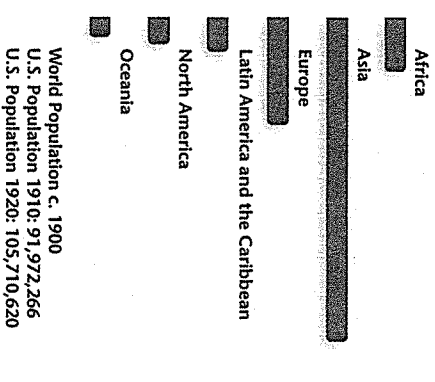
The United States joined the conflict during its final 19 months, from April 1917 through November 1918. American troops suffered 116,000 deaths (48,000 in combat, the rest from disease), or about 1.5 percent of the total military losses in the war. Yet actions taken by the United States from the moment the war began affected the outcome of that horrific struggle. Events in Europe also affected America's economy, politics, and social system.

The Colonial Origins of the Conflict

The late 19th and early 20th centuries experienced unprecedented globalization. Writing in 1919 about how the world looked in 1914, British economist John Maynard Keynes imagined a prosperous Londoner who could “order by telephone, sipping his morning tea in bed, the various products of the whole earth.” If he chose, he could invest in mines in Africa, railroads in the Americas, or plantations in Southeast Asia. Steamships carried immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe to the United States, Argentina, and Australia and Chinese and Indians to Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Prominent American progressives such as Jane Addams and William James forged links to European reformers and championed efforts to promote public health, women's suffrage, temperance, and the arbitration of international disputes. The nearly free flow of capital and goods, as well as ideas, appeared normal, permanent, and likely to improve. Before August 1914, Keynes wrote, the “turmoil of militarism and imperialism, of racial and cultural rivalries, of monopolies, restrictions, and exclusion” seemed distant threats. War, the popular British writer Norman Angell declared in his book *The Great Illusion*, had become unthinkable.

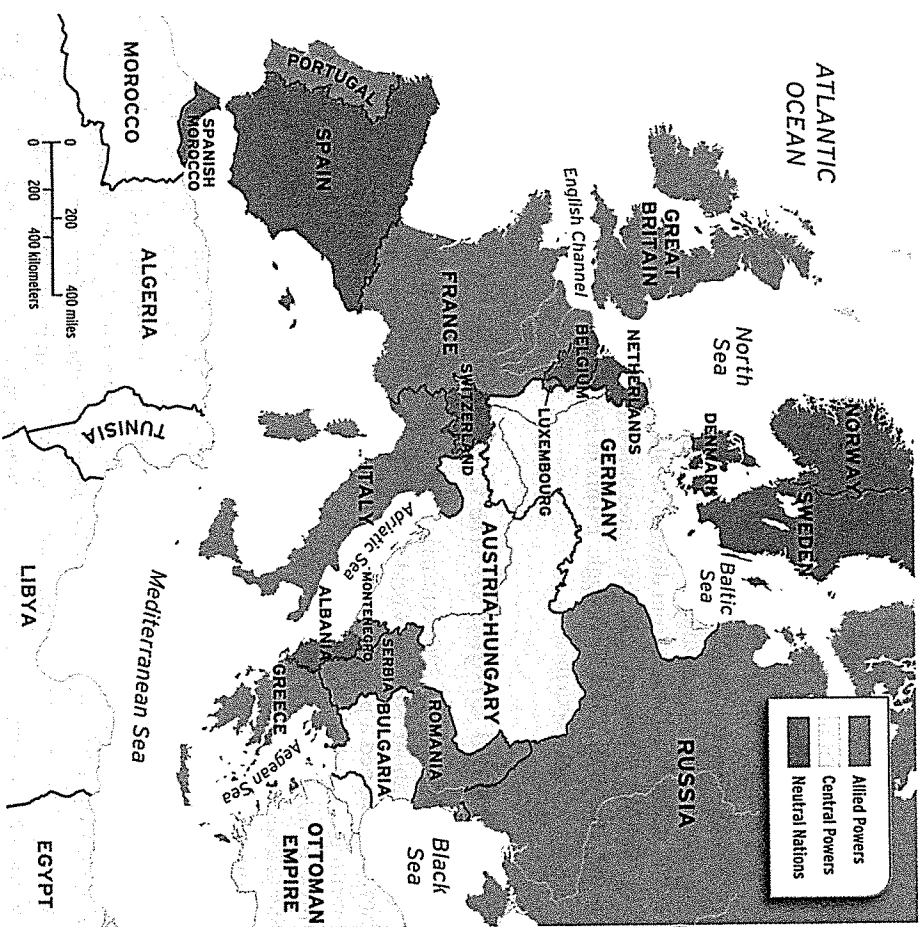
Despite such optimism, bitter national rivalries persisted. Major European powers along with Japan hoped to expand their holdings in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

POPULATION



Because most of the world was already under the control of one or another empire, acquiring new colonies meant grabbing one from a rival—as the United States had done by taking the Philippines and Puerto Rico from Spain in 1898. Competition for trade and territory sparked an arms race between nations such as Great Britain and Germany, each of whom sought to build dominant land and sea forces. To preserve a precarious balance of power in Europe and other parts of the world, each of these nations forged alliances with other states. This complex alliance system culminated as Great Britain, France, Russia, Japan, and (after the war began) Italy became known as the Allies; and Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Ottoman Turkey became known as the Central Powers (Map 21.1). As each coalition added a partner, the other felt threatened.

Strident nationalism—an extreme emphasis on national or ethnic identity—made the situation even more unstable. In the Balkans, various Slavic groups, such as Serbs and Croats, along with local Muslims contended for power as the Ottoman and



MAP 21.1 ▲ **European Political Boundaries before World War I** The German, Austro-Hungarian, Czarist, and Ottoman monarchies dominated most of Europe and the Middle East.

Austro-Hungarian empires lost their grip over the region. Rival nationalisms led to several small Balkan wars in the years leading up to the Great War. Some of the worst tension existed between independent Serbia, with visions of dominating the Balkans, and Austria-Hungary, which controlled Bosnia, a province with a large Serb minority.

In June 1914, a teenage Serb nationalist named Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Austrian heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, as he visited the city of Sarajevo in Bosnia. When Austria threatened retaliation against Serbia (which supported the terrorist group the Black Hand, to which Princip belonged), Russia pledged to defend its fellow Slavs in Serbia. Germany, which feared Russia's expanding reach in Europe as it industrialized, backed its German-speaking ally, Austria-Hungary. France had already allied itself with Russia to balance the threat it saw from Germany. Concerned that German military and industrial power would dominate Europe and threaten its overseas empire, Great Britain supported France and Russia against Germany. By August these rival coalitions mobilized their forces and rushed troops and heavy weapons by train to forward positions. Generals and political leaders convinced themselves that only by going on the offensive and striking first could they achieve a quick and certain victory.

Past predictions that world trade, the intertwined lineages of European royalty, and the interconnectedness of modern life made war between advanced nations unthinkable proved mistaken. So were assurances by European socialist and labor leaders that workers in, say, France would never take up arms against German workers. Capitalists and factory workers joined conservative and socialist politicians in most of Europe by enthusiastically supporting their own national armies.

A War of Attrition

In August 1914, German forces struck first, overrunning neutral Belgium to outflank French and British forces deployed in northern France. They seized much of eastern France, which they held for the next four years. To the east, German and Austrian armies inflicted major defeats on Russian and later Italian forces. American press accounts of the fighting focused mainly on Western Europe. However, the carnage on the Eastern and Southern European battlefields was at least as severe. During the first six months of combat in Western Europe, nearly 2 million soldiers were killed or wounded. In Italy later in the war, one-half of the entire army was killed or wounded for an advance of 12 miles into Austria. The scale of death was unprecedented, and battles descended into what Woodrow Wilson called a "vast, gruesome contest of systematized destruction."

German armies won most of the initial battles but failed to achieve the quick knockout blow that would enable Berlin to dictate peace terms. Instead, by the end of 1914, German, French, and British troops hunkered down in 400 miles of parallel trenches in eastern France stretching from Switzerland to the North Sea. Millions of frontline troops lived in these hellholes for weeks or months at a time.

Once the opposing armies settled in, battle followed battle with deadly repetition. In just a matter of hours, trains and motorized vehicles moved large numbers of soldiers and vast quantities of war supplies from factories toward the frontlines. Newly invented airplanes flew observation missions over the countryside. Offensives often began with one side's artillery pounding the trench line of the other for hours or even days. As artillery laid down a covering barrage, officers blowing whistles led their men "over the top" by the thousands to charge on foot across the few hundred yards of so called no man's land

WWI SOLDIERS WEARING GAS MASKS IN TRENCHES Terror weapons, such as poison gas, made soldiers' lives in the trenches hell.



that separated the parallel trench lines. Advancing infantry often became entangled in barbed wire barriers. At this point, enemy artillery and machine guns, most of which survived the bombardment, mowed down the attackers.

New weapons, such as machine guns, high explosive shells, and poison gas, made warfare especially lethal. Still, generals on both sides believed that throwing more and more men into combat, at whatever cost, would eventually overwhelm their foe. They could win by outlasting and outkilling the other side (Table 21.1).

The epic battles of 1914–1917 were seared into European consciousness. At the first Battle of the Marne in September 1914, about 250,000 men fell in both the German and French armies. During the siege of the French fortress of Verdun in 1916, casualties totaled nearly one million. Along the Somme battlefield, the war claimed around a million casualties all told. The killing on the Eastern front and in Italy was nearly as lethal (Map 21.2).

Soon, the ostensible causes of the struggle, such as Balkan rivalries, mattered less. Instead, leaders of the major warring nations anticipated a victory that would give them new territories and influence. They savored the thought of slicing up the Middle East, Africa, and parts of China.

America's Response to War

Prominent Americans often spoke of an obligation to serve as a model of peaceful capitalist progress. For nearly two decades, the United States had policed the Western hemisphere to prevent instability that might provoke European meddling. U.S. investments in Latin

Table 21.1 Deaths in World War I

Although the numbers are approximate, between 8 and 10 million soldiers died during World War I, along with about 7 million civilians.

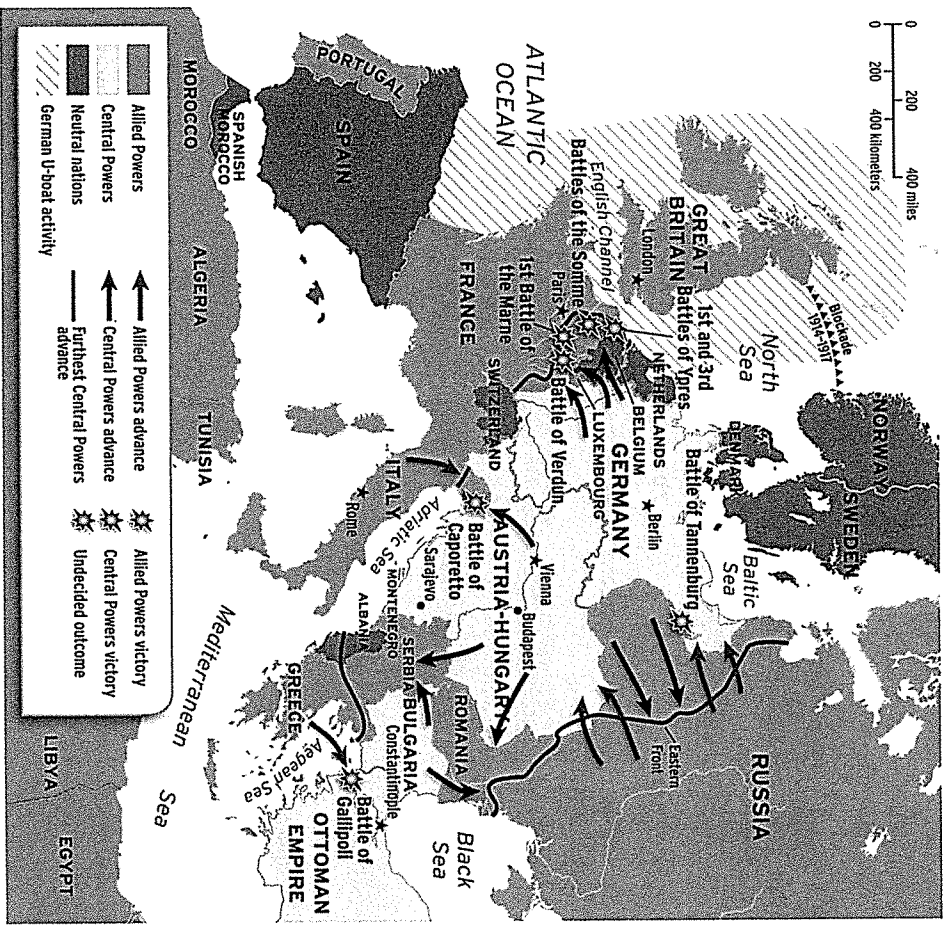
	Population (Millions)	Military (Millions)	Dead
Central Powers			
Austria-Hungary	52.0	7.8	1,200,000
Germany	67.0	11.0	1,800,000
Turkey		2.8	320,000
Bulgaria		1.2	90,000
Allies			
France	36.5	8.4	1,400,000
Britain	46.0	6.2	740,000
British Empire		2.7	170,000
Russia	164.0	12.0	1,700,000
Italy	37.0	5.6	460,000
United States	100.0	5.0	115,000

American mines, railroads, and plantations were a source of enormous profit; in addition, they were seen as a way to uplift and civilize what were often described as backward races. To distinguish these actions from that of other imperialist nations, Congress took pride in passage of the two Jones Acts of 1916 and 1917 that conferred partial rights of citizenship on the people of the Philippines and Puerto Rico, which it had seized from Spain in 1898.

Most Americans interpreted the war in Europe as proof of their own good sense in contrast to other people's violent passions. As an editorial in the *Grand Forks Herald* of North Dakota remarked on the murder of the Austrian heir, "to the world or to a nation . . . an archduke more or less makes little difference." Some American business interests saw the conflict as an opportunity to displace British and German exports to Latin America. President Woodrow Wilson reacted to the outbreak of fighting by issuing a neutrality declaration that called on Americans to stay neutral "in thought as well as in deed." Although Wilson admired Great Britain's democratic system, he considered all the warring nations partly at fault for their greed, competing alliances, and aggressive nationalism. He particularly detested Germany's militaristic stance and its effort to acquire new territories, which posed a threat to American interests in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Americans harbored a wide range of sentiment toward the warring powers. Those in the upper class identified closely with the British and French. At the same time, Irish, Eastern European, and German immigrants scoffed at the notion that Great Britain or Czarist Russia fought for democracy.

However, President Wilson, along with most business leaders, believed that American security and prosperity required maintaining close ties to the British and French.



MAP 21.2 ▲ **Battles of World War I** The battle lines of World War I stretched from the English Channel to the steppes of Russia, and from the North Sea to the Italian Alps. Many of the most destructive battles between 1914 and 1917 were fought along a front that ran through eastern France to northern Italy.

Since the Civil War, the export of grain, cotton, and minerals to Western Europe, and British investments in the United States, had provided the capital to spur economic growth. If the war in Europe stopped exports, the United States would suffer immense harm. Factory owners and mill workers, prosperous farmers and tenant sharecroppers, would all be hurt if the war closed down the Atlantic sea-lanes. As a sign of solidarity and with government approval, major New York banks loaned nearly \$2.5 billion (worth at least \$50 billion in 2014 dollars) to the British and French during the first two and one-half years of the war.

Appealing to both international law and self-interest, Wilson spoke for most Americans when he insisted that a neutral United States had the right to export nonmilitary goods

to all the warring powers and to have its citizens safely travel on passenger ships, including those owned by belligerent, or warring, nations. The country had no right to sell so-called contraband, items such as guns or munitions, to any of the belligerents. But the president believed it had every right to sell raw materials and nonmilitary products.

Britain's Royal Navy dominated the Atlantic Ocean from the time the war began. After eliminating German cargo ships, the Royal Navy imposed a blockade against all neutral shipping bound for German controlled ports in Europe. British warships either turned back or impounded cargo carried by neutral merchant ships, including U.S. vessels, attempting to deliver food or raw materials to Germany. This step made it impossible for Germany to import either food or raw materials—some of it bound for civilians as well as for war use—from neutrals such as the United States, even though the Allies could do so. Germany retaliated by declaring the waters around Britain and France a war zone and threatened to attack any ship, Allied or neutral, in the area.

At the start of the Great War, international law specified that when a naval vessel encountered an unarmed enemy cargo or passenger ship, it should be stopped, boarded, and its crew and passengers off-loaded—before it was sunk or seized. But the submarine or “U-boat,” a new weapon in the German arsenal, was effective only if it attacked without warning. A U-boat that surfaced to identify or board a cargo ship could easily be rammed or sunk by small-arms fire.

Wilson condemned British interference with U.S. merchant ships bound for German ports. But because the blockade did not kill Americans or destroy their property, the violations of international law elicited diplomatic protests—not threats of violent retaliation. In contrast, Germany's seemingly indiscriminate use of submarines to attack merchant ships shocked most Americans. In May 1915, a U-boat torpedoed the huge British liner *Lusitania*, en route from New York to England, in the Irish Sea. At the time, it was not known that the doomed ship carried in its hold weapons purchased in the United States. The attack killed 1,200 of the 2,000 passengers and crew, including 128 Americans. Newspaper headlines and many public officials condemned this as a “terrorist attack.” Rejecting advice from his own Secretary of State that Americans should not be selling goods to warring nations or traveling on their ships, President Wilson warned Germany that the United States would take action unless it ceased U-boat attacks on all civilian vessels.

In mid-1915, Germany possessed only about two dozen submarines, too few to stop all Atlantic shipping. Rather than risk war with the United States, the German government agreed to halt most U-boat attacks on merchant and passenger ships. But with an eye to the future, the German navy accelerated submarine construction. During 1915 and 1916, U-boats several times attacked British and French passenger ships, some of which caused American deaths. But when Wilson threatened to sever diplomatic relations with Germany, a prelude to a declaration of war by the United States, Germany again apologized and backed off.

Meanwhile, the continued fighting in Europe took a ghastly human and economic toll. To feed, equip, and move their armies, the Allies borrowed billions of dollars from American banks and used the funds to buy vital raw materials. In 1914, the value of goods that Britain and France bought from the United States totaled about \$754 million. By 1916, the value had more than tripled, to \$ 2.75 billion. With this influx of capital, the United States displaced Britain as the world's leading creditor nation, a rank it held until the 1980s. At the same time, because of the British blockade, Germany's transatlantic

purchases dwindled from \$345 million in 1914 to almost nothing by 1916. Enraged German leaders saw Wilson as a hypocrite for tacitly accepting the British naval blockade, which harmed civilians as well as soldiers, while condemning German naval warfare as piracy.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THE SHOCK OF WAR

1. What were the main causes of the Great War?
2. What new technologies made the war so deadly?
3. How did U.S. economic policy and trade affect the war in Europe?

THE U.S. PATH TO WAR, 1914–1917

Between August 1914 and the spring of 1917, the United States maneuvered to stay out of the European conflict even while it benefited from what it saw as the world's folly. Divided economic interests, ethnic loyalties, and partisan politics pulled at the fabric of American society. Strident nationalists criticized Wilson for not confronting Germany more forcefully or providing greater encouragement to the Allies. America must rearm, they cried, to avoid or win an eventual war. Progressive social reformers complained that military spending and growing intolerance toward immigrants and labor unions undercut the progress made in recent years in creating a more just society and mitigating the untrammeled power of corporations. President Wilson tried to placate both camps while attempting to mediate an end to the slaughter across the Atlantic. Partly to demonstrate his determination to defend national interests, he sent military forces to intervene in internal disorders in both Haiti and Mexico. The results of those limited military campaigns foretold some of the difficulties faced by Americans when they entered the European war and tried to formulate a lasting peace.

National Security and the Push Toward Americanization

Former president and Republican presidential hopeful Theodore Roosevelt typified those who accused Wilson of endangering the nation by leaving it a weak and vulnerable target for Germany or other aggressors. Roosevelt issued calls for the federal government to boost military preparedness, drastically restrict new immigration, and implement compulsory “Americanization” programs to curb the influence of ethnic groups whose loyalty could not be counted on. He described Wilson’s effort to stay out of the war as the actions of a coward who pursued a policy of “national emasculation.” War was described as a test of “manliness.”

Roosevelt’s allies, such as Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and General Leonard Wood, supported nongovernmental organizations such as the Immigration Restriction League, the National Security League, and the American Defense Society, which warned against foreign threats and advocated military training for young men along with efforts to enforce proper “social order” among working class and ethnic

Americans. Wealthy donors funded private training of college students at a camp in Plattsburgh, New York, in hopes that they would become future officers. Several thousand Americans joined the Canadian, French, and Italian armed forces.

In 1914, a group of wealthy industrialists, including auto manufacturer Henry Ford, members of the chemical producing DuPont family, and railroad magnate E. F. Harriman, organized the National Americanization Committee to promote what they called the "civilian side of national defense." They pushed to "Americanize" Eastern and Southern European immigrants by teaching English to nonnative speakers; promoting Protestant social and religious values among these largely Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish groups; and encouraging Prohibition. These industrialists championed "race consciousness," the notion that white Anglo-Saxons and "Nordics" (northern Europeans) had to defend themselves against inferior racial groups. In 1916, Madison Grant expressed this idea in a popular book, *The Passing of the Great Race*, which warned of a sea of swarthy immigrants that would swamp white America. Pro-defense, anti-immigrant advocates insisted that sympathy for Great Britain was patriotic, but pro-German sentiment was anti-American. Partly to refute charges of labor's disloyalty, and also to limit the ranks of the unskilled who competed for jobs, Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and himself an immigrant, joined those calling for strict limits on immigration. He complained that the "low-wage races" of Eastern Europe undermined the livelihood of Americans.

Unlike Roosevelt and his circle, progressive reformers such as the philosopher John Dewey and peace activist and social worker Jane Addams rejected the insinuation that immigrants were disloyal and praised the diverse origins and cultural pluralism of the American population. Some progressives reacted to the call for a military buildup by organizing the American Union Against Militarism, which opposed talk of a peacetime draft and calls to enter the war on the side of the Allies.

Social Reform, the Election of 1916, and Challenges to Neutrality

Appalled by the carnage in Europe, President Wilson and several prominent private citizens pursued unsuccessful peace initiatives during 1915 and 1916. Henry Ford chartered an ocean liner, dubbed the Peace Ship, to sail to Europe to urge a cease fire. Wilson early in 1916 sent his close aide, Edward M. House, to London, Paris, and Berlin to discuss a possible settlement. But neither side had much interest in American mediation. Meanwhile, the grim news from Europe affected the presidential campaign of 1916. The Republicans rejected the divisive Theodore Roosevelt in favor of a unifying figure, former New York governor and current Supreme Court Justice Charles Evans Hughes.

Wilson insisted that his record showed him to be strong on both defense and social reform. He backed up the claim by pressing Congress to pass the National Defense Act of 1916, which doubled the size of the army to 200,000 men. Wilson created a new federal agency, the Council for National Defense, to coordinate the nation's response to the war in Europe. The magazine *The New Republic*, one of the most influential voices for social reform, applauded what they saw as Wilson's balanced preparedness campaign and urged him to organize a "league for peace" that might eventually intervene to stop the war.

To further bolster his standing among progressives in both parties before the November election, Wilson secured congressional approval of the Keating-Owen Act

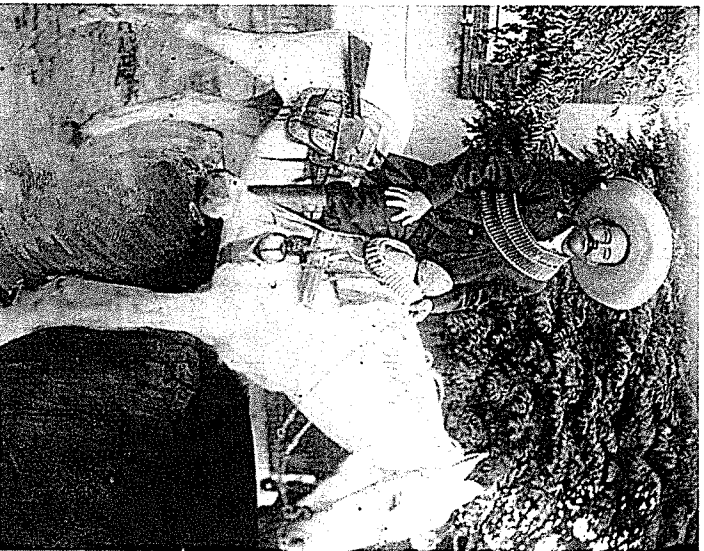
limiting child labor and the Adamson Act granting railroad workers an eight-hour work day. The Tax Act of 1916 increased levies on the wealthy in accord with the just ratified Sixteenth Amendment, which permitted a graduated income tax. These legislative accomplishments—along with a snappy reelection slogan, “He Kept Us Out of War!”—helped Wilson win a narrow victory in November.

Intervention in Latin America

President Wilson also demonstrated his commitment to national security by deploying military force in the Caribbean and Latin America. He sent Marines and naval vessels to intervene in Nicaragua, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba, where internal power struggles threatened American investments and the repayment of past loans.

Disorder in Haiti, the mostly black republic that shared the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic, especially worried Americans. The United States had few commercial interests in Haiti, but Wilson worried that its chaotic political and economic problems might tempt Germany to seize a naval base that could threaten U.S. control of the recently completed Panama Canal. (Similar concern later prompted the Wilson administration to purchase the Danish West Indies, better known as the Virgin Islands, in 1917.) When in 1915, Haitians resisted a U.S. plan to take over and stabilize the country's finances, Wilson dispatched 300 Marines to seize key locations. In addition to the perceived German threat, Wilson justified his action by labeling nonwhite countries as living in the “childhood of political development.” Advanced powers,

PHOTOGENIC GENERAL The flamboyant and elusive Gen. Francisco “Pancho” Villa strikes a pose for photographers.



he maintained, had the right, even the duty, to manage their progress. In 1918, when Haitians rose up against the foreign presence, Wilson sent a larger force. About 2,000 Haitians died fighting the Americans. During the occupation, U.S. officials wrote a constitution for Haiti, supervised construction of some roads and schools, and retained military control of the country until 1934.

The Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910 and continued for a decade, posed greater challenges to the United States. Fighting between various armed factions pushed hundreds of thousands of Mexicans into the American Southwest. In 1911, a coalition of Mexicans overthrew the long-serving dictator, Porfirio Diaz, who had welcomed foreign investors into the mining, oil, railroad, and agricultural sectors. His successor, a reformer named Francisco Madero, questioned the validity of foreign-owned mineral resources and the large landholdings of the Catholic Church. Just as Wilson took office in 1913, one of Diaz's former generals, Victoriano Huerta, seized power and, with what many Mexicans believed was the tacit approval of the U.S. ambassador, murdered Madero.

Wilson, in fact, supported the goals of moderate reform in Mexico and was stunned by Madero's murder. He denounced Huerta as a "butcher" and undertook various efforts to drive him out and bring to power moderate reformers who would stabilize the country and cooperate with the United States. His larger goal, Wilson told friends, was to "teach the South American Republics to elect good men."

Like many Americans, Wilson's understanding of events in Mexico was influenced by graphic accounts published by John Reed in *Metropolitan Magazine*. Reed, the adventurous son of a wealthy Oregon family and recent Harvard graduate, rode on horseback beside Francisco "Pancho" Villa, a sometime bandit, sometime revolutionary, who led a band of peasant insurgents in northern Mexico. He described a battalion of 2,000 Indian-looking soldiers, many of them teenagers, who galloped into battle, "their serapes flying out behind, their mouths one wild yell." Whatever the rebels lacked in discipline, they made up for in spirit. Reed quoted one of Villa's lieutenants as predicting "when we win the revolution" Mexico "will be governed by [ordinary people] not the rich."

Reed's stories were reprinted in a popular book, *Insurgent Mexico* (1914) and became the basis for a movie, "The Life of General Villa," which combined real battle scenes with recreations filmed in Bakersfield, California, with a cast of thousands, many of them refugees from the fighting south of the border. Wilson consulted with the young journalist about how to respond to the Mexican revolution, and for a while, at least, agreed to support Villa and his "people's insurgency."

In April 1914, as part of the effort to force Huerta from power and to prevent a shipment of German weapons from reaching him, Wilson ordered naval forces to occupy the city of Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico. The fighting there killed 126 Mexicans and 19 Americans. A few months later, after Huerta fled Mexico, the path to power opened for Venustiano Carranza, leader of the reformist Constitutionalist Party. Although he was pleased to be rid of Huerta, Wilson found Carranza's talk of nationalizing foreign-owned land and mineral rights deeply disturbing, especially if Mexico served as a model for other developing Latin American countries.

As a counter to Carranza, Wilson gave tentative backing to Pancho Villa. In spite of this assistance, Carranza's army defeated Villa and pushed his remaining forces north toward the U.S. border. After Wilson cut off aid to Villa, he retaliated in March 1916 by attacking the town of Columbus, New Mexico, and killing 19 Americans. Villa went on to raid several other border towns between Arizona and Texas. He hoped,

it seems, to provoke U.S. retaliation and then gain renewed popular support among Mexicans by resisting the Yankee invaders.

Wilson, stung by critics who accused him of failing to defend American soil, dispatched nearly 12,000 troops under the command of General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing to subdue Villa. During the next nine months, Pershing futilely chased the "bandit general" deeper into Mexico. Eventually, American troops clashed with Mexican soldiers sent north by Carranza, who guessed that Pershing's hunt for Villa was actually a pretext to defend foreign oil leases against Mexican plans to nationalize them. German spies in Mexico who witnessed the bungled campaign to catch Villa assured Berlin that American soldiers would be ineffective if they fought in Europe.

In July 1916, to avert a wider war that neither wanted, Wilson and Carranza agreed to submit grievances to a joint commission. By early 1917, when negotiations deadlocked, the confrontation with Germany pushed Mexican problems aside. Germany, hoping to starve Britain and France of American supplies, declared its intention to unleash its U-boats against all shipping in the Atlantic.

Decision for War

By the end of 1916, the European conflict had become a total war. John Reed, now reporting on the war for the left-wing magazine, *New Masses*, recounted the sickening slaughter. In place of dashing Mexican rebels, he described endless corpses with "holes torn in bodies with jagged pieces of melinite shells . . . sounds that make you deaf . . . gases that destroy eyesight . . . wounded men dying day by day and hour by hour within forty yards of 20,000 human beings who won't stop killing each other long enough to gather them up." Nearly all able-bodied men had been drafted to replenish the ranks of the fallen; most industrial production went to the war effort; and military commanders overshadowed civilian leaders. In Germany, for example, the military high command, rather than the weak civilian government or even Kaiser Wilhelm, made all key decisions.

The German general staff feared that the British sea blockade would soon starve both troops and civilians, making it impossible to continue fighting. They hoped, however, that if the navy unleashed its now expanded submarine force of 120 U-boats against all merchant shipping in the Atlantic, they could starve Britain and France and initiate a win-the-war ground offensive before the United States became much of a military factor in Europe. The plan carried grave risks but presented the only chance for victory. On January 31, 1917, Germany informed the United States that it intended to order its U-boats to sink any American ships supplying the Allies.

As part of their gamble, German strategists hoped to incite war between Mexico and the United States and thereby limit America's ability to fight in Europe. In mid-January, German undersecretary for foreign affairs Arthur Zimmermann cabled instructions to the German ambassador in Mexico City to propose to Carranza that if Mexico joined Germany in a war against the United States, a victorious Germany would return to Mexico the lost territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.

Wisely, the Mexican government shunned this proposal. But British intelligence agents had intercepted the so-called Zimmermann Telegram, held it for a month, and then passed it to American officials in late February 1917, just as German U-boats were poised to resume their attacks on all shipping. Evidence of Germany's deceit and designs on U.S. territory outraged Americans. Wilson ordered the arming of American

merchant ships and awaited the inevitable U-boat attacks. In late March, German submarines sank five American ships, killing dozens of sailors and wounding many more. On April 2, 1917, Wilson asked Congress to declare war against the German autocracy and militarism that had unleashed what he described as unprovoked attacks on American lives and property. The United States, he declared, fought not for territory or material gain but to create a "world made safe for democracy." Despite concerns voiced by some progressives in Congress that war would kill reform, on April 6, 82 senators voted for war and just 6 voted against. In the House, the vote was 373 to 50.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THE U.S. PATH TO WAR, 1914–1917

1. How did Wilson prepare the country for war?
2. Why did the United States intervene in the Mexican Revolution?
3. Why did Germany choose to risk war with the United States in 1917?

AMERICA AT WAR

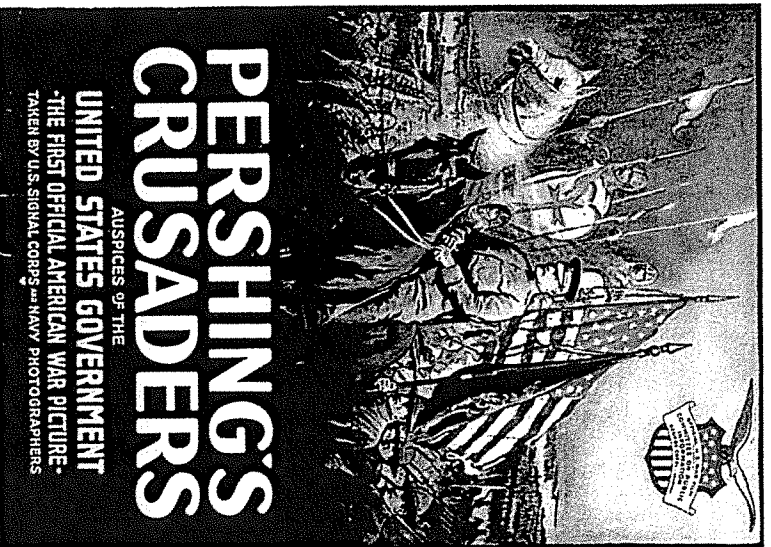
The decision to fight shaped both domestic policies and the international role of the United States. After April 1917, the nation raised an army of five million men in a year and dramatically increased military and financial assistance to the Allies. Although American troops did not "win" the war, they played a critical role by bolstering the Allies and rebuffing the last German offensive. During the war, the federal government assumed a major role in managing the economy, mobilized public opinion in support of the war, and began planning for an expanded role in the world community. The eventual disillusion felt by many of the war's initial supporters affected the international policies of the United States for two decades after the victory over Germany.

Mobilizing People and Ideas

The federal government worked hard to generate enthusiasm for the war. Wilson appointed the progressive journalist, George Creel, to head the Committee on Public Information (CPI), an agency tasked with promoting the war at home and abroad as a democratic crusade. Creel and his staff saw their task as "selling" the war to consumers and used innovative marketing methods to accomplish this. CPI provided newspapers and magazines with rewritten war information and distributed pamphlets, books, cartoons, posters, billboards, and even films directly to the public. The materials were presented in multiple languages and formats to appeal to recent immigrants and specific subgroups of Americans, such as workers, farmers, adolescents, and so forth. CPI also opened information bureaus in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to communicate directly to millions of people abroad. Foreign journalists were also brought on study tours to the United States.

Creel recruited thousands of volunteer "Four Minute Men" to deliver patriotic talks at public gatherings, screen pro-war films at nearly all movie theaters, and distribute

FILM PROPAGANDA Recruiting poster for the U.S. Army announcing release of the first World War I morale film, *Pershing's Crusaders*.



posters that often portrayed German soldiers as fanged beasts or apes. Pro-war posters often depicted Allied soldiers as medieval Christian knights.

Many leading Progressives such as educator and philosopher John Dewey, journalist Walter Lippmann, women's rights campaigner Carrie Chapman Catt, along with George Creel, became formal or informal employees of wartime federal agencies. The nation's foremost African American intellectual, NAACP founder and editor of the *Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois, expressed hope that the war overseas for democracy would improve race relations at home. When Treasury Secretary William Gibbs McAdoo announced a series of "liberty loan" bond drives to raise money for the war, women's clubs and labor unions joined the sales effort, which raised about \$16 billion of the \$24 billion cost of the war. In addition to direct defense expenditures, the U.S. government—supplanting the role of private banks—loaned the Allies \$11 billion, more than \$200 billion in today's value.

To enlist support from college students, the Wilson administration created a Student Army Training Corps (SATC)—forerunner of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at 500 colleges. Professors helped federal officials to develop a national "war issues course" whose syllabus stressed the "supreme importance to civilization of the cause for which we are fighting." These wartime offerings evolved into the "Western civilization" sequence taught at most American colleges for the remainder of the 20th century.

Social scientists also helped the war effort. Psychologist Robert M. Yerkes persuaded the War Department that he could develop an intelligence test that sorted out

the most gifted recruits from those mentally unfit for service. Commissioned as an army major, Yerkes created standardized "IQ" tests. The test results were interpreted as proof that native-born whites were smarter than African Americans or Eastern and Southern European immigrants, many of whom Yerkes classified as "morons." These flawed studies were cited to justify emergency wartime immigration restrictions and, after the war ended, became a basis to establish strict quotas against "undesirables."

Controlling Dissent

As the United States mobilized millions of soldiers to protect victims of German aggression, it began restricting many of those victims from entering this country. Anti-German sentiment often became redirected at recent immigrants, pacifists, and labor activists. Even as naval warfare stopped most transatlantic immigration, Congress moved to exclude groups now dubbed "undesirables." By an overwhelming vote in 1917, it passed the Literacy Act, a law barring the entry of any persons unable to read in their own language. Other restrictive legislation included the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Trading with the Enemy and Seditious Acts of 1918. These laws expanded the definition of treason to prohibit most public and private utterances of words or ideas deemed interference with the war effort. The U.S. Post Office adopted a censorship program that banned delivery of letters, magazines, or newspapers that questioned the justice of the war and the draft or criticized America's allies. The Justice Department and local authorities accused organizations and individuals of subversion if they spoke against the war. Former heroes such as Jane Addams and antiwar Representative Jeannette Rankin were ridiculed as "a couple of foolish virgins" for questioning the nation's foreign policy.

Federal or state authorities arrested over 2,000 war critics and sentenced 1,200 of them to prison. Among those convicted for criticizing the draft and the "capitalist" war that benefited "plutocrats" and killed workers were Socialist Party and labor union leaders Eugene Debs and William D. "Big Bill" Haywood. Sometimes unintentional critics suffered the government's wrath. For example, movie producer Robert Goldstein received a 10-year prison sentence for "attempting to cause insubordination in the armed forces" by releasing a film about the American Revolution called the *Spirit of '76* in which British Redcoats were depicted as the enemy.

Despite such incidents, one measure of the war's underlying popularity was the large voluntary network that assisted the Justice Department. This included 250,000 members of the American Protective League (APL), which had branches in most cities. APL "special agents" wearing official-looking badges opened mail, wiretapped telephone conversations, and conducted raids against newspapers and bookstores. APL members formed squads looking for slackers, a term applied to young men who avoided the draft. In one raid in New York City in 1918, APL vigilantes rounded up 50,000 suspects. Raids also took place in Chicago and other cities.

German Americans and German culture were frequently targeted by vigilantes. Delicatessen owners were ordered to rename sauerkraut "liberty cabbage" and frankfurters "liberty sausages." Symphony orchestras were threatened with boycotts if they played the works of German composer Ludwig van Beethoven. Half of the states passed laws banning speaking German in public or over the telephone and forbade teaching it in schools.

The Civil Liberties Bureau, a predecessor of the American Civil Liberties Union, challenged these repressive activities without much success. In 1919, after the war

ended, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the constitutionality of the Espionage Act in the case of *Schenck v. United States*. Schenck had been convicted for distributing anti-draft pamphlets and had challenged this as a violation of his free speech rights. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., wrote that the Constitution did not protect the "clear and present danger" posed by "a man falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic." In the related case of *Abrams v. United States*, the court ruled that in wartime, no citizen had the blanket right to criticize the government or advocate a strike by munitions workers.

Mobilizing the Economy

Mobilizing the economy for war production proved challenging. In 1917, production for the Allies and for the first phase of domestic rearmament meant that factories already operated near full capacity. The War Department relied on outmoded procurement methods that created production and transport bottlenecks. Food, munitions, coal, and other vital supplies were often stuck at depots for weeks while ships waited idly for cargo. To remedy this, the federal government created new regulatory agencies with broad powers over the economy. These included the War Industries Board, the Railroad Administration, the Food Administration, and the Fuel Administration. Many of those chosen to oversee regulatory boards were business executives hired by the government for nominal salaries and dubbed "dollar-a-year-men."

Just as the citizen's groups assisted the Justice Department in rooting out war opponents, private organizations promoted production. Among these was the Woman's Land Army. It worked with the Department of Labor to mobilize as farmhands over 20,000 young, single women, many of them enrolled in college and active in suffrage and other reform movements. Dubbed "farmerettes," they moved from cities to rural areas where they plowed fields, drove farm equipment, and harvested crops on farms throughout the nation.

To mobilize workers in support of the war, Wilson created the National War Labor Policies Board. It drew membership primarily from the ranks of pro-war unions such as the AFL. The board discouraged strikes and pressed workers to forego some benefits in return for pledges of full employment at wages above peacetime levels.

Some unions rejected patriotic appeals. Especially in the West, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a labor union that reached out to unskilled workers, led strikes in mining towns such as Bisbee, Arizona, to demand higher wages. They complained that whereas large companies profited hugely from military contracts, workers received token increases. Local vigilantes, mine guards, and federal agents responded violently. During the summer of 1917, for example, over 1,000 striking IWW miners were rounded up, placed in railroad box cars, and abandoned in the New Mexico desert. Most survived the ordeal after being rescued by sympathetic ranchers. Meanwhile, copper production continued in Bisbee.

Women Suffragists

The war created special challenges and opportunities for women. As five million men entered military service and most immigration ceased, paid employment opportunities expanded for women and minorities who had usually been relegated to work in agriculture, service jobs, or as household domestics. However, politically active women had for decades



VOTING RIGHTS Suffragists demonstrate in front of the White House in 1917, trying to shame President Wilson into supporting a woman's right to vote.

created an array of local, state, and national organizations to promote suffrage. By 1917, 11 states, nearly all in the West, allowed women to vote. In the House, the first woman was elected to Congress, Republican Jeanette Rankin of Montana. Wilson weakly favored women's suffrage but did not press Congress to pass a constitutional amendment, arguing that the right to vote was a state, not a federal, issue. Of course, by insisting that voting rights were a state prerogative, Congress and the president could dodge the controversial problem posed by the many states that barred voting not only by women but also by African Americans.

Women's organizations, including the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), endorsed the war in the hope that their support would also build national support for voting rights. NAWSA leaders pointed out that millions of women had assumed new and vital roles in manufacturing, transportation, agriculture, and government bureaus. Nearly 25,000 women served as Army nurses in Europe. Thousands of others drove ambulances, staffed canteens for soldiers in the field, or worked as military clerks. More radical suffragists, such as National Women's Party founder Alice Paul, defied bans on demonstrations by staging vigils in front of the White House with signs ridiculing talk of a democratic war in a country that barred half its population from voting.

The political winds shifted in favor of suffrage when in 1917, New York State granted women the vote. Finally embarrassed by charges that he failed to honor his ideals about self-determination, Wilson in 1918 endorsed a suffrage amendment that Congress soon passed and sent on to the states for ratification. By August 1920, enough states ratified the Nineteenth Amendment to allow women to vote in that year's presidential election. British suffragists also used the war as a mobilizing tool in their reform campaign; and by 1918, most British women won the right to vote.

The Great Migration

The wartime economic boom, the millions of men who entered military service, and the cessation of transatlantic immigration created labor shortages that pulled African Americans out of the rural South. Around a half million blacks quit agricultural work

and domestic labor to seek jobs in Southern and Northern cities in a diaspora that contemporaries called the Great Migration. Black-oriented newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender* called this an “Exodus” comparable to the ancient Hebrews fleeing slavery in Egypt. Sharecroppers who made about 50 cents a day left for factory jobs that paid \$3 per day.

The migrants headed for cities such as Atlanta, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, and New York. Some were specifically recruited by factory owners as strikebreakers, fueling white, working class hostility to the new arrivals. Racism, along with competition for scarce housing and better paying jobs, contributed to major outbreaks of violence during and just after the war. Race riots occurred in East St. Louis in 1917, in rural Arkansas in 1919, and in Chicago in 1919. In each of these incidents, dozens of blacks were killed and thousands were left homeless. In the aftermath of the violence in East St. Louis, the NAACP organized a silent protest in which 8,000 black demonstrators in New York marched to the sound of muffled drums, carrying signs that resembled those of the Suffragists, asking “Mr. President, Why Not Make America Safe for Democracy?”

African American leaders and organizations such as W. E. B. Du Bois and the NAACP supported the war despite Wilson’s dismissal of blacks as an “inferior race.” They hoped that the struggle for democracy abroad would spur progress at home. Du Bois urged black Americans to set aside their “special grievances” and “close . . . ranks with . . . white fellow citizens.” In the future, Du Bois believed, black veterans would become domestic freedom fighters. Wartime service, many black leaders hoped, would promote reforms giving the “American Negro . . . the right to vote and the right to work and the right to live without insult.” A war for democracy, they believed, would also help people of color around the world. For example, in 1918, Du Bois wrote in the *Crisis* that “this war is an end and also a beginning. Never again will darker people of the world occupy just the place they had before.” The war, he predicted, would help create an independent China, self-governing India and Egypt, and “an Africa for the Africans.”

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR AMERICA AT WAR

1. How did the U.S. government “sell” the war to the public and was it successful?
2. What methods did the government use to boost war production?
3. What legal and informal means did the government use to silence war critics?

OVER THERE

The U.S. Army numbered about 200,000 men in April 1917, a tiny fraction of the size of its enemies. Over the next 19 months, it grew to over five million men. To achieve this extraordinary growth, the government encouraged volunteers and Congress passed a selective service (draft) law that required men aged 18 to 31 to register with local draft boards that determined who would be conscripted, or drafted, into service.

Under the command of General John J. Pershing, the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) trained, transported to France, and led into battle millions of men—dubbed

doughboys—drawn from all walks of life. Training camps taught both moral and physical lessons to recruits before they entered the hell of trench warfare. The AEF entered the war at a critical time, just as Germany launched a massive offensive to break the deadlock on the western front. Their arrival in France, along with the increased military aid to the Allies that accompanied them, blunted the German onslaught. Americans not only faced death on the battlefield but suffered the ravages of a little understood influenza pandemic that killed about as many of them as did enemy bullets.

Building an Army

To promote enlistment, the War Department distributed millions of posters and pamphlets encouraging voluntary service. These included an iconic image of Uncle Sam saying “I Want You,” images of U-boat victims and children mutilated by German troops, and a poster of a winsome young woman dressed in a sailor’s suit declaring “Geell! I Wish I Were a Man—I’d Join the Navy.” Some posters were quite gruesome, including one of a Belgian woman crucified against a wall with blood dripping down her body.

For those not sufficiently motivated to enlist, there was the draft. About 24 million men registered, an overwhelming percentage of those required to, and about 10 percent of these were chosen by local boards to enter military service. The law permitted the 65,000 “conscientious objectors” who opposed war on religious grounds to perform noncombat work as medics or orderlies in hospitals. However, those who refused to do so because their beliefs did not permit any cooperation with the military were labeled “enemies of the republic” and given stiff prison sentences.

About 70 percent of the five million Americans in uniform were native-born whites, one-fifth foreign born, and nearly 10 percent African Americans. All of the nearly 400,000 blacks served in segregated units, mostly in labor battalions under white officers. Only 1,000 blacks received officer rank.

French civilian and military authorities, who had long relied on service by their own African colonial troops, resented efforts by American officers to enforce rigid segregation on foreign soil. U.S. officers insisted that the French military *not* treat black soldiers as equals, never praise them in front of white troops, and keep them away from white French women.

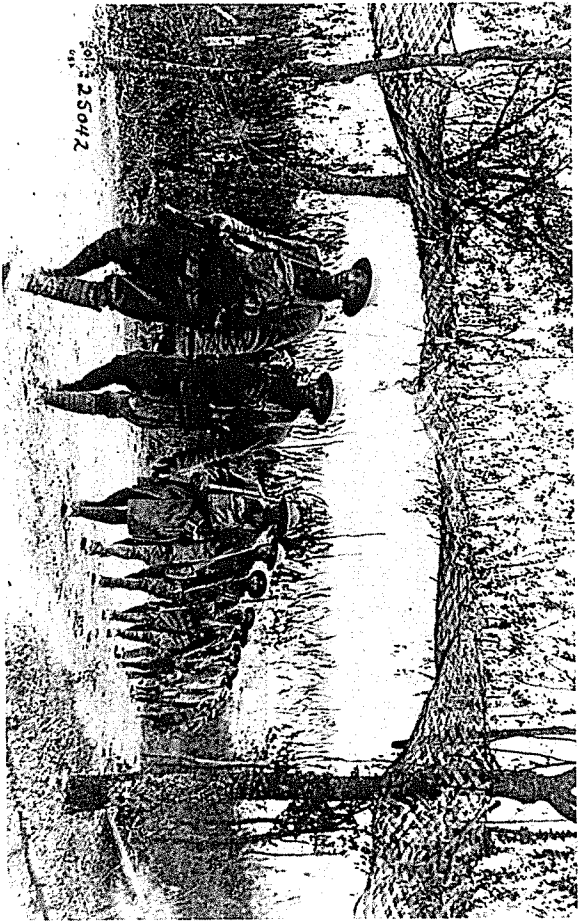
The War Department and voluntary groups such as the YMCA that worked closely with conscripts during their training and deployment often appeared more concerned about the troops’ moral health than with their fighting aptitude. In U.S. training camps and later in France, many young men frequented brothels during their time off. Patriots condemned beer, especially when brewed by companies founded by German immigrants, as a product unfit for real Americans. AEF commander General Pershing, who himself had taken a French mistress, declared brothels off limits to U.S. troops and threatened to court martial soldiers infected with venereal disease because the affliction had debilitated so many of them. French officials considered the U.S. obsession with sex, alcohol, and segregation bizarre. To protect soldiers’ health and calm American fears, French Premier Georges Clemenceau offered to create medically inspected brothels for use by American troops. Astounded by this proposal, Secretary of War Newton Baker told an aide, “for God’s sake . . . don’t show this to the President or he’ll stop the war.” Army and YMCA officials fretted that soldiers returning from Europe might transmit

“degenerate” French sexual practices. Ultimately, better hygiene and threats of court martial reduced infection rates.

With access to alcohol and women restricted, tobacco—especially cigarettes—became a common vice among soldiers. Before the war, most tobacco was either chewed or smoked in cigars. Sixteen states had previously outlawed cigarettes as a health threat. Antialcohol groups planned to begin a national antismoking crusade, dubbed “Nicotine Next,” once Congress and the states ratified the Eighteenth Amendment. But in the trenches, soldiers enjoyed the camaraderie of a quick smoke. General Pershing declared cigarettes as vital for the troops as bullets and issued an appeal for Americans to send “smokes” to the boys. Groups such as the YMCA, Red Cross, and Salvation Army, which had condemned cigarettes as a moral and health hazard, became the largest tobacco distributors in the world during the war. This led one frustrated anticigarette crusader to publish a pamphlet titled *Kaiser Nicotine*, predicting that over time, tobacco would kill more soldiers than would German bullets.

Joining the Fight

General Pershing insisted that American troops deployed in Europe fight as freestanding units under U.S. command—not as replacements for badly depleted French and British ranks. Pershing made one major exception to this rule, granting the French request to have the 92nd Division of black troops fight alongside their soldiers. Elements of the 92nd Division spent more days in battle than any other American unit during the war. But when French officers presented these brave soldiers with medals, Pershing chastised them for “spoiling the Negroes.”



AFRICAN AMERICAN “DOUGHBOYS” ON PATROL IN FRANCE, 1918 Unlike most of their peers, this unit was armed for combat and not confined to service work.

American troops, like their European counterparts, discovered that life in the trenches was cold, wet, and terrifying. Food rations often failed to reach frontline soldiers, and they frequently had to drink rainwater collected in shell holes, spreading dysentery. After German mustard gas attacks, many men suffered temporary blindness. Nearly all those in the trenches were covered by lice. The term "basket case" entered the language in reference to soldiers who had lost limbs and were confined to a basket in a hospital.

By the end of the war, about 100,000 American soldiers were admitted to field hospitals suffering from what doctors then called "shell shock." The symptoms, already common among British and French troops, included staring eyes or a frozen, terrified look; violent tremors; and cold and sometimes blue extremities. Some victims became blind, hysterical, or paralyzed. Doctors suspected that high explosive shells rattling the brain caused the condition. In addition, emotional strain caused by long periods in the trenches alternating with intense combat took its toll. In Vietnam and later wars, these symptoms are often called post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. About half the victims returned to duty after a brief hospitalization, but many remained under care. Symptoms of shell shock sometimes reappeared months or even years later among those who had seemingly recovered.

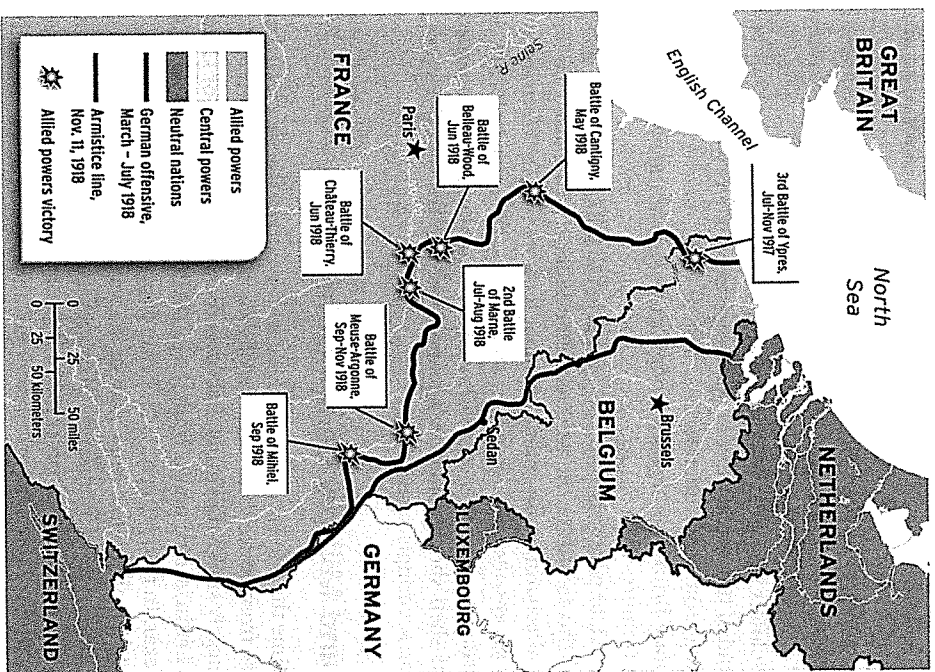
Political and Military Complications

Around the time the Americans entered the war, events in Russia created new problems on the western front. Since the overthrow of Czar Nicholas in the spring of 1917, Russian armies had largely stopped fighting. In November, the Bolsheviks, or Communists, led by Vladimir Lenin, seized power from the pro-Allied but ineffective regime that briefly replaced the czar. In the spring of 1918, Lenin approved the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany and formally pulled Russia out of the war. This allowed German commanders to transport hundreds of thousands of troops from Eastern to Western Europe. In March, the expanded German forces in the West launched a major offensive designed to overrun France before more American supplies and soldiers could arrive. The onslaught carried German armies within 50 miles of Paris.

At this point, a growing number of American troops joined the battle and blunted the German advance along the Marne River at Chateau Thierry. By the summer and fall of 1918, hundreds of thousands of additional doughboys helped push back the Germans in the battles of Chateau Thierry and Belleau Woods in June and the 2nd Battle of the Marne in July and August (Map 21.3). The intense fighting during the 10 months of combat in 1918 killed nearly 50,000 Americans and wounded many more. The infusion of fresh forces bolstered Allied morale while the desperate Germans used up nearly all their reserve forces and war materials by October. To make matters worse, Germany's Austrian, Turkish, and Bulgarian allies quit fighting.

Within Germany hunger and war weariness sparked riots. Leftists, inspired by Bolshevik Russia, agitating among German civilians and soldiers called for a revolution against the old order. Fearing an Allied push into Germany and the possible seizure of power by communists, German commanders insisted that the country's civilian politicians seek a U.S.-brokered cease-fire.

German moderates embraced the opportunity to end the war and create a democratic regime. They hoped that Wilson's Fourteen Points, promising fair treatment for postwar Germany, would serve as a framework for an armistice and peace agreement.



MAP 21.3 ▲ **America Joins World War I, 1917–1918** U.S. armed forces entered European combat in large numbers during 1918. They played an important role in breaking the stalemate on the western front.

However, Wilson rejected a cease-fire until the Kaiser abdicated, and German troops agreed to evacuate all occupied territory and to surrender their heavy weapons.

Germany had to swallow another bitter pill. Following an armistice, the Allied food blockade would continue—victimizing mostly civilians—until Germany signed a final peace treaty, a process that might last months. Germany’s democratic politicians who were eager to stop the killing and reform their government deeply resented these terms but had few options. Early in November, Kaiser Wilhelm fled to Holland, and a new civilian government accepted the harsh armistice terms. Anxious to shift the pain of defeat to the shoulders of others, German military leaders promptly accused liberals, Socialists, and Jews of a “stab in the back” that betrayed the fatherland, an absurd charge later amplified by Adolph Hitler. The guns of war fell silent at 11:11 AM on November 11, 1918, but peace remained elusive.

Influenza Pandemic

During the last half of 1918 and into 1919, a global epidemic, or pandemic, added to the world's misery. As if the huge wartime toll were not terrible enough, millions more died from an especially virulent influenza virus. The "flu," an annual arrival, usually resembled a bad cold. Because the flu virus mutates quickly, immunity seldom carried over from one year to the next.

Scientists now understand that occasionally the virus mutates dramatically or "jumps species." Thus a swine or bird flu can evolve in ways that allow it to infect humans and cause a more severe illness. Something like this occurred in 1918–1919 when otherwise healthy soldiers in the trenches of the western front came down with a severe flu that killed its victims, sometimes in a few hours. In fact, nearly half of all 116,000 U.S. military deaths in Europe resulted from the flu. The illness spread quickly in military barracks and was carried around the world by infected travelers on steamships. Unlike typical flu strains, which hit the very young and old the hardest, the 1918 variant struck healthy young adults most seriously, possibly by overstimulating those with the healthiest immune systems to inflame air passages in the lungs. Death resulted from victims' "drowning" in their own phlegm.

The disease was first reported in March 1918 among soldiers based in Kansas. Troops carried it to Europe where it may have mutated further and spread quickly around the world. The virus proved even more virulent in its second appearance in the fall. Some worried that the disease was a form of germ warfare spread by German agents. By mid-1919, the virus had struck down those most susceptible to it and had possibly mutated into a less virulent strain. Ultimately, the pandemic killed about 600,000 Americans and perhaps 50 million people worldwide, with most of the deaths in China and India.

Early in the 21st century, scientists utilized new techniques to recover DNA particles from the 1918 virus lodged in the remains of victims buried in the frozen tundra of Norway and Alaska. Among their findings was the disturbing fact that only subtle mutations distinguished the "killer flu" from the mundane variety. This finding made it all but certain that similar pandemics would again occur.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR OVER THERE

1. What methods did the United States employ to quickly raise a mass army?
2. What impact did the arrival of U.S. troops in Europe have on the war?

MAKING PEACE ABROAD AND AT HOME

President Wilson's popularity among Americans declined after the initial enthusiasm for war. The idealistic goals he proclaimed often seemed obscured by battlefield casualties and friction with coalition partners. The president blundered badly when he asked voters in November 1918 to make the congressional election a referendum on his leadership and plans for peace. Instead, a majority of voters blamed Democrats for a war they had grown weary of and a variety of accumulated economic grievances. After the

GLOBAL PASSAGES

Postwar Colonialism

Despite Wilson's promise to negotiate via "open diplomacy," American, British, French, Italian, and Japanese delegates did most of the important work behind closed doors, isolated from public scrutiny and with little input from other nations. They concentrated on forging a new map of Europe and the Middle East by dividing the colonial territories of the defeated powers. Efforts by stateless and colonial peoples to influence the outcome were considered a nuisance.

To press their case, the Indian National Congress, Muslim League, Korean and Chinese patriots, Zionists, Africans, Vietnamese, and even some Haitians and Dominicans, chafing under U.S. military occupation, ventured to Paris. They anticipated fierce opposition from the colonial powers but were stunned by the cold shoulder they received from Wilson and the U.S. delegation. The president confided to his aides that when he had spoken of self-determination, he had been thinking primarily of Eastern Europeans, such as Czechs and Poles, not the "many nationalities which are coming to us day after day"

armistice. Wilson had to deal with emboldened Republican critics who controlled Congress. Allied leaders bent on revenge, and a communist regime in Russia trying to spread revolution. These factors complicated the president's effort to win Senate approval for a treaty that included membership in a new League of Nations, an organization he saw as the key to a lasting peace.

Making Peace and Fighting Communism

In November 1918, just before the armistice, Republicans won control of both the House and the Senate. Thus, any treaty negotiated by Wilson would have to gain substantial Republican backing in the Senate to be ratified by the required two-thirds vote. To reach this number, Wilson had to seek at least tacit support from Republicans, especially Henry Cabot Lodge, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Rather than reaching out to Lodge and other rivals, Wilson refused to name any prominent Republicans, or any senators at all, to the peace delegation he personally led to Europe in December 1918. The president even shunned advice from a group of technical experts, known as the Inquiry, he had previously appointed.

In December 1918, Wilson, the first sitting president to cross the Atlantic, led a peace delegation to Europe. Before going to Paris, he visited London and Rome where adoring crowds responded to his calls for negotiating a "people's peace." Italian news papers praised him as the "king of humanity," and British writer and social reformer H. G. Wells called him a political "Messiah."

Thirty-two nations, not including Germany or communist Russia, attended the peace conference in Paris between January 18 and June 28, 1919.

from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Freedom for these people lay decades ahead, after tutelage by advanced nations. Secretary of State Robert Lansing remarked that democracy was too “dangerous” an idea to put “into the minds of certain races” whose “state of barbarism or ignorance deprives them of the capacity” to govern themselves.

The British and French took control of much of the Middle East. Rebuffing Arab calls for independence, they appropriated from the defeated Ottoman Turks the provinces of Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Trans-Jordan. Japan, angered by Anglo-American refusal to acknowledge Japanese racial equality, instead received Western approval to retain control of Korea and parts of China. Wilson aides rebuffed efforts by Vietnamese nationalist Nguyen Tat Than to deliver a petition seeking American support for his homeland’s independence from France. Indian and African appeals for self-determination received similar dismissive treatment. The war, after all, had not yet made the world safe for democracy.

- How did Wilson’s wartime rhetoric inspire colonial peoples?
- Why did the Versailles treaty shatter hope for decolonization?

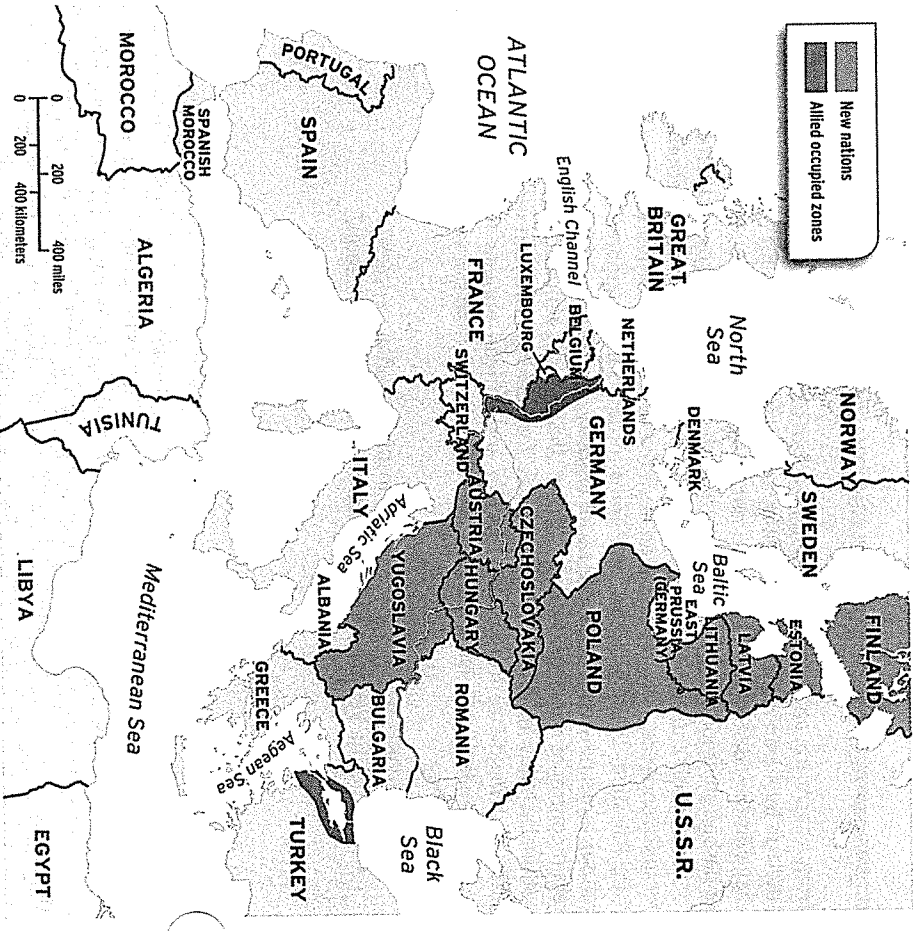
During the months-long deliberations in Paris, Lloyd George and Clemenceau insisted on weakening Germany by imposing strict limits on future German armaments, having France occupy some German territory along its border, and imposing a huge reparations bill designed to make Germany pay for wartime destruction (Map 21.4). The British and French also insisted that Germany accept as part of the peace treaty a “war guilt clause” in which it assumed sole responsibility for the fighting.

Even though the tone and substance of many decisions made at the conference violated the spirit of his Fourteen Points, Wilson needed French and British support. He spent months in Paris drafting plans for a League of Nations.

Wilson insisted that future peace and prosperity required the United States and the world’s major powers to accept Article 10 of the proposed league’s covenant or charter. This established a system of “collective security” that pledged all League members to safeguard the territory and independence of all other members.

Wilson had another reason for accommodating the wartime allies. Like the British, French, and Japanese, he feared the spread of revolution from Russia and wanted quick, cooperative action to stifle the Bolshevik regime. In mid-1918, following Lenin’s peace deal with Germany that took Russia out of the war, the United States and the Allies had sent troops to northern Russia, ostensibly to keep war supplies stored there out of German hands. In fact, the foreign armies assisted the “Whites,” as the anticommunists were known, in what became a brutal three-year civil war with the Bolsheviks. Wilson sent additional troops to Siberia where they joined Japanese and European forces in a vain effort to hold the vast region against the communists.

Around the time of Germany’s surrender in November 1918, communist groups inspired by the Bolsheviks briefly seized power in Berlin and other German cities and



MAP 21.4 ▲ **European Political Boundaries after World War I** The breakup of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires gave rise to a dozen or more new nations in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

in Hungary. To counter this threat to central and Eastern Europe, the Allies provided support to local anticommunist forces, who quickly regained power. The concern with halting the spread of communism from Russia contributed to the decision at Paris to create a buffer of anticommunist states—Finland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—out of what had been the western fringe of czarist Russia.

The victors completed drafting the peace treaty in June, nearly eight months after the armistice, and presented it to Germany on a nonnegotiable basis. On June 28, 1919, with its ports still blockaded, with its economy in ruins, and amid threats of uprisings by left-wing revolutionaries or right-wing militarists, the German government accepted the harsh terms.

Red Scare

The political and economic climate in the United States had changed dramatically by the time the peace treaty came back to Washington for Senate ratification in the summer of 1919. The cancellation of most war contracts triggered a sharp recession. Economic uncertainty coincided with a growing fear of Bolshevism abroad and at home, especially the belief that communist agents—referred to as “Reds”—either caused or planned to take advantage of labor unrest to seize power. During 1919, major employers cut workers’ wages and hours, prompting a nationwide wave of labor unrest. Although the communist movement inside the United States was tiny, it was often portrayed as the tip of the Bolshevik lance and held responsible for strikes and acts of violence.

In January 1919, unions in Seattle called a general strike that briefly shut down the city. During May and June, several prominent government officials and financiers received bombs in the mail, apparently sent by an anarchist group. Several exploded, killing innocent bystanders rather than their intended targets. These, along with later bombings, convinced many Americans that labor activists and communists were little more than terrorists. In the fall, Boston police officers went on strike, prompting Massachusetts Governor Calvin Coolidge to send in the National Guard as replacements. Coolidge became a national celebrity by declaring “there is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime.” In September, over 300,000 steel workers walked out when the big mills tried to restore the 12-hour day; seven-day work week at reduced wages. Industry executives denounced the strikers as revolutionaries and hired many replacement workers, including 30,000 African Americans, as strikebreakers. The walkout collapsed in January 1920.

Hostility toward minorities merged with antilabor sentiment in rural Arkansas when a group of sharecroppers, attempting to organize a union, gathered in a church in the fall of 1919. When armed whites attacked the meeting, the black sharecroppers fought back and killed several whites. Bands of white vigilantes responded by shooting, hanging, and even roasting to death between 100 and 300 African Americans in nearby towns, most of whom had nothing to do with the union. Another 300 blacks were beaten, denied lawyers, and jailed. Over 100 were convicted of serious crimes, and 12 were sentenced to death in trials that lasted 10 minutes or less. Scipio Africanus Jones, a local black attorney, assisted by the NAACP, appealed the convictions before the Supreme Court. The court’s 1923 decision, *Moore v. Dempsey*, overturned the convictions, calling them the product of mob rule, and freed the condemned men.

Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer declared that these events taken together revealed that a “blaze of revolution” had engulfed the nation. Palmer appointed a young protégé, J. Edgar Hoover, to lead the intelligence division within the Justice Department to track radicals. In 1919, Hoover compiled lists of thousands of suspects, many of them immigrants, who belonged to groups such as the IWW and the newly organized Communist Party. In December, about 250 of these noncitizens were seized and deported to communist-ruled Russia. In January 1920, the Attorney General authorized a broader sweep. The so-called Palmer Raids occurred in 33 cities where federal agents without warrants broke into homes and meeting halls to arrest over 4,000 people on charges of subversion. About 600 of those seized were later deported.

TIMELINE 1913-1920

AMERICA	YEAR	THE WORLD
<p>Mar Woodrow Wilson inaugurated as president</p> <p>Apr U.S. Naval force occupies Mexican port of Veracruz after "insult" to flag</p> <p>Aug Wilson issues neutrality declaration, allows nonmilitary trade with warring nations</p> <p>Jul U.S. Marines occupy Haiti and remain until 1934</p>	<p>1913</p> <p>1914</p> <p>1915</p>	<p>Jun Archduke Franz Ferdinand assassinated in Bosnia, sparking crisis among European rivals</p> <p>Aug World War I begins in Europe as Allies confront Central Powers</p> <p>Aug Panama Canal opens</p> <p>May British passenger liner <i>Lusitania</i> sunk by German U-boat, killing over 1,000, including more than 100 Americans</p>
<p>Mar Pancho Villa attacks several U.S. towns along Mexican border</p> <p>Mar Gen. John J. Pershing leads punitive military expedition into Mexico to catch Villa; leads to U.S.-Mexican confrontation</p> <p>May U.S. Marines occupy Dominican Republic until 1924</p> <p>Nov Wilson reelected president in close contest with slogan "he kept us out of war"</p>	<p>1916</p>	<p>Mar Russian Czar Nicholas overthrown by moderate democratic reformers</p> <p>Nov Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, seize power in Russia</p>
<p>Jan Zimmerman telegram sent by German government to Mexico proposing joint war against United States</p> <p>Feb German navy resumes unrestricted submarine warfare against U.S. ships supplying Allies</p> <p>Mar U.S. Merchant ships sunk by U-boats with loss of American lives</p> <p>Apr U.S. Congress declares war on Germany, endorsing Wilson's call to make the world "safe for democracy"; federal agencies established to regulate agricultural and industrial production and transportation</p> <p>May-Jul East St. Louis race riots</p> <p>Jun Espionage Act passed, restricting antiwar speech and activities</p>	<p>1917</p>	

Although President Wilson tacitly approved Palmer's harsh methods, the Attorney General overreached. In the spring of 1920, he claimed to have uncovered a "Red" plot to seize national power on May 1 and deployed troops to protect government buildings and officials. When the day passed peacefully, and Palmer could not show evidence that such a plot had actually existed, his credibility—and presidential hopes—dissolved. However, his young assistant, J. Edgar Hoover, survived the episode. An exceptionally skilled bureaucratic infighter, Hoover stayed on after the Republican sweep in 1920 and in 1924 became director of the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation (later re-named the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI), a job he held for nearly 50 years.

Ironically, an actual terror attack, about which he knew nothing, took place after Palmer's disgrace. On September 16, 1920, an anarchist group exploded a large bomb in front of the offices of J. P. Morgan Company on Wall Street in New York City. The explosion—the deadliest terror incident on American soil until the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995—killed 38 people and wounded 400 others. Like earlier attacks, the victims were mostly working people, not powerful bankers. Instead of promoting revolution, the attack frightened ordinary Americans and contributed to a more conservative drift in national politics.

<p>Jan Wilson issues Fourteen Points peace plan directed at Germany, Allies, Bolsheviks, and colonial peoples</p> <p>Nov Republicans win midterm congressional elections</p> <p>Nov Armistice signed, ending fighting in Europe; Allied blockade of Germany continues along with anti-Communist effort in Russia</p>	<p>Feb Bolsheviks sign Brest-Litovsk treaty with Germany and quit war</p> <p>Mar Global influenza pandemic begins</p> <p>Jul Allied armies, joined by the United States, begin military intervention in Russia that lasts into 1920</p> <p>Oct–Nov German Kaiser abdicates and German civilian government seeks cease fire</p>	<p>1918</p>
<p>Jan Paris Peace Conference, attended by President Wilson, begins with Germany and Bolsheviks excluded</p> <p>Jan Eighteenth Amendment (Prohibition) ratified</p> <p>Jul Chicago race riots</p> <p>May–Jun Anarchist bombings in United States promote conservative backlash</p> <p>Jun Peace treaty ending Great War signed at Versailles despite Wilson's misgivings</p> <p>Sep Elaine, Arkansas, race riots</p> <p>Nov Palmer Raids against radicals begin with roundup of several thousand immigrants</p>	<p>May Chinese May Fourth Movement rallies patriots against Allied decision to give Japan control of former German-held territory in China</p>	<p>1919</p>
<p>Mar U.S. Senate rejects Versailles Treaty by failing to muster two-thirds vote</p> <p>Aug Nineteenth Amendment ratified, giving women right to vote</p> <p>Sep Wall Street bombing kills dozens</p> <p>Nov Republican Warren G. Harding elected president with pledge to restore "normalcy"</p>		<p>1920</p>

The Fight for the Treaty

Even before Wilson formally submitted the Versailles Treaty for ratification, 39 senators—more than the one-third needed to defeat it—signed a petition demanding that the League of Nations recognize that the Monroe Doctrine gave the United States preeminence in the Western Hemisphere. When the treaty reached the Senate in the summer of 1919, Senator Lodge bitterly criticized it. He argued that Article 10 of the League Covenant, the basis for collective security, unfairly restricted America's freedom of action and might oblige the country to engage in unwise military ventures without congressional approval. Other critics warned the League might interfere with immigration policies or require that U.S. officials accept African or Asian equality. Some progressive critics of the treaty complained that it was too conservative and locked the United States into defending British, French, and Japanese colonial holdings while treating Germany unfairly.

Wilson stubbornly rejected all criticism of the Versailles treaty, arguing that reopening negotiations would only make things worse and that any problems could be solved once the League of Nations began operating. To bolster public support for

ratification, he launched an arduous speaking tour in September 1919. He collapsed on September 26 at the end of a speech in Pueblo, Colorado, and soon suffered a nearly fatal stroke. After partially recovering, Wilson became ever less willing to compromise. He insisted that Senate Democrats prove their loyalty by voting *against* an amended treaty even if they agreed with the changes. As a result, three times between November 1919 and March 1920, the Senate voted down the treaty, with and without amendments. If Wilson had allowed Senate Democrats to vote in favor of the amended treaty, it would likely have passed. The rejection of the Versailles Treaty and League membership signified a deep division among American leaders. Some, like Wilson, believed the Great War proved the United States must join formally with other nations in managing world trade and enforcing peace. Critics of the League argued that membership would needlessly entangle the United States in European conflicts and restrict America's freedom to act. Both sides of the debate actually agreed that the nation had global interests and could not isolate itself from world affairs. But they disagreed strongly over how the United States should exercise its power and defend its interests, collectively through the League of Nations or unilaterally by picking and choosing issues and nations with whom it would cooperate.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MAKING PEACE ABROAD AND AT HOME

1. What compromises did Wilson make in negotiating peace and why?
2. Why did many liberal and conservative Senators oppose the Versailles Treaty?
3. What events in Europe in 1919–1920 and at home created fear of domestic radicalism?

Summary

- The outbreak of war in 1914 shocked Americans, who tried to avoid involvement while they benefited from exporting raw materials to the warring nations.
- Expanding economic links to the Allies and growing fears of German militarism gradually moved the United States toward direct involvement.
- Once in the war, the government used its new power to raise a mighty army, boost production, and stifle dissent.
- As large numbers of American troops joined the fighting early in 1918, they played a decisive role in defeating Germany.
- In 1918–1919, an influenza pandemic killed millions of people worldwide.
- Wilson personally negotiated the peace treaty, hoping to use it as a vehicle to create a League of Nations that would insure future peace and prosperity.
- Support for the treaty, and for liberal policies, was undermined by a wave of strikes, bombings, and fears of terrorism during 1919–1920.

Key Terms and People

Adams Act 728

American Protective League (APL) 733

American Expeditionary Force (AEF) 736

Catt, Carrie Chapman 732

Central Powers	720	Lenin, Vladimir	718
Committee on Public Information, the	717	League of Nations	742
Debs, Eugene	733	Lippmann, Walter	732
Dewey, John	727	Literacy Act	733
Franz Ferdinand, Archduke	721	Lusitania	725
Ford, Henry	727	Madero, Francisco	729
Grant, Madison	727	National Security League	726
Great Migration	736	Palmer, A. Mitchell	745
Haywood, William D. "Big Bill"	733	Palmer Raids	745
Holmes, Oliver Wendell, Jr.	734	Paul, Alice	735
Hoover, J. Edgar	745	Rankin, Jeanette	735
House, Edward M.	727	Tax Act of 1916	728
Huerta, Victoriano	729	Villa, Francisco "Pancho"	729
Hughes, Charles Evans	727	Wilhelm, Kaiser	730
James, William	719	Zimmerman, Arthur	730

Reviewing Chapter 21

1. How did the war in Europe impact the United States early on?
2. What were President Wilson's major war aims?
3. How did the federal government suppress wartime dissent?
4. What international and domestic events complicated Wilson's efforts to control the peace settlement?
5. What unresolved problems from the war contributed to postwar instability?

Further Reading

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- Clark, Christopher. *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*. New York: Harpers, 2013. Both intense local nationalism as well as Great Power schemes of expansion fueled the drive toward war that each side felt justified in fighting.
- Freeberg, Ernest. *Democracy's Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, the Great War, and the Right to Dissent*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. Debs had several careers as a labor organizer, Socialist leader and principled opponent of the war. His prosecution revealed the extent to which the Wilson administration went in stifling peaceful dissent.
- Gardner, Lloyd. *Safe for Democracy: The Anglo-American Response to Revolution, 1913–1923*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984. Amidst the carnage of the Great War, British and American leaders tried to control the social upheavals in Mexico, Russia, Eastern Europe, and China.
- Hastings, Max. *Catastrophe, 1914: Europe Goes to War*. New York, 2014. Explores how the major powers blundered into war and why the fighting became so bloody.
- Kennedy, David. *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. U.S. entry into the Great War set in motion economic, political, and social changes that had long-term consequences in the lives of ordinary Americans.
- Knock, Thomas. *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. The author explains how Wilson saw American participation in the Great War as a way to reshape global politics and impose a uniquely American reform agenda on the world.

MacMillan, Margaret. *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. New York: Random House, 2002. The author examines the personalities and politics behind the long peace conference after the Great War and evaluates the successes and failures of the peacemakers.

Manela, Erez. *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Wilson's call for self-determination following WWI aroused great hopes among colonial peoples. But the failure to implement this promise pushed many Asians, Africans, and Arabs in radical directions.

Schaffer, Ronald. *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. American participation in the war, Schaffer explains, was made possible by the expansion of federal power early in the 20th century, and the war further enhanced that power. He also chronicles the experience of ordinary soldiers.

America In The World

CHAPTER 21: America and the Great War 1914-1920

